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The Sweet and Gentle Struggle: Francis de Sales on the Necessity of Spiritual Friendship (2014 eBook Version)

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The Sweet and Gentle Struggle: Francis de Sales
on the Necessity of Spiritual Friendship

Terence A. McGoldrick

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Preface to the 2014 eBook version

I am happy to be able to make my monograph available after being out of print for many years, with the permission of its publisher, University Press of America. This eBook was first published as my dissertation for the Theology Faculty at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. The dissertation was defended in 1994 under the direction of Guy Bedouelle O.P. and Servais Pinckaers, O.P. in partial fulfillment of the Doctorate in Sacred Theology. The book was substantially revised from the original dissertation thesis and published in 1996. I have since published two articles on Marriage in *Salesianum*, which include new research that I have not added to this new version of *The Sweet and Gentle Struggle*. I have however, taken this opportunity to rewrite the conclusion of my monograph, to allude to some of what I consider the more significant factors of recent Salesian scholarship that bear upon the book's major claims. This is not to be considered a updating with the many of years of Salesian scholarship that have been produced since 1996, yet I have been abreast to those developments and felt it important to make a few points, particularly regarding the historical context of the Early Modern Church and its influence on Francis de Sales. A more developed treatment of that research can be found in my later writings, as well as those yet to come.

I wish to thank my colleagues of the International Commission for Salesian Studies for their part in my own development as a scholar of Francis de Sales and the Early Modern Church, particularly Wendy Wright, Thomas Donlan, Eunan McDonnel, S.D.B, Joseph Boenzi, S.D.B, Alexander Pocetto O.S.F.S. and Joseph Corphenning O.S.F.S. I wish to also thank Mark Caprio and Christiane Marie Landry of the Providence College Library for their assistance in transferring the monograph to digital form and making it available to the commons of researchers across the globe for the first time.

- Dr. Terence McGoldrick, 2014

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I

A Word about The Doctor of Love's Sources

Francis de Sales credits a plethora of sources in his many volumes of writings. The printing press was flooding the world with books for the first time, making masters of wisdom from Antiquity and the Fathers of Christianity available like they had never been before. However, there are only a few that are significant for our subject. A Jesuit scholar, Fr. A. Liuima, spent more than 10 years investigating the sources of Francis' *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu* and after two volumes was still not satisfied that he had exhausted them.¹ But even if we could somehow identify the source of every thought beyond those he chooses to cite, would that really gain our study insight into his own thought? He contends there is nothing new in his writings, which is a powerful argument against the tremors his innovations caused in certain circles of his generation.² If there was really nothing original in his thought, however, *The Introduction to The Devout Life* would not have seen more than 40 printings in his lifetime. It was a sensation because it said

¹Cfr. The preface to A. Liuima's, *Aux sources du Traité de l'Amour de Dieu de saint François de Sales*. Libraria editrice of the Gregorian University, Rome 1959, 2 vols.

²"Je ne dis rien que je n'aye appris des autres." *Oeuvres...IV*, p.10. He repeats it in the preface to *la Déclaration mystique sur le Cantique des Cantiques*, *Oeuvres...XXVI*, p.14; and again in his preface to *des Controverses*. *Oeuvres...I*, p.13.

old things in new ways, and made perfection's ivory towers attainable for even simple folk. Exactly how his thought might be original is not our purpose, although we do scan the question and make some general conclusions.

The first part of the present work regroups four principal sources in chronological order: Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, and Aelred of Rievaulx. Of these Cicero is least important in Salesian thought, yet since Cicero is a basis for Augustine and Aelred, we have included a brief exposé on his key contributions to the subject. Aristotle is capital for understanding the anatomy of friendship, but since his ideas alone could be the subject of a thesis, we have limited the first chapter to the texts Francis de Sales uses to make some fundamental points on friendship, and have attempted in doing so to show the Philosopher's thought explaining these key notions. As for the second pillar, Augustine, we have begun with an explanation of the instances where the Bishop of Geneva cites him to show his influence, and then to explain the notions evoked explicitly within the Bishop of Hippo's general scheme of thought, because it is so fundamental to the Christian, and especially the Salesian, adaptation of Antiquity's philosophical ideal. And finally, the chapter on Aelred is a lesser-known source that has a more moral and practical tone, which even though Francis only cites his work once, he must have found it agreeable to his own temperament. Scripture's influence is omnipresent, but his usage of the sacred texts is very different than modern exegesis, as we will see in detail.

There are of course other influences. He cites for example Gregory and Basil's friendship. Neither of them wrote anything on friendship, and what we might cull from their letters adds nothing significant to the four chapters already included. One might also ask why we have not included a chapter on St. Bernard, who he also cites. Bernard's ideas, especially on love and the relationship between the soul and God, as lover and beloved, mark the whole of Salesian interpretation of the interior life, which will become apparent as the study develops. Bernard too had many friendships, and in fact was the one to suggest that Aelred write his work *On Spiritual Friendship*. From this we can conclude two things relevant to our study; first, St. Bernard believed friendship important for Christian life -- even as a religious; and secondly, his ideas were much in accord with Aelred, his friend and the one he encouraged to write something on the subject. For this reason, Bernard's thought and the Cistercian tradition is best revealed through Aelred. St. Thomas is not a source for our subject, at least not explicitly, although there are clearly points the two authors hold in

common. Their emphasis was markedly different. This will be briefly shown in a few of pages of comparison between the Angelic Doctor and our author, which will serve to highlight his originality on the subject. Francis cites Plato, Seneca, Jerome and Ambrose as well, all of whom wrote something on friendship, but these too are not significantly different from the major representative authors we have chosen to treat.

The influences on Francis de Sales is a delicate question. First because he cites who he wants to cite, he isn't obliged to be as careful as a professor, like St. Thomas, for example, to give credit to every source, although he often does so.³ Secondly, because, just as with Scripture, he has integrated what he has learned. His Christianity and interior life digested the entire Christian message into his being. He was fluent in every spiritual movement of his times, and passionately studied theology for most his life. The little nuances we may be able to trace originating from one Father or another don't really tell us as much about his understanding of friendship as his life and his own words. That is why we have judged it enough to consider the main figures, the wells of ideas for many generations, to set the background for Salesian friendship. Their influences are noteworthy, but everything he acquired, even from them, was governed by his own unique personality and experience that shaped his distinct worldview. As a saint and a mystic obedient to the Church, he was a master in his own right on Christian living, as we are about to discover.

³Francis would have most certainly known, for example, Raymond Lulle's *The Book of the Lover and the Beloved*, which Montaigne cites in his praises to his friend Raymond Sebonde in his *Essais*. Lulle's work was translated three times in France between 1585 and 1627. Cfr. *Historia de la philosophia española*, T. and G. Carreras y Artau, t. 2, Madrid, 1943, p.290. See too, R. Sugranyes de Franch, "Raymond Lulle Docteur des Missions," in *Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire*, Schöneck-Beckenried, Switzerland, 1954.

II

The Salesian Usage of Scripture

A weaver of images

As Francis de Sales himself says, in his note to the reader that he added to the second and third editions of his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, “When I use the words of Scripture it is not always to explain them, but to explain myself by means of them, more venerably and fondly.”¹ One might wonder why he felt it important to add that note for the later editions of his work. It comes just after an apologetic remark which says that his work is still without citations and full of typographical errors. His intention, he explains, is to edify the reader. This is the first thing to understand when considering his use of the Bible.

In his study of the Doctor of love’s sources, Antanas Liuima devotes nearly 170 pages to our author’s usage of Scripture in his *Traité de l’amour de Dieu*.² His study shows that the Doctor of love’s method is

¹ “Quand j’use des paroles de l’Ecriture ce n’est pas tousjours pour les expliquer, mais pour m’expliquer par icelles, comme plus aimables et venerables.” *Oeuvres*...III p.2.

²Cfr. A.Liuima, *Aux sources du Traité de l’Amour de Dieu de saint François de Sales*. Libraria editrice of the Gregorian University, Rome 1959, 2 vols, pp.515-678.

very different from modern exegesis. He follows the spirit and not the letter of the sacred texts.³ As Fr. Liuima summarizes, “he cites, he paraphrases, he makes allusions, he freely works with ideas and images without concern for any literal exactitude.”⁴ He relies on Scripture for images to express what he is trying to communicate, often completely abstracting them from their meaning in context because, as Dom Mackey, one of the chief editors of the Annecy critical edition of Francis’ works points out, “he is straining to express his thoughts and feelings, combing Scripture for images that adequately portray his message”.⁵ His *Traité*, like his other works, is a great synthesis. Scripture has become proper to his soul, lived daily at the most intimate level of his heart. “One would say,” Fr. Liuima remarks, “that he perfectly apprehends the spirit of Holy Scripture and detaches it from the letter of the text.”⁶ Francis uses Scripture to embellish his exposition with images much the same way the Fathers of the Church do. He was fondest of Scripture’s spiritual sense, where he could develop allegories and draw a moral lesson.⁷ This is why he favors the rich imagery of the Old Testament books such as *Genesis*, the *Psalms* and *Song of Songs*,⁸ while doctrinal texts are rare. They are full of persons, narration and images.⁹ Indeed, he clearly prefers the imagery over the sense of the texts he employs. He believed this an excellent pedagogical method. “There is a secret here that is extremely profitable to the preacher,” he counsels, “draw similarities from Scripture.”¹⁰ As

³A. Liuima, *Aux sources ...* t.2, p.508.

⁴“Il cite, il paraphrase, il fait des allusions, enfin, il opère librement avec les idées et les images, sans se soucier d’exactitude littérale.” A. Liuima, *Aux sources... t.2*, p.518.

⁵Cfr. *Oeuvres... IV*, p.LXXXIX. From the first to last version of the *Traité* Francis deleted many citations, which shows how assiduously he searched Scripture for the images he uses.

⁶“On dirait qu’il possède parfaitement l’esprit de l’Ecriture Sainte et le dégage de sa lettre.” A. Liuima, *Aux sources... t.2*, p.522.

⁷Cfr. H. Lemaire, *Les images chez St. François de Sales*, Nizet, Paris, 1962 pp. 27-66, for the literary sense of Francis’ images, and a comparison with the Fathers.

⁸ *Song of Songs* is his favorite book of Scripture, see how he uses it, for example, in chapter 11 “Spiritual Friendship,” under the section: “Another self and the profit of speaking”.

⁹Of the 105 citations from Genesis in the *Traité*, 29 are about Abraham.

¹⁰“Or, il y a un secret en ceci qui est extrêmement profitable au predicateur : c’est de faire des similitudes tirées de l’Ecriture, de certains lieux ou peu de gens les savent remarquer; et ceci se fait par la méditation des paroles.” *Oeuvres... ltr. CCXXIX*.

Fr. Liuima remarks, “St. Francis de Sales comes to Scripture not to study the inspired word and draw out its ideas, but only to find help, a support, clothing for his ideas”.¹¹

For example, he depicts Job as a penitent who, having lost his spiritual possessions, repents and is rewarded.¹² However, Job is just in Scripture, and never loses his spiritual goods or heritage! Again, he does the same with the example of David, (1Sam. 17:39ff.) who “found that all were better skilled using their weapons than he, but who nonetheless discovered himself more valiant than all”.¹³ From this he draws a parallel which is not in the prophet’s account between the skill of wielding weapons and the degrees of charity here on earth, making David’s courage the model of the love of God. His use of images is the secret of his success, and he is often original in his adaptation. For instance he uses the four rivers that flow from paradise to represent the 4 cardinal virtues.¹⁴ He often does so, furthermore, without consideration for his citation’s context.¹⁵ He did not think this the place for a verse by verse “sentential” (exegetical) commentary, like the ones he studied in Paris with the best theologians of his generation.¹⁶ His intention was to move people to devotion.

The living word and not scriptura sola

Throughout the *Traité*, like his other writings, Francis’ use of Scripture is so impregnated into his style that it is sometimes difficult for the editors of his collected works to find the exact citation because it is condensed and assimilated into the text.¹⁷ At times he inundates the reader with 8 to 10 citations per page.¹⁸ He supposes his reader has good knowledge of Scripture and makes allusions to greater and lesser

¹¹A. Liuima, *Aux sources...* t.2, p.526.

¹²See for example, *Oeuvres ...V*, p.281. See too, infra p.466, where he puts two texts together out of context to attribute a new meaning.

¹³“David ...trouva que tous estoient plus habiles aux exercices des armes que luy, qui neanmoins se trouva plus vaillant que tous” *Oeuvres...* IV,p.191.

¹⁴*Oeuvres...*V pp.262-263.

¹⁵See A. Liuima, *Aux sources...* t.2, pp.570-578.

¹⁶“Mais cette façon de passer sur tout un Evangile sentencieux est moins fructueuse, d’autant que le predicatuer ne pouvant s’arrester que fort peu sur chacune sentence, ne peut les bien demesler, ni inculquer a l’auditeur ce qu’il desire.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIX.

¹⁷A. Liuima, shows numerous examples. See, *Aux sources...* t.2, pp.544-550; 558-559.

¹⁸See for example, *Oeuvres...* IV, p.158.

biblical persons. He assumes, for instance, the reader knows that Felix¹⁹ was Judge of St. Paul, and merely alludes to Saul, Balaam²⁰, Caiaphas, Phineas²¹, and Mattithiah.²² He also paraphrases, using verses that he believes are so well known that they need not be cited. He says, for example, “as it is written, the soul that will sin will die” and offers no reference.²³ There are numerous similar cases.²⁴ As Fr. Liuima summarizes, “One easily finds citations without importance, either as an affected expression or a superfluous development, even prattle”.²⁵

He felt one should follow their inspirations when employing the Bible implementing it freely, yet at the same time respectfully. Francis explains, “I advise that one can use Scripture to apply it with a great deal of pleasure, even though quite often what one draws from it may not be the true sense, but in doing so you should be unassuming and controlled.”²⁶ For him the sacred texts are a whole that shed light upon its parts.²⁷ Its real meaning is found in the word’s living existence in the faithful. This is why he gives an equal importance to the lives of saints and thoughts of the Fathers. “What is the life of a saint if not the

¹⁹Acts 23:24 et seq.

²⁰Num. Chs. 22-24.

²¹1Esd. 8:2 Cfr. *Oeuvres...* V, p.223.

²²1Chr. 25:3 et passim. A. Liuima gives more exemples in *Aux sources...* t.2, p.518.

²³*Oeuvres...* IV pp.227-228. Cfr. 2Sam. 12:13; Ezek. 3:20; 18:24; 33:14; John 8:21; and Sir.25:24.

²⁴As for example: *Oeuvres...* IV, p.158 for Ps 118:94; 56:1; 68:1 and Lk 15:19; 18:13 and again IV, p.331 for Ct. 1:12; 2:16-17; 1:6 and similarly V, p.151 for Lk. 22:42; 23:46 and Ps 30:6.

²⁵“On rencontre facilement des citations sans importance (V, p.241 and IV, p.142) soit un expression maniérée (IV, p.30) ou un développement inutile (V, p.165 Cfr. Mt. 22:38 and V, 297 Cfr. PS 2:10 and IV, p.4 Cfr. Ps 67:14 and V,170 Cfr. Ps 83:5 and V, p.202 Cfr. Ps 118:94) voire un bavardage (V, 104 cf. Ps 72:23-24.)” A. Liuima, *Aux sources...* t.2,p.569.

