St. Francis's Devotion toward the Blessed Virgin Mary

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It is common knowledge that during the course of time the sons of St. Francis have made a very great contribution to the fostering of devotion toward the Blessed Virgin, while at the same time contributing to the evolution of Marian teaching. All the members of the Franciscan family with one accord have especially fought for the defining of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. But from what source did our Franciscan ancestors draw that fervent love toward our heavenly mother, if not principally from the writing and admirable example of our father Francis? Therefore, in the following pages we shall consider this precious Marian patrimony of ours, which St. Francis left us as our inheritance.

St. Francis's Marian Teaching

Let it first be acknowledged that in the short space allotted it would be impossible to treat fully the whole complex subject of history and doctrine pertaining to this subject. Besides, we would rather omit what

¹Benignus a Sant'Ilario, "Litterae circulares de Anno Mariano Rite Celebrando," AnalOFMCap 69 (1953): 189–97; Michael Brlek, O.F.M., "Legislatio Ordinis Fratrum Minorum de Immaculata Conceptione Beatae Mariae Virginis," Antonianum 29 (1954): 3–44; Nicola Dal Gal, L'opera dei Francescani attraverso i secoli per trionfo dell'Immacolata (Quaracchi Ad Claras Aquas), 1905; G. Haselbeck, O.F.M., Seraphische Marienminne: Bilder zur Geschichte der Marienverehrung im Franziskanerorden (Mergentheim, 1924); Heribert Holzapfel, O.F.M., Bibliotheca franciscana de Immaculata Conceptione (Quaracchi Ad Claras Aquas, 1904); Jean de Dieu (of Champsecret), "La Vierge et l'Ordre des Frères Mineurs Conventuels, Franciscaines, Capucins," Maria: Études sur la Sainte Vierge sous la direction d'Hubert Du Manoir, S.J., vol. 2 (Paris, 1952), pp. 783–831; Camillo Mariotti, O.F.M., L'Immacolata Concezione di Maria e i Francescani, Quaracchi Ad Claras Aquas, 1904; P. Pauwels, O.F.M., Les Franciscaines et l'Immaculée Conception (Malines, 1904).

is widely known, so that we may direct most of our attention to what has up to the present time enjoyed less attention.²

It is sufficiently evident that St. Francis can not properly be numbered among those theologians who foster the knowledge of Mary and increase it by new investigations. Nevertheless, we are amazed how clearly and confidently he spoke about the Marian mysteries during a time when heresies were multiplying. The Albigensians, for example, thought that Mary - no less than Christ - was an Aeon possessed of only an apparent body. Others in denying the historical existence of the Blessed Virgin reduced her to a mere symbol of a chaste and penitential life.3 St. Francis proclaims in plain words the true, virginal and divine motherhood of Mary. Filled with admiration, he writes in his Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful: "Through His angel St. Gabriel the most high Father announced this Word of the Father - so worthy, so holy and glorious, in the womb of the holy and glorious virgin Mary, from which He received the flesh of humanity and our frailty. Though He was rich beyond all other things in this world, He, together with the most blessed Virgin, His mother, willed to choose poverty." It is easily seen how much he insisted on the reality of the Incarnation and on the divine motherhood. In the Earlier Rule we find this prayer: "We thank You (God the Father) for You brought about His birth as true God and true man by the glorious ever-virgin Mary."5

⁵RegNB XXIII 3. Kajetan Esser (in Marienfrömmigkeit, pp. 179–80) rightly considers

 $^{^2}$ See "La nostra devozione a Maria Santissima sull'esempio del Padre S.Francesco," VitaMinorum 25 (1954): 71-9; I.M.Benoit, Le Chavelier courtois de Notre-Dame-des Anges (Montreal, 1952); A.Bierbaum, O.F.M., Der hl. Franziskus von Assisi und die Gottesmutter (Paderborn, 1904); R.Brown, Our Lady and St. Francis: All the Earliest Texts Compiled and Translated (Chicago, 1954); Clovis de Provin, O.F.M.Cap., "Saint François d'Assise et son ardente dévotion à Notre Dame de la Trinité," Prop. Trois Ave Maria (1932): 16; Eugène Christian, O.F.M., Our Lady: Devotion to Mary in Franciscan Tradition (Chicago, 1954); Kajetan Esser, O.F.M., "Die Marienfrömmigkeit des hl. Franziskus von Assisi," Wissenschaft und Weisheit 17 (1954): 176–90, hereafter cited as "Marienfrömmigkeit"; Francis Mary Scannell, O.F.M.Cap., "Queen of the Seraphic Order," Round Table of Franciscan Research 19 (1954): 92-97; Beda Kleinschmidt, Maria und Franziskus von Assisi in Kunst und Geschichte (Düsseldorf, 1926); John Baptist Kurcz, O.F.M.Cap, "Francis and Mary," Round Table Franciscan Research 15 (1950): 42-46; Willibrord Lampen, O.F.M., "De S.P.Francisci cultu Angelorum et Sanctorum," Archivum franciscanum historicum 20 (1927): 11-20, hereafter cited as AFH; Lampen, "De quibusdam sententiis et verbis in Opusculis S.P.N.Francisci," AFH 24 (1931): 552-57; Moise de Ceton, O.F.M.Cap., "L'Ave Maria de Saint François," in Prop. Trois Ave Maria 46 (1947): 118ff, 149ff, 167.

³ See J.Guiraud, Dict. Géogr. Hist. Écclés., s.v. "Les Albigois." See also Kirchenlexikon, vol. 1, cols. 431 ff.

⁴Verse 4. [For our translations of the writings of Francis we have used Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap. and Ignatius C. Brady, O.F.M., eds. and trans., Francis and Clare: The Complete Works, Classics of Western Spirituality. Paulist Press (New York, Ramsey and Toronto, 1982). Used by permission of Paulist Press. — Editor.]

Furthermore, in his Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Francis addresses her with the technical term "mother (genetrix) of God." This whole prayer consists of a very beautiful paraphrase of Mary's divine maternity. With vivid verbal images, which continue to increase in ardor, he salutes Mary: "Hail, His (Christ's) palace. Hail, His tabernacle. Hail, His home. Hail, His robe. Hail, His servant. Hail, his mother."6 In the following words Thomas of Celano excellently describes the basis of St. Francis's filial devotion to Mary: "He loved the mother of Jesus with an ineffable love, because she made the Lord of majesty our brother." Although his belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary is clearly evident in the cited passages, he commemorates it in more explicit words in the Salutation cited above: "Hail, O lady, holy queen, Mary, holy mother of God, you are the virgin made church."8 He speaks in like manner in a Letter to the Entire Order. In it he humbly confesses his sins to all the friars: "I confess all my sins to the Lord God, the Father and the Son and the holy Spirit; to the Blessed Mary ever-virgin, and to all the saints." In a particular place in the Earlier Rule he calls Mary "ever-virgin." Yet in the writings of St. Francis we have searched in vain for that familiar designation of the fathers of the church: "A virgin before the birth; a virgin in the birth; a virgin after the birth."11 Nevertheless, in resume one can say that her virginal motherhood of God forms the heart and center of our father Francis's teaching about Marv.

During the Marian year, which in a special way commemorated the defining of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, one was faced with the timely question whether St. Francis said anything at all about this prerogative of Mary. At first sight it would seem that one could respond with an affirmative answer. For instance, Luke Wadding reports in his *Annals* of the year 1219: "Three things were legislated in this meeting (of the General Chapter at Assisi): first, that Mass be

that Francis's predilection for the mystery of the Incarnation has to be joined with this prerogative. Besides he recalls the representation of the nativity scene which Francis did at Greccio.

⁶SalBVM 45.

⁷ 2Cel 198.

⁸SalBVM 1.

⁹EpOrd 38.

¹⁰ RegNB XXIII 3.

¹¹ This formula is found in St. Augustine in almost similar words (see his "Sermo 186," no. 1, PL 38, 999; and "Sermo 188," no. 4, PL 38, 1004). It is clearer in St. Jerome, Epist. 48, PL 22, 510. The maternity seems to be the core and center of the Marian teaching of St. Peter Damian, O.S.B. (d. 1072), on whom Francis seems to depend not a little (see O.J.Blum, St. Peter Damian: His Teaching on the Spiritual Life (Washington, 1947), p. 161; see also Lampen, "De S.P.Francisci cultu," [cited in n. 3 above], pp. 13–14).

solemnized in honor of the Immaculate Virgin Mary on each Saturday."12 But serious doubts arise concerning the historical truth of this report. For on the one hand, the very early sources, such as Celano and St. Bonaventure, are altogether silent about such a decree; and on the other hand, in the manuscripts of the statutes of the Chapter held at Assisi in 1269 and of another Chapter held at Paris in 1296, there is mention only of a votive Mass that should be celebrated on each Saturday in honor of the Blessed Virgin. 13 It seems that the same formula (inasmuch as it was very similar) has to be accepted for the statutes of the first Chapter,14 because with the exception of Blessed Eadmer no explicit testimony is found in the thirteenth century in favor of this Marian privilege. 15 Hardly any trace of such a belief can be found in the writings of St. Francis. He never applies the word 'immaculate' (immaculata) or 'untainted' (intemerata) to the Blessed Virgin. At most, passages can be set forth, in which he calls her "holy mother" or "holy queen." The first legal document concerning the Office and the votive Mass, which regulate particulars to be attributed to the Immaculate Conception, is not found before the Chapter of Salamanca in the year 1553.17 The report of Wadding and of those who depend on this celebrated annalist, must without doubt be interpreted as a repetition of conditions of a later time. We think that St. Francis adopted a Mass in honor of Mary for each Saturday because of the custom which was then widespread. He did this for his order in testimony of his great love for the mother of God. 18

¹² Annales Minorum, vol. 1 (Quaracchi Ad Claras Aquas, 1931), no. 302, p. 335. Because he had already written in 1625, we believe that Michael of Naples, O.F.M., who repeats his words (see Chronologia historico-legalis Seraphici Ordinis Fratrum Minorum S. Francisci, vol. 1 [Naples, 1650], p. 11b), depended on Wadding (see Brlek, "Legislatio ordinis," Antonianum 29 [1954]: 7, n. 1).

¹³ See AFH 5 (1912): 708; 3 (1910): 55ff; MisFran 33 (1933): 28. See also Brlek (cited in note 2 above), p. 34, nn. 2–3.

¹⁴The same decree was set forward in the General Chapter of Assisi in 1269 (see "Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis Minorum," *Analecta Franciscana* 3 [1897]: 351). [Hereafter we shall cite references to the *Analecta Franciscana* as *AF*. — Editor].

¹⁵ See X. Le Bachelet, S.J., Dict. Théol. Cath., s.v. "Immaculée Conception." See also C. Balic, "Il contributo di Scoto nella questione del'Immaculata," Antonianum 29 (1954): 478–79. In this the negative influence of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, O.Cist. (d. 1153) should especially be weighed. See Dict. Théol. Cath., cols. 1010–15. See also J.B.Auniord, "Citeaux et Notre-Dame," Maria: Études sur la Sainte Vierge, vol. 2, p. 588; Jean Leclercq, O.S.B., "Dévotion et théologie mariales dans le Monachisme bénédictin," Maria, vol. 2, p. 573. Positive or negative indications are absent as far as St. Peter Damian is concerned. See S.Baldassari, "La Mariologia di S.Pier Damiani," Scuol. Catt. 61 (1933): 308.

 $^{^{16}}$ See SalBVM 1.

¹⁷ Brlek, Legislatio O.F.M. (see n. 2 above), p. 34, n. 6.

