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THE PLACE AFFORDED TO MARY IN THE INITIAL EVANGELIZATION OF THE STONE AGE PEOPLE OF NEW CALIFORNIA

Bro. Lawrence Scrivani, S.M.*

The evangelization of New California is known more generally as the story of its famous twenty-one missions. In our times these Old Missions have become tourist sites colored by romance and by controversy in a proxy war between parties of culture. But those topics are not the concern of this paper which focuses instead on the place of Mary in the initial evangelization project. Her place will be described according to three modalities of presence; namely, 1) Mary in doctrine, 2) Mary as type, and 3) Mary as patron and intercessor.

I. Mary in Doctrine

The evangelization of New California¹ was entrusted to the Franciscan friars of the Apostolic College of San Fernando² in the City of Mexico. Consequently, Franciscan spirituality and

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¹ The Spanish during the eighteenth century used the term “New California” to designate that part of California now in the United States. The part of California now called “Baja” was to them “Old California.” Only later were the terms “Alta” and “Baja” introduced to indicate administrative subdivisions. The term “Mexico” referred to the area around the City of Mexico. The territory to the north of it was known as the Internal Provinces (Provincias Internas). The general term for the entire region was “New Spain.”

² The Apostolic College should not be confused with a university. The use of the word “college” in this context should be understood as a self-governing association
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Theology provided the basis for the project. Regarding Marian theology it is important to note that the Franciscans held both the Immaculate Conception of Mary and her Assumption into Heaven. At this time in history, neither doctrine was formally defined by the Magisterium nor universally held by all Catholics. Classical Franciscan spirituality is characterized as going to the gospels to discover the great lessons of Christ's life. It is noted by its intense devotion to the humanity of such as a college of electors. The Franciscans organized their missionary activity in New Spain by this means beginning with the establishment in 1683 of the Apostolic College of the Holy Cross in Querétaro. The Apostolic College of San Fernando in the City of Mexico was established by royal decree on October 15, 1733, and provided missionaries to the Sierra Gorda in Mexico (1744-1770), to Baja California (1768-1773), and to Alta California (1769-1853). Its members were referred to as the Fernandinos. The third Apostolic College in New Spain was that of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Zacatecas. The apostolic colleges were independent of any province or custody and were directly subject to the Father Commissary General of the Indies who was stationed in Madrid. The colleges were governed internally "by a guardian, whose normal term of office would be three years," and who "was assisted in this government by a council of four discreet [councilors] who should be chosen from among the priests who had served longest in the Order" (Michael B. McCloskey, O.F.M., The Formative Years of the Missionary College of Santa Cruz de Querétaro, 1683-1733 [Washington: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1955], 36-37).

For the most complete and scholarly study of the College of San Fernando of Mexico, see Maynard Geiger, O.F.M., "The Internal Organization and Activities of San Fernando College, Mexico City (1734-1758)," The Americas 6 (July 1949): 3-21. After the passing of the mission era in California, the surviving Fernandinos there formed in 1853 the Apostolic College of Our Lady of Sorrows with its headquarters at the former Santa Barbara Mission. San Fernando College was formally suppressed in 1908, and the last of its buildings was demolished in 1935 (Martin Morgado, Junípero Serra's Legacy [Pacific Grove, Calif.: Mount Carmel, 1987], 177).

Admittedly, the subject of Franciscan spirituality is a vast and daunting one as is the literature about it. For this paper the basic source is the digest used at one time by the Franciscan Theologate in California: Franciscan Spirituality: A Commentary on Part I of the Centenaria Solemnia of Most Reverend Perantoni, O.F.M., prepared by the Clerics of San Luis Rey, California, circulated cum permissu superiorum pro manuscrip., June 1953. While there is an enormous literature both scholarly and popular concerning the California missions, almost none of it addresses theology in general much less Marian theology in particular. Existing theological literature regarding Mary amounts to a handful of articles that focus mainly on an enumeration of external signs of Marian devotion. There is little or nothing of theological discourse. To recover the theology behind the evangelization project requires the use of the techniques of local history investigation. Once the historic record is documented, one then induces the
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Christ especially under the forms of the crib, the cross, and the tabernacle. These three terms will provide a handy summary used in this paper.

When the Spanish entered New California in 1769 they initiated contact with a group of Indian cultures that had never seen a white man, had never seen a horse or burro, had no knowledge or fear of firearms. They lived a hunter-gatherer
theology inherent in the words and deeds of the historical actors. The following titles provided citations used in this paper:

Periodicals. The most comprehensive article about Mary in the California missions is that of Maynard Geiger, "Our Lady in Franciscan California," Franciscan Studies: A Quarterly Review 23, new series vol. 2, no. 2 (June 1942): 99-112. Geiger relied on the best primary and secondary sources for this article. Then, during the Marian Year of 1954, the Franciscans sponsored a national Marian Congress in San Francisco and published the proceedings as number 9 of the journal Studia Mariana ("Second Franciscan National Marian Congress in Celebration of the Marian Year in Honor of the Centenary of the Definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, May 4-9, 1954"). Only one of its articles, authored by the auxiliary bishop of San Francisco, concerned Mary: Merlin J. Guilfoyle, "History of the Immaculate Conception in California," pp 158-159. Guilfoyle's monograph tells nothing of a theological nature about the Immaculate Conception; only the founding of the mission of that name by Friar Fermin Lasuén on December 8, 1787. A third article on the subject of Mary in the missions was written by the vice postulator of the Serra cause to describe Serra's devotion to Mary: Eric O'Brien, "Serra's Devotion to Our Blessed Mother." The article came to be published years later in the anthology: The California Missions, ed. Vincent P. McConologue (Hollywood, Calif.: California Missions, 1966), 12-13. Finally, two unpublished articles exist concerning the declaration of Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners as the patroness of California's first diocese (established 1840). Both articles were written by church historians and neither addressed theology in a direct way. The first is by A. D. Spearman, "Our Lady of Refuge: Patroness of California," in Academy Scrapbook 1, no. 8 (February 1951): 235. The second is by John T. Dwyer, "Sermon Preached during the Marian Year Liturgy at the Old Mission Church," in Our Lady of Refuge (Santa Clara, California, July 8, 1987). This latter article was circulated as a souvenir of the occasion. Such is the extant theological literature on the subject of the role afforded to Mary in the proto-evangelization of California.