²⁶“Je vous advise qu’on se peut servir de l’Ecriture par application avec beaucoup d’heur, encores que bien souvent ce qu’on en tire ne soit pas le vray sens; comme saint François disoit (Bonaventure, *In Vita ejus*, ch. 8) que les aumosnes estoient ‘pannis Angelorum’ parce que les Anges les procuroyent par leurs inspirations, et applique le passage (Ps 77:25): *Panem Angelorum manducavit homo*. Mays en cecy il faut estre discret et sobre.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIX.

²⁷ Francis draws parallels between Scripture, like the revolt of Absalom against David and the revolt of self love against the love of God. (IV, pp. 224-225). He also compares the entrance of the soul into eternal life to the entrance of Rebecca into Sarah’s bedroom (IV, p.188), and many more.

Gospel in action? There is no more difference between the written Gospel and the life of the saints than between music written and music sung.”²⁸ For Francis de Sales, doctor of theology in a church formed by Trent’s positions against the *Scriptura Solo* of the Protestants, Scripture is synthesized into his life and his teaching; it has become integrated into his soul.²⁹

He writes, for example, that he hopes to make a pilgrimage to the Mountains of Piedmont where a friend and fellow bishop Giovanale Ancina lives, and he alludes to the second letter of John saying, “On that occasion I will be sure to visit Our Reverendissimi Lord, (Ancina) so that *hand in hand, and mouth to mouth*, we may renew this friendship that cannot age, but which the sentiment always grows by presence.”³⁰ The reference is to 2John 12: *Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink, but I hope to come to see you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.* And speaking about the unity of friends, he weaves together a series of texts in his typical way, ending with the famous friendship of Jonathan and David, which illustrates how Scripture forms a whole atmosphere underlying each and every thought. He writes, “In the multitude of believers, St. Luke says (Act. 4:32) *there is only one heart and soul*; Our Lord prayed to his father for all the faithful so that *they be all one and the same thing* (Jn 17:21); saint Paul warns us (Eph. 4:3) that we *be eager to conserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. This unity of heart, soul and mind signify the perfection of love, that joins several souls into one: thus it is said (I Sam. 18:1) that *the soul of*

²⁸“Y a il rien de si utile, rien de se beau? Mais aussi, qu’est autre chose la vie des saintz que l’Evangile mis en oeuvre? Il n’y a non plus de difference entre l’Evangile escrit et la vie des Saintz qu’entre une musique notee et une musique chantee.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIX.

²⁹Francis often condenses and makes allusion to truths that are the conclusion of several passages as for example, “il admira souvent par dilection, comme il fit le Centenier (Mt. 8:10) et la Cananee (Mt. 15:28).” *Oeuvres*, V, 231. “Il a eu des tendretés admirables envers les petitz enfans qu’il prenoit entre ses bras et dorlotoit amoureusement (Mk. 10:16); envers Marthe et Magdeleyne (Jn 11:5); envers le Lazare (Jn 11:5) qu’il pleura, comme sur la cité de Hierusalem (Lk 19:41)” *Oeuvres...*V, pp.229-233.

³⁰“Con questa occasione non mancarò di andar dove V.S.Rma. si ritrovarà, acciò che, consertis manibus *os ad os* (3John 14) rinoviamo l’affetto che se bene no si può inveterare, cresce nientedimeno almanco nelli sentimenti per la presenza.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXIII.

Jonathan was fused to the soul of David, that is, as Scripture adds, he loved David as his own soul."³¹

Even though the Bishop of Geneva takes the biblical texts as a means of expression, it would be wrong to conclude that he manipulates them to say whatever he wishes. His use of the sacred texts, although sometimes stretched to garnish a point, is always in the spirit of Scripture. He uses pagan authors the same way. Francis writes André Frémyot explaining, when using Scripture "one should not make vain and affected descriptions like many young students."³² He sometimes interprets in a manner that we would find too free today. For example, he stretches to meet his need for scriptural support and takes text of Psalm 4:7: *You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound*, in order to argue that every human being has a natural desire for God. Notwithstanding, it is not to the excess of some of his contemporaries.³³ He never seeks to critique a scriptural pericope.³⁴ His approach is somewhere between these two extremes. Indeed, he confesses a great respect for Scripture, swearing he is ready to die rather than permit even its punctuation be changed.³⁵

³¹“ En la multitude des croyans, dit saint Luc (Act. 4.32) il n'y avoit qu'un coeur et qu'une ame; Notre Seigneur pria son Pere pour tous les fideles affin qu'ilz fussent tous une mesme chose (Jn 17.21); saint Paul nous advertit (Eph. 4.3) que nous soyons soigneux de conserver unite d'esprit par l'union de la paix. Ces unites de coeur, d'ame et d'esprit signifient la perfection de l'amour, qui joint plusieurs ames en une: ainsy est il dit, (I Sam. 18.1) que l'ame de Jonathas estoit collee a l'ame de David, c'est a dire, comme l'Escriture adjouste, il ama David comme son ame propre.” *Oeuvres ... IV*, pp 50-53. See how he uses Jn 15:15 (*No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends...*) in a similar vein infra chapter 3, note 119.

³²“Mais il faut prendre garde a ne faire pas des descriptions vaines et flacques, comme font plusieurs escoliers qui, en liu de proposer l'histoire naivement et pour les moeurs, se mettront a descrire les beautés d'Isaac...” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIX.

³³ Cfr. *Oeuvres...*IV, p.85. He brings texts together that are completely different like the fire descending from heaven to consume Elijah's sacrifice is evoked to explain a sudden death is not dangerous, but the only thing to fear is a death in the insouciance of a state without charity. (V, pp. 36-37). See A. Liuima, *Aux sources...* t.2, p.589; 596-597, for more on Salesian interpretation and examples of the excesses of the epoch.

³⁴See A. Liuima, *Aux sources...* t.2, p.600.

³⁵*Oeuvres...* Sermons VIII, p.328.

Conclusion

To study Francis de Sales' use of Scripture in the context of friendship would either be so vast that it would require another doctorate, or so dispersed that it would not really shed light on his idea of friendship. Surely everything he believed about friendship originates in revelation, yet friendship is best observed in the man's life, letters and reflections. There we will find his authentic interpretation of Scripture. Thus, because of the Doctor of love's very free and non-literal approach to the Old and New Testaments, an exposé on the texts he chooses when speaking about friendship would lead us away from the spiritual sense or imagery he intends, and back to the letter of the text. From his youth Francis had read and re-read Scripture, so that in the despair of his terrible crisis, already in his twentieth year, he spontaneously prayed in verses of the Psalms.³⁶ As A. Ravier points out, albeit we can number some 1,250 Scripture citations in *The Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, what is more significant is the role played by biblical formulas or images in the development of his thoughts.³⁷ Roger Devos discovered some 340 biblical references either implicit or explicit in his critical study of the manuscripts of the *Entretiens*.³⁸ That is approximately one per page. Hence, Scripture is everywhere in his thought and in his life. There is rather, as Fr. Ravier concludes, a whole atmosphere of Scripture that we must take into account, both in his writings and in the man himself.³⁹

³⁶Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXII, p.19-20.

³⁷A. Ravier, "Saint François de Sales et la Bible" in *Le Grand Siècle et la Bible*. Sous la direction de Jean-Robert Armogathe. Bible de tous les temps, vol.6. Beauchesne, Paris 1989, pp. 617-626.

³⁸*Les Entretiens spirituels*, in, saint François de Sales, *Oeuvres*, par A. Ravier and R. Devos, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, pp. 975-1320.

³⁹Francis used the Vulgate with the Lyra commentary and the *Catena Aurea* of St. Thomas. Cfr. A. Ravier, "Saint François de Sales et la Bible"... p.619. An example is his statement at his crisis. "Quidquid sit, o Domine, in cujus manu cuncta sunt posita et cujus omnes *viae* iustitia et veritas (Ps 24:10); quidquid de illo aeterno praedestinationis ... Semper es justus Judex et misericors Pater, diligam te, Domine, saltem in hac vita, si diligere non dabitur in aeterna; et saltem, te hic ambo, o Deus meus, et in misericordia tua *semper sperabo, et semper adjiciam super omnem laudem tuam* (Ps 70:14), quidquid in oppositum *angelus Satanae* (II Cor. 12:7) suggerere non desinat. O Domine Jesus, tu eris *semper spes mea* et *salus mea in terra viventium* (Ps 141:6). Si meis exigentibus meritis maledictus de maledictorum numero sum futurus qui faciem tuam suavissimam non videbunt, da mihi saltem ut ex numero eorum

Moreover, there already exist many works summarizing biblical teaching on friendship. There is no need to duplicate them here. Instead, we will proceed to the spirit of Scripture as he expresses it in friendship. Vincent de Paul would suggest the same, for he once said of his friend from Savoy, “He is the Gospel speaking.”⁴⁰

All this is to say that, for our purposes, it is better to begin with the classic philosophical ideas on friendship and their influence on the Doctor of love, and to consequently allow his interpretation, which is wholly absorbed by Scripture, to serve as an exposé of the sacred texts. Indeed, we might say that this entire thesis is a commentary on Scripture’s conception and application of friendship. The life of Francis de Sales, like every saint, is itself a commentary on the meaning of Scripture, or more precisely, on the meaning of Christ in the world and in the human heart. Let us begin then with Aristotle, who incorporates the Greek tradition that originates with Plato, and see if one finds there any important elements of Salesian friendship.

non sim qui maledicent nomini sancto tuo.” *Oeuvres...* XXII, pp.19-20.

⁴⁰See “St. Vincent de Paul”, *infra* p. 329.

III

The Basis of the Salesian Ideal of Friendship in Aristotle

When St. Francis de Sales talks about friendship, he cites Aristotle a few times in the main texts,¹ but this obscures his real importance in the Bishop of Geneva's thought.² The Doctor of love not only knew, but adopted vital ideas of the Philosopher's treatises on friendship. He chooses to use the terms of Aristotle's definition of friendship rather than Cicero's "harmony in things human and divine," even though he does not explicitly cite him. In any case, Aristotle's importance is fundamental in every study on friendship because his influence is so great.³ I wish to show some of the major peaks of a many faceted land-

¹*Oeuvres ...* ltr. IX; III, p.238; IV, pp.50-53 and ltr. DCCXI. We also mention III, p.202 (which is by medium of St. Thomas *in Eth. Nic.* X, 1. IX, lect. xii).

²Even though they were banished from Geneva since 1535, and residing in Annecy, the Bishops continued to govern a part of what was their historical domain and retain the title "Prince and Bishop of Geneva," until the beginning of the 19th century.

³The papal legate Robert de Courson, authorized the explanation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in the faculty of arts of Paris in 1215. Nicole Oresme

scape of thoughts shared by the two men to give Aristotle the role he deserves, and at the same time it will reveal some of the philosophical underpinnings of Francis' ideas on the subject.⁴

Necessary

Both the Bishop of Geneva and the Philosopher are in accord: human happiness or fulfillment seems to depend somehow upon friendship. Aristotle puts it clearly, "Nothing is more necessary to life. Who would want to live without friends, though he be filled with every other kind of good?"⁵ For, "solitude is the most terrible of evils."⁶ We are "a political animal, made to live in society,"⁷ Aristotle argues, because we are able to speak and reason (logos incorporates both concepts). Human beings are able to share their ideas of justice, and all things properly human that enable them to form a community. Springing from the very foundation of our essence as human beings is a need to share, both what we have and what we are, with others. This means not only for the utility of all the material advantages social life brings us, but for spiritual fulfillment as well. Only communicating his life with others in some way permits the human person to completely actualize himself. "God is his own good activity, but human good consists in relationship to others."⁸ Now this natural inclination to associate and share with others in society has its most profound fundament in the human need

first translated it into French in 1370, with the Renaissance translations and commentaries multiplied in every part of Europe. Cfr. Gauthier and Jolif, *l'Éthique à Nicomaque* vol.1, i pp.75*-93*.

⁴Some might grimace at the idea of giving Aristotle such importance in Francis de Sales instead of Plato in view of the predominant Neo-Platonism of the early 17th century. Aristotle spent 20 years at Plato's Academy and, albeit his master was much older, they too shared a friendship. As Fr. M.-D. Philippe points out, Aristotle also influenced Plato. But Aristotle's philosophy serves our understanding of friendship more than Plato because it first builds upon it, and, more importantly, for the first time friendship (filiva) joins contemplation (qewriva) as indispensable for human fulfillment, introducing a practical human dimension which appreciates the social nature of the human person. Cfr. *De l'Amour*. Mame, Paris, 1993, pp.60-79.

⁵*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 1, 1155a 4. These are practically the opening lines of the treatise.

⁶*Eudemeanian Ethics* VII, 1, 1234b 33.

⁷*Politics* I, 1 1253a 3, or *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 9, 1169b 18.

⁸*Eudemeanian Ethics* 1245b 18-19.

for friendship, affection and love.⁹ Essentially, we need to love, to step outside ourselves, both that we may know ourselves and that we may exercise that human excellence, or virtue, which Aristotle emphasizes so much. Moreover, this is true in both pains and joys, for “The very presence of a friend is pleasant as much in good fortune as in bad; by the pleasure one finds in their presence and by the thought of their compassion, our pain is diminished.”¹⁰ Francis could not agree more, he writes to a friend shortly after his mother’s death: “It relieves me to tell you this, for it is a great thing; what a happy and congenial meeting to be able to communicate, albeit by letters only, with a heart so gentle, so gracious, so dear, so precious and such a friend as yours is for me by your goodness.”¹¹

Intimacy for both the Christian Doctor and the Philosopher is the fullest expression of our human life and is even in some way necessary for us to enjoy that fulfillment. Aristotle believes “the fulfilled person will, therefore, have need of this kind of friends, because he desires nothing so much as to actually consider excellent actions, which are proper to him; and, just as are the actions of the good man, so too are the acts of his friends.”¹² Indeed, Aristotle posits friendship as the intersection of the contemplative and active life contending, in contrast to Plato, that friendship’s communication and society are the expression

⁹Cfr. S. Pinckaers, *Les sources de la morale chrétienne, sa méthode, son contenu, son histoire*. Etudes d’éthique chrétienne. Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, Cerf Paris 1985, pp.431-436 for more, with the benefits of St. Thomas’ interpretation, who comments Friendship is the most useful of human goods, “For who would wish to live without friendship, though he be full of every other kind of good.” *In Ethic.* I, 8.

¹⁰*Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 11, 1171a.

¹¹“Voyez vous, Monsieur, je m’allege a vous dire cecy, car c’est grand cas comme c’est une heureuse et souefve (suave) rencontre a un coeur aucunement (quelque peu) blessé de pouvoir se communiquer, quoy que par lettres seulement, a un coeur si doux, si gratieux, si cher, si pretieux et tant amy comme le vostre m’est par vostre bonté, en laquelle je vous conjure tous-jours de me continuer fermement, avec assurance que je suis sans fin ni reserve,” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXIX. See also ltrs. MCCCXCVII; CCCIV and MCDLXVI.