¹⁸ See G. Durandus, Rationale Divinorum Officiorum, bk. 4, chap. 1, n. 31 (Naples, 1859),

Following the lead of the Archangel Gabriel, St. Francis preached that the Blessed Virgin Mary was full of grace. In the Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary he cries out: "In you (Mary) is all the fullness of grace and every good."19 Therefore, abundant grace existed in Mary's soul not only during her earthly life, but now that course of life is finished, it perdures in an overflowing measure in such a way that we all drink of this fountain. One can conjecture that St. Francis knew the kinds of grace that the Blessed Virgin posessed: first, the grace of divine motherhood, which he indicates in the Salutation, but saying that she had been consecrated to the beloved Son by the heavenly Father.²⁰ Besides, by praising the mother of God "in whom is ... every good," he suggests there is in the soul of Mary a certain mystical inhabitation of the Trinity, for according to the manner of speaking used elsewhere the two words "every good" simply signify God, Who is supreme good, all good, totally good." He certainly allowed that Mary possessed the gift of infused virtues, since in the Salutation he adds without any grammatical or logical distinction: "Hail, His mother, and hail, all you holy virtues, which through the grace and light of the Holy Spirit are poured into the hearts of the faithful, so that from their faithless state you may make them faithful to God."22 If the infused virtues are directly possible for all the baptized, certainly they are at least indirectly possible for the most holy mother of God.

It is interesting for us to know what St. Francis thought about the mediation of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. It is true that nowhere does

²² SalVirt 6.

p. 145, where it says: "On Saturday (the Mass) of the Blessed Virgin (is sung)." St. Peter Damian introduced into his congregation the pious practice of dedicating Saturday to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and he himself probably labored to spread this practice all over Italy. Moreover, he urged others to celebrate this same day with the Mass of the Blessed Virgin. See Blum, cited in n. 12 above, p. 160, n. 87; L.Gougaud, Dévotions et pratiques ascetiques du moyen-âge (Paris, 1925), pp. 65–73.

¹⁹ SalBVM 3.

²⁰ Ibid., vv. 12. It does not seem that in the mind of Francis the word 'consecrate' was associated with the Eucharist, for when he speaks about this mystery he always uses the word 'sanctify' or 'confect the Sacrament' (see Opuscula, pp. 105, 113.); but he understands it in the generic sense of the sanctification and blessing of things or persons (see Du Cange-Carpentarius, Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis, vol. 2 [Paris, 1840], p. 557). In those days the word sanctificare could be used in the sense of consecrare (Du Cange, Glossarium, vol. 6, p. 55). In this the Seraphic Father seems to have been inspired by the words of St. Paul in 1 Timothy 4: 5, to which he alludes (see Opuscula, p. 105). Conrad of Saxony (d. 1279) uses this word in the same sense in Speculum Beatae Mariae Virginis (Quaracchi Ad Claras Aquas), 1904, p. 55): "In your Son is your virginity consecrated (sanctified)."

²¹ SalVirt 3; LaudHor 11; RegNB; EpFid; LaudDei. Francis's insistance of the essential goodness of God seems to prepare the way for the affective theology of Bonaventure and the theology of love of John Duns Scotus.

he show that he held to the universal mediation of all graces. Neverthless even St. Peter Damian, on whom Francis depends in many things, foreshadows this belief only from afar, while St. Bernard of Clairvaux proclaims by many original images and in sufficiently clear words the idea that all grace comes to us through the hands of Mary.²³ However, it must be kept in mind that up to this point in time the investigators of Franciscan themes have not yet shown that St. Francis was acquainted with the Marian writings of the Mellifluous Doctor.²⁴

In any case Francis insists greatly on the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin as when he confidently beseeches her: "Pray for us with St. Michael the Archangel and all the powers of heaven and all the saints to your most beloved Son, the Lord and master." And consequently he represents her as his advocate before the Advocate. We are conscious that he possessed unlimited confidence in the efficacious intercession of Mary by the fact that he hoped to obtain the remission of sins through the intervention of the virgin.

In like manner, in St. Francis's Prayer Inspired by the Our Father, which he had made his own by frequent use (even if it can not be properly attributed to him as its author), he supplicates Mary. In the verse "And forgive us our trespasses," [which St. Francis addresses to the Father], he prays: "Through Your ineffable mercy through the power of the passion of Your beloved Son, together with the merits and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all Your chosen ones."

²³ See Baldassari, "La Mariologia di S. Pier Damiani," cited in n. 16 above. Nevertheless, Peter Damian explicitly assigns the primacy in intercession to Mary above all other saints, in "Epist. 29 ad Stephanum monachum," PL 144, 420a.

²⁴ See A. Stolz, O.S.B., "Die Mittlerin aller Gnaden," in P.Sträter, S.J., Katholische Marienkunde: Maria in der Glaubenswissenschaft, vol. 2 (Paderborn, 1947), pp. 249-50. As far as the dependence of St. Francis on St. Bernard is concerned, see L.Oliger, Expositio quattuor Magistrorum super regulam Fratrum Minorum (Rome, 1950), p. 183 at line 9, where only one parallel passage is offered for the writings of St. Bernard, namely, "Sermones de Tempore, Sermo 4," no. 12, PL 183, 49, which does not necessarily presuppose a direct dependence. See also Lampen ("De quibusdam sententiis" [cited in n. 3 abovel, p. 553), who indicates that it is only probable that Francis knew Bernard's writings on precepts and laws. Besides, Oliger (Expositio, pp. 177, 182ff, 189) points also to some parallel passages from Pseudo-Bernard ("De modo bene vivendi," PL 184, 1189-1306). But by no means do we intend to say that St. Francis did not share the religious sentiment stirred up by the Mellifluous Doctor. In "De quibusdam sententiis" (p. 553) Lampen sets forth many authors who speak about the similarity of the religious devotion of both saints. Pseudo-Bernard ("Super Salve, Sermo 3," no. 5, PL 184, 1064) says: "You are the Good, all the Good, the highest Good," which agrees perfectly with the words of St. Francis (see Opuscula, p. 124). However, this parallelism alone does not force us to admit literary dependency, since this manner of speaking had perhaps been widespread at that time; in fact, our Seraphic Father perhaps composed this passage by meditating on Luke 18: 19, or Ps. 118: 68 or Ps. 117: 1.

²⁵ OffPass, Antiphon at Compline.

²⁶ExpPat 7. There are internal and external reasons which militate against the

Moreover, the argument for his special confidence in Mary is derived from the fact that in a special way he established her as the advocate and protector of his order;27 for St. Bonaventure is the witness that Francis chose Mary because "after Christ his confidence rested principally in her."28

As we speak now about the royalty of Mary, we first call to the mind of the reader that in St. Francis's time this Marian privilege had already deep roots in the people of Christianity.29 In his homily on the birth of the Blessed Virgin St. Peter Damian uses these words: "There was born today the queen of the world..., the gate of heaven, the tabernacle of God, the star of the sea, the stairs to heaven, through whom the king of heaven humbled himself to descend to the depths."30 That which Thomas of Celano reports - that St. Francis after his death appeared to a Tuscan woman and urged her to recite the prayer Salve Regina misericordiae³¹ — presupposes that this antiphon was

authenticity of this paraphrase. See Kajetan Esser, O.F.M. and Lothar Hardick, O.F.M., Die Schriften des hl. Franziskus von Assisi (Werl, 1951), p. 16; H.Boehmer, Analekten zur Geschichte des Franziskus von Assisi (Tübingen, 1904), pp. 30-31. Another passage is read in the Letter the Entire Order, in which he confesses "all my sins ... to the blessed Mary-ever virgin" (EpOrd 38). In writing about this text the authors speculate about the nature of these sins. Hilarin Felder (Die Ideale des hl. Franziskus von Assisi (Paderborn, 1951), p. 407) speaks about putative (vermeintliche) sins; however, Kajetan Esser ("Marienfrömmigkeit," p. 188, n. 73) rejects this. We think that this confession does not refer to the sins of his youth (whatever their nature and gravity may be), if indeed their remission had been made known to him in a remarkable way not long after his conversion (see ICel 26); even though he afterwards confessed that he was the "greatest of sinners" (see 2Cel 123; LMaior VI 6). This cannot be explained by his eagerness of humility which has to be bolstered by truth. But it is sufficiently probable that we have here a mystical experience, in which, for example, the light of infused contemplation brings human misery into greater emphasis, and because of this light the soul feels that "it is rejected by God and as a hateful thing thrust into darkness."

²⁷ 2Cel 198; LMaior III 1. It seems to be worthy of mention that the fervent fosterer of the Lord's passion never speaks about Mary's compassion for the Crucified. Not so St. Clare (see Engelbert Grau, O.F.M., Leben und Schriften der hl. Klara (Werl, 1952), p. 109).

²⁹ See Pius XII, Litt. encycl. "Ad Caeli Reginam," Oct. 11, 1954, in Acta Apost. Sedis 46 (1954): 625-40. See also H.Barre: "La Royauté de Marie pendant les neuf premiers siècles," in Rech. Scien. Relig. 29 (1939): 129-62, 303-34. In this disquisition it is brought out that the Blessed Virgin Mary's royalty had already been clearly proposed in the fifth century. For the subsequent time see A.Luis, C.SS.R., La Realeza de Maria (Madrid, 1942), pp. 50ff; G.M.Roschini, O.S.M., "Royauté de Marie," Maria: Études sur la Sainte Vierge sous la direction d'Hubert Du Manoir, vol. 1 (Paris, 1949), p. 612, n. 68, and p. 618. For the queenship in the liturgy see Serapio de Yragui, "La Realeza de la Virgen María en la liturgia," Actas del Congreso Asuncionista de América Latina (Buenos Aires, 1949), pp. 31–65. ³⁰ "Serm. 46," *PL* 144, 753c, and 761ab.

 $^{^{31}}$ 3Cel. The word mater was inserted into the antiphon in the sixteenth century (see AF 10 [1926-41]: 244, n. 1.) This antiphon together with the rest: Alma Redemptoris, Ave Regina caelorum, Regina caeli, is already found in the liturgy of the Friars Minor in 1249;

sufficiently and widely known at that time. Therefore, it is not surprising if the saint in a spontaneous manner addresses Mary in the Salutation as "holy Lady, holy queen." The reason for the word 'Lady', which Francis gives to the mother of God antonomastically, is excellently expressed by Thomas of Celano: "because she made the Lord of majesty our brother."33 We think that there was another reason, namely, that he very well knew the power of this woman's intercession, whose "like has not been born into the world." In this fact the holy fathers of previous ages had already recognized the basis of the queenship of the Blessed Virgin. 34 Therefore, we are not surprised if he inserts the title 'queen' into his prayer.35 Since our Seraphic Father loved the queen of heaven with such an ardent soul, he therefore marked everything which can be referred to it with the attribute of royalty. In this way in the Salutation of the Virtues, by which he extolls the perfections of Mary, he salutes both as twins: "Hail, Queen Wisdom, may the Lord protect you with your sister holy pure Simplicity."36 Moreover, "he used to say that this virtue (poverty), which shone forth so eminently in the king and queen, was a royal virtue."37

Moreover, St. Francis exhibits a no less solid theological sense when he shows forth the relations of the mother of God with the most holy Trinity. He joins her to the heavenly Father by the fact that she "was chosen," by the fact that she was His "servant." By the words "chosen

but for the Cistercian monks it had already been decreed that from the time of their General Chapter in 1218 the Salve Regina be recited daily. See G.Golubovich, O.F.M., "Statuta Liturgica ... in Capitulo Generali Pisano an. 1263," AFH 4 (1911): 71; H.Leclercq, Dict. Arch. Lit., s.v. "Salve Regina." See also Jean de Dieu ("La Vierge," [cited in n. 2 above], pp. 798–99).