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culture, had campsites not cities, and had no written language. Every two-days march, or about forty miles, a new Indian language was spoken. These circumstances presented daunting challenges to the prospect of evangelization. However, the friars were able to draw on techniques used by previous generations of Franciscans, who had developed methods for teaching the unlettered masses of Europe's countryside and towns. To communicate doctrine, they relied on recitations, songs, processions, dramatic acting-out of the gospel texts, public sermons and graphic art. They compressed the doctrine of the faith into a capsule that could be learned by a person of average intelligence without the need to read. This capsule was called the Doctrina Cristiana (Christian Teaching) and consisted of: the Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed, the Hail Holy Queen, the Acts of Faith and Hope and Charity, the Act of Contrition, the Ten Commandments of God, the Precepts of the Church, the Seven Sacraments, the Six Necessary Points of the Faith, and the Four Last Things.

The strategy behind the Doctrina was simple: the Doctrina was to catechesis what the alphabet was to literacy. Its formula prayers were the basics for reciting the Rosary, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and the Angeles. The Act of Contrition was necessary for participating in the Sacrament of Penance. The Doctrina provided a uniform groundwork on which to build knowledge and ready observance. A pagan candidate for Baptism at one of the missions had to repeat the words of the

In recent years scholarship has increasingly applied sociological and anthropological analyses to the neophyte population and to the Franciscan missionaries regarding the psychological aspects of religious conversion. Unfortunately, these writers do not have a positive understanding of Catholic theology or religious devotional practices to inform their analyses.

4 Francis Guest, Hispanic California Revisited (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library, 1996), 111, n. 31), offers a slightly different list of contents for the Doctrina consisting of: the sign of the cross, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Apostle's Creed, the Hail Holy Queen, the articles of faith, the commandments of God and the Church, the sacraments, the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues, the seven capital sins, the enemies of the soul, and the four last things.

5 The Four Last Things were: death, judgment, heaven and hell.
Doctrina over and over until memorized. By persevering in this task the candidate revealed his seriousness of purpose. After Baptism, the Doctrina featured prominently in the communal life of the missions. It was recited collectively at each village in the morning and in the evening—once in the Spanish language and once in the local tongue. The first prayers to be translated into the local tongues were the Pater and the Ave. Regarding the degree of comprehension to be expected of the neophytes, this grew over time. In school we learn many things we do not at first understand. We take the teacher’s word for it until we can understand it for ourselves. Something like this occurred at the missions. The Doctrina provided a perennial content for preaching. Its contents presented Mary as inseparable from Jesus. How this was so is well illustrated by the content of the Alabado hymn which was sung at the end of the communal recitations of the Doctrina.

Recall that one of the instructional techniques used by the friars was to teach the people songs. The Alabado hymn

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6 The term “neophyte” was used throughout the mission period to denote the baptized Indian population living at the missions. In general Christian practice, the term applied to individual persons and not usually to populations. The term continued to be applied generally to the mission populations because, according to the law for California, they were wards of the mission with the legal status of minors. Neophytes who intermarried with the Hispanic population or who moved away from the mission would no longer be called neophyte. The term “gentile” was used to denote the unbaptized or pagan Indians.

7 The Alabado is actually a genre of music as much as a single hymn, as explained by musicologist Dr. Tomas Lorzano of Albuquerque, New Mexico. In an interview with the author at Santa Barbara Mission, California, September 7, 2002, Dr. Lorzano said: “The alabado is a genre of compositions most often encountered as the anthems sung by the “brothers” (hermanos) of the lay confraternities, such as the penitentes. Each confraternity has its own distinctive alabado. The term also refers to anthems sung at the dawn of a day and, hence, at the beginning of an enterprise such as the founding of a mission. There are many alabados in New Mexico, including ones similar to but not exactly the same as the one known in California. The various versions have perhaps diverged from a common source by the accumulation of small changes owing to oral transmission.” Doctor John Warren, Ph.D., director of the New World Baroque Orchestra (Paso Robles, California), cites the origin of the term to be the Spanish word “to praise” (alabar). Friars Owen Da Silva, O.F.M., and Zephyrin Engelhardt, O.F.M., heard and transcribed the Alabado version generally attributed to California from a recording on a wax cylinder made by the Santa Ynez (California) native singer known as “Fernandito, the last of the Mission Singers.”
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deserves special mention because it was found everywhere in mission era society, making its doctrinal content of interest to us. It is the closest thing to an anthem of the California missions. Junípero Serra directed that it be sung at the foundation of every mission and the custom continued after his death until the end of the mission era. The neophytes sang it congregationally twice every day in the mission routine after reciting the *Doctrina Cristiana*. The Hispanic population used it at civic functions. From its content it could be subtitled the *Canticle of the Holy Family*. Its first verse honors the Blessed Sacrament, the second honors the Immaculate Conception and the third honors Saint Joseph. The fourth verse provides a doxology.

**Hymn of Praise**

Praised and exalted  
Be the Sacrament Divine  
In which God is present in a hidden manner  
And offers Himself as the food of souls.

And the Immaculate Conception  
Of the Queen of Heaven  
Who while remaining a pure virgin  
Became the Mother of the Eternal Word.

And blessed Saint Joseph  
Elected by immense God  
For the esteemed father  
Of his son the Divine Word.