¹²*Nicomachean Ethics* IX 9, 1169b 38-41. In fact, the Stagarite gives four proofs here for our need for friends in the virtuous life. First, that it provides a mirror to the contemplation of ourselves. Second, it helps the virtuous exercise a continuous good activity, because “with and for others it is easier.” Thirdly, because one is “drawn into virtue in living in intimacy with good people.” Then the last is the reason taken from the bottom of our nature: our self consciousness. The conclusion of chapter 4 is the major premise in the first two arguments: the virtuous is for his friend that which he is for himself.

of the philosopher's fulfillment in contemplation and enrich it in, by sharing and influencing one another's excellence. Francis, for his part, also sees it as necessary for perfection, and hence happiness, "To form an alliance by a holy and sacred friendship, for by that means they animate, help and carry each other to goodness."¹³ Friendship's place in the moral life will also prove pivotal for the Doctor of love, who considers it a great risk or a great benefit for persons in the world because of its unique ability to communicate the qualities of one person to another, as we will develop at length in the last part of this work.

Wealth, friendship and political power are "exterior goods" to human happiness for Aristotle. They are integrated in the nature of happiness, but cannot be loved for their own sakes. They should, rather, be loved as indispensable instruments permitting us to exercise good and virtuous actions. "For many acts are accomplished by friends, by wealth, and by political power, as a kind of instrument."¹⁴ For Francis de Sales, in a similar way, friendship is only a means to salvation, like one's vocation, and it must always be measured in that light. To love friendship, or even virtue, as a good in itself would only be a kind of idolatry.¹⁵

Communication

Aristotle had an insight into the nature of friendship, setting him apart from his former teacher Plato. He agreed with Plato that friendship is based upon some kind of resemblance¹⁶ and mutual benevo-

¹³ "Mais quant a ceux qui sont entre les mondains et qui embrassent la vraye vertu, il leur est necessaire de s'allier les uns aux autres par une sainte et sacree amitié; car par le moyen d'icelle ilz s'animent, ilz s'aydent, ilz s'entrepportent au bien." *Oeuvres...* III p.202; Cfr. also ltr. XIII to Antoine Favre; and CXXXVII to Jane de Chantal.

¹⁴ *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 9, 1099b 2.

¹⁵ Cfr. *Oeuvres...* V, p.179.

¹⁶ Plato's Academy argued between two theories that saw the source of friendship either in similarity or in contrariety. Plato resumes: "While a friendship that precedes from contraries is a terrible and savage friendship and does not inspire us to reciprocity, that which precedes from those who are similar is a peaceful and reciprocal friendship for one's entire life." *Laws*, VIII, 837 a-b. Aristotle resolves the debate by noting a concomitant similarity and a difference. Similarity is the chief component found between the virtuous, and contrariety of needs between those seeking pleasure or utility in another. Cfr. *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 4, 1166a 1-10.

lence.¹⁷ He contends, however; that good will between two persons is not enough: "How could one call them friends when they do not know their mutual feelings? To be friends then, they must be mutually recognized as bearing good will and wishing well to each other."¹⁸ *Communicating* that mutual good will was the insight Aristotle brought to the understanding of friendship. They must manifest and, in turn, experience that good will another bears for them. It must be actualized and exchanged, in a word: communicated.¹⁹ We find St. Francis de Sales using this very same element as his grounds for distinguishing the kinds of friendship. "When the love of benevolence is exercised with a mutual corresponding feeling returned, it is called the love of friendship. Now these mutual corresponding feelings consist in three points, for friends must love each other, know that they love each other and they must have communication, privacy and familiarity together."²⁰ Francis adds then, that if these mutual feelings are going to be made known, they must tame each other in private communication. Without such an exchange and all it entails, even mutual benevolence is only well wishing from afar. Without communication, Aristotle explains, the benevolence friendship is founded upon can be no more than a disposi-

¹⁷ This mutual benevolence was itself ordered in the hierarchy of loves, degree by degree to the unique "First Friendship" of goodness in itself Cfr. *Lysis* 219 c-d. Plato's real focus was not so much on friendship but evros or metaphysical desire for transcendent beauty, pure Goodness, "the first object of friendship," the one in later life he will not hesitate to call God. All other loves were but a reflection of this and all reduced to this one love. Cfr. *Lysis* 1155 for one of many examples.

¹⁸*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 2, 1155b 30-1156a 5.

¹⁹Père Gauthier resumes the significance of this insight. "The choice thus made by Aristotle clarifies his entire conception of friendship. If friendship is not for him the love-desire of evros it is not the love-gift of altruistic benevolence either, a sentiment which in his eyes could only be weak and impotent (Cfr. IX, 5, 1166b 33, 1167a 9-11). It is a love-exchange which, if it includes the altruistic gift to the sacrifice of self (IX, 8, 1169a 18-34), also includes desire (IX, 5, 1166b 33) and possession. Friendship, Aristotle concluded, is communion (IX, 12, 1171b 32-33), a communion of minds in one intimate life where each gives and receives at every moment." *l'Éthique à Nicomaque* vol. II ii pp.671-672.

²⁰"Quand l'amour de bienveillance est exercé sans correspondance de la part de la chose aimée, il s'appelle amour de simple bienveillance; quand il est avec mutuelle correspondance, il s'appelle amour d'amitié. Or, la mutuelle correspondance consiste en trois points: car il faut que les amis s'entraiment, sachent qu'ils s'entraiment et qu'ils aient communication, privauté et familiarité ensemble." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.70.

tion to act. It must always be dynamic and expressed.²¹ St. Francis de Sales agrees: “Friendship requires a great communication between lovers, otherwise it cannot be born nor subsist.”²² We see an example of this already as a young man in his acceptance of Antoine Favre’s offer of friendship. Favre’s good will solicits an ardent desire on Francis’ part to “accommodate” his benevolence.²³ The communication of friendship, as we will expose later, inspires benevolence in return, and hence enriches friendship. It is essential to friendship. The dynamic, the effort, the sharing, and even the mistakes, all pivot around communication, in which the good will is manifested *à travers* the limits of our human condition between those who decide to call themselves friends.

A difference between the Philosopher and Christian Doctor comes to light when we compare their ideas of anger in friendship. Anger always stems from some perceived injustice. We feel angry with friends, Aristotle says, when they “Do not speak well of us or treat us well,” or even if they do not perceive our needs.²⁴ In such cases a person believes something is owed him because of his love for his friend. He sees himself treated with contempt for his benevolence, as if he and his love are considered inferior by the one receiving them. This can happen with those indifferent to our pain, those who believe rumors about us, who focus on our weaknesses, betray our confidence, are negligent, or those who reproach the ones we love. It can even happen, he observes, with those who do not return a favor. These many ways the Philosopher cites that friends can wrong one another, causing bad feelings, only indicate how easily misunderstanding can occur. Yet if one’s friendship is es-

²¹ Aristotle explains, “As in regard to the virtues some men are called good in respect of a state of character, others in respect of an activity, so too in the case of friendship; for those who live together delight in each other and confer benefits on each other, but those who are asleep or locally separated are not performing, but are disposed to perform, the activities of friendship.” *Nicomachean Ethics* 6, 1157b 6-7. See also, *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 9, 1098b 290 1099a 7 and VII, 13, 1152b 33. Like every habitual state, virtuous friendship will be as enduring as the very being of the person, and the act of friendship, we will see is the free and confident exchange of intimacy.

²² “L’amitié requiert une grande communication entre les amans, autrement elle ne peut ni naistre ni subsister.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.213; and “C’est une bonne condition pour avancer selon l’esprit que d’avoir le coeur ouvert pour la fidele et naive communication que nous devons faire entre nous.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXV.

²³ “Vivendi te coram et audiendi manebat consilium; ac tuae in me benevolentiae, si quo feri posset modo, promerendae tanto tenebar desiderio, ut cum illud amplius animus meus capere non potest.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. IX.

²⁴ *Rhetoric* II, 2.

tablished upon a sense of justice outside of friendship, outside of ourselves, and based upon the love of God, anger does not arise so readily. Even when injustice is blatant, as when one with whom we once knew intimacy turns to war against us, Francis says we must bear their rancor like a cross. If a Christian is commanded to love his enemies, and taught to live in humble gratitude once he knows the merciful love of God and knows himself, then his sense of what is owed him, and even his manner of offering benevolence is very different from even the virtuous philosopher. It is more generous, more elastic and more patient in these inevitable little storms, as the Doctor of love calls them, every friendship suffers, “Which once they are passed, the lovers are reintegrated.”²⁵ Not only does his Christianity help Francis to bear these injustices, but it also helps to reconcile them, because even Aristotle admits that anger is calmed by humility.²⁶

Common interest founs friendship’s communion

This communication, and its activity of sharing, is based upon a common love of some good, for friendship is not any communication, but a communication of benevolence. A question remains therefore: what is the nature of the good wished, and how does it bear upon communication?

Another innovation Aristotle brought to classic opinions about friendship was to expand the notion of what Plato and the Academy called resemblance as some kind of common interest.²⁷ The origin or condition making friendship possible, the equalizer that provides them with enough in common to share a friendship, Aristotle saw as the particular kind of good they loved together.²⁸ He remarks, “Equality, that is resemblance, is friendship.”²⁹

Now, the Philosopher continues, any good may be loved either as it relates to our benefit, like pleasure or utility, or for its own sake and in itself. The common interest that brings men freely together will also

²⁵“Il ni a point de si parfaite amitié que ne se trouble quelquefois par quelque petit nuage, lesquelz estans passes, *amoris redintegratio sunt.*” [he cites the council of Trent here: Act. III sc. III.23]. *Oeuvres...* ltr.CLVII.

²⁶*Rhetoric* II, 3.

²⁷“Common interest” he declares, “is the foundation of friendship,” and the measure of justice in friendship. *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 11, 1159b 24-32.

²⁸ Note too that for Aristotle a person’s character is very important as a cause of what one loves; therefore, resemblance comprehends both the common love and the common lovers.

²⁹*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII 10, 1159b 2

fall under one of these three kinds of good. "Friends wish each other well," he says, "in that respect in which they are friends."³⁰ A friendship based upon a mutually useful good would be like business partners who each get some useful good from one another. Their exchange is the foundation of their friendship or association. An example of friendship based on pleasure would be when one befriends another because of their beauty, fame or because they make him laugh. Of course, these goods could also be mixed where pleasure is exchanged for utility.³¹ Aristotle observes that friendships of pleasure are found mostly among the young, while friendships of utility are mostly between the old.³² The good will shared between friends is then defined in terms of the common interest constituting the communion of these persons. Naturally then, the friendship is in turn defined by the kind of good it rests upon. St. Francis de Sales agrees: "According to the diversity of communications, friendship is also diverse, and the communications are different according to the different kinds of goods communicated between persons. If these are false and vain goods, friendship is false and vain; if they are true goods, the friendship will be true and the more excellent the goods will be the more excellent will be the friendship."³³ Francis parts company with the Philosopher in an important way here. He clearly rejects the notion that a common interest as mutual profit can constitute a friendship in any real sense, saying in more than one way that "The society made for temporal profit between merchants only has the reflection of true friendship, for it is made not for the love of persons, but for the love of gain."³⁴ In his opinion, there really is only one kind of friendship; all the others are false. Aristotle, on the other hand, considered them all as truly friendship in virtue of their rapport with "primary friendship."³⁵

³⁰*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 3, 1156a 9-10

³¹Aristotle sees these loves as really loving oneself. They are loved in the aspect that they relate to the lover and not in themselves. They are esteemed good in the measure they bring the lover pleasure or utility. Cfr. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1666a 11, ch. 9.

³²Cfr. *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 3, 1156b 1-5.

³³*Oeuvres...* III, p.194. His terms are a little different, but the ideas are the same. He calls love for someone *in se* "benevolence" and "covetousness" love for profit. Cfr. IV, p.170.

³⁴"La societe faite pour le prouffit temporel entre les marchans n'a que l'image de la vraie amitié; car elle se fait non pour l'amour des personnes mais pour l'amour du gain." *Oeuvres...* III, p.213.

³⁵For Aristotle, friendship is an equivocal notion, which does not require that the two things called friendship be identical, but that they realize friendship

We even find him using the same term of resemblance to develop his ideas about friendship, but with an important nuance. He extends resemblance to also include a certain proportionality between two persons to love and be loved, which he calls “correspondence.”³⁶ It will later permit friendship between man and God, as we shall see.

The common interest binding people freely may, of course, be either judged as destructive and, therefore, vicious or virtuous and constructive. For Aristotle and the ancients the term “friendship” or *filiva* enjoyed a much farther reaching sense than for Francis de Sales. It was *filiva* that was responsible for the motions of the planets, as well as for the formation of city states. It was any force that holds persons or bodies together. The Salesian idea of friendship is much like our own modern one. It entails only those to whom one knows personally and exchanges some form of intimacy together.

The most dangerous of loves

Once communication’s importance is put into perspective, the danger of friendship seducing a person into vice becomes evident. This was especially poignant to a director of souls like the Bishop of Gene-

under a certain rapport to the same definition. His classic example is that one can say that Socrates is healthy and the medicine he takes is healthy. Both are truly healthy, yet one, Socrates, can be said to be more healthy, because the medicine is said to be healthy in virtue of the health in Socrates. Yet the concept has a different definition in the two cases. Therefore, the useful and the pleasant friendships are defined by their rapport with the virtuous friendship, which realizes the notion at its highest degree. All their difference lies in the nature of the good mutually loved and communicated. Note well, however, that Aristotle believes the paradigm and true friendship to be virtuous or noble friendship, “The first and true friendship.” “The others,” he goes on to explain, “are such truly for the resemblance they enjoy with it.” *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 4. They are not friendship, “In the measure that they lack a resemblance with virtuous friendship.” *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 8, 1158b 5-11.

³⁶ “La convenance donq de l’amant a la chose aymee est la premiere source de l’amour, et cette convenance consiste en la correspondance, qui n’est autre chose que le mutuel rapport qui rend les choses propres a s’unir pour s’entre-communiquer quelque perfection. Mais cecy s’entendra de mieux en mieux par le progres du discours. C’est pour dire que l’amour ne se fait pas tousjours par la ressemblance et sympathie, ains par la correspondance. Or la correspondance de deux choses consiste en ce que [l’une recoit de la perfection de l’autre, ou par l’union de l’autre avec soy...] par l’union de l’un’a l’autre elles puysent recevoir de la perfection et devenir meilleures.” *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.48-50 vol. 1. See also IV, p.74.

va. He cautions: "Friendship is the most dangerous of all loves, because the other loves can be without communication, but friendship being totally founded upon this, nearly cannot be had with a person without participating in his qualities."³⁷ He and Aristotle agree with the classic poets that "It is from virtuous people that you will learn virtue."³⁸ If communication of their wishes for that good uniting them is vital for the existence of these friendships, and if it is what distinguishes them, then their advancement in friendship will be proportional to their advancement in that good that binds them. One of the benefits of friendship is that it extends our capacity to enjoy the goods defining the friendship. Sharing good things somehow makes them better. The allure of those things we esteem is personified in some way, and this causes a certain admiration. St. Francis de Sales cites Aristotle to explain this phenomenon: "Admiration excites the desire to know,"³⁹ when he writes Favre accepting his offer of friendship. Already having some attachment to something he perceives as good, a person is drawn to another with whom he shares a common interest.⁴⁰ Both are then somehow able to increase their enjoyment of these things. And this is both the blessing and curse of friendship. Like human freedom, it can be used for great good or great evil. If the good their friendship is grounded upon is some kind of selfishness, they will grow in egoism. If both admire and seek virtuous goods for their own sake, they will learn virtue from each other. Perhaps the most dangerous factor is, however, that persons are complex, and they usually seem to have a mixture of good and bad qualities, and these bad qualities, the Doctor of love warns, can seduce us almost unnoticeably.⁴¹

³⁷*Oeuvres...* III, p.194.