³² SalBVM 1. Even though the word 'Lady' express an excellence only in an indeterminate manner, yet from use it coincides with the word 'queen'. See Barre, ("La Royauté de Marie," cited in n. 30 above), pp. 137 and passim.

³³ 2Cel 198. Esser ("Marienfrömmigkeit," p. 177) shrewdly recalls to our minds that in speaking this way Francis clealy shows that he participated in an expression of piety that belonged to a previous age which principally adored in Christ the "Lord of Majesty." On the other hand, however, in other passages he brings out that Francis at the same time gave his attention to the humanity of Christ more attentively than his predecessors and in this way contributed to the greatest extent to the change in religious devotion. See Lothar Hardick, O.F.M., "Franziskus die Wende der mittelalterlichen Frömmigkeit," Wiss. Weish. 13 (1950): 136–37.

³⁴ See H. Barre, "La Royauté de Marie" (cited in n. 30 above), p. 327. Whether one can conclude from Bonaventure (see *LMaior*), who speaks about Francis's fervent devotion to "the queen of the world," that Francis believed firmly in the active participation of the Blessed Virgin in governing the world, or the biographer attributes his own idea about her, we dare not decide, although this may be found in some previous medieval writers (see Barre, p. 331).

³⁵ See SalVirt 1, 5.

³⁶SalVirt 1.

^{37 2}Cel 200.

daughter" he insinuates that the Blessed Virgin is in a similar manner, though infinitely inferior, the partner in the divine filiation as Christ, Who is the Son of God in the true and proper sense. In fact by these words he perhaps expresses the idea that Mary similarly was picked out beforehand and predestined by God with a remarkable love, and he insinuates in another place that the Incarnation of the Word was made manifest from eternity. By the word 'servant' he extols the humble handmaid of God, who like Christ came into the world not to be served but to serve (Matt. 20: 28). Then he shows that through the Son the mother of God was blessed and was His mother. Finally, he calls her the spouse of the Holy Spirit. On the shows that through the Spirit.

We should say a few words on how our Seraphic Father twice establishes a parallel between the mystery of the Eucharist and the Incarnation in the womb of the virgin. In his Letter to the Entire Order he uses the comparative relation between the fact of the divine mother-hood of Mary and our duty of honoring her worthily as an argument from the lesser to the greater for the purpose of requiring a holy way of living from priest-ministers of the Eucharistic Body, that they may be fit for their dignity. And in Admonition I 14 Francis says that God, in Himself altogether inaccessible and invisible, is rendered accessible and visible by the assumption of flesh in the womb of His mother. And just as the apostles, notwithstanding lowly appearances, nevertheless realized and acknowledged under the illumination of the Holy Spirit that He was truly God, so Christ, now once again withdrawn from our senses, descends through the words of consecration to the altar into the hands of the priest and is rendered visible under the species mysteri-

³⁸ SalBVM 2; OffPass at Compline 12. It seems that the absolute predestination of Christ is represented by these words of Office of the Passion: "The most holy Father of heaven ... before all ages has sent His beloved Son from on high" OffPass V 3) and in Admonition V 1: "Be conscious, O man, of the wondrous state in which the Lord God has placed you, for He created you and formed you to the Image of His beloved Son according to the body, and to His likeness according to the spirit." See Esser, "Marienfrömmigkeit" (cited in n. 3 above), p. 178; Ant. Sérent, "Sex elementa spiritualitatis franciscanae," Tertius Ordo 15 (1954): 162.

³⁹ For the parallelism between 'servant' and 'servant of God' in Scripture, see Peter Morant, O.F.M.Cap., Das Psalmengebet (Schwyz, 1947), pp. 119–20.

⁴⁰ For the word *consecrare* see n. 21 above.

⁴¹ See *EpOrd* 21. St. Peter Damian speaks similarly and in a praiseworthy manner about the relation between the Eucharist and the Incarnation: "Now, my very dear brothers, I ask you now to weigh carefully what great debtors we are to this most blessed mother of God, and what great thanks we ought to give to her after God for our redemption. Indeed that Body of Christ, which the most blessed virgin bore, which she held in her lap, and wrapped in swaddling cloths, and nourished with motherly care — that Body, I say, and no other — we now receive without any doubt from the holy altar, and we drink His Blood in the sacrament of our redemption" ("Serm. 45 in Nativitate Beatae Mariae Virginis, 2" *PL* 144, 743ab).

ously containing Him. He is again discerned by spiritual eyes or those of faith: "In this way our Lord remains continually with His followers." And so in the mind of St. Francis the special importance of the mother of God in our economy of salvation is this: that transcending all else, she is the humble instrument in making God visible. 43

If thus far we wish to understand the words of St. Francis in the light of their theological value, we should be very careful not to judge them from the evolved state of modern Mariology; otherwise we would arrive at altogether excessive and false conclusions. The merit of Francis's Mariological teaching must be weighed rather in the context of the Marian teaching of his age. Since we have especially the Marian sermons of St. Peter Damian, the writings of St. Francis must be said to reflect in a popular yet dogmatically correct way the contemporaneous Marian teaching of that time. 44 What has to be admired all the more is the fact that he altogether lacked proper scientific instruction. It seems that we have to recognize that he received the direction and the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, we must remember that he always and with the greatest zeal associated Mary with her Son. The basis and the acme of his Marian teaching is his faith in the true incarnation of the Word in the womb of the virgin. Since Mary is the mother of God, she is our advocate at the throne of Christ our Advocate. Since she is the parent of the heavenly king, she must be celebrated as queen. Since she is connected to the incarnate Word by blood, she must be intimately referred to the two other Persons of the Blessed Trinity and to the sacrament of the Eucharist. 45

St. Francis's Devotion To Mary

From what has been said and explained so far about St. Francis's teaching concerning Mary, it is now right to deduce that he had an extraordinary devotion toward the mother of God. His first biographers unanimously refer Francis's burning ardor toward the most blessed virgin: "Toward the mother of Jesus he was filled with an inexpressible love, because it was she who made the Lord of majesty our brother. He

⁴² Ibid., v. 22.

⁴³ See Esser, "Marienfrömmigkeit" (cited in n. 3 above), p. 184.

⁴⁴ See G.M.Roschini, *Mariologia*, vol. 1, *Introductio* (Milan, 1941), pp. 280–318.

⁴⁵ Esser (in "Marienfrömmigkeit," pp. 177–84, cited in n. 3 above), sets this aspect forth very well. We purposely omit at this time St. Peter Damian's sermon on the mystery of the Assumption, both because few of St. Francis's contemporaries speak clearly about this matter (see *Tertius Ordo* 15 [1954]: 136, n. 22), and we may presume that he did not know about this truth of the anticipated glorification of Mary's body. Nevertheless, the feast of the Assumption occupied a special place in his devotion, and he used to fast for forty days in order to celebrate it worthily (see *LMaior* IX 3). This exercise of piety is probably explained by the special dignity of this feast in the liturgy.

sang special praises to her, poured out prayers to her, offered her his affections — so many and so great that the tongue of man can not recite them."

Let us consider first how St. Francis manifested his devotion to Mary by his deeds. We do not think that there is any reader who would be ignorant of how dear to the heart of our father was the little church of the Portiuncula. St. Bonaventure tells us that in this place by the merits and intercession of the Blessed Virgin "he was found worthy to be taught the way to perfection, by the spirit of the Gospel truth, which was infused into him from above." And there, as Brother Bernard of Besse testifies: "He began the Order of Friars Minor and assumed the habit under the patronage of Mary."48 There too, Clare Favorone, a noble maiden of Assisi, put on the habit of humility and laid the foundation of the Second Order: "And so she ran to Saint Mary of the Portiuncula.... There the brothers ... received the virgin Clare with torches."49 Moreover, Francis established this place as the head and mother-church of the whole order, in which the first sons of St. Francis, tirelessly imitating the virtue of Mary, lived a life of the most rigid regular observance and of most exalted poverty.⁵⁰ It is said that it was there that Francis sought a day of great pardon.⁵¹ It was there that the dispersed Friars, burning with love and filled with joy, convened for a General Chapter, and from there they again left for widely spaced places in order to gain souls for Christ. 52 And there, finally, on a Saturday - a day particularly dedicated to honoring Mary - he gave back his holy soul to God.53 Therefore, we rightly conclude that the whole life of our holy father is contained within the confines of this Marian sanctuary.

We should now turn our attention to Francis's eagerness to renovate churches dedicated to Mary. First of all, the restoration of the chapel of St. Mary of the Angels comes to mind. St. Bonaventure says that this church, which was constructed in ancient times, was in a very ruined condition in the time of St. Francis. In fact, it was almost destroyed,

⁴⁶ 2Cel 198.

⁴⁷LMaior II 1.

⁴⁸ "Legenda vel Vita S. Francisci," *AF* 3 (1897): 687.

⁴⁹ SLegCl 8.

⁵⁰ See 2Cel 18.

⁵¹See Amédée Teetaert, *Dict. Théol. Cath.*, s.v. "Portioncule." He considers the evidence up to this time and shows in what mist the question is still shrouded. See also Raphael Huber, *The Portiuncula Indulgence from Honorius III to Pius XI*, New York, 1938, pp. 1–100.

⁵² See Earlier Rule XVIII.

⁵³ 1Cel 105.

because it was being cared for by no one, not even by its owners, the Benedictine Fathers of Monte Subasio. Bonaventure says: "When the man of God saw it (St. Mary of the Angels) so abandoned, he began to stay there continuously in order to repair it, because of the fervent devotion he had for the mistress of the world." This work of restoring the sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin fills us with great admiration. For reared by his parents in gentle ways, he certainly was not accustomed to manual labor. Besides, he was of small stature and slender body. Yet he carried stones on his weak shoulders and mixed mortar with delicate hands. By work such as this he truly confirmed the sincerity of his love for "the head of all the saints."

In an inscription behind the main altar of the Church of St. Mary Major [in Assisi] we read: "St. Francis had this tribune built in the year 1216." Writers of the eighteenth century, and many writers of later times, thought that this stone should be interpreted literally. The restoration of this huge apse, however, would have far exceeded both Francis's strength and his skill. This inscription, affixed to the interior part of the apse together with a picture of the Blessed Virgin and St. Francis and placed extrinsically on an ornament of stone after the renovation itself, is to be read thus: "MCCXVI, in the fourth indiction and tenth year (of Francis's conversion), at the time of Bishop Guido and Brother Francis." Its objective sense hardly admits of a causal connection of the saint with the restoration itself. He probably gave neither an active impulse to the beginning of the work nor personally worked to complete it. By these letters carved in the fourteenth century, the citizens of Assisi intended to indicate that the renovation of the tribune took place and was finished at a time when Francis had auspiciously begun the spiritual reformation of the city.58

Luke Wadding, moreover, reports that at Cesi, a town between Sangremini and Acquasparta, St. Francis had constructed "a little church in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which was similar in all things to St. Mary of the Angels." At the same time he had a wonderful antependium painted.⁵⁹ Although the primitive sources are silent about

⁵⁴ LMaior II 8.

⁵⁵ 1Cel 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid., no. 29.

⁵⁷ 2Cel 18.