And this for all the centuries  
And throughout the centuries, amen.  
Amen, Jesus and Mary;  
Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

In summary, the doctrinal content of the *Alabado* sets the incarnate Christ in the contexts of the tabernacle and of the

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8 Friar Junípero Serra (1713-1784) served as the Friar President of the Missions in New California from 1769 until his death. He was the religious superior of the Franciscans there as well as the ranking ecclesiastical authority for the Catholic Church as *Vicar Forane* under the Bishop of Guadalajara, who then had diocesan jurisdiction for the entire northern frontier of New Spain.
Holy Family: we see the crib, the cross and the tabernacle. Mary is presented as inseparable from Jesus.9

The principal celebrations of the liturgical calendar provided another occasion for teaching Mary's place in the doctrine of the faith. Junípero Serra sang a high Mass on all the feasts of Christ and Mary and preached on the meaning of the mystery being celebrated. For the solemnities he added dramatizations or processions that depicted what was written about in the Gospels. For example, after midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, Serra arranged to have some young people act out a "devout dramatization" of the birth of Christ depicted with "genuine realism."10 On Good Friday afternoon, a life-sized

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9 The Spanish text of the Alabado according to Da Silva and Engelhardt, is as follows:

*Alabado y ensalzado*

*Sea el divino Sacramento*

*En quien Dios oculto asiste*

*De las almas el sustento.*

*Y la limpia Concepción*

*De la Reina de los Cielos*

*Que, quedando Virgen pura*

*Es madre del Verbo Eterno.*

*Y el bandito San José*

*Electo por Dios inmenso*

*Para padre estimativo*

*De su hijo el Divino Verbo.*

*Y esto por todos los siglos*

*Y de los siglos, amen.*

*Amen, Jesús y María;*

*Jesús, María y José.*

10 Palou's *Life of Fray Junípero Serra*, translated and annotated by Maynard J. Geiger, O.F.M., Ph.D. (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1955), 29: "On all the feasts of Jesus Christ and of Mary Most Holy, a High Mass was sung, and during it the Venerable Father preached, explaining the mystery and feast of the day... When this was over, some young Indians gave a devout dramatization of the birth of the Child-Child. The devout father taught them partly in Spanish and partly in Pame concerning the great mystery which they portrayed with genuine realism. By this means, he not only instructed them as to the mystery, but aroused in them affection towards it." Ibid., 30: "On Friday morning he preached a sermon on the Passion, and in the afternoon, in a most realistic manner, the Descent from the Cross was represented. This was done by means of a lifelike image..."
corpus of Christ was taken down ceremoniously from the crucifix in church and carried in procession to the altar of repose where it was laid in an imitation tomb.\textsuperscript{11} This required a corpus with hinged arms so they could be moved alongside the torso. Later, on the same day at Vespers, Serra conducted a procession of Our Lady of Solitude, followed with a sermon about its meaning. At dawn on Easter, Serra would conduct a procession of the Risen Christ. In this procession, two devotional images were carried separately, one of Christ and one of Mary, with the two seeking each other out until reunited. In both Christ's death and resurrection, Mary was presented as inseparable from Jesus. The technique of acting out the meaning of the events held the attention of a people accustomed to using chant together with dance to express cultural content. Processions fit the Indian culture best and were the most popular form of devotional practice among the neophytes.

Serra celebrated the Immaculate Conception more solemnly than any other feast of Mary. Devotion to the Immaculate Conception was extended throughout the year by means of a procession every Saturday evening with lanterns and chanting of the Rosary. A statue of the Immaculate Conception was carried on a litter through the village. As soon as the procession entered the church, the congregation sang the \textit{Tota Pulchra es, Maria} in Spanish translation.

To summarize how Mary was present in the doctrine of the Faith, we can say that she was presented in her relationship to the events of Christ's life, in the context of the Holy Family, and as the Immaculate Conception.

\textbf{II. Mary as Type}

The preeminent image of Mary presented in the California missions was that of the Immaculate Conception. It is important to understand that Mary was not simply described as

\textsuperscript{11} This custom continued annually until the abandonment of Mission Carmel during the 1840s. Harry Downey, mission restorer, revived it in the 1930s using the very same corpus. The custom continued until the 1970s. The same corpus can be seen over the main altar at that mission to this day.
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having been conceived without sin, but, rather, she was identified with the Immaculate Conception. In the language of Marian theology of the twentieth century, the Immaculate Conception provided what was called the "fundamental principle" for organizing doctrine about Mary. Giving preeminence to the Immaculate Conception as the organic principle for understanding Mary resulted in part from the general Franciscan practice of that time. But there was, in addition, a particular reason for it in the California mission enterprise attributable to Junípero Serra. In Serra's life previous to his becoming a missionary at the age of thirty-six, he had occupied the Scotist Chair of Theology at the Llullian University of Palma de Mallorca. John Duns Scotus\(^{12}\) is preeminently the theologian of the Immaculate Conception, but Scotus derived his position on it from his understanding of the general nature of Christ. Scotus held that the soul of the Christ was in creation the first object of divine predestination; therefore, the primacy of the God-man was not only in excellence but in absolute universality. Franciscan theologians, arguing from this intuition of Duns Scotus, came to hold that the Incarnation was decreed independently of Adam's sin. That is to say, the Word would have become flesh even if there had been no Fall in order to complete creation. But because Adam sinned, the Word became incarnate with the potential to suffer as a means of redeeming His creation. In either case, Mary is predestined with a primacy as absolute and universal as that of Christ, but totally dependent and subordinate to His.\(^{13}\)

To the mind of Serra, the Immaculate Conception was the architectonic symbol of the central struggle of redemption and, therefore, the symbol of his campaign against the darkness

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\(^{12}\) John Duns Scotus (1266-1308), a Franciscan teacher at the universities of Oxford and Paris, was known as the "Subtle Doctor"; he marked a great advance in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception by providing a way to reconcile Mary's exemption from original sin with the universality of Christ's redemption. For his doctrine on Mary, see *John Duns Scotus: Four Questions about Mary*, trans. Allan B. Wolter (O.F.M.), with an introduction and notes (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Old Mission Santa Barbara, 1988).

