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Saint Louis, Saint Francis and the Leprous Monk at Royaumont

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This paper will examine the account of Saint Louis' meeting with a leprous monk at Royaumont, as recorded by William of Saint-Pathus. It will consider what the report can tell us about Louis' personal religiosity, how this relates to the tradition of healing by the Royal Touch and how it illustrates the extent to which his attitude towards sickness differed from the attitudes of his entourage. The paper will also address how the incident neatly illustrates Saint Louis' relationship with, and admiration for, the Franciscan Order, and the inferred parallels between Saint Louis and Saint Francis.

William of Saint-Pathus, a Franciscan, was confessor to Louis' widow, Margaret of Provence, from 1277 until her death in 1295, and then confessor to their daughter, Blanche, until 1314; it is not known that he ever met Louis. His hagiography, *Vie de Saint Louis*, was written very early in the fourteenth century at the request of Blanche, and used as its source the accounts from the commission into Louis' canonisation.² Saint-Pathus made it clear in the introduction to his text that he had been asked to record only the documents he had seen and the events attested to during the inquest.³ Although not explicitly stated, the canonisation process would also have relied on two earlier biographies written by Louis' confessor, Geoffrey of Beaulieu and his chaplain, William of Chartres, both members of the Dominican order. These were both written shortly after Louis' death in anticipation of his canonisation, and many of the details found in their texts also feature in the text of Saint-Pathus.

Although Saint-Pathus's original Latin text no longer exists, a French translation from the early fourteenth century has survived, and Saint-Pathus' *Vie* can therefore be read as a reliable source of information about the canonisation proceedings. William's position in the royal household allowed him access to the original documents from the Roman court. These documents were retained by the Franciscans in Paris, to enable anyone to check William's accounts of Louis' life and miracles.⁴ It contains the official account of

¹ Katie Phillips is an AHRC funded PhD student in her second year at the University of Reading.

² Guillaume de Saint-Pathus. *La Vie et les Miracles de Monseigneur Saint-Louis*. d'Espagne, M. C. (ed. & trans.) (Paris, 1971) p.16.

³ Ibid. p.17.

⁴ Ibid. p.17.

Louis' life used by the commission, as well as the 65 miracles accounted for in the 27 years following his death. Also included is a list of the witnesses to the canonisation proceedings. These included Louis' relations: his grandson, King Philip IV of France, his son Peter, Count of Alençon, and his brother Charles of Anjou; the bishops of Evreux and Senlis; members of the Dominican Order; the abbot of St Denis; monks from Royaumont and Chaalis; nuns from the hospitals at Vernon and Compiègne; members of the aristocracy, and officials from his household, such as his cook, surgeon and valets.⁵ The approximate ages of many of the witnesses are also noted, providing confirmation that these people were old enough to have known Louis personally.

The nature of the sources used obviously means that 'the saint is only seen through the writing about the saint as saint', and this is emphasised by the format chosen by Saint-Pathus.⁶ The presentation of his life and subsequent miracles, as well as some of the introductory text, is identical to that used by Bonaventure in his *Legenda Maior* of Saint Francis, which had been written in the 1260s.⁷ Instead of offering the reader a chronological narrative, the *Vie*, as was common for hagiographies, is divided into thematic chapters, each offering examples of the ways in which Louis fulfilled the virtues of a saint, just as Bonaventure had done for Saint Francis.⁸

By far the longest chapter in the *Vie* is the eleventh chapter, which records Louis' acts of mercy. There are detailed accounts of the king personally feeding those in need – the poor, the blind, and, of the sick, choosing the 'most disgusting' to be brought to him so he could serve them.⁹ He washed the feet of the poor, and gave alms to anyone in need. Large sums of money were given to religious orders, particularly the Franciscans and Dominicans; a hospital for 300 blind people was built in Paris, and other hospitals were founded and extended.¹⁰ Whilst on his first crusade he personally helped to bury the bodies of Christians who had been killed by the Muslims. After his return to France, he assisted the widows of those men, whom he described as 'martyrs'.¹¹ At the opening of

⁵ Ibid. pp.18-20.