⁵⁸ See Leone Bracaloni, O.F.M., "S. Francesco architetto secondo Paolo Sabatier," CF 5 (1935): 365–66; Michael Faloci-Pulignani, O.F.M., "Il più antico documento per la storia di S. Francesco," MisFran 2 (1887): 35–36. As Bracaloni demonstrates, St. Francis did not construct a canopy above the altar. That idea arose from a false interpretation of L.Lipsius (see Compendiosa historia vitae S.P.Francisci (Assisi, 1756), p. 19), who thought that the word tribuna meant 'canopy' (ciborium) instead of 'apse'.

⁵⁹Wadding, Annales Minorum, at year 1213, pp. 173-74. As far as this passage is

this, and things reported by this celebrated annalist should generally be handled with great caution, it seems that in this case he should be believed. He is supported by Father Mariano, who affirms that this antependium had been preserved up to his time. 60

The construction of the Church of St. Mary of the Angels at La Verna is attributed to St. Francis with lesser right by writers of a more recent time. There is no proof, not even an implicit argument, which has been found.61

Now another way has to be considered, by which the Seraphic Father unfolds his devotion toward his heavenly mother, and which is reported by Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure. The latter writes: "After Christ, he put all his trust in her as patroness for himself and his friars."62 One will perhaps inquire what our holy father meant by this word 'patroness' (advocata). First of all, it must be remembered that St. Francis was not the first nor the only one to make such a selection. Helimand of Froidmont (d. 1212) testifies that the Cistercians had already chosen the Blessed Virgin as the advocate for their order. 63 The word 'advocate' is applied to the mother of God certainly by the writers of the eleventh century. For example, it was used by Adhemar of Puy,64 who according some authors65 must be considered the author of that well known antiphon Salve Regina, in which we say: Eia ergo advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte ("Come, O you our advocate, and turn your eyes of mercy toward us").

We believe that the word advocata was subject to the mind of the writers of the Middle Age, and that it had a twofold meaning for St. Francis. The first meaning is derived from the biblical manner of speaking and from court practice. In the first epistle of John 2: 1 we read: "My dear children, these things I write to you in order that you may not sin. But if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, who is Jesus Christ the just." This manner of expressing oneself is

concerned, the annalist is supported by Mariano of Florence (see Willibrord Lampen, O.F.M., "S.Franciscus Cultor Trinitatis" AFH 21 [1928]: 456).

⁶⁰ Lampen, "S.Franciscus cultor Trinitatis," p. 456; Bracaloni, "S.Francesco architetto," p. 363; Nicola Cavanna, O.F.M., L'Umbria francescana (Perugia, 1910), pp. 275–76.

61 See R. Brown, Our Lady and St. Francis, pp. 57–58.

⁶³ See Helimand of Froidmont, "Sermo 2 in natali Domini 1," PL 212, 495d; Lampen, "De S.P.Francisci cultu" (cited in n. 3 above), pp. 15-16.

⁶⁴ For Adhemar see Lampen (cited in n. 3 above) p. 15, n. 3. See also Adam Perseniae, O.Cist. (d. 1221), "Fragmenta mariana," PL 211, 744; St. Bernard, "Sermo in Nativitate Beatae Mariae Virginis de Aquaeductu 7," no. 7, PL 183, 441c; St. Bonaventure, "Sermo 4 de Annuntiatione," Opera omnia IX, p. 672; Ubertino of Casale, Arbor vite crucifixe, bk. 4, chap. 15 (Venice, 1485).

⁶⁵ H.Leclercq, "Salve Regina," Dict. Archéol. Chrét. Liturg., s.v. "Salve Regina."

exactly the same as was practised in judicial investigations of this time. A man who was brought to court tried as quickly as possible to hire a defender for himself, who would persuade the judge in eloquent words to free him without punishment. In like manner, Jesus Christ intercedes continuously before our heavenly Father for us who who are guilty of many sins. The Blessed Virgin, as well, as a mediatrix, humbly asks that the sins committed by us and the resultant contracted punishment be remitted or lessened. Such an interpretation corresponds fittingly with the cited section of the Salve Regina. Unless I am mistaken, the same sense underlies the words of St. Bonaventure, by which he reports that before Francis's full conversion in the Church of St. Mary of the Angels, he urged her with continual sighs to deign to become his advocate.

The second meaning of the word 'advocate' seems to us to depend rather on a usage of the Middle Ages. A man was sometimes considered an 'advocate' who as a patron brought cases of a monastery before a civil court, and defended the religious from force and injuries. But these advocates frequently injured the rights of their clients rather than defend them. For this reason the Cistercians deliberately refrained from selecting them, and in place of these advocates they solemnly chose the most Blesed Virgin Mary as the advocate for their order. For St. Francis, who had entirely and voluntarily renounced all worldly goods, the protection of a heavenly advocate, as Kajetan Esser well notes, could have only a spiritual sense, in as much as he implored her for divine help against the manifold dangers to body and soul.

Besides, the word 'advocate' was sometimes meant a person who as a guardian administered and took care of the affairs of an orphan. In documents pertaining to this subject there is express mention of women also who performed this function and were designated as advocates. The most holy mother of God is according to this understanding of the word that most beneficent mother of us all, who with her most firm assistance protects from dangers of body and soul us orphans who have been besieged on all sides. This doubtlessly agrees with the words

⁶⁶ See S.Many, *Dict. Bibl.*, s.v. "Avocat." See also parallel passages in Heb. 7: 25; Rom. 8: 34. See also St. Peter Damian, "Sermo de Resurrectione Domini," *PL* 144, 563b.

⁶⁷See LMaior III 1.

⁶⁸ Lampen, "De S.P.Francisci cultu" (cited in no. 3 above), p. 15; Esser, in "Marienfrömmigkeit" (see n. 3 above), p. 187, n. 68, offers the authority of F.Heer (Aufgang Europas [Vienna and Zurich], 1949, pp. 113ff), who asserts that by the phrase "our advocate" the people of the twelfth century understood the firm protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

⁶⁹ Esser, "Marienfrömmigkeit," p. 187, n. 68.

Nee Du Cange-Carpentarius, Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis, s.vv. "Advocatus" and "Advocata."

of Celano: "But what delights us most, he made her the advocate of the order and placed under her wings the sons he was about to leave, that she might cherish and protect them to the end."

Perhaps each meaning becomes one, since in these days we are accustomed to consecrate ourselves and our order to Mary as our bountiful patroness. We most willingly repeat the prayer of this same biographer, which he immediately adds to the preceding passage: "Hail, O advocate of the poor! Fulfill for us your office of protectress until the time set by the Father."

Not by deeds alone but also by fervent words Francis expressed the tribute of his love for his heavenly mother. Thomas of Celano tells us about this. He tells about a pleasant scene during the night when Bernard of Quintavalle was watching St. Francis in his bedroom. The biographer says: "He [Brother Bernard] noticed that Francis would pray all night, sleeping but rarely, praising God and and the glorious virgin mother of God." And in another place: "He sang special praises to her and poured out prayers to her."

In fact, there are two Marian prayers in the writings of Francis, which are still extant today, namely, the Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Marian Antiphon of his Office of the Passion. ⁷⁵ For

The second secon

⁷² Ibid., no.198.

^{73 1}Cel 24.

^{74 2}Cel 198.

⁷⁵ SalBVM 15; OffPass, Antiphon at all the Hours. Even though the Angelic Salutation was not yet in widespread use during the thirteenth century, nevertheless it is sufficiently probable that it has to be numbered under those special praises mentioned above. In the time of St. Francis it had not yet evolved into the prayer we have today; but according to the testimony of Conrad of Saxony, it was recited in this way: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Speculum Beatae Maria Virginis, p. 7). The same author adds the following (p. 8): "This name 'Mary' was not introduced by Gabriel, but by the devotion of the faithful, inspired by the Holy Spirit." I think that an indication that Francis knew this Marian phrase or used it is to be found in the fact that the Salutation of the Blessed

the sake of brevity I will refrain now from speaking about their theological and historical implications, and will limit our discussion to a few points.

As far as the first prayer is concerned, a critical problem arises whether in its original form it was one entity with the Salutation of the Virtues. Since in eight of ten codices it immediately follows the praises of the virtues, and since internal criteria do not altogether hinder this opinion, I hold the theory of the original unity of the two. 76 Thus the virtues appear clothed with human likeness, because not only the poetic genius of St. Francis unfolds but there is also revealed the influence of the age of chivalry. A knight was accustomed to offer a homage of love not only to his spouse, but to any noble lady. For her he would undertake the most dangerous combats and did not shrink from even the most painful sufferings. In the knightly Marian song of St. Francis, the lady and queen would be Mary herself. The virtue of poverty was his spouse, to whom he was joined in chaste wedlock. The other virtues would be the close associates of the lady, that is, the virtues of the Blessed Virgin, which St. Francis continually strove to imitate.77

With such a remarkable canticle St. Francis substitutes the praise of chaste love sung to the Blessed Virgin for those secular praises of the troubadours and jesters, which often degenerated into unchaste songs of love. Celano, moreover, suggests that the numbers of songs composed by our holy father was very great. ⁷⁸ He exercised such an excellent and favorable influence that Marian troubadours were accepted among his sons, especially Jacoponi da Todi. ⁷⁹

As far as the Marian Antiphon is concerned, it should be known that in the Office compiled by St. Francis it holds the place of the capitulum, the hymn, the versicle, and the oration. 80 As can be seen at first sight, that poetic exaltation which marks the Salutation is absent in this prayer. It has evolved much more in the objective forms reminiscent of the nature of nature of liturgy. In fact, in the edition of the Little Office,

⁸⁰See the Antiphon at Compline, v. 3.

Virgin Mary begins: "Hail, O Lady"; and that in the Marian Antiphon (OffPass Antiphon at Compline: "Among all women ... there is none like you," could be an allusion to "blessed are you among women." See H.Leclercq, in Dict. Arch. Lit. X, col. 2043; Jean de Dieu (see n. 32 above), 797–98; Esser, "Marienfrömmigkeit" (see n. 3 above), p. 189.

⁷⁶ See also Boehmer, Analekton zur Geschichte (cited in n. 27 above) pp. 6, 28, 48; Cuthbert of Brighton, Vie de saint François, append. 3: "Les sources de notre connaissance de saint François" (Paris, 1925), p. 572. The appendices are unfortunately missing in the German version.

⁷⁷ See Benoît, *Le Chevalier*, (cited in n. 3 above), pp. 23–24.

⁷⁸ See *2Cel* 198.

⁷⁹ See Hilarin Felder, Der Christusritter aus Assisi (Paderborn, 1940), p. 159.

which was usually recited in the hermitage of Fonte Avellana near Gubbio, where St. Peter Damian had been superior for a time, we find by chance an antiphon for the *Magnificat*, which coincides in part with that of St. Francis. In this *Office* the following resounds: "O virgin Mary, there has not been born into the world among women one like you, blooming like a rose, etc. Pray to your Son for us." In the *Salutation*, however, we read the following: "Holy virgin Mary, among all the women of the world there is none like you.... Pray for us to your most holy beloved Son." With this Antiphon St. Francis wished to give his *Office* a Marian quality, even though he dedicated it to meditation on the passion of Christ.

We must keep in mind the solemn hymn of praise and thanksgiving of the Earlier Rule, by which St. Francis asks Mary as leader of the church-triumphant to give worthy thanks in our name to the most blessed Trinity for all God's immense benefits, such as the creation of man, the birth of the Word of God by the glorious, ever-virgin," His bloody death to redeem us, and His Second Coming "in the glory of His majesty" to condemn the evil and give happiness to the good. To he says: "We humbly beg the glorious mother, most blessed Mary ever-virgin ... to give You thanks ... the supreme and true God, eternal and living with Your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, world without end. Amen."