³⁸ *Nicomachean Ethics* XII, 12, 1172a 13. These are the last words of Aristotle's treatise on friendship and are taken from the ancient Greek poet Theognis. 31-18. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. DVI and III, p.213.

³⁹"Que l'admiration excite le desir de connaitre, c'est une maxime assuree qui s'apprend avec les rudiments de la philosophie." (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. I. I, c. II) *Oeuvres...* ltr. IX.

⁴⁰ "Each loves not that which is really good for him... [but] that which appears good to him." *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 2, 1155b 27-28.

⁴¹He compares false friendships to poisonous honey that causes insanity versus good honey.

“True” vs. “false” friendships*False friendships are selfish and passing*

If pleasure is the common interest the friendship is based upon, then they mutually share and communicate pleasure in some way, and the same is true for utility. Both authors agree that such friendships are some kind of selfishness, and will last only as long as their symbiosis of pleasure or usefulness lasts,⁴² which is why St. Francis calls them “false friendships.” They are not based upon goods esteemed for their intrinsic value, but upon profit. He never refers to “the useful” as a kind of friendship. For him these relations are not apparently even worthy the name friendship in an extended sense.⁴³ The Bishop of Geneva writes: “Friendship founded on communication of sensual pleasures is completely ill-mannered, and unworthy of the name friendship.”⁴⁴ He calls them excrement, sensual and frivolous. Like Aristotle, he says they are common among the young, “Passing and melt like snow in the sun.”⁴⁵ If, on the other hand, their common interest is goodness for its own sake, where the friends love each other’s very being and say “It is good that you exist!”⁴⁶, then it is a friendship based on virtue in the Greek Philosopher’s teaching. Such a friendship, Aristotle will say, is permanent as virtue is permanent. “No function of man has so much permanence as virtuous activities.”⁴⁷ Francis refers to the authority of

⁴² Cfr. *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 3, 1156b 1-8.

⁴³ “Il y a des biens desquelz nous nous servons en les employant, comme sont nos esclaves, nos serviteurs, nos chevaux, nos habitz; et l’amour que nous leur portons est un amour de pure convoitise, car nous ne les aymons pas que pour nostre prouffit. Il y a des biens desquelz nous jouissons, mais d’une reciproque et mutuellement esgale jouissance, comme nous faysons de nos amis; car l’amour que nous leur portons entant qu’ilz nous rendent du contentement, est voirement amour de convoitise, mais convoitise honneste par laquelle ilz sont a nous et nous egalement a eux.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.144.

⁴⁴ “L’amitié fondee sur la communication des playsirs sensuelz est tout grossiere, et indigne du nom d’amitié.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.196, Cfr. III, p.209; V, p.179 and III, p.197.

⁴⁵ *Oeuvres...* III, p.196 compare *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 3, 1156b 1-5.

⁴⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 4, 1166a 23-25. He continues “Sweet are the memories of his past actions, and his future actions he knows will be good.”

⁴⁷ “No function of man has so much permanence as virtuous activities, and of these themselves the most valuable are more durable because those who are happy spend their life most readily and most continuously in these; for this seems to be the reason why we do not forget them. [Durability]...then will belong to the happy man, and he will be happy throughout his life; for always, or by preference to everything else, he will be engaged in virtuous action and

Aristotle, Augustine and Jerome when he writes, “The friendship that can cease was never a true friendship.”⁴⁸ He says, however, that its durability is based upon Christ and extends into eternity.⁴⁹ For the Philosopher, friendship endures because the characters of the persons are not changeable. Francis too would say “it is good you exist,” and love a friend for his own sake, but this would always be because he is the image of God. That doesn’t explain everything, however, since every created person is the image of God. Friendship is as true as the persons, and for Francis de Sales, as well as for the Christian tradition, the *veritas vitae* is the gift of grace Christ grants those who never tire of trying to please Him. Only through Christ, then, can a person be unchangeable, and likewise, only by grace can love be permanent. If the permanence of virtue exists in us, it is the effect of grace and our cooperation. As a Christian, he loves every person for his own sake, he loves his friends in their very existence, true, but what will distinguish friendship from charity will be the nature of friendship’s communication. If Aristotle loves his virtuous friend for the virtue in him, then St. Francis de Sales loves him for the resplendence of God in him.

True Friendship for Aristotle is among the good and per se

“Perfect friendship,” Aristotle contends, “is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue: for these wish well alike to each other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves.”⁵⁰ Virtue is a habitual perfection for Aristotle, a deeply rooted way of being and acting ordered by right reason.⁵¹ These strengths direct human action toward

contemplation, and he will bear the chances of life most nobly and altogether decorously, if he is 'truly good' and 'foursquare beyond reproach'." *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 10, 1100b 11-21.

⁴⁸ “Bien que les personnes que j'aime soyent mortelles, ce que j'aime principalement en elles est immortel, et j'ay tous-jours estimé cet axiome fondamental pour la connoissance des vraies amitiés, qu'Aristotle, saint Jerome et saint Augustine ont tant solennisé: L'amitié qui a pu cesser, n'a jamais été veritable.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXI.

⁴⁹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltrs. MDCCCLXXXIII; MMXXXIV; CLXXIX; CLXXXVII; MDCCV; DCCXI. It often appears as a consolation to loved ones upon the death of someone dear.

⁵⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 3 1156b 7-8.

⁵¹ “The morally good human act is that which conforms to right reason” *Nicomachean Ethics* III, 8 1114b 29. He gives this definition of virtue: “A chosen habit in the mind consisting of a determinate species insofar as a man of wisdom will determine it” *Nicomachean Ethics* II, 6, 1107a 1-3. Aristotle develops that rule of just action as a mean between two extremes better known as

some good to act spontaneously, uniformly and with pleasure in a way that will bring fulfillment.⁵² For the Greeks, the wise man was the morally and intellectually integrated person who was able to discern between good and evil, to judge things rightly and govern them well.⁵³ And it seems that such men in Aristotle's vision are most apt to be friends. "That which is greatest in just men seems to be this possibility to be friends."⁵⁴ Indeed, he thinks that friendship is the consequence of virtue.⁵⁵ Moreover, because this perfect friendship is noble and virtuous, it is also useful and pleasant in its own right, indeed more so than those friendships made for these very reasons. "The good are good in themselves,"⁵⁶ he argues, and friendship between them is based upon their very being, because the common interest they share *is a quality of their being*, for virtue is a habitual state perfecting the very personality of the person, his intellect (nou`β) and his character (hjϑoβ).⁵⁷ The good

moderation in the *Nicomachean Ethics* bks 2-7 (which Cicero will later describe as: "Moderation is the art of giving its proper place to whatever we do or say" Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1).

⁵² Père Gauthier notes: "If Aristotle had to summarize his morality in one formula, he would not have said, with the Stoics: "Live in conformity with nature," he would not have said, with the Christian: "Search God," he would not have said, with the modern moralist: "Do your Duty," or "Do Good." He would have said, or more exactly he said: "Live in friendship with your self, in a manner that permits, to boot, to live in friendship with others." (*Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 4, 1166b 26-29) *l'Éthique à Nicomaque*, vol. I i p.299. Jean Vanier draws to our attention that two books out of ten in the *Nicomachean Ethics* are on friendship, and in the *Eudemian Ethics* 11 sections out of 35 are on friendship. He concludes: "Friendship for Aristotle is the summit of the moral life." *Le bonheur principe et fin de la morale aristotélicienne*, p.295 note#2. Cfr *Nicomachean Ethics* chapters II- VII for his explanation of these perfections of the powers that make us men and in turn, cause happiness or fulfillment.

⁵³ Wisdom is one with virtue. It is not merely an intellectual perfection, but wholly active. The man who desires truth in his activity, Aristotle will explain, but is unable to always achieve it, is the incontinent. The vice of intemperance is completely opposed to wisdom, as is the man who neither desires nor knows what good is. Cfr. *Nicomachean Ethics* chapter VII.

⁵⁴ *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 1, 1155a 29-30.

⁵⁵ At the outset of his treatise on friendship the Philosopher states: "Is it not a virtue, or at least, is it not intimately linked with virtue?" *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 1, 1155a 4.

⁵⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 1156b 9.

⁵⁷ It is a free decision that constitutes our very personality in Aristotelian ethics. "Moral virtue is a habitual state that directs our decisions and the decision is a desire deliberated." *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 2, 1139a 22-24; see also

they love is incarnated in the person they befriend, and therefore, they love them for their own sakes. But the feelings such men bear for themselves are also the grounds for this affection. For Aristotle, it begins with the way they live interiorly, the way they think of themselves, *bref* their friendship with themselves.⁵⁸ That moral beauty which the virtuous person loves in his friends exists in himself in some way. Naturally then, his love for goodness is in some way one with his love for himself.⁵⁹ For this reason, friendship plays a decisive role in self knowledge for Aristotle, because "The friend is another self."⁶⁰ Through friendship one can thus contemplate himself in his friend, the mirror of himself, and at the same time the nature of that goodness that binds them. Perhaps all three of these loves (of self, of goodness and of one's friend) convene in the same one true Goodness, and are none other than different manifestations of the same moral beauty, in itself, in me and in another. For can we conceive of a virtuous person not loving that very same goodness in himself as he loves it in another?

Nicomachean Ethics II, 4, 1106a 1-4.

⁵⁸ Aristotle hesitates however to go so far as to contend that we can have friendship with ourselves, but he seems close when he says, "But is there or is there not friendship towards ourselves? Let us leave this question aside for now. Perhaps one might agree to admit that {these feelings of friendship that one has for oneself called friendship by some} are friendship, in the measure that we are ourselves two or several distinct beings, and also because friendship pushed to the extreme resembles the feeling that one bears for himself." (idem) St. Thomas, Albert the Great, and other commentators, interpret this as the rational part wishing good for the irrational part of the soul. Cfr. Gauthier and Jolif, *l'Éthique à Nicomaque* II, ii p.733. It could perhaps be called the self love, or self respect of the virtuous, which he is in turn able to communicate and share with those he loves. *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 4, 1166a 23-25.

⁵⁹ "And it is evident that the honest man loves this part of himself more than any other. And too he will be the self centered par excellence, but one completely different than that rightly stigmatized, for they differ as the rational life from the life of passions and as the desire for moral beauty differs from what one believes to be in his interest." *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 8, 1169a 4-6.

⁶⁰ "When we want to know ourselves we need only look at our friend. For the friend is an other self. If then it is agreeable to know oneself, but on the other hand it is not possible to arrive at this without an other, who is our friend, the man who is sufficient in himself needs friendship to know himself." *Magna Moralia* II, 17, 1213a 22-26.

True Friendship is Spiritual for St. Francis de Sales

For the Doctor of love, “perfect friendship” is spiritual friendship, where two persons share a common interest greater than virtue, the love of God. “But if your mutual and reciprocal communication is made from charity, devotion and Christian perfection, oh God, how your friendship will be precious! It will be excellent because it comes from God, excellent because its bond will be in God, excellent because it will endure eternally in God.”⁶¹ This spiritual friendship too comprehends the virtues of Aristotle’s ethics, but its principal common interest is Christ. Here the ways of philosophy and Christianity separate most poignantly in the practical life of friendship, in a radical way. He says all other friendships are but shadows in comparison, and their bonds are bonds of glass. Thereby he shows profound skepticism on the rock-solid firmness of the virtuous, that the Stagarite extols in statements like: “For being steadfast in themselves it is characteristic of good men neither to go wrong themselves nor to let their friends do so. But wicked men have no steadfastness (for they do not remain even like to themselves).”⁶² Indeed, Francis believes that no one is so good as to never go wrong himself, and often writes his friends that we must have much patience with ourselves, for we are poor and full of imperfections. This is the “Key to the mystery for us,”⁶³ because Christian humility is “The love of this poverty and abjection, in contemplating that of our Lord. Love this worthless condition, glorify in being nothing, be comfortable with it, because your misery serves as the object of God’s goodness is to exercise his mercy.”⁶⁴ The “folly to the Greeks”⁶⁵ of Christian perfec-

⁶¹ “Mais si vostre mutuelle et reciproque communication se fait de la charité, de la devotion, de la perfection chrestienne, o Dieu, que vostre amitié sera pretieuse! Elle sera excellente parce qu'elle vient de Dieu, excellente parce qu'elle tend a Dieu, excellente parce que son lien c'est Dieu, excellente parce qu'elle durera eternellement en Dieu.” *Oeuvres...III*, p.202.

⁶² *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 10, 1159b 8-9.

⁶³ “Je le repete souvent parce que c'est la clef de ce mystere pour vous et pour moy. Il ne faut point trop pointiller en l'exercice des vertus; mais il y faut aller rondement, franchement, naivement, a la veille française, avec liberté, a la bonne foi, grosso modo....je desire que vous ayez un coeur large et grand au chemin de Nostre Seigneur, mais humble, doux et sans dissolution.” *Oeuvres... ltr. CCXXXVIII bis*.

⁶⁴ “Qu'est ce donc que l'humilité chrestienne? C'est l'amour de cette pauvreté et abjection, en contemplation de celle de Nostre Seigneur ...Aimés cette chetive condition, glorifiez vous de n'estre rien, soyés en bien ayse, puisque votre misere sert d'objet a la bonté de Dieu pour exercer sa misericorde.” *Oeuvres... ltr. CCXXXVIII bis*. See also III, p.161 and III, p.233.

tion in weakness comes to bear with all its weight upon the friendship of the good. Humility and forgiveness add a new elasticity. This too we will see in more detail during our investigation of the Doctor of love's anatomy of friendship.

Rather than loving a person because of his virtuous character in himself, St. Francis would say to love "God in man and man in God."⁶⁶ One's love of a friend can never surpass his love of God from which it takes its direction and its very life.⁶⁷ He firmly believed true friendships are caused by God⁶⁸ and aided by His grace.⁶⁹ Aristotle never broaches the question as to the cause of friendship's beginning except, of course, indirectly as the communication of virtue. Francis refers to God as "This dear Friend of our souls"⁷⁰ and "The Friend of friends,"⁷¹ which is reminiscent of the "First friend" of Plato and Aristotle.⁷² The Doctor of love speaks to Jane as "another self," but doesn't seem to feel it important as a mirror for self knowledge in the way the Greeks did for wisdom.⁷³ This comes wholly from contemplation of God and obedience to His will.⁷⁴ He does say that "love equalizes the lovers,"⁷⁵ and

⁶⁵ 1Cor. 1:23 "But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles."

⁶⁶ *Oeuvres...* V, p.205. See also ltr. CDII.

⁶⁷ "La perfection de la charité c'est la perfection de la vie, car la vie de nostre ame c'est la charité." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXXI. See too ltr. DCCXI.

⁶⁸ *Oeuvres...* II, p.29; see also ltrs. CMXL and MDCCCLXVII.

⁶⁹ *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMXXXVI.

⁷⁰ *Oeuvres...* IV, p.293.

⁷¹ *Oeuvres...* V, p.85.

⁷² The "First friend" is a human being loved for himself. It is that "goodness in itself," the absolute and highest good, which reason grasps as God. The conclusion of Aristotle's earlier work, *The Eudemean Ethics* is the classic interpretation taught by Plato. He says everything that hinders man from knowing and serving God is morally bad. (*Eudemean Ethics* VIII, 3, 1249a 21). In the *Nicomachean Ethics* even this vocabulary is abandoned and "first friendship" becomes "perfect friendship." Cfr. *Lysis* 219 c-d, see also W. Jaeger, *Aristotle, Fundamentals of the History of His Development*, Oxford (1962), Trans. Robinson. pp.107-109; and 243-245. Who comments: "Its aim is rather to establish the independent worth of the moral personality, and in the last resort of human morality in general, as opposed to the cosmic Good that is based on the idea of God." But one could not conclude that Francis knew of this concept from his use of terms like "the Friend of friends."