⁶ Bartlett, R. *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ. 2014) p.519.

⁷ Gaposchkin, C.M. *The Making of Saint Louis: Kingship, Sanctity, and Crusade in the Later Middle Ages*, (New York. 2008) p.39.

⁸ Bartlett. *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?* p.518.

⁹ Guillaume de Saint-Pathus. *Vie*. p.59.

¹⁰ Ibid. p.60.

¹¹ Ibid. p.68.

the Maison-Dieu at Compiègne, which Louis himself had founded, he and Theobald of Navarre, his son-in-law, carried in the first patient themselves.¹²

On Fridays and Saturdays Louis liked to visit Royaumont, the Cistercian abbey founded by himself and his mother, Blanche of Castile, following the death of Louis' father, Louis VIII. During his visits, Louis would eat at the abbot's table. If he visited on other days he would help to serve food to the monks and would test the wine to ensure it was drinkable.¹³ The *Vie* also recounts in detail Louis' habit of visiting the sick at Royaumont. He would visit each of the monks in the infirmary, take their pulse and touch their temples, and ask the doctors to check the patients' urine in his presence. Apparently the more serious a patient's illness was, the more willing the king was to touch them.¹⁴

Saint-Pathus describes, in great detail, a visit to a particular deacon, Frère Léger, a leper who lived in a house separate from the other monks.¹⁵ On the occasion of this particular visit, Frère Léger's illness had progressed so far that he was abominable to look at: he could barely see, he had lost his nose, his lips were cracked and inflamed, and his eyelids were red and hideous. When Louis and the abbot arrived at his residence, Louis' other attendants having been kept behind, the leper was eating pork. Louis proceeded to kneel in front of the man, and to cut his meat for him, and to feed him. The abbot also knelt, out of reverence for the holy king, although apparently watching Louis' actions with some horror.

Louis then requested roast partridge and chicken to be brought. When he fed salted partridge to the leper, the salt caused blood to run from his cracked lips. Undeterred, Louis began to wipe the salt from the meat and continued to feed the sick monk. William reported that Louis visited this man often. He would say to his knights, 'Let's visit our sick man,' however he was only ever accompanied by the abbot. According to the text there was another leprous monk at Royaumont whom he also visited several times, although no further details are provided about his condition or circumstances. The *Vie* also details Louis' visit to other sick people to whom he would feed soup and wipe their lips with a towel that he carried with him. A patient at the Maison-Dieu in Paris had blood running from his nostrils, which Louis wiped away himself, then left the

¹² Ibid. p.67.

¹³ Ibid. p.61.

¹⁴ Ibid. p.67.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.65.

towel with the sick man.¹⁶ At the Maison-Dieu at Compiègne, Louis fed pear to a man suffering from scrofulas on his face.¹⁷ So much pus ran from the wounds that Louis had to wash his hands twice whilst feeding him. On some of these occasions at least, Louis was accompanied by his sergeants, who were reportedly horrified, and amazed that he could bear it. Sometimes the stench of the sickroom was so bad that they were forced to leave, whilst the king continued to serve food to the infirm as if he smelt nothing.¹⁸ It is possible that Louis did not have a sense of smell – William of Chartres graphically recounted the burial of the putrefied body parts of slain crusaders in Sidon, in Lebanon, during which Louis was the only person who did not have to cover his nose to block out the smell.¹⁹ Alternatively, he possibly succeeded in disguising any horror or nausea he felt, in order to set an example to his fellow crusaders.