After making a comparison between this antiphon and the text of the Little Office, which was in use at the hermitage of Fonte Avellana, we go on to examine the Marian devotion of our Seraphic Father in the regular Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the introduction to the Office of the Passion we read: "He (Francis) would first say the

⁸¹ PL 151, 972c.

⁸² OffPass, Antiphon at Compline, v. 3.

⁸³ RegNB XXIII 34. See Esser, Marienfrömmigkeit (cited in n. 3 above), p. 187.

⁸⁴ Verse 6. Esser (in "Marienfrömmigkeit," p. 189, n. 88) refers to some verses of Henri d'Avranches, a secular cleric who died in 1272. In "Legenda versificata Sancti Francisci" (VII 9-15, in AF 10 [1926-41]: 449), he expressed that the Seraphic Father taught his sons to reflect on the "joys of our mother." It is indeed true that the poet gave this metrical life in 1232 or 1234 to Gregory IX, but the editors of the Analecta Franciscana exhibit distrust of this in these words: "The testimony of Henry does not lack a certain general worth, but it is wanting as far as St. Francis is concerned" (p. 449, n. 4). And in the preface (p. 52): "In the meantime he also adorned the deeds of his hero-saint with some suitable embellishments which, however, do not merit historical trust. They are manifestly poetic ornaments, freely and ingeniously invented." Since new arguments are not found favoring its genuineness, its seems that we have to abide by the judgment of the editors. This is all the more confirmed by the fact that in a codex containing very many of his poems, two poems are found: one treating five joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the other treating seven joys. See Michael Bihl, O.F.M., "De 'Legenda Versificata' S. Francisci, auctore Henrico Abrincensi," in AFH 22 (1929): 47.

Psalms of the holy Mary. In addition he would say other Psalms as he chose, and at the end of all the Psalms he used to say the Psalms of the passion."85 In fact, to render this entirely certain, the following words preface his Praises To Be Said at All the Hours: "Our most holy Father, here begin the praises which our most blessed father Francis arranged and recited at every Hour of the day and night and before the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary."86 Whether or not Francis recited this Office in honor of the mother of God every day is not made clear by any document. We think, however, that this is not at all improbable, especially since already in the year 1095 in a synod held at Clermont, Urban II had already imposed even on all the lay faithful the pious recitation of the Marian Office on each Saturday for the purpose of seeking God's help for the Crusaders.87 It is apparent to all how fervently our Seraphic Father burned with the desire to liberate the holy places from the power of the Saracens. 88 For the recitation of this Marian Office no fixed common form existed at this time. Therefore, the question arises as to what kind of formula Francis used. Since we know that in the second Marian oration the saint depended on the Antiphon used in the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin by the monks at Fonte Avellana, 89 and since we know that in other words referring to the mother of God he borrowed many things from St. Peter Damian, hardly any doubt is left that Francis observed that formula for himself.90

If at this time we wish to compress in one word, as it were, the power and importance which the Marian devotion of St. Francis had in systematic religion, it is evident from what we have said and proved up to this point that it tended toward effecting an easier and more fruitful

⁸⁵ See Lampen, "De S.P.Francisci cultu" (cited in n. 3 above) pp. 16–17.

⁸⁶ See the Antiphon at Compline, v. 3.

⁸⁷ See C.J.Hefele, Conziliengeschichte V, vol. 2 (Freiburg, 1886), p. 232. It seems that in 1185 in the Synod of Split (Dalmatia), the duty of singing the Marian Office was imposed on those who were obliged to the Office in choir (see Hefele, Conziliengeschichte, p. 729). St. Peter Damian gives sufficiently clear evidence that the practice of reciting this Office became common among the secular clergy of Italy toward the middle of the eleventh century. But this, as seems to follow from Peter's writings, was proposed only by way of counsel, although he frequently urged that this be done. See Blum, St. Peter Damian (cited in n. 12 above) pp. 158–59.

⁸⁸ See Hilarin Felder, Die Ideale des hl. Franziskus, pp. 309–10, 313–14.

⁸⁹ See the Antiphon at Compline, v. 3.

⁹⁰ See Lampen, "De S.P.Francisci cultu" (see n. 3 above), pp. 13–14; J.Cambell, O.F.M., "Les écrits de Saint François d'Assise devant la critique," in *Franziskanische Studien* 36 (1954): 225, who emphasizes that the origin of the *Salutation's* many Marian attributes, on which rest Lampen's suppositions for repeating Francis's dependence on Peter Damian, come from the liturgy. However, this is not proved, at least for the phrase "His robe" (*SalBVM* 5.

assent of the soul toward God through the advocacy of Mary to Christ the advocate, and through Christ to the Father.⁹¹

The Marian Practice of Our Holy Father

Certainly under this title we can include the burning zeal which possessed St. Francis to conform his life to the virtues of the most Blessed Virgin. The form or type of his devotion to the mother of God represents in particular the mind of those who lived in the Middle Ages. This is not because no indications could be found for it in Christian antiquity. In fact, St. Ambrose (d. 397) often appeals to the admirable example of Mary in his works on virginity.92 But at that time of anti-Arianism, when the fathers were being forced continually to defend the divinity of Christ, faithful Christians were giving their attention particularly to the heavenly mistress and queen depicted in the apses of the hieratic-Byzantine basilicas, and less attention to her exemplary earthly life. 93 Unless I am mistaken, Paschasius Radbertus, O.S.B. (d. ca. 865) is the first who in his sermons designedly and earnestly called upon the nuns to imitate the virtues of the Blessed Virgin.94 During the following centuries the number and fervor of writers increased more and more, who followed the same reasoning and conducted themselves similiarly. The principal reason for this must be assigned perhaps to the expeditions of the Crusaders to the Holy Land

⁹² See "Lib. de instit. virg.," chaps. 5 and 14, nos. 34 and 87, PL 16, 328 and 340d; "Exhortat. virginit.," chap. 10, n. 71, PL 16, 373a. See M.Viller and K.Rahner, Aszese und Mystik in der Väterzeit (Freiburg, 1939), pp. 305–6, 54, n. 38.

⁹¹ To illustrate better the Marian devotion of St. Francis, we can mention the case of his formula for the Confiteor. In the time of St. Francis there was no fixed formula. In the beginning when it was first introduced into the liturgy, the phrase "all the saints" was used. However, under the influence of the extraordinary Marian devotion of St. Bernard, the practice of always inserting the name of Mary was sanctioned for the Cistercian Order in 1184. As the Middle Ages progressed, the names of more saints were inserted into this catalogue (see J.A.Jungmann, S.J., Missarum solemnia, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1948), pp. 373–75). It is hardly improbable that for private confession before a chapter St. Francis used for himself that formula which had come into use in the order under the influence of public cult (see EpOrd 38). This chapter was not necesarily a General Chapter, as many authors think (see Esser and Hardick [cited in n. 27 above], p. 11). This form of confession was as follows: "I confess to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, and to blessed Mary ever virgin and to all the saints." Therefore, because of his most tender devotion to his heavenly mother, St. Francis wished to explicitly mention her cherished name in every confession.

⁹³ See M.Vloberg, "Les types iconographiques de la Vierge dans l'art occidental," in Maria: Études sur la Sainte Vierge, vol. 2, pp. 493-98. To illustrate this the triumphal arch 'Theotokos' of the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome may especially be offered. See also H.Rahner, S.J., "Die Marienkunde in der latein: Patristik," in P.Sträter, Kath. Marienkunde: Maria in der Offenbarung, vol. 1 (Paderborn, 1947), p. 178.

 $^{^{94}}$ "May Mary's delineated virginity be your (the nuns) image, may her humility be your example, and may all her virtues be your beauty. When you strive to imitate her, it is then that you truly love her." See "Expositio in Ps. 44," bk. 3, PL 120, 1055a.

in order to free it from the hands of the Saracens. These expeditions of the Crusaders renewed interest in the life Jesus lived on earth. ⁹⁵ One could look at, for instance, the sermons of St. Peter Damian, O.S.B., ⁹⁶ or the *Libellus Coronae Virginis*, written in the twelfth century and falsely attributed to St. Ildephonse (d. 669), ⁹⁷ or the Marian homilies of Bishp Amadeus of Lausanne, O.Cist. (d. 1150), ⁹⁸ or the sermons especially of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, O.Cist. (d. 1153), preached on the feasts of the mother of God, ⁹⁹ or those of Abbot Adam of Perseigne (d. 1221). ¹⁰⁰

We think that our holy father should be considered part of this movement of admiring and at the same time of conforming oneself to the example of the Blesed Virgin Mary. Two codices of the canticle which is called the Salutation of the Virtues are inscribed with these words: "On the virtues with which the holy virgin was adorned, and with which the holy soul should live." The canticle or Salutation begins: "Hail, Queen Wisdom, may the Lord protect you with your sister, holy pure Simplicity. Lady, holy Poverty, may the Lord protect you with your sister, holy Humility. Lady, holy Charity, may the Lord protect you with your sister, holy Obedience. O most holy virtues, may the Lord protect all of you, from Whom you come and proceed." 102

As far as the imitation of the Marian virtues is concerned, Francis honors poverty especially and explicitly. Although he may not be the first or only one who directed his attention to this side of Mary's life,

⁹⁵ See J.Lortz, Geschichte der Kirche (Münster, 1953/18), p. 158; G.Schnürer, Kirche und Kultur im Mittelalter, vol. 2 (Paderborn, 1926), pp. 516–17.

⁹⁶ "Sermo 1 in Epiphaniam Domini," *PL* 144, 508c. Since we know that St. Francis depended on him in many things, this testimony has great value: "Such is our star, brothers, such is the virgin Mary, such is the star of the sea; and because she left us an example, that we may follow in her footsteps (1 Peter 2: 21), such a one should also be our life." See also col. 511a).

⁹⁷ See *PL* 96, 285a, and G.Bareille, in *Dict. Theol. Cath.*, s.v. "Ildéfonse." See e.g. "Hail, throne of majesty. Hail, flower of humility and lily of purity, temple and sanctuary of total divinity, of inviolate love" (see also col. 310c). The whole work is pervaded with a sense of tenderness.

sense of tenderness.

98 See "Homilia 5 de mentis robore seu martyrio beatissimae Virginis," PL 188, 1330–31.

99 See Auniord. "Citeaux et Notre-Dame" (cited in n. 16 above), pp. 610–12.

¹⁰⁰ See "Sermo 5 in Assumptione Beatae Mariae," PL 211, 739–40, 744a; "Fragmenta mariana," PL 211, 750–51.

¹⁰¹ See Boehmer, Analekton zur Geschichte, p. 58, no. 12. For other arguments, which seem to suggest an original unity, we refer the reader to note 76 above. See also SalVirt 48. However, we do not deny that there are difficulties concerning internal criteria, which proceed from the fact that nowhere in this Salutation is there explicit mention of a connection between Mary and these virtues. The reasons that J.Cambell adduces to the contrary hardly seem convincing.