⁷³ See for example infra p195.

⁷⁴ Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXCVII, for example.

⁷⁵ *Oeuvres...* IV, p.273. See also infra. "Union by love, the end of love is nthing other than union" beginning on page 397.

applies this to love of God saying we become like the things we love. We see the oneness between friends manifested in the sharing of suffering; first, as he notes, with Christ and again with friends *in via*.⁷⁶ There is no question in his mind that all three of these friendships are like branches from the same tree. “Charity has three parts: love of God, affection for oneself, and the love of one’s neighbor.”⁷⁷

Intimacy

Communication of benevolence is most perfectly expressed in intimacy, the private and most personal exchange friends share. Aristotle calls it *symploche*, “the life of intimacy,”⁷⁸ which underlines the dynamic nature of communication’s interchange.⁷⁹ Aristotle contends one cannot have the intimacy of perfect friendship with many persons, because it requires much time and effort.⁸⁰ On the other hand, Francis de Sales says, “Be friends with all and familiar with few people; especially in your liaisons and conversations.”⁸¹ Thus, even though one might at first argue that he had many more friendships than Aristotle, he too believed there was a just limit to one’s inner circle. His almost superhuman flow of letters to friends strained him, due at least partly to his motivation to serve Christ to the point of martyrdom spurring him beyond the limits that Aristotle would trace. Even Francis’ use of “friends with all” is an attenuated sense of friendship that shouldn’t be confused with the richest communication we are speaking of now. He cites St. Thomas to make that point, saying: “Perfect friendship cannot extend to many

⁷⁶ “Le monde passe, et toutes ses amitiés passent, mais la nostre elle est de Dieu, en Dieu et pour Dieu: *Ipse autem idem ipse est, et anni ejus non deficient* [Ps 101:28]. *Mundus perit, et concupiscentia ejus* [I Joan., 2:17]; *Christus non perit, nec dilectio ejus consequence infallible. Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCLXXXIII; see too for example ltr. XIV.

⁷⁷ “La charité a trois parties: l’amour de Dieu, l’affection a soy mesme et la dilection du prochain.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCLXXIII.

⁷⁸ *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 12, 1171b 31 and IX, 12, 1171b 37.

⁷⁹ In *The Politics* Aristotle speaks of “The leisure of the intimate life,” where the “communion” of souls taste the joy of living in the conversations of private life. *Pol.* III, 9, 1280b 38.

⁸⁰ Cfr. *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 10, 1171a 8-14; and *Oeuvres...* III, p.202. Aristotle argues intimacy with anyone = with all = with no one. Yet St. Francis’ some 2,300 extant letters suggest that his intimacy extended to many indeed.

⁸¹ “Estre ami de tous et familier avec peu de gens; surtout dans les liaisons et conversations. *Oeuvres...*XVI, p.38.

persons.”⁸² In his understanding, to be “familiar” is to be like one of the family, among the closest. He may sometimes use the term loosely, as we should expect in letters, but as we shall see in the following pages, friendship held a very clear meaning in his mind. Both Aristotle and Francis believed true friends were a rare find, because men of true virtue are rare.⁸³

Intimacy is the essence of friendship for Aristotle. It is the act of friendship.⁸⁴ He could not accentuate its importance more than saying, “For every category of men, that which is their existence, or in other words, that which is their reason to live, is in those things which they wish to pass their time with friends.”⁸⁵ It comprehends what he calls the virtues of social or intimate life: veracity, playfulness and amiability.⁸⁶ For Aristotle, intimacy does not necessarily mean the most privately human communication possible. It has a more general sense, as one might say, to invite someone into your home is to invite him into your intimacy. The friendship or *philia* that binds the city, in contrast, is not intimate because it does not enter into our daily life’s exchanges. All the people who know our name, who associate freely in our social life would fall into this type of intimacy and its virtues, as would also the very personal and private intimacy we use the word to describe today. Francis, too, attributes certain virtues to intimate life. When speaking to the sisters of the Visitation he lays out two virtues of their communal life of intimacy: affability and good conversation. The first is neither being too grave and serious at one extreme, nor being too flattering and

⁸²(*In x lib. Eth. Arist.*, l. ix. lect XII, et *Quaest. disput. de Malo*, Qu. vii, art II ad 12) “la parfaite amitié ne peut s’étendre à beaucoup de personnes.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.202.

⁸³ Francis writes Favre: “Il me semble que nostr’amitié est sans limites, et qu’estant si fort naturalisée en mon cœur, ell’est aussi ancienne que luy. Ce pendant, continuons, Monsieur mon Frere, en cette si digne et si rar’affection,” *Oeuvres...* ltr DCXLII. He refers to Aristotle via St. Thomas to say one can only have few true friends (*Oeuvres...* III, p.202) and in *Oeuvres...* III, p.24, he says he who finds a true friend has found a treasure.

⁸⁴ *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII 5, 1157b 13.

⁸⁵ He continues, “Thus some drink together and others play dice together; and still others play sports together, hunt together or philosophize together. All pass together their days in those things that they love the most of the things one can do in his existence; in their desire to live with their friends a life of intimacy, they do with them and share in common with them those things in which they believe life consists.” *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 12, 1172a 3-7. However, for friendships based on mutual usefulness, Aristotle thinks there is no possibility of a life of intimacy. Cfr. *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 3, 1156a 27-28.

⁸⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics* IV, chapters 12, 13 and 14.

solicitous at the other. The virtue of good conversation is speaking to recreate or to console, or just to render the home life agreeable.⁸⁷ But that aside, he never articulates the idea that the act of friendship is intimacy. Francis might express it differently, but he understood intimacy in the same sense as Aristotle.⁸⁸

Aristotle warns that if friendship goes too long without intimacy's free and easy exchange, it risks being "buried in forget."⁸⁹ Without this act, friendship is only a disposition to act, but more importantly for lack of communication friendship can end. Aristotle then considers communication a *sine qua non* for friendship. Francis de Sales seconds that opinion when he writes: "Friendship descends more than it ascends."⁹⁰ But as we will explore later, this is due to the human condition and pride, more than to lack of communication. True friendship can never be forgotten in his view, but communication and presence, without a doubt, is important and enriching.⁹¹

Union

Our inner life is hidden and, because of this, two difficulties arise in friendship. First, to communicate adequately our thoughts and feelings, and secondly, to know if the other person is trustworthy. As the act of friendship, intimacy both defines it and expresses those hidden feelings exchanged reciprocally between friends. Within the protection of intimacy's trust, friends share their common interest and are at the same time acting out their friendship and growing closer by what they say and do with each other. Francis puts it poetically, "To pour out ones

⁸⁷ "La vertu de l'affabilité se tient entre le trop et le trop peu, faisant des caresses quelquefois selon la nécessité de ceux avec qui l'on traite, et conservant une gravité suave néanmoins quand il est requis, selon les personnes ou les affaires desquelles on traite. La vertu de bonne conversation requiert qu'on contribue à la foie sainte et modérée, et aux entretiens gracieux et qui peuvent servir de consolation ou de récréation au prochain; en sorte que nous ne lui causions point de l'ennui par nos contenance refrognés et mélancoliques, ou bien refusant de nous récréer au temps qui est destiné pour ce faire." *Oeuvres...* VI, p.58.

⁸⁸ Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltrs. XXI and CLXXIX, for example.

⁸⁹ *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 5, 1157b 14.

⁹⁰ "l'Amitié descend plus qu'elle ne monte" *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCXCV.

⁹¹ "Si ritrovaria, acciò che cosertis manibus et *os ad os* [2 Jn 12], rinoviamo l'affetto che se bene no si può inveterare, cresce nientedimeno almanco nelli sentimenti per la presenza." *Oeuvres...* CLXXIII.

soul and spread forth one's heart is nothing other than to speak."⁹² Aristotle stresses, "Friendship is communion,"⁹³ and this unity of souls develops and takes root in conversations and acts of our private life.⁹⁴ Love seeks union, and intimacy is the dynamically evolving process, aiming to unite two who are similar but different. St. Francis cites Aristotle on this very theme of union through love, where he speaks of Jonathan loving David as his own soul (1Sam. 18:1).⁹⁵ He adopts Aristotle's view that the heart is the first part of man which receives life by union with a soul.⁹⁶ As we will discover, the heart is the font of the per-

⁹² "Nous ne respandons nos discours ni les pensees qui procedent de la portion spirituelle de nos ames, que nous appellons rayson et par laquelle nous sommes differens d'avec les animaux, sinon par nos paroles... verser son ame, et respandre son coeur, n'est autre chose que parler." *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.50-53 vol. 1.

⁹³ *Nicomachean Ethics* ending of VIII. Père Gauthier remarks, "This communion which defined and establishes perfect friendship is not a common virtue, as useful and pleasant friendships share a common interest. Virtue is not possessed in common, but rather virtue is essentially an act of decision (*Nicomachean Ethics* III, 4, 1111b 5-6; 7, 1113b 3-6; VIII, 15, 1163a 22-23; IX, 1, 1164b 1-2), and what makes the individual who he is, is his decisions (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 2, 1139b 5). Therefore because it is essentially individual, the act of virtue cannot be something shared in common. But an individual act of virtue can resemble another individual act of virtue, and this very resemblance of individual acts in themselves, virtuous friendship, as Aristotle has shown in chapter 4 and 9 of this book (*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII on friendship), ends in a sort of fusion of consciousness. The koinoniva is not his point of departure, it is the very act in which it is expressed and in which it flourishes." Gauthier and Jolif, *l'Ethique a Nicomaque* vol. II, ii, p.769.

⁹⁴ "Now the fact of being, we have said, is desirable in that which we sense that we are good, a sensation which is pleasant in itself. Therefore we must also sense in common with our friend, his existence, and we are able to do this on the condition that we live in communion with him, that is to communicate with him in words and in thoughts. Is it not there, by unanimous opinion, that one calls living in communion for men, and not as for a herd of animals, the simple fact of sharing the same meadow?" *Nicomachean Ethics* IX 9-10, 1170a 28-1170b 16.

⁹⁵ "Et Aristotle, approuvant des-ja de son tems cette facon de parler: "Quand," dit il (*Magna Moralis* 1. II, c. 11) "nous voulons exprimer combien nous ayons nos amis, nous disons: l'ame de celuy ci et l'amour nous assemble: la fin donques de l'amour n'est autre chose que l'union de l'amant a la chose aymee. *Oeuvres...* IV ch 9, pp.50-53.

⁹⁶ "On dit que le coeur est la premiere partie de l'homme qui reçoit la vie par l'union de l'ame, et l'oeil la derniere. [Aristotle, *On the generation of animals*, II, ch. 4]" *Oeuvres...*, V, p.257.

sonality for Francis de Sales; therefore, a union of hearts is the most profound communion possible. Francis de Sales will use Aristotle's expression "one soul in two bodies" to expound much more than Aristotle the idea of union in friendship. The friends communicate not only their loves, but themselves in his view. They become one heart, united in one pretension, or one vocation, and ultimately in one Savior eternally. This union is a participation in the one love of the Trinity. Union, he will say, is the unique end of love, and therefore all communication tends to union, when it is the expression of benevolence in friendship.⁹⁷

Introducing union with God into friendship's union by participation in the one love of the Trinity, will have dramatic consequences for friendship. Aristotle does not speak of union in the divine for perfect friends, even though he does seem to think that the highest human fulfillment is in the contemplation of divine things, which he called in his earlier work *God*, like his teacher Plato.⁹⁸ A communion of common interest or one friendship may be directed to contemplation, but it does not admit participation with the divine, and, of course, has no paradigm of friendship in the Godhead. The most far reaching consequence of this difference is that for the Christian, Francis de Sales, friendship will also be a means to union with God, and as such, an instrument of grace and personal development. It will become "the medicine of the soul."⁹⁹

⁹⁷ See *infra*, "Participating in the intimacy of the Trinity" on page 445. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.50-53, and III, pp.264-266.

⁹⁸ Aristotle presents, above all, the contemplation of God in his *Eudemian Ethics* and in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, under the aspect of man's achievement. In this sense, there is not an opposition between these two, as one once believed. The text we have of the *Eudemian Ethics* evokes an aspect of contemplation that the *Nicomachean Ethics* leaves in the shadows: the Supreme Good, which is not only to contemplate God, but to honor and to contemplate God. τὸν θεὸν κεραιεῖν καὶ κεραιῆν (1249 b 20). To honor God is to personally engage oneself with the divinity, and is to join together the intellectual life with the life of piety, or to make the intellectual life a life of piety. For to honor God is without doubt precisely to contemplate Him. (Cfr. *Meta*, *lambda*, 7, 1072b 14-17 and 24-30) Cfr. Gauthier and Jolif, *l'Ethique a Nicomaque* vol. II.ii, pp.857-859. See also W. Jaeger, *Aristotle. Fundamentals of the History of his Development*, Oxford (1962) trans. R. Robinson., pp.243-245. The author contends the development of the early ethics parallels that of theology in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. (p.246). Perhaps one could argue that friendship sharing and honoring God, the good of contemplation, is implicit in his work.

⁹⁹ Only in *The Introduction to the Devout Life*, does the idea appear when he cites *Eccl.* 6.:14, 16 in III, p.24. The expression comes from Ambrose's *De Officiis*, which Francis was surely acquainted with, (Cfr. *Oeuvres...* Itr. MDCCLXXXIII) yet he never uses the expression 'a friend is the medicine of

But before the activity of friendship can begin, and intimacy can grow, both men tell us that we must learn if the other person loves us honestly, and is worthy to reveal that hidden self.

Confidence

Aristotle and Francis de Sales also agreed that friendship takes time. As Aristotle says, “A wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not.”¹⁰⁰ Not until those lovable qualities have been shown and not until the person has already been trusted in small ways, can complete confidence finally take root. Even when there is a strong mutual desire for authentic friendship between truly good people, they must, as the ancients would say: “eat salt together.” They must share their lives a while to tame one another. For, as Aristotle puts it, the greatest marks of friendship are to delight in one another’s company and to spend their days together.¹⁰¹

Intimacy, like virtue, requires a decision. One must freely decide to risk revealing oneself to another. Aristotle explains that this comes first from a certain judgment that springs from the character of a person, and secondly, from testing that the other prove worthy of our trust after a time.¹⁰² Again, The Doctor of love is of the same opinion. He comments: “As his conduct in our regard progresses, we will recognize if we should advance in familiarity and confidence, or if we should hold a defensive posture.”¹⁰³ And if we are mistaken, thinking we are loved for our selves, when one really loves us for himself,¹⁰⁴ Aristotle contends,

the soul.’

¹⁰⁰“Friendship requires time and familiarity; as the proverb says, men cannot know each other until they have ‘eaten salt together’; nor can they admit each other to friendship or be friends until each has been found lovable and been trusted by each. Those who quickly show the marks of friendship to each other wish to be friends, but are not friends unless they both are lovable and know the fact; for a wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not.” *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 1156b 25-30.

¹⁰¹*Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 1158a 8-10.