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of paganism. In the ancient enmity between the Serpent and the Woman (Gen. 3:15), the Immaculate Conception is the type. In the system of Duns Scotus, concupiscence results after the Fall not from a change in the body but rather from a change in the powers of the soul that reduced the soul's control over the drives of the flesh, which drives Scotus suspected were probably always there. Therefore, Mary could strengthen the Christian believer against the proclivity to sin because: "... from the first moment of your conception, your lack of human weakness protected you against the designs of Satan." In other words, because of her Immaculate Conception, Mary is able to function as socia Christi redemptoris. This is who she is.

14 "The Lord God said to the serpent: ...'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel:'" (Revised Standard Version, Catholic Ed., London, 1946).

Michael O'Carroll (in Theotokos) describes this passage as an "oracle." Further, he cites its use in the definitions of two Marian dogmas: "Pius XII used the oracle in Munificentissimus Deus: Mary, the new Eve subject to the new Adam 'is most intimately associated with him in that struggle against the infernal foe which, as foretold in the protoevangelium, would finally result in the most complete victory over sin and death which are always mentioned together in the writing of the Apostle of the Gentiles: The same Pope wrote in Fulgens Corona: the biblical foundation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was 'in these words, which not a few Fathers, Doctors of the Church and many approved interpreters applied to the Virgin Mother of God'" (O'Carroll, Theotokos, 371).

15 From A Marian Novena attributed to Junipero Serra, comp. and ed. with an historical preface by Msgr. Francis J. Weber (Los Angeles, Calif.: Archives of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, 1988), 29. The Spanish original of this novena does not name Serra as the author, but rather cites as author: "un menor subdito de la Sra. del Colegio Apostolico de S. Fernando." It was published in Mexico City in 1765. The novena addressed Mary with the title Prelada (superioress).

16 While Duns Scotus does not use the word socia in regard to Mary, later Franciscans find in his teaching about the Immaculate Conception the seed of the concept "socia Christi redemptoris." For example, Scotus argued that Mary could be free of the effects of Original Sin and still be able to suffer because: "There were some of these penalties of original sin which might have been advantageous to Mary." Writes Berard Vogt in 1954: "We have here a pregnant thought of Scotus, if we correlate the idea with the role of Mary as 'Socia Christi Redemptoris' or 'Co-Redemptrix'... As the new Eve, Mary had to be close to Jesus the new Adam, and to share his atoning destiny" (Berard Vogt, O.F.M., "Duns Scotus, Defender of the Immaculate Conception—An Historical-Dogmatic Study," Studia Mariana 9 [1954]: 173).
The Guadalupe image can be understood most simply as the Immaculate Conception depicted in an Indian cultural context. The Guadalupe image directly applied the Marian type to an Indian population. The neophyte could see himself in the image of Juan Diego receiving the Virgin and cooperating with her. Using paintings to communicate theology in full color was one of the techniques used by the friars to instruct people from non-literate cultures. There existed in Spanish Colonial art a generic composition for depicting Our Lady of Guadalupe that included the four apparitions of the Virgin to Juan Diego arrayed as cameos at each corner surrounding a large central image of the Virgin. Serra wrote about receiving such a painted image for Mission Carmel. One can see similar depictions with the four apparitions at many of the California missions to this day. The painting presently at Carmel Mission has the words of Genesis 3:15 arrayed as a border around the image of the Virgin, thereby linking explicitly the Woman of Genesis with the Immaculate Conception.

After the Immaculate Conception, the image of Mary encountered most frequently at the missions is that of Our Lady of Sorrows (also presented as Our Lady of Solitude). It was the custom in the missions to position the coffin of the deceased before a side altar of the Mother of Sorrows during the night before its burial. The relatives of the deceased were invited to keep vigil during the night. There is an obvious As to the use of the term socia in Marian theology, Michael O’Carroll translates it as “associate” and provides the following synopsis for its development as title of Mary: “Associate is a key word in the modern theology of Our Lady. It is not applied to her in the Bible... None of the Latin Fathers speaks of Mary as socia of Christ... As present knowledge goes, it is Eckbert of Schonau (qv) who first uses the noun socia of Mary... ‘The Lord is with you [Lk 1:18], as one... taking you to himself as an associate,’... The great scholastics, St. Thomas (qv), St. Bonaventure (qv), St. Albert the Great (qv) and Duns Scotus (qv) did not see a place for the idea in their systems. It persists in a different stream of Marian theology—that represented in the fourteenth century by Englebert of Admont (qv) and Ubertino da Casale (qv).... The inseparable union between Mary and Christ is a constant in modern ecclesiastical teaching, papal and conciliar. Socia does not appear, however, until St. Pius X...” (O’Carroll, Theotokos, 53-54).

17 Serra described obtaining a painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe that fit this description (Writings of Junipero Serra, ed. Tibesar, 1:223; letter of June 20, 1771).
significance in this custom. It situates one’s personal death in context of the death of Christ. But it is through identifying with Mary’s participation in the mystery of the cross that the Christian faithful apply that most difficult mystery to themselves.

In the California missions, the neophyte population was taught to recall the events in the lives of Christ and Mary and to apply these events to their own lives. The term “role model” is used by some to describe this process and the place it affords to Mary. But this term is sociological in origin and does not adequately express the reality of the regeneration of a soul in grace. The term “role” suggests an analogy with a garment that one dons or sheds in response to a social function. The function might indicate one’s position in a social hierarchy but it fails to describe the essential self. The term role model thus fails to adequately describe the reality of transformation of the self through grace as demanded by an authentic Christian anthropology. To express regeneration in grace requires an image that indicates both a transformation of the self as well as a permanence that is not indicated by the notion of wearing clothing. Better is the notion of “type” whose prime reference is the Greek word *tupos*, meaning an impression. An impression such as that made at the mint when the smooth, coin-sized blank is struck sharply with the dye stamp bearing the image to be imparted to the blank. The struck object that results then bears the image of the *tupos*. At the missions, two images of Mary were used more than others to present her as the type of the Christian soul regenerated in grace. These images were the Immaculate Conception and the Mother of Sorrows.

