

St. Francis and St. Dominic, as has been remarked, enjoyed a beautiful friendship on earth, a friendship that furnished a theme for much of the art and poetry of the older days. Some erratic religious enthusiasts of our time, however, have undertaken to change all that by setting up these two saints as types of opposing principles of religion. The cult of St. Francis has become fashionable in certain cultured circles. There is, in fact, an International Society of Franciscan Studies. This is something to be commended. The gentle mystic of Assisi is worthy of all the veneration that can be shown him, and the example of a life such as his, is, indeed, much needed by our men of to-day. But, unfortunately, the St. Francis portrayed by these Franciscan devotees is little more than a travesty.

The pamphleteers and lecturers on Franciscan subjects have, for the most part, imbibed their erroneous notions of the seraphic saint from Paul Sabatier's biography of St. Francis. Sabatier, though, no doubt, a sincere and devout admirer of the saint, uses his life to bolster up the theory of a time-long conflict between priest and prophet — a theory closely related to the recently condemned "Modernism." The prophet, of course, is taken as the type of the personally inspired, who is a religion unto himself. The priest is the type of orthodoxy, the obedient member of an organized church. By Sabatier and those who have been influenced by his doctrine, St. Francis is taken as one of the most notable examples of the prophet, standing above pope and council, and getting his religion by direct communication from the Almighty. St. Dominic, of course, is made to represent the priest, who gets his religion from the organized church. It would be going beyond the limits of this paper to undertake to show the fallacy of the theory of conflict between prophet and priest. But that St. Francis should be represented as a type of unorthodoxy and a protestant of the most liberal stripe, shows that his life has been lamentably misinterpreted by his pretended disciples. In their efforts to create a popularity for him, they have made him, as Fr. Robinson says, an absurdity and a chimera, a sort of "canonized paradox."

No one outside the Catholic Church, unfamiliar with its teaching and out of sympathy with its spirit, can properly understand St. Francis, much less portray him. A beautiful poetry clusters about the incidents of his life. But the namby-pamby talk of literary dilettanti about his love for nature and the birds and beasts of the field, gives one the impression that he was little more than a pantheist. St. Francis' love for the creatures of the earth is, indeed,