¹⁰²“To render friendship for friendship supposes a decision, now a decision proceeds from a habitual state” *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 5, 1157b 28-31. Cfr. also VIII, 5, 1166b 34-35; 1167a 11-12 and 7, 1158a 14-18.

¹⁰³“Au progres de ses deportemens en nostre endroit, nous reconnoistrans si nous devons avancer en familiarité et confiance, ou si nous devons nous tenir en posture de defiance.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CL.

¹⁰⁴Interestingly, both Aristotle and Francis use the same metaphor in this context. Compare Aristotle, “But if it is by false pretensions of the other that

like Francis, that if we cannot reform them, we must give them up, "For it was not to this sort of man that he was a friend."¹⁰⁵

However, once trust is gained, Aristotle observes, "For friends there is nothing more desirable than the life of intimacy."¹⁰⁶ They long for it. Francis writes to his dear friend Antoine Favre, "Silence between brothers is always painful" and looks forward to "not only a serious conversation, but amicable babbling"¹⁰⁷ Intimacy belongs to friendship and only to friendship. As its act is made perfect, friendship is made perfect, and therefore there are degrees and progress possible in friendship's communication. "For all avow, they [the noble and virtuous] become better in exercising their friendship, i.e. in correcting each other, for they model themselves on each other everywhere they find in their friends some trait that pleases them."¹⁰⁸ Francis explains this is because they participate in each other's qualities easily, on the one hand,¹⁰⁹ and in another way must take great pains. Loyally they battle, he affirms, to purify their love,¹¹⁰ and this ardent struggle to step outside of oneself "demands much patience with oneself."¹¹¹ This brings us to another difficulty in friendship, which is one and the same as the diffi-

one is mistaken, one has the right to be angry with the deceiver as one is with false money changers," *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 3, 1165b 11-14; with St. Francis, "Ainsy que les Anciens nous ont appris: "Soyes bons changeurs" et monnoyeurs, c'est a dire, ne receves pas la fause monnoye avec la bonne, ni le bas or avec le fin or; separez le pretieuz d'avec le chetif : ouy car il n'y a presque celuy qui n'ait quelque imperfection. Et quel rayson y a-il de recevoir pesle mesle les tares et imperfections de l'ami avec son amitié? ... car l'amitié requerit la communication du bien et non pas du mal." *Oeuvres...* III, p.213.

¹⁰⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 3, 1165b 7-8. St. Francis says "Ayes memoyre de l'advís de saint Jacques: *L'amitié du monde est ennemie de Dieu*. [1 Jn 4.4]. ...Oh! Dieu vous defende de ces accidens....Coupes, tranches ces amitiés, et ne vous amuses pas a les desnouer." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DIV. See also III, p.211.

¹⁰⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 12, 1171b 31.

¹⁰⁷ "Etsi namque incommodum est et inopportunum spontanem omni sane tempore inter fratres silentium...at vero longe nunc acerbius et iniquius esset, cum non modo colloquium, sed garrimum verni ipsius temporis leges permittere videantur." *Oeuvres...* ltr. XXI.

¹⁰⁸ *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 12, 1172a 12-15.

¹⁰⁹ Cfr. *Oeuvres...* III, p.194 (which is why Francis considers friendship dangerous, as we shall see).

¹¹⁰ "Quand sera ce que cet amour naturel du sang, des convenances, des bienséances, des correspondances, des sympathies, des graces, sera purifié et réduit a la parfaite obeissance de l'amour tout pur du bon plaisir de Dieu?" *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCII.

¹¹¹ *Oeuvres...* ltr. CXC.

culties of living virtuously or charitably. It is sometimes difficult to treat our friends as we believe they deserve to be treated. The Doctor of love zeros in on the difficulties that sharing intimacy imposes, all due to our very stubborn self love,¹¹² which for him stands out in sharp contrast to Aristotle's "friendship with oneself," as we shall see. Francis sees intimacy as an extension of the interior life, and this takes both its direction and its being from friendship with God. Intimacy with Christ is the source of both humility and compassion, and its sharing is sharing one's interior journey with the same Lord.

Friendship with God?

Aristotle taught that friendship between human beings and God is impossible because the inequality separating them is so great that there can be no reciprocity at all.¹¹³ How can one wish well to a god? St. Francis de Sales argues painstakingly in the *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu* to refute him, and to show that there is in fact a basis for some kind of reciprocity between God and human beings. He argues that human beings are created in the image of God and therefore share a resemblance. Moreover, their inequality is in a respect that brings them together, "One has a great need and capacity to receive goodness, and the other has a great abundance and inclination to give that goodness."¹¹⁴ The

¹¹² "O Dieu! nostre Sauveur nous soit a jamais toute chose, Tenes le coeur en haut, dans le sein amoureux de la divine Bonté et Providence, car *c'est le lieu de son repos* [Ps 132.14]. C'est luy qui m'a rendu tout vostre, et vous toute mienne, affin que nous fussions plus purement, parfaitement et uniquement siens. Ainsy soit il." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXCVIII.

¹¹³ "It is commonly believed that a person can have friendship for a god or for inanimate things (e.g. in Homer, the friendship of Athena and Ulysses; or in Euripides, the friendship of Artemis and Hippolyte) but this is an error. For friendship, according to our doctrine, exists there where reciprocity exists in affection. But friendship for a god does not admit either reciprocity of affection (Cfr. *Eudemeanian Ethics*, VII, 3, 1238b 27; 4, 1239a 19), nor even, to go to the very bottom of things, any kind of affection at all. There can be no common feeling in pretending to love Zeus! And likewise, one would not expect a reciprocal affection from inanimate things. *Magna Moralia* II, 11, 1208b 27-32.

¹¹⁴ He argues, "Nous sommes créés a l'image et semblance de Dieu: qu'est-ce a dire cela, sinon que nous avons une extreme convenance avec sa divine Majesté? Nostre ame est spirituelle, indivisible, immortelle; entend, veut, et veut librement; est capable de juger, discourir, sçavoir et avoir des vertus: en quoy elle ressemble a Dieu....la Divinite est toute en tout le monde, et toute en chaque partie du monde.... Mais, outre cette convenance de similitude, il y a une correspondance nompareille entre Dieu et l'homme pour leur reciproque

Doctor of love sees virtuous friendship a bit differently with the eyes of faith. Perfect friendship shares friendship with God, and its love is to an eminent degree. Aristotle could never accept friendship with the gods because there was no resemblance upon which their communication or their interests could be shared. This, of course, is completely foreign to Christianity, and the Bishop of Geneva devotes several pages to show that not only is this communication with God possible, but it is also constant and intimate in a way that surpasses all others.¹¹⁵ In fact, it is the paradigm that defines all our loves with others, as well as our own interior life with ourselves. God is “The friend of my heart or the heart of my soul.”¹¹⁶ Friendship with Him is the motive for our benevolence and really the only true friendship. It is God that friends share and they love Him above all else¹¹⁷ and for His own sake.¹¹⁸ Here, rather than in the virtuous loving the virtuous, does the benevolence of friendship reach its fullest meaning, because there is no greater good one can wish another. The beauty of it is that it is something available to all at every moment.¹¹⁹ Thus, not only is friendship possible between God and men,

perfection; non que Dieu puisse recevoir aucune perfection de l'homme, mais parce que, comme l'homme ne peut estre perfectionné que par la divine Bonté, aussi la divine Bonté ne peut bonnement si bien exercer sa perfection hors de soy qu'a l'endroit de nostre humanité: l'une a grand besoin et grande capacité de recevoir du bien, et l'autre a grande abondance et grande inclination pour en donner....Nostre ame donques, considerant que rien ne la contente parfaitement et que sa capacite ne peut estre remplie par chose quelconque qui soit au monde, voyant que son entendement a une inclination infinie de sçavoir tous-jours davantage, et sa volonte un appetit insatiable d'aymer et trouver du bien, n'aille pas rayson d'exclamer: Ah, donques je ne suis pas faite pour ce monde! Il y a quelque souverain bien duquel je depens, et quelque ouvrier infini qui a imprimé en moy cet interminable desir de sçavoir et cet appetit qui ne peut estre assouvi: c'est pourquoy il faut que je tende et m'estende vers luy, pour m'unir et joindre a sa bonté a laquelle j'appartiens et suis. Telle est la convenance que nous avons avec Dieu.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.74-76. We find the same concept of proportion in Aristotle's treatise regarding friendship between unequals, but the example of a god exceeds these limits for him. Cfr. *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 7, 1158b 20-33.

¹¹⁵ Cfr. *Oeuvres...* IV, pp. 304-305. Why would he argue so deliberately to show God and man have enough resemblance for friendship to exist if he was unfamiliar with Aristotle's arguments? He does not refer to Aristotle at all in this context, yet he lies there just below the surface of the entire exposé.

¹¹⁶ “l'Ami de mon coeur ou le coeur de mon ame.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.189.

¹¹⁷ Cfr. *Oeuvres...* IV, p.37, and IV, pp.70-72.

¹¹⁸ *Oeuvres...* IV, p.163.

¹¹⁹ “Nous sommes en perpetuelle communication avec luy, qui ne cesse de

it is a means to transformation in a way that grows and becomes the source of a new kind of virtue, dignity and divinized human love.

Contemplation

Aristotle believed, like most Greeks, that to know oneself was one of the main pillars of wisdom and happiness. “A friend is another self,”¹²⁰ and therefore, one best contemplates himself in considering his friend. The Doctor of love would agree, but here too, friendship with God changes everything. It is the only true source of contemplation because we learn most about ourselves in our interior life by following Christ.¹²¹ Aristotle never speaks of humility or charity as a virtue, but St. Francis often does. “Humility and charity are the master cords, all the others are attached to them. These are the mothers of the virtues.”¹²² The most pivotal difference between these two theories of friendship lies here. Redeemed by God’s mercy through Christ’s friendship and forgiveness, the Christian learns that: *In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.*¹²³ God loves us not because we are good, but because He is good. His love gives us a new dignity, and humble gratitude. Virtue for the Christian is a puffed up and hollow illusion without the understanding in every fi-

parler a nos coeurs par inspirations, attraitz et mouvemens sacres. Il ne cesse de nous faire du bien et rendre toutes sortes de tesmoins de sa tressainte affection, nous ayant ouvertement revele tous ses secretz, comme a ses *amis* confidens (Jn 15.15); et, pour comble de son saint amoureux commerce avec nous, il s'est rendu nostre propre viande au tressaint Sacrement de l'Eucharistie. Et quant a nous, nous traittons avec luy a toutes heures, quand il nous plait, par la tressaint orayson, ayans tout nostre vie, nostre mouvement et nostre estre, non seulement avec luy, mais en luy et par luy (Act 17.28).” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.164.

¹²⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 9, 1170b 4-5.

¹²¹ Contemplation for St. Francis is in a word: “Que nous vivions plus en Dieu qu'en nous mesme.” *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.324-5.

¹²² “L'humilité et la charité sont les maistresses cordes; toutes les autres y sont attachées...Ce sont les meres aux vertus.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXXXV. And again, “Estre bonne servante de Dieu, ce n'est pas estre tous-jours consolee... c'est estre charitable envers le prochain, avoir en la partie superieur de l'esprit une inviolable resolution de suivre la volonté de Dieu, avoir une tres humble humilité et simplicité pour se confier en Dieu et se relever autant de fois qu'on fait des cheutes, s'endurer soy mesme en ses abjections et supporter tranquillement les autres en leurs imperfections.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDIX. See also, *Oeuvres...* ltr. CXXXVIII bis.

¹²³ 1John 4:10

ber of one's being that *No one is good but God alone*.¹²⁴ Christian friendship is, therefore, more compassionate and quick to forgive. Moreover, it is more ardent in its love, able to better endure faults and see, even in what Aristotle would consider unequals, reason to be edified, and material for friendship. Its source comes from a very different genre of self knowledge than that of the virtuous philosopher, and naturally it tends to a good not alien to ethics, but beyond it, as we shall see later.

Conclusion

Neither the *Nicomachean Ethics* nor the works of St. Francis de Sales were carefully composed treatises. Both were fragments gathered together into a kind of aggregate whole. Some of the letters penned by Francis were written as he was mounting his horse bound for some appointment. Aristotle's work was made up of course notes gathered and compiled by his students after his death. All this is to say that neither work is meant to be complete by its author. Both are practical men writing in the haste of very active lives, which means their thoughts about the nature and problems of friendship come from concrete instances.

Similarities

St. Francis practically borrows Aristotle's definition outright. He agrees that friendship must be based upon some kind of resemblance, or "convenience," and that the benevolence mutually shared between friends must be communicated in conversation and actions of the intimate life. Like Aristotle, he thinks that friendship is distinguished by the nature of goods communicated, what the Philosopher calls common interest. Both men teach that the things one loves are key in understanding, the nature of all three terms of the definition of friendship. It is what makes these persons resemble each other, what they communicate and the good they perceive as desirable for themselves; in a word, what they wish for and from their friend. If the common interest that brings such men together is profit, then both agree that these friendships will not last, because they are passing like the passions upon which they depend. If their friendship is based upon the communication of things that are good in themselves, however, both agree such a friendship is true and stable. They would both contend that these

¹²⁴ Mark 10:18

friends love each other for their own sake and not for some good they might get from the other. They wish him well in a true sense, without self interest, and ironically, they profit from such friendships no less than those who seek nothing more. They see such friendship as a consequence of virtue, because the virtuous person is both able to love greater goods more than himself and to act wisely in their regard. In other words, they are able to not only wish their friend the goods they should, but also to treat them as they should. This is only proven over time, because what a person truly is remains hidden from us, and only revealed in what they say and do. Slowly one learns that another is trustworthy, and slowly intimacy is able to grow. Here, both believe the full communication of the things one loves, and indeed one's very self is acted out. It is the act of friendship, and as it grows and progresses, they both tell us, friendship does too. Intimacy is then the communication of our private life and has many possible degrees. Finally, both the Greek Philosopher and the Savoyard Bishop agree most vehemently that friendship is necessary for human happiness. Though we may enjoy every other good, if we cannot communicate and exchange it with others our lives are incomplete. Its benevolent love is both defined and communicated by their very personalities. In this way friends increase each other's participation in those noble goods they share. And when that love is between the truly good it is for each other's own sake, it is permanent and progresses in sharing the noble things both enjoy and which make them what they are.

Differences

Aristotle's use of friendship is much more vast than Francis de Sales' idea. He extends it to all communities of men, to patriotism and the like. However, once we focus on the inter-personal relationship and its intimacy we find many similarities. Perhaps happiness, this last similarity, is the best place to begin to sketch the great chasm that differentiates these two thinkers on friendship. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle set out in quest of the human good, the telos of human life. He calls it fulfillment, and describes it as the virtuous life shared in friendship, with the benefit of external goods necessary for that life.¹²⁵ St.

¹²⁵ Père Gauthier summarizes it best: "If Aristotle consecrated such a large place in his *Nicomachean Ethics* to the analysis of friendship, is this not because in the end it is by it that ideal is most completely defined?... If Aristotle had to resume his morality in a single formula, he would not have said, with the Stoics: 'live in conformity with nature;' he would not have said, with the Christian: 'Seek God;' or: 'Do Good;' he would have said, or more exactly did say:

Francis de Sales, as a Christian, believes in this kind of happiness, but also believes in a greater supernatural happiness. The greatest difference between him and Aristotle is explained by his Christian faith: “You have made us for Yourself, oh Lord, and our hearts will never find rest until they find it in you.”¹²⁶ The common interest he shares with friends is a love of God. He is both the good wished for every friend and the good communicated between them in intimacy. While Aristotle contends that the good communicated is the virtuous good incarnated in the friends themselves, Francis accepts this and adds another dimension, taking it one step further to the Creator. As images of Pure Goodness, and exemplar of all goodness, human beings are indeed lovable in their own right. Francis loves them for what they are, as indeed he believes God loves them. The more he loves the Paragon, the more he loves His image and likeness, but this love of others for their own sake does not terminate in the friends’ good character, but is directed toward union with that same personal God. This is why he calls it “spiritual friendship”.