The account of Louis' visits to the leprous Frère Léger was included in Pope Boniface VIII's canonisation bull of 1297.²⁰ The episode was also recorded within a series of readings produced by the Dominican house in Évreux in around 1298, if not slightly earlier.²¹ Visual records of the encounter were later included as iconography in Books of Hours that included the Hours of Louis, in stained glass windows and in altar paintings.²² It did not, however, feature in the biographies by Geoffrey of Beaulieu and William of Chartres, written prior to the canonisation proceedings.

It is notable from the accounts in Saint-Pathus' text that Louis' attitude towards diseased and deformed bodies was not shared by his contemporaries. The abbot of Royaumont appears to have been horrified that Louis could approach the leper without any obvious revulsion; the canonisation bull reported that the abbot actually broke out in groans and tears and could barely watch.²³ William reports that the abbot knelt by the leper's bedside, out of reverence for the holy king. Louis, however, was performing his act of charity out of reverence for the leper and for what he represented. He advised the leprous monk to be patient, as he was suffering purgatory on earth, and it was far better

¹⁶ Guillaume de Saint-Pathus. *Vie*. p.67.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.67.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.66.

¹⁹ William of Chartres. 'De Vita et Actibus regis Francorum Ludovici...auctore Guillelmo Carnotensi' in *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. 20. Bouquet, M. et al. (eds.) (Paris. 1840) pp.27-40, pp.31-2.

²⁰ 'Bonifacii VIII bulla et sermones de canonisatione sancti Ludovici regis Francorum' in *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. 23. de Wailly, N., Delisle L. and Jourdain C. (eds.) (Paris. 1876) pp.148-160, p.150.

²¹ *Ibid.* p.163.

²² Gaposchkin. *The Making of Saint Louis*. p.74, p.213.

²³ 'Bonifacii VIII bulla et sermones'. p.163.

to suffer during life rather than in the long period after death.²⁴ This belief was echoed in Jean de Joinville's *Vie de Saint Louis*; Joinville, when asked by Louis if he would prefer to be a leper or to be in mortal sin, chose the latter, to which Louis responded by saying that it was far preferable to have a leprous body, knowing that you were suffering for your sins before death, than to die with your soul in mortal sin, not knowing if you would ever be able to repent fully.²⁵ Louis' perception of leprosy reflects the ambiguous way in which people reacted to the disease; despite the unpleasant, even repulsive, physical symptoms of the sufferers, the disease was closely linked to Christ. The veneration of Christ himself as being almost a leper, *Christus quasi leprosus*, which will be examined further below, elevated lepers to a spiritual level above that of their peers. They became the 'poor of Christ' – *pauperes Christi*.²⁶ By understanding the disease as a spiritual blessing, the leprous were, to some extent, were accorded a higher status than sufferers afflicted with other diseases.

The obvious motivation for Louis' visits to the sick is religious devotion, but it is not apparent whether he wanted this devotion to be made public. Saint-Pathus records that very few people would accompany him on his visits to the sick, as he often did not want even his private advisors to know what he was doing, suggesting that he was not greatly concerned about setting an example to his entourage, despite being in a position to do so.²⁷ He also reports that Louis gave money 'secretly' to the mendicant orders and to other religious orders.²⁸ William of Chartres records Louis washing the filthy feet of a pauper, who was at first unaware of the identity of the man in front of him, as Louis did not attempt to make himself known.²⁹ The decision to exercise such discretion, and not to advertise his charity, was undoubtedly taken out of pure humility, however the appearance of so many similar stories after Louis' death suggests that the incidents were being recorded during Louis' lifetime, perhaps in early anticipation of his future canonisation. As one of Louis' confessors, it may be that William of Chartres was privy to information that Louis did not wish to be made public, but which William deemed it appropriate to share following Louis' death. Although William of Chartres' account was

²⁴ Guillaume de Saint-Pathus. *Vie*. p.66.

²⁵ Jean de Joinville. *Vie de Saint Louis*. J. Monfrin (ed.) (Paris. 1998) pp.13-15.

²⁶ Rawcliffe, C. *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Woodbridge. 2006) p.160.