To summarize, the second modality for Mary’s presence in the evangelization project of the California missions was as the type to be impressed upon the individual Christian in life and in death. The two most frequently encountered images of Mary—the Immaculate Conception and the Mother of Solitude—present her without the Child. Could we see in these the type of Mary as the *sociad Christi*; as a type applicable to any of the Christian faithful regardless of gender; as a type of the soul regenerated in grace, rather than an example of Christian womanhood exclusively?
The third modality of Mary's presence in the evangelizing project is as patron and intercessor. The friars in their difficult mission gave evidence of counting on the ordinary presence of Mary through her patronage and her intercession. Patronage implies the act of supporting, maintaining or protecting a person or an enterprise. Intercession implies entreaty in favor of another person. The doctrine of the Communion of Saints provides the theological basis for invoking Mary and the saints as patrons and intercessors. On the foundation of this doctrine the friars developed an intensely practical reliance on the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin. Specific examples of their conviction can strike present-day sensibilities as naive. For example, when the royal visitor general dispatched the Monterey Expedition of 1769, he gave them as their patron a lifesized statue of Our Lady of Bethlehem (Nuestra Señora de Belén) to be installed aboard one of the three ships of the expedition.\(^\text{18}\) The statue was crafted to be as lifelike as possible with naturalistic features, glass eyes, real human hair and real clothes. This title of Mary was traditionally invoked by sailors for protection on the seas, but for the duration of this expedition the image was invoked as well as La Conquistadora. This particular image was subsequently installed over the main altar of the church at Carmel Mission and can be found there today.

\(^{18}\) From Merlin J. Guilfoyle, "History of the Immaculate Conception in California," *Studia Mariana* 9 (1954): 159: "When Don José de Galvez summoned Father Serra to undertake the missionary work of Upper California, he presented him with a statue which he called 'La Conquistadora.' This image had come to the Archbishop of Mexico by way of Spain, under the title of 'Our Lady of Bethlehem.' As Patroness of the Sea, Mary of Belén had been invoked since Vasco de Gama set out for the Indies in July, 1497. In Lisbon, Prince Henry the Navigator had built a chapel dedicated to Our Lady Restello. Here da Gama spent the night in prayer before sailing. After the successful voyage around Africa and the Cape of Good Hope, the king changed the name of the chapel to Belén, Our Lady of Bethlehem.

This was the image enshrined on the San Antonio in which Padre Serra sailed for Monterey. ... On the image of Our Lady of Bethlehem is a silver crown, gift of a seaman. Inside the crown is the inscription, 'From the devotion of Naval Lieutenant, Don Juan Bautista Matute, commander of the frigate, Purísima Concepción. He dedicates this crown in fulfillment of a vow, year 1798.'"

today but on a side altar. The kind of confidence in Mary's protection attained a degree that Michael O'Carroll describes as "empirical, experiential" rather than as an "exposition of theory." Men such as Junípero Serra and his companions were convinced that Mary could hear their petitions and that she provided continual help in all their needs. The appeals to Marian patronage are of interest because they reveal the attitude of the people regarding the value of Mary's assistance in some truly difficult circumstances. For example, the Anza Expedition of 1776, that blazed an overland trail across the desert from Altar in Sonora to San Gabriel in California, invoked the protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe "who was chosen by unanimous consent."

During the difficult first efforts to establish the missions, Serra and his companion Francisco Palóu reported several instances where an image of Mary was associated with extraordinary manifestations which the friars interpreted as signs of her patronage. For example, "Francisco Palóu relates that at San Diego Mission, the friars had a beautiful picture representing the Blessed Virgin with the Child Jesus in her arms. It aroused the curiosity of the Indians so that they approached the mission.

19 O'Carroll, Theotokos, 231.
20 This expedition [Anza's] was under the special patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Friar Francisco Font, the official diarist of the expedition, records: "I told them [the members of the expedition] that the principal patroness of all the expedition during the journey was the Most Blessed Virgin, Our Lady of Guadalupe, who was chosen with singular applause and affection, by unanimous consent, with the approval of myself and the commander. For we were as one in the thought, and even before speaking about it we had both already decided that our patroness must be the sovereign Virgin Mary, Mother of God, under the title of Guadalupe, as mother and patroness which she is of the Indians and of this America." (From H. E. Bolton, trans., Font's Complete Diary [Anza's California Expeditions, IV], 5—as quoted in Maynard Geiger, "Our Lady in Franciscan California," Franciscan Studies 23 [n.s. 2], no. 2 [1942]: 108, n. 41).
21 Friar Francisco Palóu (1723-1789) accompanied Junípero Serra from Mallorca and labored with him in the missions of the Sierra Gorda of Mexico and finally in California. He attended Serra's death at Carmel and wrote his obituary in the Book of the Dead at that mission. He immediately began a biography of Serra usually referred to as the Relación Historica or sometimes the Vida. Upon returning to Mexico after July 1785, Palóu wrote the first history of California referred to in abbreviation as the Noticias.
and asked the fathers to allow them to see it. A stockade surrounded the mission quarters through which the Indians could not pass. This was in the days before any conversions were made. Yet the Indian women, captivated by the picture, would thrust their breasts through the openings between the poles of the stockade, "thus signifying their love for the divine Infant and their desire to nourish the beautiful Child."22