¹⁰² SalVirt 14. Benoît, in Le Chevalier, p. 73, likens this canticle to Lanval, the work of Marie de France.

nevertheless hardly any writer of a previous age is found who so often and so fervently brings it to light. 103

Such a consideration moves our holy father first of all to the mystery of the Incarnation. After he solemnly proclaimed the truth of the Word made Flesh in his Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful, he immediately continues: "[Christ] was rich beyond all other things in this world He, together with the most Blessed Virgin, His mother, willed to choose poverty."104 Celano confirms the same: "He would recall, not without tears, what great want surrounded the poor virgin on that day (the nativity of Christ). Once when he was sitting at dinner, a certain brother talked about the poverty of the Blessed Virgin, and recalled the want of Christ, her Son. Francis immediately arose from the table and, with great sighs and many tears, ate the rest of the meal on the bare ground."105 Here Francis shows how he consciously tried to transfer the poor life of Mary to his own and his friars' way of living. The same thing appears in the Earlier Rule when he decrees: "And when it may benecessary, let them go for alms. And they should not be ashamed, but rather recall that our Lord Jesus Christ ... was not ashamed. He was a poor man and a transient and lived on alms - He and the Blessed Virgin, and His disciples."106. Francis once sharply

¹⁰³ We read these words of Leander of Seville, which are of great importance: "What about you who have a Rule which you follow? Look at the virginity and the poverty of Mary. She was so precious in the Lord that she merited to be the mother of God. She was so poor in things that she had the consolation of neither midwife nor handmaid at the time she gave birth. Her resting place was so small that she used a stable for a cradle" ("Regula sive Liber de instit. virg. et contemptu mundi," chap. 14, PL 72, 888c). As far as others are concerned, see Honorius of Autun (first half of the twelfth century), "Sigillum Beatae Mariae," PL 172, 500d. St. Peter Damian says: "She (Mary) abounded in a lack of temporal things." Later he commemorates the stable. See "Sermo 12 in Nativitate Beatae Mariae Virginis," 2, PL 144, 747d; St. Bernard, "Sermo IV in nat. Domini," PL 183, 123b. In St. Bonaventure: The Works of Bonaventure, vol. 4, Defense of the Mendicants, trans. from the Latin by Jose de Vinck (Paterson: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1966), p. 253, the theme becomes explicit: "But thou, O most worthy queen of the world, defender of the poor and the advocate of the humble..., be aroused by the cries of Francis so that thou mayest appeal to the King in order that, through thy sacred examples and merits, He may glorify and support the state of the mendicants, which He desired to conform to thine own and unite with thee with special closeness. What, indeed, gives more fuel to the love of poverty, what more clearly declares its prerogatives and glory than thy manner of life, O most Blessed Virgin and mother of our Lord Jesus Christ." See also Conrad of Saxony: "The poor shepherds found the poor mother and the poor Infant in a poor place, not in an extravagant cradle, but in a poor manger" (Speculum Beatae Mariae Virginis, pp. 52–3). ¹⁰⁴ 2EpFid 5.

 $^{^{105}}$ 2Cel 200. See also parallel passages in St. Bonaventure (LMaior VII), and James of Voragine ("Vita Sancti Francisci)," in AF 10 (1926-41): 690.

 $^{^{106}}$ RegNB IX 35. In the beginning St. Francis took pity on the embarrassment of his sons who sometimes came from noble families, and went seeking alms alone. Later he exhorted them to follow his example (see 2Cel 7577

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rebuked a friar who had dared to cast suspicion on the good intention of a man who was begging. Francis said to the friar: "When you see a poor man, brother, an image is place before you of the Lord and His poor mother." "Whatever he saw in anyone of want, whatever of penury, he transferred in his mind, by a quick change, to Christ. Thus in all the poor he saw the Son of the poor Lady, and he bore naked in his heart Him Whom she bore naked in her hands." Besides, in the mind of St. Francis, people who are surrounded by want and beggary have the extraordinary and continual duty of showingo forth the poverty of our Lord and His mother to the eyes of mankind — a duty that pervades and enlightens every place and time.

How seriously Francis continually strove to express his reason for living the indigent life of Jesus and Mary is illustrated by the following event. He Peter of Catania, Francis's vicar, seeing that St. Mary of the Portiuncula was visited by a great number of brothers from afar, and that there was not sufficient alms to provide for their needs, said to St. Francis: "May it please you, I beg of you, that some of the goods of the novices who are entering be kept aside so that we might have recourse to them at the opportune time." The saint answered: "Away with kindness of this kind, dearest brother, which would act wrongly against the *Rule* for anyone's sake." He was an expression of the saint anyone's sake." He was an expression of the saint anyone's sake." He was an expression of the saint anyone's sake." He was an expression of the saint anyone's sake." He was an expression of the saint anyone was a saint anyone where the saint anyone was a saint

The former said: "What shall I do?" Francis said: "Strip the altar of the Blessed Virgin and take away its many ornaments, since you cannot otherwise come to the help of the needy. Believe me, she would be more pleased to have the Gospel of her Son kept¹¹² and her altar stripped than that the altar should be ornamented and her Son be despised. The Lord will send someone who will give back to our mother the ornaments she has lent to us." Therefore, in the eyes of St. Francis the Marian cult would lack a mark to confirm it and a crown to perfect it, if he did not use it to conform his life to the virtues of the mother of God. Therefore, for him the affective desire of admiring has little worth without the effective experience of imitating the Blessed Virgin Mary. Now we do not wonder that "he used to say that this virtue that shone forth so eminently in the king and queen was a royal virtue." And

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. v. 85.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. v. 83.

¹⁰⁹ See Esser, "Marienfrömmigkeit," p. 186.

¹¹⁰See 2Cel 67.

¹¹¹ RegNB II; RegB II.

¹¹² It should be recalled to mind that Francis heard the call from God to a life of evangelical perfection in the Church of the Portiuncula through the words of Matt. 10: 1–42. In Francis's mind, therefore, evangelical poverty is somehow the compendium of the entire Gospel. See *ICel* 2223.

toward the end of his life he made known his spiritual testament to St. Clare: "I, Brother Francis, the little one, wish to follow the life and poverty of our most high Lord Jesus Christ, and of His most holy mother, and to persevere in this until the end." 114

As we see in the Salutation of the Virtues, Francis reminds us of Mary's virtue of humility together with her poverty. 115 Otherwise we find no explicit place concerning this. Nevertheless, in the Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary he calls Mary the 'servant' of Christ. 116 This word is used in an antonomastic way by the preachers of that time to express Mary's humility, just as it was demonstrated before the angel in the Annunciation. St. Peter Damian, St. Francis's fervent precursor in Marian devotion, says the following in a homily given on the feast of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin: "To what great perfection had Mary seen herself lifted above all humanity, when she heard that she was made the mother of her Creator? But with what great depth of humility did she, who merited to rise before God to such a sublime dignity, prostrate herself before Him. For she said: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word'(Luke 1: 38). By the angel she was called the mother of God, but she acknowledged that she was the handmaid of the Lord."117 Since St. Francis, together with the universal church, piously celebrated the feast of the Annunciation every year, 118 and since in his Letter to the Faithful he makes special mention of this mystery, 119 we can very likely conclude that he intensely admired the humility of the most blessed Virgin and untiringly imitated it. 120 It remains for us to show how according to the mind of our

^{113 2}Cel 200.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 76. St. Clare most faithfully followed the last will of her Seraphic Father. See Lothar Hardick, O.F.M., "Erläuterungen," in E. Grau, Leben und Schriften der hl. Klara, pp. 160–61.

pp. 160-61.

115 Verse 2: "Lady, holy Poverty, may the Lord protect you, with your sister, holy Humility." This internal union between poverty and humility often occurs in the writings of St. Francis. See the Earlier and the Later Rule. See also Lorenzo Casutt, O.F.M.Cap., L'eredità di San Francesco: Riesame della sua spiritualità, trans. A.Fongoli (Rome, 1952), p. 51.

¹¹⁶ Verse 6.

¹¹⁷ "Sermo 46," PL 144, 759–60. See also Pseudo-Anselm, "Homilia 9 in Evangelium secundum Lucam," PL 158, 645–46. See especially St. Bernard in his sermons on the Annunciation. See also Auniord (cited in n. 16 above), pp. 610–11.

¹¹⁸See Tertius Ordo 15 (1954): 136, n. 19.

See 2EpFid 4

¹²⁰ Of the disciples of St. Francis it may be enough to mention Conrad of Saxony, who in explaining Luke 1: 28ff says the following: "See first, my most dear one, that Mary in herself was boundless in her humility.... Mary is assumed into being the mother of God. Mary is now placed before all creatures. Mary is now made the queen of heaven and earth..., but in all this she depreciates herself with remarkable humility as she says: 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord'" (Speculum B.M.V., p. 45).

holy father the entire life of a Christian can assume a Marian aspect. In his Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful he goes on to say, after he speaks about the practice of various virtues: "Upon all men and women, if they have done these things and have persevered to the end, the Spirit of the Lord will rest (Isaiah 11: 2) and He will make His home and dwelling among them. They will be children of the heavenly Father, Whose works they do (Matt. 5: 50). And they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers when we do the will of His Father Who is in heaven (Matt. 12: 50). We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience. We give birth to Him through His holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example." There is no one who does not see that these words from the inmost heart of St. Francis show forth the depth of his mystical life.

The first thing that attracts our attention is this quotation: "We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit." In the writings of the holy fathers and of the writers of the Middle Ages the espousal figure of the Blessed Virgin is often expressed, although it does not always refer to the same Person. Among the Orientals she is called the "spouse of God," the "spouse of the most holy Trinity," the "spouse of the hypostatic Union." 122

"De S.P.Francisci cultu" (see n. 3 above), p. 15, n. 1. Rupert, abbot of Deutz (d. 1129), calls her the "spouse of the Father and of the Son of God." But in the patristic age the expression "spouse of the Holy Spirit," as far as I know, occurs only once, namely in the tenth century by Cosmas Vestitor. 124 Similiarly in the medieval writings immediately before St. Francis it is found only twice: in Amadeus of Lausanne, who addresses Mary thus: "Go forth, for your bridal bed is now set up. Your spouse shall come to you, the Holy Spirit will come to you;" and in Nicholas of Clairvaux: "The virgin is singularly consecrated to the Son

¹²¹ 2EpFid 4853.

See C.Passaglia, S.J., De Immaculata Deiparae semper Virginis conceptu, vol. 1
 (Naples, 1855), pp. 319, 355, 369, in Lampen,

Word" was gathered together by C.Feckes (see "Die Gottesmuttershaft," in P.Sträter, Maria in der Glaubenskunde, vol. 2 (Paderborn, 1947), pp. 54ff). See especially A.Piolanti, "Sicut Sponsa ornata monilibus: Maria come 'Sponsa Christi' nella teologia fino all'inizio del sec. XIII," in Euntes Docete 7 (1954): 299–311.

¹²⁴ See "Sermo in SS Joachim et Annam," PG 106, 1006b, n.2, where he says: "She brought forth the spouse of the Holy Spirit," in Lampen, "De quibus sententiis" (see n. 3 above), p. 554.

 $^{^{125}}$ "Homilia 3 de Incarnatione Christi et Virginis conceptione de Spiritu Sancto," PL 188, 1317d, and passim.

of God, and especially united to the Holy Spirit."¹²⁶ It is remarkable that Francis, lacking scientific knowledge of theology, speaks so beautifully about the bridal link of the Blessed Virgin to the Holy Spirit. ¹²⁷ In the Antiphon of the Office of the Passion he calls Mary "the daughter and handmaid of the most high king and Father of heaven, the mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ, the spouse of the Holy Spirit."¹²⁸ And by meditating on the angelic message brought to Mary by Gabriel that the Holy Spirit will come upon you (Luke 1: 35), and by admiring her prompt spirit by which she announced: Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say (Luke 1: 38), he perceived that the Blessed Virgin had been joined to the Author of the wonderful Incarnation by a special bridal bond. ¹²⁹ In like manner Mary was made spouse of the Holy Spirit, because with a pure heart she opened herself to the announced word and with a burning love conceived in her womb the Word to be made flesh. ¹³⁰

¹²⁶Sermo 40 in Beatae Virginis Mariae Assumptione," PL 144, 719b. The "Sermo" does not belong to Peter Damian, as Lampen supposes (see De quibus sententiis, p. 554); but it ought to be attributed to Nicholas of Clairvaux. Also the bishop of Ostia (in the authentic "Sermon 45 in Nativitate Beatae Virginis Mariae 2," PL 144, 741c) speaks about "the mother of the church's spouse," that is, Christ, after he discourses on the preparation of the 'home', the womb of Mary, through the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

 $^{^{127}}$ Feckes (see n. 124 above), p. 64 affirms that this expression is used only three times. He seems not to have known about the testimomy of Cosmas Vestitor.