²⁷ Guillaume de Saint-Pathus. *Vie*. p.58.

²⁸ *Ibid*. p.60.

²⁹ William of Chartres. 'Vita'. p.35.

not explicitly referred to in Saint-Pathus' text, the presence of a number of Dominicans at the canonisation proceedings may have ensured the disclosure of this knowledge.

The text offers some information about the treatment of lepers. As a recent royal foundation, the abbey at Royaumont was obviously a very wealthy institution, a fact borne out by the report that it was customary for the lepers to eat meat, and the ready availability of partridge and chicken in the kitchen. The infirmary at Royaumont appears to have cared only for its own monks. Unlike the institutions run by the mendicant orders, the Cistercians would not generally welcome outsiders into its environment. How the lepers were housed is not clear; Saint-Pathus described the deacon's residence as a 'house' separate from the infirmary, whereas Boniface VIII's canonisation bull referred to him being segregated in his own room within the monastery.³⁰ Either way, their accommodation was away from the rest of the monks, although certainly still within the abbey grounds, and they were cared for by their fellow monks or lay brothers.

Louis' care for the sick, and for the lepers in particular, is strongly linked to the original rules of the Franciscan order. Both the Dominicans and the Franciscans were supported by the French royal family from their first arrival in Paris, and Louis' children were educated by the Dominicans, even while they were resident at the Cistercian Royaumont.³¹ Geoffrey of Beaulieu's *Vita* related Louis' desire to join one of the mendicant orders, although he could not choose between the two and he was strongly discouraged from joining either by his wife, who reminded him of his duties as a king.³² Isabelle, Louis' sister, founded Longchamp, a religious house for women affiliated with the Franciscan order which received a great deal of financial support from Louis. Margaret of Provence founded the convent of St Marcel at Lourcines for Franciscan women, to which Louis' daughter, Blanche, retired after the death of her husband.³³ Bonaventure, the Franciscan biographer of St Francis, preached several times at Louis' newly founded Sainte-Chapelle in Paris.³⁴

³⁰ 'Bonifacii VIII bulla et sermones'. p.157.

³¹ Lawrence, C.H. *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society* (London, 1994) p.166.

³² Geoffrey of Beaulieu. 'Vita Sancti Ludovici Auctore Gaufrido de Belloloco' in *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. 20. Bouquet, M. et al. (eds.) (Paris, 1840) pp.1-26, p.7.

³³ Gaposchkin. *The Making of Saint Louis*. p.156.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p.155.

Saint Francis's first biographer, Thomas of Celano, recounted how a meeting with a leper formed one of the steps of Francis's conversion to faith. Despite his horror at the physical appearance of the leper he met while riding one day, Francis nevertheless judged it to be his duty to approach the man. Having kissed him and given him money, Francis rode away, only to turn round and find that the leper had disappeared. 'Filled with joy and wonder', Francis was prompted to repeat the act, eagerly seeking out lepers to whom he could give care and alms.³⁵ This interest in caring for the sick, and lepers in particular, became one of the founding principles by which he, and the initial followers of his order, lived.

Between 1221 and 1223, at the request of Pope Honorius III and Cardinal Ugolino (later Pope Gregory IX), the rules of the order had been amended, and rewritten into a more codified, legalistic text. Although the essence of the rules did not change, the new text omitted all previous mention of the care that should be given to lepers, and although begging was praised, the text removed the original context, which stated: 'They must be happy to be among people of low condition and of no account, among the poor and the weak, the sick, the lepers and the street beggars.'³⁶ Here we can see how Saint Louis fully characterised Francis's vision for his order. Louis actively sought out the sickest and weakest in order to bestow charity and to show them mercy. By showing so much love towards lepers, Louis displayed the ideals that had defined Saint Francis's sanctity.