After the mission at San Diego began to receive converts, an additional foundation was attempted in the general area now occupied by the city of Los Angeles. On August 6, 1771, Friars Pedro Cambon and Angel Somera traveled north from San Diego to look for a suitable site to establish the mission to be named San Gabriel. The friars were accompanied by only a small party. In the vicinity of the future mission a large raiding party of local Indians confronted them and challenged their presence. The friars unfolded a traveling image of Our Lady of Sorrows whereupon they observed an immediate change in the demeanor of the warriors. The Indians were described as subsequently sending to their village for food which "they placed at our Lady's feet as an offering, thinking she might eat as we do." The change in attitude of the local Indians was so pronounced that they helped the small party build the temporary structures for the new mission thus allowing for the founding of the mission and the offering of the first Mass there on September 8, 1771, the Nativity of Mary.23

With the foundation of Mission San Gabriel complete, the painted image of Our Lady of Sorrows was installed in the temporary church building. In one of his letters, Serra described the reaction to it of the unbaptized Indian women in the vicinity as follows:

As for the Indian women, when the Fathers showed them a beautiful painting of the Most Blessed Mary, artistically executed, which they had brought with them, and had placed in the church, they were so taken with it that they could not tear themselves away from it. They went to their

22 Palóu, Relación Historica, 131, as quoted by Geiger, "Our Lady in Franciscan California," 109.
homes and came back loaded down with seeds and provisions, which they offered to the holy image, leaving their offerings in front of the altar. It is easy enough to say their actions were prompted by the foolish idea that the Most Holy Virgin was to eat them. But the very sight of how intent they were, and how much in earnest, touched one to the heart, and made one feel sure that they would pay even greater homage to the Great Queen when in the light of the Faith they would come to know how exalted she was.24

How can we understand these perceptions of both the friars and the neophytes which seem so alien to our age and disposition? In the scholarship of California mission studies there are writers who reduce these and other signs to natural or psychological causes. They advance arguments such as there existed a supercharged atmosphere at the time of the Spanish Entrada characterized by high emotion, expectation, confusion and fear; in short, the conditions for group hallucinations. It is also possible, it is argued, that the indigenous peoples wanted to gain favor, and thus gifts, by telling the friars what they wanted to hear. It is interesting that such arguments were encountered already during the mission times from the Enlightenment spirit. Palóu responded to these objections by including in his written account this answer for the incredulous: "To the unbeliever this fact may seem to be merely accidental, but the good missionaries considered it an act of divine providence ... the immediate effect of which was to enkindle hope in the most despondent hearts."25 In the final

24 Writings of Junípero Serra, ed. Tibesar, 1:359; letter to Bucareli, May 21, 1773.

25 Palóu, Vida, Adams ed., 45: regarding the arrival of the relief ship under extraordinary circumstances on the feast of St. Joseph. Both Serra and Palóu, writing separately, recorded other extraordinary occurrences observed only by the indigenous peoples and later described by them. These included an earthquake and an eclipse of the sun that the Indians say happened when they sighted for the first time one of the ships of the Monterey Expedition approaching the Bay of San Diego. The Indians of the Monterey peninsula reported what was later called the “miracle of the cross” and the “miracle of the birds.” No Spaniard saw these, though they did report seeing behavior among the Indians which in retrospect could be interpreted as consistent with these signs. Considering the behavior of the Indians at San Gabriel, the hypothesis suggests itself that they were not reacting to a painted image on canvas, but possibly something like the Guadalupe phenomenon; that is, the experience of a mariophany.
result, the friars were sustained in difficult circumstances by their faith in the patronage powers of Mary which they perceived to be real.

And what about the neophytes, what might explain their behavior in the presence of the Marian images? At least one scholar of Spanish Colonial religious art attributes the behavior of these Stone Age peoples to a complete lack of experience with representational art. While this might be true, it is not immediately convincing. Even if a Stone Age people had never seen such art, surely they would know a sheet of cloth from a body. The descriptions of their behavior make one wonder if a Guadalupe phenomenon were occurring; that they perceived an apparition of Mary that acted with animation and spoke with them. If this were so, then Mary functioned as socia Christi in an active way and not only symbolically. The New Testament records various extraordinary manifestations of the numinous breaking through the ordinary world of phenomena during the first evangelization efforts of the Twelve. The evangelization of New California occurred in a setting in many ways parallel to that of the first Christian generation. Would heaven therefore provide extraordinary assistance appropriate to these circumstances?

While Mary's patronage (sustenance and protection) provides the more dramatic stories, the ordinary modality of her assistance was her intercession (entreaty in favor of another). Mary's intercession was invoked in the missions under a variety of special titles and devotions, some of which are familiar

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26 Kurt Baer, art historian at the University of California at Santa Barbara and specialist on the Spanish Colonial art of the California missions, provided the following explanation for the behavior of the raiding party that saw the image of the Our Lady of Sorrows: "The Indian of the California missions . . . was totally unprepared for pictures that appeared to reproduce human figures with their proper, though unfamiliar coloring and strange glowing garments. These were no symbols with meaning to one whose pictorial art rarely went beyond a schematized representation of an animal form. Small wonder then, that a picture of Our Lady of Sorrows, suddenly thrust before a hostile band of San Gabriel valley Indians, was sufficient magic to make them throw down their bows and arrows. They were overwhelmed (probably more by astonishment than adoration) by the painted image of a sorrowing woman . . ." ("Spanish Colonial Art in the California Missions," *The Americas* 18 [July 1961]: 33).
to Catholics today and a few of which are not. The devotions likely to be familiar with Catholics today, and for which there is evidence from the mission era, are at least these: the Immaculate Conception (Purísimas Concepción), Our Lady of Guadalupe (Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe), Our Lady of Solitude (Nuestra Señora de Soledad), also Our Lady of Sorrows (Nuestra Señora de los Dolores), Our Lady of Bethlehem (Nuestra Señora de Belén), Our Lady of Mount Carmel (Nuestra Señora de la Cúrimen), and Our Lady of the Pillar (Nuestra Señora del Pilar). Less familiar devotions include Our Lady of Light (Nuestra Señora de la Luz) and Our Heavenly Shepherdess (La Divina Pastora María Santísima). These last two deserve a little description.