¹²⁸ At Compline. This becomes less explicit in the Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, where he says that she was consecrated to the beloved Son and the Holy Spirit, the comforter. Conrad of Saxony sets this forth yet more extendedly, perhaps under the influence of his Seraphic Father. See Speculum B.M.V., pp. 132, 136ff; S.Girotto, O.F.M., Corrado di Sassonia, predicatore e mariologo del sec. XIII, Florence, 1952, pp. 152ff.

¹²⁹ See Esser, "Marienfrömmigkeit" (cited in n. 3 above), p. 181. Feckes (see n. 124 above), pp. 63-64, thinks that since the fathers rightly believed that the Incarnation, as an external work of God, should be attributed to the entire most holy Trinity lest they present an occasion for erroneous concepts, they carefully avoided the expression "spouse of the Holy Spirit." He adds, moreover, that although this danger is not present today, nevertheless that expression should be substituted for this, namely, "the spouse of the Word," and that in referring to the Holy Spirit one should rather say the sanctuary or place of His marvelous operation; for in the present economy of salvation our love necessarily passes through Christ and it is stirred up in us only through the Holy Spirit. Yet, even though we cannot now explore this thoroughly, we must remember that the expression "spouse of the Holy Spirit," at least in the sense of assigning an attribute, cannot be rejected, for even if anyone wished to adopt the opinion of Denis Petau (Petavius), who asserted that the soul of the just man is joined by sanctification to the Holy Spirit with a special and formal title, then by greater right could one speak of the nuptial closeness of the Blessed Virgin "full of grace" to the Holy Spirit. Even J. Scheeben, the principal patron of the argument defended by Feckes, adopted this opinion. See P.Galtier, S.J., De Ssma. Trinitate in se et in nobis (Rome, 1953), n. 415ff, p. 310. Nevertheless, we should not reject the expression "spouse of the Word." We think that each expression completes and perfects one another, since these concepts, assumed by necessity among men and referred to the mysterious relations of God with us, are never fully equivalent to reality, but merely cast light on one or another aspect.

Analogically, therefore, according to St. Francis each faithful soul is a spouse of Christ through the Holy Spirit, if it receives the word of God with a willing spirit and thus in some way or other conceives the Lord. This interpretation perhaps provides the key for explaining why our Seraphic Father immediately adds in the Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary: "Hail, His (Christ's) mother, and hail, all you holy virtues which through the grace and light of the Holy Spirit are poured into the hearts of the faithful so that from their faithless state you may make them faithful to God." For just as the Word of God took on flesh in Mary after the Holy Spirit came down upon her, so in like manner Christ is formed in the soul of the faithful by the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit and the inpouring of grace. 133

This leads us quite naturally to another pronouncement: "We are mothers to Him when we carry Him in our hearts and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience. We give to Him birth through His holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example." To order to clarify more perfectly the meaning of this

¹³⁰ See Esser, "Marienfrömmigkeit," p. 181.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 182. It may be noted that in the text of St. Francis the spousal connection is referred to Christ through the mediation of the Holy Spirit: "We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit." There is no one who does not see that this attitude of soul that opens itself to the word of faith by believing, and perfects it in deed by obeying, is of greatest importance in striving for perfection. For the teaching of St. Francis on obedience see Kajetan Esser, O.F.M., Bindung zur Freiheit: Die Gehorsamsauffassung des hl. Franziskus von Assisi, O.F.M., in Wiss. Weish. 15 (1952): 161–73.

¹³² SalBVM 56.

 $^{^{133}}$ See Esser, "Marienfrömmigkeit," p. 183. It seems that the idea of the correlation of the espousal bond and mystical motherhood is found only in St. Cyril of Alexandria. See H.Rahner, "Die Gottesgeburt: Die Lehre der Kirchenväter von der Geburt Christi in Herzen des Gläubigen," in Zeitsch. Kath. Theol. 59 (1935): 370-71. St. Bonaventure also treats of spiritual conception. See The Works of Bonaventure, vol. 3 (cited in n. 104 above), pp. 199-207. It must be said that the phrase "all you holy virtues which by the grace and light of the Holy Spirit are poured into the hearts of the faithful" is explained differently by different people. For example, Moise, in "L'Ave Maria" (see n. 3 above) p. 151, thinks that St. Francis thought about the Blessed Virgin as the queen of virtues, who was to be imitated by us by a virtuous life and as our spiritual mother from whom virtues are dispersed to us. This last consideration seems go beyond Francis's concept. In this sense this agrees with the rest of the Marian teaching of St. Francis, if Mary's influence as far as our virtues are concerned is understood in the sense of intercession. Perhaps not only one sense was perceived by his mind. Probably in this place a case is verified where our Seraphic Father did not express perfectly what was in his mind, or as the same author says: "Il pense plus long qu'il n'exprime." We will not wonder at this, if we remember that the mystics found it very difficult to communicate their ineffable experience with others (see G.Truhlar, De experientia mystica, p. 26, n. 29; and on the other hand, that the saint was only a little versed in the Latin language and most likely dictated his ideas in the ancient Italian language to a more learned brother who translated them into Latin. See Esser and Hardick, Schriften (cited in n. 27 above), pp.

quotation, we start with the interpretation of a celebrated passage concerning spiritual relationship with Christ. 135 After our Lord Jesus refused the approach of His mother and relatives, he spoke those words which extol spiritual union with him above every bond of blood, and even of motherhood. Whoever, therefore, obeys His commands perfectly and with a prompt spirit, "follows after these with the same love with which one is accustomed to embrace brothers, sisters, and parents." 136 The fathers of the church have already bypassed this mere literal sense. H.Rahner brilliantly sketches out the rise and evolution of the mystico-moral interpretation. 137 The initial thrust has to be placed in the psychology of the ancients who considered the heart the vital center and the principal seat of intellectual cognition, from which they thought ideas were born after the manner of offspring. These same holy fathers represented baptismal regeneration and the indwelling of Christ after the manner of offspring coming forth from the heart of a Christian — after the example of the generation of the Word from the heart of the Father, and being carried in the heart as a pregnant mother carries her infant in her womb. 138 These considerations begin with St. Hippolytus (d. 235), who was the first to present baptism as the birth of Christ in the heart of Christians. 139 The ontico-mystical concept of the birth of the Lord in the writings of Origen (d. 254) take on a new moral aspect in the sense, for instance, that he understands an increase of a spiritual life confirmed by baptism as the conception of Christ accomplished by the word of faith, and as the birth of the Lord brought about by good works conforming to Christ, similar to the nativity of the historical Christ from the womb of the virgin. 140 In this regard it is worth our while to recall St. Ambrose, who has shed light on the Marian aspect of this truth more clearly than his predecessors. He compares Mary's virginal act of giving birth with the birth of the virgin-mother-church and of a virgin soul rich in good works. 141 We should especially consider the sermon of St. Gregory the Great, which was delivered in the Basilica of St. Felicity on her feastday. This homily

134 2EpFid 53.

¹³⁵ Matt. 12: 46–50 and parallel passages: Mark 3: 31–35, Luke. 8: 19–21.

¹³⁷ See H.Rahner, "Die Gottesgeburt" (cited in n. 134 above), pp. 333–418.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp. 335–36, 343–44.

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp. 349ff.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 353ff, 356 n. 32.

¹³⁶ J.Knabenbauer, Commentarius in Evangelium secundum Matthaeum, vol. 3 (Paris, 1922), p. 567. Modern commentators have generally passed over this with a quick pen, explaining only the literal sense. L.Pirot and A.Clamer, in La Sainte Bible, vol. 9: Évangiles de S. Matthieu et de S. Marc (Paris, 1946), p. 166, outline the mystical sense.

¹⁴¹ For the rest of the Greek fathers see ibid., pp. 369ff, 386–87, etc.

was used in the third nocturn of the feast, and therefore St. Francis dutifully read and listened to it every year. 142 The holy Doctor said: "We should know that whoever is a brother and sister of Christ by believing, becomes a mother by preaching. For one, as it were, gives birth to the Lord, whom he imparts into the heart of his listener. And that person is made a mother, if by his voice the love of the Lord is generated in the heart of his neighbor." An apostolic aspect is sketched by these words. They show how by the preaching of the word the incarnate Word of God is by a vital action in generated in souls. 143 St. Peter Damian comments on this text of the Gospel which concerns us here: "It was special and unique that Christ was conceived in the womb if that most Blessed Virgin; it is common and universal for all the elect to carry Him in the devotion of the heart. That woman was happy and exceedingly blessed who for nine months bore Him in her womb. We also are happy if we assiduously strive to carry him in our hearts. It was a wonderful thing for Christ to be conceived in a womb of flesh, but it is no less wonderful, if He is borne in the confines of the heart."144 Especially since it is known that St. Francis met Innocent III (d. 1216) not only once, we think that the following testimony of the pontiff is not devoid of value: "Spiritual birth was more clearly manifest when Christ said: 'Anyone who loves Me will be true to My word' (John 14: 23). For Christ is conceived through love, is born through love, and is nourished by performance."145

If now we were to compress in a short sentence the meaning of Francis's words, it would have to be this: "As often as anyone fulfilled

 $^{^{142}}$ Gregory the Great, "Homilia 3;" PL 76, 1086d. The reasons are as follows. G. Durandus (Rationale Divinorum Officiorum, p. 684) attests that the feast of the seven brothers was celebrated at that time in Italy at the same time as the feast of St. Felicity. Smaragdus (d. ca. 830) already in the ninth century had sanctioned the pericope Matt. 12: 46–50 to be used for this feast. He repeats word for word the part about the mystical maternity of Christ from the sermon of St. Gregory (see PL 102, 433b). Finally, J.Beleth, in a celebrated work of the twelfth century ("Rationale Divinorum Officiorum" [PL 202, 146c]) recalls some things from St. Gregory in the feast of St. Felicity. The same is seen in the Venerable Bede (d. 735). See H.Rahner, "Die Gottesgeburt," p.

¹⁴³The same is seen in the Venerable Bede (d. 735). See H.Rahner, "Die Gottesgeburt," p. 394, n. 4; also in Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173), p. 392. For further evolution see pp. 391–410. As far as the birth of Jesus is concerned, the Marian mysteries reach their culmination in St. Bernard and especially among his disciple Guerric of Igny (d. 1157).

¹⁴⁴ "Sermo 45: De Nativitate Beatae Mariae Virginis 2," PL 144, 747bc. See "Opusc. 55 de celebrandis Vigiliis," PL 145, 802a.