After the amendment of the order's rule by the Pope, Francis wrote his *Testament*, a text intended to accompany the rule, and possibly an attempt to re-introduce some of the themes that had recently been excised. This included a reference to the grace he had experienced from caring for lepers: 'when I was in sin, it seemed to me too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body.'³⁷ This sweetness of soul and body is evidently what Louis either experienced, or aspired to experience in his visits. There is no evidence that Louis had ever suffered the same revulsion that Francis had, but Louis had Francis's example as a guide, teaching him the appropriate way to deal with the sick. Although the nature of the Franciscan order changed throughout the thirteenth century, with less emphasis on poverty and

³⁵ Armstrong, R. Hellmann, J., Short, W. (eds.). *The Francis Trilogy of Thomas of Celano* (Hyde Park, NY. 2004) pp.166-7.

³⁶ Le Goff, J. *Saint Francis of Assisi* (London. 2004) p.48.

³⁷ Armstrong, R., Hellmann, J., Short, W. (eds.). *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents; Vol. 1: The Saint* (New York. 2003) p.124.

caring and a greater emphasis on learning and preaching, the absolute importance to Francis of tending to the sick and the poor was one that Louis appears to have adhered to throughout his lifetime.

The notion of Jesus Christ appearing in the form of a leper, as witnessed by Saint Francis, had already been reported in France in the twelfth century, and further incidents were recorded elsewhere in Europe in the thirteenth century. Walter Map recounted Theobald II of Champagne's visits to a particular leper; he arrived one day to find him, surprisingly, healed.³⁸ Instead of the usual stench of the leper's sores, Theobald instead smelt 'a sweet odour of spices.' He did not ask any questions except to enquire how he was feeling, to which the leper replied that he was feeling very well. Having given the leper his blessing, Theobald departed in search of the local reeve to thank him for his care. The reeve responded that he had done all that he could during his life, and then had given him a proper funeral. Astounded, Theobald visited the leper's tomb, then returned to the dwelling, where he found only an empty hut, upon which he rejoiced in having seen Christ.

Another representation of a leper as Christ was reported to have taken place in Hungary in the early thirteenth century. Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, a princess, lived a highly religious life after the death of her husband, until her own death in 1231.³⁹ According to the Dominican friar Thomas of Chartres, she allowed a leper into her room to wash his feet, then let him rest in her bed. Hearing about this, her father went to the room in anger and pulled back the covers, only to find the bed filled with beautiful, sweet-smelling roses, the sight of which persuaded him to convert to Christianity. Variations on this tale included the husband instead of the father, and the crucified Christ in the bed instead of the roses. Although Elizabeth's death occurred only a few years after the death of Saint Francis, the Franciscans had first been sent to Hungary in 1219, and Elizabeth was certainly aware of Saint Francis and his influence in the west.⁴⁰ A few years prior to her death, she founded the Saint Francis hospice for lepers at Marburg, where she spent the last four years of her life tending to lepers.⁴¹ Her confessor, Konrad of Marburg, although neither a Dominican nor a Franciscan, was a well-educated priest,

³⁸ Walter Map. *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*. James, M.R., Brooke, C.N.L., and Mynors, R.A.B. (eds. & trans.) (Oxford, 1983) pp.462-5.

³⁹ Klaniczay, G. *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge, 2002) pp.371-2.

⁴⁰ Brooke, R.B. *The Coming of the Friars* (London, 1975) p.206.

⁴¹ Klaniczay. *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*. p.203.

who had probably studied at Paris or Bologna where he would have had contact with the mendicant orders. Interestingly, Joinville recounted the arrival of an 18 year old at the Capetian court in 1241 who was said to be Elizabeth's son. Blanche of Castile kissed him devotedly on the forehead because she was sure that his mother had kissed him there many times, demonstrating also that tales of Elizabeth's sanctity had reached Paris within a few years of her death.⁴²