Francis, unlike Aristotle, not only believed friendship with God was possible, but he also lived such a friendship. It was like a source from which his love of others poured out endlessly. His more than 2,000 letters attest to an intimacy that Aristotle would have a hard time comprehending, since he believes a friend to all is a friend to no one.¹²⁷ Francis de Sales, on the contrary, believed that love is one, and in giving oneself wholly to God, one at the same time gives himself wholly to friends, family, republic and even enemy, “So that in being all to each, he will be more all to all.”¹²⁸ Charity in this way encompasses all

‘Live in friendship with your self, in a such way as to be able to in addition, live in friendship with others.’”(Nicomachean Ethics IX, 3, 1166b 26-29).

¹²⁶Augustine *Confessions* I, 1.

¹²⁷ *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 9, 1171a 16-18. Compare St. Thomas: “Perfect friendship is not directed towards many, so that to each one it would be something proper to himself. But inasmuch as friendship towards one becomes perfect as regards that one, the more perfect the love we have toward one, the better able are we to love others. Thus charity, because it is the most perfect friendship, extends itself to God and to all who are able to know God. It includes not only those whom we know, but also our enemies.” *De Charitate* art. 4 ad 11.

¹²⁸ “Un homme ne laissera pas d'être tout à Dieu, tout à son père, tout à sa mère, tout au prince, tout à la république, tout à ses ennemis, tout à ses amis; en sorte qu'étant tout à un chacun, il sera encore tout à tous. Or cela est ainsi, d'autant que le devoir par lequel on est tout aux uns n'est pas contraire au devoir par lequel on est tout aux autres. L'homme se donne tout par l'amour, et se

of humanity, but these letters reveal a charity communicated, which is why they can be considered true friendships. He enjoyed friendships with the illiterate and lowly, hardly acceptable in Aristotle's vision of resemblance. But Francis would tell us that these too love Christ, and what's more, these too are most precious to the "Friend of my soul," and because He loves them so do I. They would share an equality in faith, and thereby a wisdom greater than the Greeks. An interior life of friendship with God brings a wisdom of its own, as he implies when he writes, "These kinds of writings are done more happily by devotion of lovers than by the doctrine of the learned."¹²⁹ Aristotle is right, men should not be able to be friends with God, but Christ has now made that possible, as we shall see in the mosaic of friendships in Francis' life. It is one of the gifts of redemption.

Finally, the tone and hue of that interior friendship with Christ gives a new texture to every friendship. Faith, hope and charity add incoherently a supernatural and eternal dimension to all the qualities of the virtuous life that Aristotle describes. In friendship the most significant effect of this life is its humility. That humble gratitude for Christ's love when we were not lovable, our redemption and dignity in God, makes us love mercifully and generously in return. This mercy, Francis would often say, should extend not only to our neighbors and our intimates, but also to ourselves. The "gentle struggle of friendship" is all of these; it is the interior life of every Christian. It makes its bonds much more permanent because they are founded on Christ, it makes its intimacy deeper and its day to day life gentler and more elastic, and finally, it reaches out, always inviting equals and unequals to share in its medicinal participation in the very intimacy of the Trinity.

donne toute autant qu'il aime." *Oeuvres...* X, p.3.

¹²⁹"Ces sortes d'escritz se font plus heureusement par la devotion des amans que par la doctrine des sçavans." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.5.

IV

Cicero's Laelius de Amicitia

Since his days in Paris at Clermont with the Jesuits, Francis de Sales had been ingrained with the Classics,¹ and we find references to them sprinkled throughout his works in this context.² That Classic lecture

¹ G. Dupont-Ferrier, the historian of daily life at the Collège de Clermont, reports that the grand authors of Antiquity were “understood and explained in a way that they were transformed...one had the impression of reliving the life of Antiquity, to speak its language, to hear the applause or the clamor of the agora or the forum, to combat with Achilles, with Pericles or with Caesar.” A. Schimberg, *L'Education Morale dans les Collèges de la Compagnie de Jésus en France sous l'Ancien Régime* (XVI, XVII, XVIIIème siècles) Paris, 1913, p.145.

² For example: “Saint Augustin (*De Civit.* l. 14. c.7, and 9) reduisant toutes les passions et affections a quatre comme ont fait Boece (*De Consol. Phil.* 1, I metrum VII), Ciceron (*Tusc. Disp.* 1, III c. XI, 1, IV c VI), Virgile (*Aeneis*, I, VI, 733), et la pluspart de l'antiquite.” *Oeuvres...IV*, p.33. See also: A. Liuima *Aux Sources...* for an explanation of Francis' education in the humanities. Bremond in *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu' à nos jours*, 11 vols. Paris, (1916-1936) gives a long explanation of Francis' erudition and concludes naming him “l'humaniste par excellence,” in vol I, *L'Humanisme Dévot*.

was however, thoroughly Christian.³ Augustine and the other fathers formed the infrastructure. The Classic authors of Antiquity were more than adornments, but never preeminent.⁴ Let's look briefly at the later stoic idea of classical friendship, the strongest and deepest of human affections, as synthesized by Cicero in his *De amicitia*. It was an important grounds for two sources that Francis will appeal to explicitly and implicitly for his ideas on friendship. Namely, Aelred of Rievaulx and Augustine. He undoubtedly was familiar with Cicero's famous work.

Cicero's treatise on friendship is more practical than Aristotle's, and is marked by a certain skepticism for the wisdom of the Greeks. He agrees with them that friendship is the best of goods and that it can only exist between good men. However, he rejects virtue and wisdom as some rare ideal "that no mortal can attain,"⁵ being satisfied with the common sense of good people in the practical situations of every day life. His second orientation springs from another current of Stoic thought, which held that friendship was based upon some kind of mutual need and was therefore basically for profit.⁶ He argues that

³"En un mot ils [les Jesuits] ne séparent jamais la formation de l'esprit de celle du coeur." Schimberg, *l'Education morale dans les collèges ...* p.176.

⁴ Maldonat sums up the priorities of an education at the time Francis was just beginning his. "Deinde ut vos moneam, perinde ac debeo, provideatis diligenter, ii si qui sunt forte, qui Cicieronis regula, Virgilii, Lucretii, Luciani, Plutarchi, Plinii deliramentis pietatem et religionem metiuntur, vobis imponant. Volo omnes esse doctos, et in omnibus litteris politioribus eruditos, sed volo tam pie doctos esse et eruditos religiose, ut et planius dicam, velim omnes esse Irenaeos, Basilios, Chrysostomos, Nazianzenos, Augustinos et Heironomos, quorum unusquisque incredibilem profanarum litterarum scientiam cum singulari religione et vitae sanctitate conjunxit". J.M. Prat, *Maldonat et l'Université de Paris* pp.557-558. A. Liuma notes that although the classic authors are cited often by St. Francis, "Ces auteurs sont pour lui des répétiteurs plutôt que ses maîtres. ... il les corrige, il les complète par la doctrine chrétienne." *Aux Sources...* vol. I p.144-145 and p.97.

⁵"Sed hoc primum sentio, nisi in bonis amicitiam esse non posse....Negant enim quemquam esse uirum bonum nisi sapientem. Sit ita sane. Sed eam sapientiam interpretantur, quam adhuc mortalis nemo est consecutus." Cicéron *Laelius de Amicitia*, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", ed. Combès, Paris, 1983 §18 p.12.

⁶ Theories which began with the Sophists in Greece. Xenophon in *Memorabilia* (11, 3.3 and 4), for example, describes a friendship of utility and kinship. A friend's value, choice and even how he is to be treated, all revolve around how much profit he brings us. Protagoras (*Dissoi Logoi* ch 3) elaborated

friendship known among even common people can become perfect little by little, purified of all utility, if it is between persons habitually trying to pursue sovereign Goodness. So fundamentally he agrees with the Greek theories,⁷ as portrayed by philosophers like Aristotle, but there are some nuances that merit our attention before we turn to Augustine.

True friendship among the good

Cicero's work begins with the problem of the immortality of the soul, and through this problem, he attests to the nobility of friendship, for when a friendship is truly exemplary, it may leave an eternal memory (*memoriam*) of those who were such friends to one another.⁸ "I can only exhort you to prefer friendship to every kind of good; for nothing is in better harmony with nature, nothing suits human happiness better in good times and bad."⁹ His optic in fact is already apparent here in the opening. Nature and *consensio* are his two pillars in this work. Friendship harmonizes and perfects something in our very natures.¹⁰ Indeed, it is so fundamental that it is practically a matter of

a theory of useful friendship as a kind of justice.

⁷ In his introduction to the French edition, R. Combès shows that Cicero's sources are disputed and unknown, and mentions two major differences with the Greeks, the first being the lack of a study of the conflict between *honestum* and *utile* friendships, and the second, the absence of any treatment of the duties of friendship. Cicéron *Laelius de l'Amitié*, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres"... pp.LI- LIII.

⁸ "Sed tamen recordatione nostrae amicitiae sic furor, ut beate uixisse uidear, quia cum Scipione uixerim, quocum mihi coniuncta cura de publica re et de priuata fuit; quocum et domus fuit et militia communis et, id in quo est omnis uis amicitiae, uoluntatum, studiorum, sententiarum summa consensio. Itaque non tam ista me sapientiae, quam modo Fannius commemorauit, fama delectat, falsa praesertim, quam quod amicitiae nostrae memoriam spero sempiternam fore." §15 *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.11. Is Francis de Sales thinking of this text when he writes Favre in 1610, "Continuions, Monsieur mon Frere, en cette si dinge et si rar'affection, affin que...tout le monde l'admire et louë des-ormais". *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXLII.

⁹ "Ego uos hortari tantum possum, ut amicitiam omnibus rebus humanis anteponeatis; nihil est enim tam naturae aptum, tam conueniens ad res uel secundas uel aduersas." §17 *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.12.

¹⁰ "Sic enim mihi perspicere uideor, ita natos esse nos, ut inter omnes esset societas quaedam, maior autem, ut quisque proxime accederet." §19, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.13.

common sense.¹¹ It is therefore necessary, and life without friendship is like the universe without sun.¹² It can only exist between good persons, for they are alone able to give a friend the benefit of the doubt when others would cave in to suspicions, and they alone are frank when flattery would make things falsely nice and comfortable.¹³ Such people are gentle in their friendships, affable, and free with one another.¹⁴ Their characters are stable¹⁵ and humble.¹⁶ For “It is precisely virtue that creates and maintains friendship, and without virtue, all friendship

¹¹“Agamus igitur pingui, ut aiunt, Minerua. Qui ita se gerunt, ita uiuunt, ut eorum probetur fides, integritas, aequalitas, liberalitas nec sit in iis ulla cupiditas, libido, audacia sitque magna constantia, ut ii fuerunt, modo quos nominaui, hos uiros bonos, ut habiti sunt, sic etiam appellandos putemus, quia sequantur, quantum homines possunt, naturam optimam bene uiuendi ducem.” §19, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.13.

¹²“Solem enim e mundo tollere uidentur qui amicitiam e uita tollunt, qua nihil a dis immortalibus melius habemus, nihil iucundius.” §47, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.31.

¹³“Amicitiam nisi inter bonos esse non posse. Est enim boni uiri, quem eudem sapientem licit dicere, haec duo tenere in amicitia. Primum ne quid fictum sit neue simulatum; aperte enim uel odisse magis ingenui est quam fronte occultare sententiam. Deinde non solum ab aliquo adlatas criminationes repellere, sed ne ipsum quidem esse suspiciosum, semper aliquid existimantem ab amico esse uiolatum.” §65, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.42.

¹⁴“Accedat huc suauitas quaedam oportet sermonum atque morum, haudquaquam mediocre condimentum amicitiae....amicitia remissior esse debet et liberior et dulcior et ad omnem comitatem facilitatemque procliuior.” §66, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.42. One insight into what he means by gentleness is seen when he refutes the contemporary interpretations of friendship’s limits. Touchingly, he defends the weak soul. He calls that theory which holds our measure of esteem for a friend must be the esteem one has for oneself, the worst of all, for it is often the case that a person lose confidence and be broken, and if this happens one should try and inspire new hope and ambition in him, rather than adopt the attitude one has for oneself. See also §59.

¹⁵ Stability comes from good faith and nature, “Firmamentum autem stabilitatis constantiaequae est eius, quam in amicitia quaerimus, fides....Simplicem praeterea et communem et consentientem, id est, qui rebus isdem moueatur, eligi par est.” It reveals his practical orientation, and his ever present nuance of feelings springing from nature binding friends of this most lasting kind. §65, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.41.

¹⁶“Quamquam miror, illa superbia et importunitate, si quemquam amicum habere potuit.” §54, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.35.

is impossible.”¹⁷ Virtue is the condition,¹⁸ origin,¹⁹ and guarantee of friendship. “It is virtue, virtue, yes indeed, which both forms and conserves friendship’s bonds. For it assures harmony, stability and consistency.”²⁰

The beginning

Friendship is born when a virtuous person notices virtue in another person. This resemblance spontaneously produces an affection compelling them to associate with one another and bind themselves together in friendship.²¹ “Nothing searches its like more rapaciously than nature.”²² We were made for friendship, to live in society, because we can speak unlike the animals, and share the power to reason.²³ This natural fulfillment accompanied by the affections it bears are the cause of friendship for Cicero. Once such characters are recognized, good men must reveal their feelings for one another, but once they do “The flame of love and friendship ignites.”²⁴ They then participate in each other’s qualities,²⁵ and love each other not for profit, nor for some need, or weakness in themselves, but honestly.²⁶ “For friendship does not

¹⁷ “Qui autem in uirtute summum bonum ponunt, praeclare illi quidem, sed haec ipsa uirtus amicitiam et gignit et continet nec sine uirtute amicitia esse ullo pacto potest.” §20, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.14.

¹⁸ §18, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.12

¹⁹ §27-28; §100, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, pp.19-20 and 59.

²⁰ “Virtus, uirtus, inquam,...et conciliat amicitias et conseruat. In ea est enim conuenientia rerum, in ea stabilitas, in ea constantia.” §100, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.59-60.

²¹ “Cum autem contrahat amicitiam,... si qua significatio uirtutis eluceat, ad quam se similis animis adplicet et adiungat, id cum contigit, amor exoriatur necesse est.” §48, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.32.

²² “Nihil est enim adpetentius similibus sui nec rapacius quam natura.” §50, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.33.

²³ Cicero was no doubt inspired by Aristotle for this idea. He says in the *De Officiis*, I, I, 4: “Eademque natura vi rationis hominem conciliat homini et ad orationis et ad vitae societatem.”

²⁴ §100, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.60.

²⁵ §100, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.60. The same point will be raised by St. Francis de Sales word for word, to argue that friendship is the most dangerous of loves. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* III, p.194. See infra “The importance of friendship, the most dangerous of loves” beginning on page 387.