¹⁴⁵ "Sermo in nativitate Domini" (about eternal, temporal and spiritual birth), *PL* 217, 461. See the interpretation of this text in H.Rahner, "Die Gottesgeburt," p. 409. The testimony of Innocent is given not only because St. Francis lived at the same time, but also because his direct influence is sufficiently evident at least as far as some aspects are concerned. See Lampen, "De quibus sententiis" (cited in n. 3 above), pp. 555–56. See also Quirinus van Alphen, "Het H. Sacrament des Altaars en Sint Franciscus van Assisi," in *Franc. Leven* 22 (1939): 364–73.

the will of our heavenly Father and does not withdraw from Him by means of any sin, so often does the espousal bond with Christ through the Holy Spirit remain inviolate." Therefore, through sanctifying grace, through a truly virtuous life and through the infused virtues, especially love, the faithful soul carries Jesus in his heart and body in a manner similiar to the Blessed Virgin carrying the Lord in her womb. ¹⁴⁷ In an analogous manner, by good works that evoke imitation we bring forth this sublime fruit of the heart into the souls of sinners and those who do not believe, that is, of those who lack supernatural life, just as the mother of God brought forth the incarnate Word to the whole world.

While we are referring the words of St. Francis back to the teaching of the writers who preceded him, we conclude that he did not consider merely the moral sense (although after the manner of the Latins he made it very clear), but with sufficient clarity he emphasized the ontico-mystical importance, when he speaks about the espousal bond as the basis of mystical maternity.148 He does not speak out about the element of the birth of Christ from the baptismal font and the aspect of the nativity of Jesus in the innermost recess of the heart. 149 That the image of Christ is perfected in a progressive manner by the increase of the supernatural virtues in us is understood rather that declared. 150 Similiarly, the Marian influence, although it undoubtedly underlies the words, is nevertheless not explicitly proposed. We think that it belongs peculiarly to St. Francis that, if you except St. Cyril of Alexandria, he alone set forth the part of the Holy Spirit in the formation of Christ in us and that he conceived the whole Christian life as a continual birth of Christ. 151 As far as we were able to discover, none of the writers who

 $^{^{146}}$ For the interpretation of the text of St. Francis, see Esser, "Marienfrömmigkeit," pp. 182

¹⁴⁷ The following correspond to the elements enumerated in the text of St. Francis: sanctifying grace to the espousal bond; the virtuous life to the "pure conscience"; and the infused virtues that lead to love. To the last aspect should be added that passage of the Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which mentions the infused virtues (see verse 6). For a real and full interpretation of the word 'pure' in the religious system of St. Francis, see Esser and Hardick. Schriften. pp. 162–63.

see Esser and Hardick, Schriften, pp. 162–63.

148 A mere moral change is proposed, for example, by a certain writer after St. Augustine.

See H.Rahner, "Die Gottesgeburt," pp. 347ff. The espousal bond which is called the basis of spiritual motherhood was mentioned above.

¹⁴⁹ Especially the Greek fathers extol the consideration of birth by baptism and of internal birth. The idea of generation in baptism is recalled by St. Augustine; more so by John Scotus Erigena (d. 877), and in a sublime manner by Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173). See H.Rahner, "Die Gottesgeburt," pp. 351, 391, 404, 408.

 $^{^{150}}$ The idea of a mystical increase of Christ in us, as the virtues increase, is very beautifully set forth by St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394). See Rahner, "Gottesgeburt," pp. 373–76. As regards faith, Richard of St. Victor says: "For if faith in Christ is in your heart, Christ is in your heart." See PL 196, 1017a.

have commented on the text of Matt. 12: 46–50 and parallel passages have explained the mystical maternity by way of good example, which incites one to follow Christ. ¹⁵² Under a vision so vast each endeavor of the spiritual life, even though entirely hidden within a cloister, assumes an aspect that is eminently apostolic and at the same time Marian. We do not know what to admire more: the eye penetrating the supernatural things of theology, or the heart of a mystic experiencing the things of God.

Conclusion

Before we put an end to this investigation, it seems advantageous to synthesize the value and importance of Francis's Marian teaching. Our Seraphic Father's devotion to the mother of God was nourished by the primary sources of holy Scripture, the liturgy, and popular devotion. In this respect perhaps he showed himself less original than in other things, such as in his familiarity with creatures. Nevertheless, he very willingly adopted for himself and for his friars each and every form of the Marian cult that he had been able to find anywhere, and he clothed it with his own spirit. 153 Yet, it has escaped no one's attention that

¹⁵¹See H.Rahner, "Die Gottesgeburt," p. 369.

¹⁵² For St. Francis's teaching and practice of good example see Alberto Ghinato, O.F.M., Il buon esempio francescano (Venice, 1951).

¹⁵³ See also Esser and Hardick, "Erläuterungen," in Schriften, p. 171. Furthermore, parallel passages show that the idea of mystical motherhood was sufficiently familiar to St. Francis (see Esser, "Marienfrömmigkeit," p. 183, n. 45). Francis, for example, used to speak about sons of eternal life who were generated by preaching and prayer (see 2Cel 164), or about sons of his order, who were brought into light from their mother's womb (see 2Cel 174). Or he calls to mind how "daily as a mother in Christ" he would in his compassion bring forth spiritual sons who were stained with sin. Therefore, it is evident how much people of that age directed their attention to the internal aspect of apostleship, namely, supernatural fecundity through grace. Under Francis's immediate influence St. Clare wrote in a letter to Agnes of Prague: "Just as the glorious virgin of virgins carried [Christ] materially in her body, so you, following her footsteps of humility and especially of poverty, without any doubt can always spiritually bear Him in your chaste and virginal body and encompass Him by Whom you and all things are encompassed" (W.Seton, O.F.M., Letters of St. Clare to Bl. Agnes of Bohemia, in AFH 17 [1924]: 517). Similiarly, St. Bonaventure, following the footsteps of his Seraphic Father, wrote a splendid work about the five feast days of the boyhood of Jesus: "In the secret of my mind, I saw that with the grace of the Holy Spirit a soul devoted to God could conceive the blessed Word, the only-begotten Son of God the Father; that it could give birth to Him" (The Works of Bonaventure, vol. 3 [see n. 134 above], p. 199). Others also refer to the testimony of St. Anthony of Padua. See Sophronius Clasen, O.F.M., Lehrer des Evangeliums: Ausgewählte Texte aus den Predigten des hl Antonius von Padua (Werl, 1954), pp. 74-75, 92-93, 143-44. Finally, we offer Conrad of Saxony, who in his first sermon within the octave of the nativity of our Lord says: "Just as Jesus was not corporally conceived nor hidden except in a virginal womb, so neither is He [conceived] spiritually except in a chaste heart." And in his third sermon for the third Sunday of Lent: "Let us carry Christ in our hearts as Mary did in her womb.... My very dear friends, let us carry in the womb of our hearts the One who is always carrying us in the womb of

devotion to Mary did not form the center of his spirituality. The spiritual focus of St. Francis, and also that of St. Bernard, was as as much as possible undoubtedly centered on Christ. ¹⁵⁴ Nowhere in his writings do we find Francis exhorting his sons in expressed words to venerate the virgin Mary. Neither in the *Later Rule* nor in his *Testament* will you find any word pertaining to the mother of God. ¹⁵⁵ Besides, it has been ascertained that St. Clare had demonstrated a greater Marian devotion than her father Francis. ¹⁵⁶

Speaking in a positive manner, we think that the perfect theological soundness of his devotion is his guiding force. In whatever place he speaks about his most holy mother, he joins her indissolubly with her Son. Much less will you find the least indication of any morbid tendency in his Marian cult, such as at that time began to be manifested by the tracts treating of the miracles of Mary, which introduced inadvisedly into the veneration of Mary an appearance of religious materialism. 157 But for the purpose of offering a just judgment on the worth of Francis's Marian devotion, it is most important that we should recall that St. Francis shared in the directions of his time. It was a time when Marian teaching and Marian devotion had not yet been fully developed. Moreover, it is right to distinguish between St. Francis's value as a promoter of Marian cult, and his value as a personal venerator of Mary. His principal praise for propagating devotion of Mary has to be placed especially in his own fervent exemplary devotion and in those doctrinal words or expressions of his which worthily disclose his own devotion.

His holy mercy, until He gives us birth into the light of life everlasting" (S.Girotto, Corrado di Sassonia, p. 85.

¹⁵⁴ For St. Bernard, see J.Leclercq (see n. 16 above), p. 569; idem, "St. Bernard et la dévotion médiévale envers Marie," in Rev. Asc. Myst. 30 (1954): 361-75. "It is excessive and rather erroneous to reduce St. Bernard's devotion to a 'mariolatry' and his theology to 'Mariology'." See A.Wilmart, Auteurs spirituels et textes dévots du moyen-âge latin (Paris, 1932), cited by J.Leclercq, "Dévotion" (cited in n. 16 above), p. 568, n. 2. For the Seraphic Father's devotion to Christ, see Casutt, L'eredità di S. Francesco, pp. 43ff; Kajetan Esser, Der Orden des hl. Franziskus (Werl, 1952), pp. 24ff. However, we do not intend to treat here whether devotion to Christ or to the Father prevailed in St. Francis's devotion. See Vitus a Bussum, De spiritualitate franciscana: Aliqua capita fundamentalia (Rome, 1949), p. 49.

155 Lorenzo Casutt ("Franziskus: Die Regeln des franziskanischen Ersten Ordens," in U.

¹⁵⁵ Lorenzo Casutt ("Franziskus: Die Regeln des franziskanischen Ersten Ordens," in U. von Balthasar, Die grossen Ordensregeln (Einsiedeln, 1948), pp. 226–27) explains why this word is absent in the Later Rule.

¹⁵⁶See Hardick, "Erläuterungen" (cited in n. 115 above), pp. 160ff.

¹⁵⁷See J.Leclercq, "Dévotion" (cited in n. 16 above), pp. 566–67. Only one miracle obtained in his lifetime through prayers to Mary is narrated by St. Bonaventure (*LMaior*), which however only reveals Francis's living trust in his heavenly mother. Besides, Thomas of Celano describes two apparitions made after death, in which the saint exhorts two women to pray to the Blessed Virgin for health. See *3Cel* in *AF* 10 (1926–41): 308, 314; *LMaior*, p. 641.

As many documents of Franciscan history demonstrate, all these things readily and abundantly contributed to the promoting the cult of the Blessed Virgin. 158 Other saints, such as St. Anselm or St. Bernard, certainly surpassed Francis in this regard. 159 As far as personal devotion to Mary is concerned, we think that our holy father St. Francis can legitimately be considered the equal of the great venerators of Mary of his own and earlier times. His attitude toward Mary was not the kind of devotion which existed over and beyond other devotions, but it undoubtedly occupied an eminent place is his religious life. This is especially proved by the fact that St. Francis admired and imitated in Mary the central aspect of his own spirituality, namely poverty, 160 and because his teaching, his devotion and his imitation of Mary rested upon Christ as on its center. Therefore, to sum it all up in a few words. the root of Mary's dignity and the reason for her excellence rest, according to our Seraphic Father Francis, on the incarnate Word, her Son; and it is the function of our Lady that through her intercession as by a ladder we ascend more securely to the Lord; that by following the virtues of the handmaid, we may more zealously imitate Jesus, the most perfect example of all.

¹⁵⁸ For Francis's influence in the teaching, cult and practice of this devotion see Jean de Dieu (of Champsecret), "La Vierge" (cited in n. 2 above), pp. 787, 799. For his artistic influence, see Vloberg, *Les types iconographiques* (cited in n. 94 above), pp. 504, 506 n. 13; B.Kleinschmidt (see n. 3 above), passim.

¹⁵⁹ See J.Leclercq, "Dévotion" (cited in n. 16 above), pp. 556, 574.

¹⁶⁰ For the value of poverty as the center of his spirituality see Kajetan Esser, "Mysterium Paupertatis: Die Armutsauffassung des hl Franziskus von Assisi," in Wiss. Weish. 14 (1951): 177–89; V.Breton, La Pauvreté, vertue fontale de la piete franciscaine (Paris, 1943).