The miraculous elements in the tales of Theobald of Champagne, Saint Elizabeth and Saint Francis, are not found in any of Saint Louis' encounters with the sick. Saint-Pathus' *Vie* is instead a display of Louis as the epitome of the king as Christ's representative on earth; the lay monarch mirroring the humility and charity of Jesus Christ, washing and feeding the sick. Unlike Saint Francis, Louis was not reported to have either performed or witnessed any miracles during his life, however this is reflective of the more rigorous canonisation process of the thirteenth century. Notwithstanding the extremely rapid canonisation of Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, the papacies of Innocent III and Gregory IX fostered a more cautious approach to the recognition of sainthood, and emphasis was placed on works of piety performed during life, and miracles only after death.⁴³

The absence of any miracles during Louis' life raises questions about the use of, and the belief in, the Royal Touch during the thirteenth century and its association with leprosy. Reports of Louis' use of the Royal Touch were not circulated until after his death. Thaumaturgy, the power of English and French kings to heal scrofula by touching the afflicted and reciting holy words, can possibly be traced back to Edward the Confessor in England, and to Robert the Pious in the early eleventh century in France.⁴⁴ The definition and translation of scrofula from the original texts, however, is ambiguous enough to potentially refer to a number of illnesses.⁴⁵ The original classical Latin term, *morbus regius*, which translates literally as 'royal disease', came to refer to both jaundice and leprosy; by the twelfth century, the term was being used to refer principally to leprosy and other disfiguring skin conditions.⁴⁶ William of Malmesbury explicitly equated *morbus regius* with leprosy in the early twelfth century.⁴⁷ In the middle of the thirteenth century the term began to be used to identify scrofula, a glandular inflammation; the term was

⁴² Jean de Joinville. *Vie de Saint Louis*. p.48.

⁴³ Vauchez, A. *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*. Birrel, J. (trans.) (Cambridge. 1997) p.36.

⁴⁴ Barlow, F. 'The King's Evil' *The English Historical Review* vol.95 (1980) pp.3-27, p.14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p.4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.6.

also used to apply to facial swellings and discharges, such as those suffered by the sick man fed by Louis at Compiègne. Even in Saint-Pathus' accounts of Louis' miracles after his death, the names of illnesses, including those believed to be curable by the late king's intervention, are interchangeable. Geoffrey of Beaulieu's *Vita* describes Louis touching sick people affected by *scrolæ*, and Saint-Pathus repeats this, reporting that each day after Mass, people suffering from *écrouelles* – scurvy or scrofula – would spend the night in the king's house, and would be brought before Louis the following morning so that he could touch them.⁴⁸

Although the medical terms are ambiguous, Louis' contemporaries did apparently believe that he had inherited his predecessors' ability to heal by touch. A clear example of this belief can be found in the life of Saint Thomas Hélie of Biville, in Normandy, written in the thirteenth century. One of the miracles ascribed to Saint Thomas, who died in 1257, at the height of Louis' reign, concerned a girl, suffering from scrofula, whom the surgeons had been too fearful to treat, scrofula being a disease traditionally healed by the king's divine hands.⁴⁹ Louis' encounters with the scrofulous and the leprous can be viewed within this tradition.

Geoffrey of Beaulieu's *Vita* confirms the belief that the kings of France were bestowed with the gift of healing by the Lord, and in this Louis wished to observe the manner of his predecessors.⁵⁰ The *Vita* describes Louis touching the affected part of the body, whilst reciting holy words and making the sign of the cross, so that subsequent healing would be attributed to the power of the cross rather than to the majesty of the king. No accounts of Louis' life, however, report any incidents of people being cured by his touch. Perhaps the healing was implied in Louis' contact with the sick, and his biographers did not feel the need to report it, or alternatively, as Marc Bloch has suggested, the authority of the Church and its continued support for the Gregorian reform of the eleventh century continued to suppress any suggestion that temporal rulers could hold any sacerdotal or miraculous powers.⁵¹ Boniface VIII's canonisation bull perhaps alluded to the power subtly, suggesting that the saint had made justice, not only by example, but

⁴⁸ Geoffrey of Beaulieu. 'Vita'. p.20; Guillaume de Saint-Pathus. *La Vie et les Miracles de Monseigneur Saint-Louis*. p.67.