The Virgin of Light originated in Sicily in 1722, where it had been painted in accordance with a vision seen by Jesuit missionary José María Genovese. In 1732, Genovese brought it from Sicily to New Spain. It was enshrined in the cathedral of León (Guanajuato, Mexico) where it developed a reputation for wonderworking. The image depicts Mary holding the Child in the crook of her left arm. With her right hand she is snatching a man from hell. Meanwhile, the Child is leaning over her arm to select a human heart from a basketful of them being held up to Him by an angel. A version of this image found at San Diego that dates from the eighteenth century depicts as an Indian the man being saved from hell. Including the depiction of an Indian is interpreted as an attempt to indigenize the image. Similar depictions of this image are documented to have existed at other California missions. The image of Our Lady of Light was generally reproduced throughout New Spain but was little known elsewhere.27

Similarly, the devotion to the Heavenly Shepherdess was much depicted in the American colonies of Spain but almost nowhere else. There are many variations on a basic theme that depicts the Virgin, usually seated, with the Child on her lap and sheep gathered around her. They are depicted in a garden with

many beautiful flowers and with Mary petting the sheep. Variations can include a depiction of the adult Christ in the far background either as the Good Shepherd or in some other appearance. Another variation has two angels holding a crown above the Virgin's head. There are many examples of this image in the art surviving in the California missions. Serra refers to a painting of the Divine Shepherdess at Mission Carmel in his time with a condemned man depicted in the background. The devotion is interesting because it illustrates the theological principle of Mary being a reflection of Christ, like him in all things but dependent on him. He is the Good Shepherd, she is the Divine Shepherdess. He gathers the strays, provides his sheep with pasturage and protects them from predators. In her case, she is petting her sheep in a garden of colorful flowers. In some depictions, she does this in the shadow of the Good Shepherd who is present in the background. Mary is once again the socia Christi in his saving work.

IV. The Anthropology of the Evangelization

It should be obvious by now that the place afforded to Mary in the evangelization enterprise was not limited to superficial devotional practices characterized by sweet sentimentality. Quite the opposite, the devotional practices were the enculturation of doctrine and the doctrine was the representation of the immaterial realities of the faith. Mary was not extra but essential, because the nature of the Christ cannot be apprehended without her and because she has an indispensable role.

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28 Baer, Painting and Sculpture at Mission Santa Barbara (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1955). Baer writes: "The history of the devotion and portrayal of this subject—which rarely appears outside of Spanish and Spanish-Colonial Art—is interestingly related by Marie T. Walsh in her "Mission of the Passes," Santa Inés (Los Angeles: The Times-Mirror Press, 1930), 63." For a reference to the early presence of the Heavenly Shepherdess in the California missions, see Serra's Writings, ed. Tibesar, 2:311; Memorandum, August 21, 1775: "The Fathers have already received from articles arriving from California [Baja]: .... Item: a painting one vara long of the Most Blessed Mary, depicted as Our Heavenly Shepherdess [La Divina Pastora Maria Santísima]. There is represented in the background one under the sentence of condemnation."
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in the dynamics of Christian anthropology. Essential to that anthropology is the action of grace in the psyche of the individual believer as well as its influence on the culture of the group. Both the behavior of the individual believers and the culture of the society in which they live are changed over time under the influence of grace. Christ explained this influence using the image of leaven in dough. Entering the mission began a process into which one grew with time. The friars allowed a great elasticity in their criteria for conversion because they were convinced of the value of the sacraments over time in the life of the soul and in the superiority of mission life to life in the wild on any basis, whether material or moral. The friars thought they were bringing steady nutrition, sanitation, the practical arts and security from enemies, tribal and demonic, to a people formerly without them. While the evangelization of New California did not occur in a cultural vacuum; a secular social science limited to quantifiable measurement or to materialist concepts cannot apprehend the encounter of the friars with the indigenous peoples.

The California mission project lasted about seventy years, with Serra's activity in it limited to only the first fifteen of those years. This paper relies heavily on the writings by or about Serra because scholarship in support of his cause for sainthood has made them the most accessible. A book-length study would be needed to draw together the scattered documentation on the experience of the generations following Serra's life. The point is that the role afforded to Mary in the Old Missions did give evidence of change over time. While the basic outlines of the Marian doctrine were the common heritage of all Franciscans, the convictions and character of individual friars did affect how this doctrine was presented over time. Serra's leading interest was to bring as many pagans into the sacraments as quickly as possible so that God

29 Matt. 13:33—’He told them another parable. ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.’” See also Luke 13:21.
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could begin His quiet work of grace in their souls. Serra gave evidence of a practical belief in the efficacy of the sacraments to correct ills personal and social. His Marian theology reflected his fiery zeal for souls and his complete trust in Providence and in the intercession of Mary and Joseph. During this first generation, Mary assumed most clearly the active role of *socia Christi*. The leading figure during the second generation was Friar President Fermín Lasuén, a very different figure from Serra just as his times differed from those of the initial contact. Lasuén is seen by historians as the ideal administrator—patient, tactful and diffident toward higher authority. He presided over the so-called golden age of the missions in terms of their material accomplishment. The indigenous people by his time had come to take the missions as an everyday fact of life, whether they were born at one or whether they lived among the “gentile” villages in their shadow. Lasuén’s writings told less of evangelization and more of administration and extension. The number of missions doubled during his time in office, including two named for Mary; these were *La Purísima Concepción* and *Nuestra Señora de Soledad*. After Lasuén’s time, the missions entered onto troubled waters, occasioned by the Napoleonic wars and the dissolution of the *Ancien Régime* in Hispanic society. By the time of the administration of the last friar president, Francisco García-Diego, the spirit of irreligion introduced by