⁴⁹ 'Vita et Miracula Beati Thomæ Helii auctore Clemente' in *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. 23. de Wailly, N., Delisle, L. and Jourdain, C. (eds.) (Paris. 1876) pp.557-568, p.565.

⁵⁰ Geoffrey of Beaulieu. 'Vita'. p.20.

⁵¹ Bloch, M. *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*. Anderson, J. (trans.) (London. 1973) p.72.

also by *tactum*, which could be translated as either 'influence', or as 'touch', but he did not go any further in allowing Louis this ability.⁵²

It is very interesting that despite the extensive description by Saint-Pathus of this meeting between Louis and the leprous monk, such detail is absent in the other extant biographies. William of Chartres made no reference at all to the leper at Royaumont; Geoffrey of Beaulieu referred only to Louis washing the leper's feet. Saint-Pathus and the canonisation bull both record that the abbot of Royaumont was present at these meetings, and we know that members of Louis' entourage were aware of them, and although they were not present in the room on this occasion, they certainly witnessed him ministering to other sick people in a similar fashion. As Louis' confessor and chaplain, William and Geoffrey would also have been aware of it – Geoffrey reported that if Louis was unable personally to attend to the sick, he would sometimes ask his confessors to serve them on his behalf.⁵³ It is possible that the incident came to light as a result of the presence of Brothers Adam and Girart, monks from Royaumont, at the canonisation proceedings in Rome; it does not appear to have been written about before this time.

The most likely reason for this would appear to be the background of the biographers themselves. William of Chartres and Geoffrey of Beaulieu were both members of the Dominican order, and given their personal relationships with Louis, and his family's long-standing support for their order, it is unsurprising that they should promote the idea of Louis' sanctity in all aspects of his life even before papal approval of his canonisation had been given – Geoffrey of Beaulieu had been asked to write the life of Louis by Pope Gregory X in 1272, in anticipation of the canonisation proceedings.⁵⁴ It is important to note, however, that Cecilia Gaposchkin's analysis of the texts produced by the Dominicans for the royal entourage in the second half of the thirteenth century shows them to be principally pedagogical, instructing in the subject of ideal kingship, and written in order to be read and understood as such by Louis' successors.⁵⁵ This theme was repeated in Dominican sermons in the fourteenth century, which stressed the desired royal qualities of justice and wisdom and the sanctity bestowed on the king by the possession of these qualities.

⁵² 'Bonifacii VIII bulla et sermones'. p.149.

⁵³ Geoffrey of Beaulieu. 'Vita'. p.6.

⁵⁴ Le Goff, J. *Saint Louis* (Paris. 1996). p.333.

⁵⁵ Gaposchkin. *The Making of Saint Louis*. p.119.

As a Franciscan, however, Saint-Pathus, seems to have had a different motive. He placed a great deal more emphasis on Louis' interest in personally ministering to individuals suffering from disease, particularly leprosy, and those in poverty. Saint-Pathus demonstrates how Louis' personal religiosity enabled him to carry out acts of compassion and mercy above and beyond those commonly performed by his contemporaries. This is a clear reflection of the deeds of Saint Francis; it was not uncommon for saints to use other saints' lives as exemplars.⁵⁶ The resemblance is reinforced by Saint-Pathus' decision to mirror the format of Bonaventure's biography. Saint Francis's exhortations to his followers to take particular care to minister to the leprous, the sick and the poor were in turn reminiscent of Jesus's care for the same people. William of Saint-Pathus' biography can be understood as a work intended to emphasise the close connection between the newly sainted king, Saint Francis, and Jesus Christ.

⁵⁶ Bartlett. *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?* pp.511-2.

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