30 From Palou’s *Vida*, Adams ed., 64: “I never regret having founded these missions. Through our labors some souls have gone to heaven from Monterey, San Antonio, and San Diego. There is a great number of Christians to praise God. His Holy Name is more frequently on the lips of the people here than on those of many Christians. Some persons fear that from meek lambs they will turn into lions and tigers. God may permit it; but those of Monterey give us reason to expect otherwise, for after three years of experience, we find them greatly improved. The promise made by God to St. Francis, that the people, by merely looking at his children, should be converted to our holy Faith, I now see fully realized; if they are not all Christians, it is because of our want of knowledge of their language.” This excerpt is from a letter of Serra to Palou, dated August 18, 1772. In the *Vida* the text is somewhat paraphrased. For a more complete version, see Serra’s *Writings*, ed. Tibesar, 1:265-267; letter to Palou, August 18, 1772.
the Enlightenment had made itself well present on the frontier. During his tenure, García-Diego became the first bishop of California and took pride in kneeling before the president of Mexico to recite an oath of fealty to the civil constitution. He was an apostle of Mexican independence and expected the state to keep its promises of material support for his new diocese. When it did not, he found himself unable to act. Where the friars of Serra’s time had traveled on foot in the wilderness, using an image of the Virgin as protection, García-Diego was unable to conduct a visitation of his new diocese because he could not outfit his carriage. Ironically, he wrote about being better able to trust his ex-mission neophytes than his fellow citizens. Extant among his writings are a novena to the Divine Shepherdess and a decree establishing Our Lady of Refuge as the patroness of his new diocese. The advance of the generations from Serra to García-Diego tells a story of change from the seraphic fire of Serra to the bureaucratic timidity of García-Diego. Their notions of Mary changed as well from the cosmic scope of the struggle between the Serpent and the Immaculate to the cultivation of the Divine Shepherdess and of Our Lady of Refuge as a source of consolation and as a haven from difficulties.

But what about the ex-mission neophytes; what happened to their faith? Jump ahead forty years from the suppression of the missions to Victorian times. Regarding the enculturation of the faith among the mission Indians, United States Indian Agent S. S. Lawson wrote the following in a report dated August 20, 1881, about the Indians of southern California:

No active missionary labor is at present conducted among them. The greater portion of them, however, especially the older people, have had, in the years past, the benefit of Christian instruction by the Catholic Fathers, who conducted the famous Missions whose ruins are yet objects of veneration and curiosity. They have orthodox views as to morals, God, and the future life, and it is not unusual to see sacred pictures, the crucifix, and the rosary adorning the walls of their adobes and lodges.31

So in the absence of resident pastors, what did these isolated people do to retain the faith for all those years? The following description was written in 1921 by a visiting Catholic missionary:

So the Indians would assemble in their poor little chapels, which they had constructed in every hamlet of theirs, and on Sundays and holidays of obligation, or in the evenings, recite the *Doctrina Cristiana*, the Rosary and Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and other prayers. An Indian, who would act as sacristan, and also as undertaker for the dead, would lead in the prayers and the singing. His title was *Rezador*, one who leads prayer. Not infrequently a woman attended to the little altar and led in the service. She was the *Rezadora*. She would also have charge of the keys. In this way, through all the days of bitterness, the Mission Indians contrived to preserve their holy Faith.³²

While there was some evidence of perseverance in the faith among the evangelized population, it must be understood that not all former mission Indians remained faithful. It would do well to keep in mind the parable of the sower used by Christ to illustrate that the seed of the word when sown in different hearts has different results. In some hearts it never grows to fruition and in those where it does, it yields fruit to varying degrees.³³ The point of this paper is to recover the theology behind the techniques of evangelization, not to evaluate the efficacy of the missions in general.

**Conclusion**

In the initial evangelization of New California one can discern three modalities for Mary’s presence: 1) Mary in doctrine, 2) Mary as type, and 3) Mary as patron and intercessor. The friars conducting the evangelization presented Mary in the context of classical Franciscan spirituality with its focus on the crib, the cross and the tabernacle. Mary is always inseparable from Christ according to the principle: “That since the

³² Ibid.
mysteries of Jesus and Mary mutually elucidate one another they should be studied side by side."34 The neophyte population was taught to recall the events in the life of Christ with Mary and to apply these to their own lives with Mary serving as the type of the faithful. Two images of Mary proved pivotal, the Immaculate Conception and the Mother of Sorrows, the former typifying the struggle against the darkness of paganism and the latter typifying the relationship of the faithful to the mystery of the cross. In both images, Mary appeared without her Child, thereby becoming the type of discipleship for either gender rather than as the model of Christian womanhood exclusively. During the earliest years of the evangelization, the friars reported occasions where an image of Mary was associated with extraordinary events which the friars interpreted as signs of her assistance in their mission.

The Marian theology found in the missions can be characterized as a positive formulation of the Immaculate Conception for describing Mary; one that situates her ahead of us in all things pointing to God but looking back toward us. Mary is the *socia Christi* in the struggle against darkness and in turning from the dominion of Satan to that of God. There are many applications of Marian devotion to the believer’s personal spiritual life. These include perspectives compatible with the personalism of Pope John Paul II, in that Mary’s motherhood is personal and unique in its application to each Christian. The mysteries of the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph are presented for adhesion rather than assent. The believer does not engage in intellectual propositions about them. Rather, the individual accepts them as historic fact, enters into them with his/her whole person through liturgical acts, and adheres to them in his/her personal life. Thus the Catholic faith is presented as an organic whole encompassed in the mysteries of the life of Jesus lived with Mary and Joseph. The actions of living in this world—of family life, of walking on a journey, of eating and drinking, of suffering and dying—provided the anthropological link from personal life to the Faith for the neophyte in New California. Or, as the friars of old would say: *Viva Jesús, María y José!*