²⁶ §26 and §30 ed. Combès, p.19 and 21. Here we come to an interesting difference between Cicero and Aristotle. Aristotle called love wishing the good

hope for reward, but all the profit it procures is in the very love that it inspires in us.”²⁷ And yet, nothing is more profitable.²⁸ Indeed Cicero laments, most people seek friendship for profit, but they will never know true friendship if they do not love another as they love themselves, “for a friend is another self”.²⁹ This is why the person who does not respect cannot know friendship. This kind of love is always based upon respect.³⁰ Its minimum measure is the respect we hold for ourselves, which is another way of understanding why someone who does not respect themselves cannot be a friend in the true sense.

Definition

Cicero gives his most succinct description, which is often repeated, in this way: “Friendship is indeed nothing other than *consensio* in all divine and human things with benevolence and affection.”³¹ *Consensio*

for another, from whence his idea of benevolence in friendship. Cicero, however, calls love “Amare autem nihil est aliud nisi eum ipsum diligere, quem ames, nulla indigentia, nulla utilitate quaesita, quae tamen ipsa exflorescit ex amicitia, etiamsi tu eam minus secutus sis.” §100 ed. Combès p.60. For him friendship seems to be much less intellectual, less dependent upon a free decision, than spontaneous and compelling. But this rush of feelings nature causes, he will later say, should come after a judgment, and not from a judgment made in the swirl of passion. Cfr. §85. Yet he seems to be in complete agreement with Aristotle that genuine love must always be altruistic.

²⁷ “Amicitiam non spe mercedis adducti, sed quod omnis eius fructus in ipso amore inest, expetendam putamus.” §31, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.22. This is a direct rebuttal to Stoical opinions of his times, like Epicures, who believed friendship to be motivated by utility, or contrariety.

²⁸ “Non igitur utilitatem amicitia, sed utilitas amicitiam secuta est.” §51 *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.34. See also §22.

²⁹ “Quidquam bonum norunt, nisi quod fructuosum sit, et amicos, tamquam pecudes, eos potissimum diligunt, ex quibus sperant se maximum fructum esse capturos... Ipse enim se quisque diligit, non ut aliquam a se ipse mercedem exigat caritatis suae, sed quod per se sibi quisque carus est. Quod nisi idem in amicitiam transferetur, uerus amicus numquam reperietur. Est enim is, qui est tamquam alter idem.” §79 and 80, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.49. See also Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 10, 1170b 5.

³⁰ “Nam maximum ornamentum amicitiae tollit, qui ex ea tollit uerecundiam.” §82, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.50.

³¹ “Est enim amicitia nihil aliud nisi omnium diuinarum humanarumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensio.” §20, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.14. Is Francis de Sales thinking of this definition when he writes

is difficult to translate. It is often rendered as a complete and absolute understanding accompanied by common feelings. In other words an accord, of both feelings and understanding, between those who seek Goodness: the wise and good.³² This accord implies friends share in common their goods, projects and desires, “without exception.”³³ “For friendship consists in making, so to speak, one sole soul from many.”³⁴ It equalizes the unequal,³⁵ and is proven when a man chooses friendship over power and money.³⁶ This is something, Cicero admits after many years in public life, rare indeed, and why we must resist the rush of our affections for a person and test their firmness of character.³⁷ There are no friends like old friends, who have proven themselves over the years. “And the proverb is true”, he comments, “that one must eat many bushels of salt to fulfill one’s role in friendship.”³⁸

Limits

Friendship has its limits in Cicero’s teaching, and they stem from discord “when one asks from a friend things to which he has no right, as to serve a passion or to aid in an injustice.”³⁹ It is the law of

Favre: “La commiseration est la marque incontestable de l’amitié, ce sentiment le plus exquis de tous.”? *Oeuvres...* ltr. XIII. As we shall see, he does not adopt this definition because sharing feelings on human and divine things is comprehended in the Aristotelian idea of communication.

³²“The wise,” “the good,” and “the virtuous,” are all interchangeable in Classic literature.

³³“Sit inter eos omnium rerum, consiliorum, uoluntatum sine ulla exceptione communitas.” §62, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.39.

³⁴“Nam cum amicitiae uis sit in eo, ut unus quasi animus fiat ex pluribus.” §92, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.50.

³⁵“Verum enim amicum qui intuetur, tamquam exemplar aliquod intuetur sui. Quocirca et absentes adsunt et egentes abundant et imbecilli ualent et, quod difficilium dictu est, mortui uiuunt; tantus eos honos, memoria, desiderium prosequitur amicorum.” §23, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.16.

³⁶§63, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.40.

³⁷§62, 63 and 78, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.39-40; 48. Unhappy times permit us to know true friends §17; 22; 48 and 64. And since characters may change, time is very important in appreciating a friend’s value, §63; 74. In fact, Cicero thinks the pitfalls are so numerous that one must count on luck to escape all of them and find true friendship, §35.

³⁸“Multos modios salis simul edendos esse, ut amicitiae munus expletum sit.” §67, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.43.

³⁹“Magna etiam discidia et plerumque iusta nasci, cum aliquid ab amicis,

friendship to neither ask nor acquiesce in a shameful thing,⁴⁰ for friendship is no excuse for bad actions. And yet, sometimes one must be willing to bend morality a little, provided it leads to no dishonor, for the good of a friend. “One may show a certain indulgence for friendship.”⁴¹ However, he admits, sometimes characters and tastes suffer changes, in which case we must gently dissolve or “unsew rather than tear” such friendship.⁴² These are friendships that were somehow already lacking in virtue, because, he emphasizes, this does not occur in friendships between the virtuous.⁴³

Degrees and Progress

Cicero readily admits that there are many different degrees possible in friendship, and that friends aid us in virtue. This entails a struggle, especially when one must accept the good and frank criticisms of a friend, and conversely when we must also reproach our friends out of good-will.⁴⁴ In this way, friends progress in both intimacy and virtue. Nature alone cannot bring itself to perfection, but she must “Conjoin herself and share with another to arrive there.”⁴⁵ Thus he joins the accord of classic writers who attest that solitude somehow deprives us

quod rectum non esset postularetur, ut aut libidinis ministri aut adiutores essent ad iniuriam.” §35, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.24.

⁴⁰“Haec igitur lex in amicitia sanciat, ut neque rogemus res turpes nec facimus rogati.” §40; 44, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, pp.27 and 29.

⁴¹“Est enim quatenus amicitiae dari uenia possit nec uero neglegenda est fama nec mediocre telum ad res gerendas existimare.” §61, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.39. He says earlier that worrying about exact justice in exchange of gifts etc. is a constraint to friendship. §58, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.37.

⁴²“Ut Catonem dicere audiui, dissuendae magis quam discindendae.” §76, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.47.

⁴³ §76 and 77, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.47.

⁴⁴“Ut igitur et monere et moneri proprium est uerae amicitiae et alterum libere facere, non aspere, alterum patienter accipere, non repugnanter, sic habendum est nullam in amicitia pestem esse maiorem quam adulationem blanditiam, adensationem.” §91, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.55, cfr. also §88.

⁴⁵“Uirtutum amicitia adiutrix a natura data est, non uitiorum comes, ut, quoniam solitaria non posset uirtus ad ea, quae summa sunt, peruenire, coniuncta et consociata cum altera perueniret.” §83, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.50.

of even the most heavenly of pleasures.⁴⁶ We need friendship to progress in virtue, and to enjoy the pleasures of life. He explains, “All that man touches is fragile and unstable, one should always search around himself a person worthy of being loved and capable of loving. For a life deprived of affection and benevolence is also without any pleasure.”⁴⁷

Eternal

He ends with the same theme he opened with, immortality, and argues that friendship is permanent because nature is permanent. This quality gives friendship its greatest value in his eyes. “In spite of the sudden loss of Scipio,” Cicero writes, “I believe that he still lives, and that he will always live: for it is his virtue that I have loved and it has not ceased to live.”⁴⁸ There is a certain measure of eternity in the living memory of such men that remains with their friends left behind in that virtue they shared.⁴⁹

Let’s now turn to Augustine, bearing in mind this classic heritage that imbued him, and look to see how Christianity changes the classical ideas of this most fundamental of human goods.

⁴⁶He cites Timon of Athens and Archytas of Tarente in this context. §87 and 88, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, pp.52-53.

⁴⁷“Sed quoniam res humanae fragiles caducaequae sunt, semper aliqui anquirendi sunt, quos diligamus et a quibus diligamur. Caritate enim benevolentiaque sublata, omnis est e uita sublata iucunditas.” §102, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.61.

⁴⁸“Mihi quidem Scipio, quamquam est subito ereptus, uiuit tamen semperque uiuet: uirtutem enim amaui illius uiri, quae exstincta non est.” §102 *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès p.61.

⁴⁹“Quarum rerum recordatio et memoria si una cum illo occidisset, desiderium coniunctissimi atque amantissimi uiri ferre nullo modo possem. Sed nec illa exstincta sunt alunturque potius et augentur cogitatione et memoria mea, et, si illis plane orbatus essem, magnum tamen adfert mihi aetas ipsa solacium.” §104, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.62. Francis de Sales echoes this when he writes Claude de Quœx after his brother’s death, “Les désirs de ce défunt et sa fidèle amitié vivront à jamais en ma mémoire et en mes affections.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDX.

V

Augustine of Hippo

“Only in friendship is a man known.”¹

The most influential

Charles-Auguste de Sales, Francis’ Episcopal successor and biographer, tells us that Augustine was his favorite among the Fathers of the Church.² The Bishop of Geneva calls Augustine’s writings, “sweetness and graciousness itself.”³ Fr. Liuima’s study shows that Augustine is the most frequently cited of the Fathers in St. Francis’ *Traité de l’Amour de Dieu*.⁴ That trend is consistent in his writings

¹“Et nemo nisi per amicitiam cognoscitur”. *De diversis quaest.* 83, 71, 5.

²Charles-Auguste deSales, *Histoire du Bienheureux François de Sales* Paris, Vivès 1857, 2 vols.

³“Il n’y a rien de plus doux que saint Augustin, ses escrits sont la doueur et la suavité mesme.” *Oeuvres...* VI, p.60.

⁴A. Liuima, *Aux Sources du Traité de l’Amour de Dieu de Saint François de Sales*, Librairie Editrice de l’Univ. Gregorienne, Rome 1959, 2 vols. He cites Augustine 79 times in the *Traité* and 441 times in the whole of his works. The structure of the soul described in the first book of the *Traité* is explicitly augustinian. See also W. Marceau, *L’optimisme de Saint François de Sales*, P.

about friendship. He cites Augustine 18 times,⁵ more than any other source apart from scripture. In most cases the Bishop of Hippo is used as an authority to support some point the Doctor of love is making, or as an example of one loving God rightly. He cites and, therefore, he certainly knew Augustine's *Confessions*, the *City of God*, together with his *Commentary on the Psalms*, and his letters.

If we try to trace the importance of Augustine's thought for St. Francis de Sales' idea of friendship, these citations are important, but they are really only a starting point, because though Augustine may be cited expressly in these particular places, his thought is prevalent in a more subtle and fundamental way. Remember, Francis did not write the content of 26 volumes with the leisure of a scholar, but with "little 15 minute scraps of time" he was able to find here and there.⁶ Many times citations are paraphrased or missing.

This poses a problem for our research into his sources because we are left with implied references and interpretation. Moreover, there are many ideas less fundamental to Christianity than friendship that the Fathers of the Church and great theologians examine and re-examine throughout the many centuries of Christian thought. Augustine's influence extended over more than 1,000 years of pondering before it reached St. Francis de Sales. He enjoyed an authority greater than any other Christian thinker in the Latin church, and his thought is interwoven at nearly every turn of the development of western Christian doctrine. To know which are the sources of the Bishop of Geneva is a delicate question. We find ourselves hard pressed to determine if certain ideas have their source in Gregory, Bonaventure, Thomas, or Augustine, because they all hold them. Really, what does it matter? Our purpose is not to give credit for every little step and nuance given in the discernment of friendship, but to explain and understand it in the Doctor of love. Our study of his sources is meant only to give depth to his thoughts, which he himself says contains nothing original! "I say nothing that I haven't learned from others."⁷

In many ways, the lives of all the saints are similar, and to attempt to argue that the lives of the Bishop of Geneva and the Bishop of Hippo

Lethielleux, Paris 1973, pp.40-128, for a good summary of the wide spectrum of influences on Francis' thought.

⁵ *Oeuvres* III, p.202 (2x); V, p.274; V, p.322; III, p.209; III, p.245; IV, pp.304- 305; IV, p.267; IV, pp.187-189; IV, p.33 (2x); IV, pp.50-53; ltrs. CCCIV (2x); CCCVI; CCCXXVII; DCCXI and MDCCLXXXIII.

⁶Cfr. introduction to the *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu Oeuvres*... IV., p.10.

⁷"Je ne dis rien que je n'aye appris des autres". *Oeuvres*... IV, p.10.

were similar, and therefore Francis was duly influenced by Augustine, would be forced if it were not for the explicit and ample evidence in the Doctor of love's writings. Augustine was known, for example, for his humility and to have given generously, even his clothing, to the poor. Francis de Sales was also like him in this way, but then so was another famous Bishop who had an important influence on him, namely St. Charles Borromeo. Is it any surprise that Christian friendship has many similarities just as Christian life?

The Christian bridge

Augustine is one of the main roots of Salesian reflection, indeed of Christian reflection, yet Francis de Sales had his own particular interpretation of Christian friendship, which studying Augustine will also help to demonstrate.⁸ Notably, Augustine's expression "corrupted nature" is not found even once in St. Francis de Sales' writings. His optimism was influenced by Protestant pessimism about human nature, no doubt, but it is a clear difference he chooses from Augustine, which will have consequences for his understanding in friendship. We propose to begin with the texts where Francis explicitly cites Augustine, and briefly explain Augustine's ideas on friendship using the concepts Francis deemed important, filling any gaps with some background from Augustine's works and life. Augustine will serve us in another way too. He provides an excellent lens through which we can behold the Classics. His thought is a synthesis of the Classic concept of friendship. Schooled from his early youth at the feet of the best masters of his time, he was recognized by his contemporaries as a great orator, fluent in the literature and philosophy of ancient Rome.⁹ He is the bridge between

⁸ H. Bremond summarizes three very important points where Salesian thinking differs from Augustine: 1) the virtues of the pagans are only disguised vices; 2) man is lost by the bad usage of his free will; and 3) after the fall human nature is incapable of any good act, which means the human will cannot have a proper role in salvation. Bremond H. "La philosophie de saint François de Sales," in *Revue de Paris*, 1923, p.138ff See also, Marceau, W., *L'optimisme dans l'oeuvre de Saint François de Sales*, Editions P. Lethielleux, Paris, (1973) pp 95-100 for a resume of Augustine's optimism regarding human nature despite these tennents, and his influence on Francis de Sales.

⁹ In the *Confessions* III, 4. He tells us at the age of 19 that he fell upon Cicero's Hortensius. Numerous modern authors agree that Cicero's influence was much greater than that of Plotinus, and throughout his life Augustine will cite long passages from this Hortensius with praise. Cfr. Courcelle,

Classic thinkers like Cicero, Aristotle and Plato, and Christianity. He reshapes them with his newly acquired tool: Christianity. His *Confessions* is a story of intellectual catharsis, just as much as it is a story of moral conversion. Therefore, his education played a large role in his understanding and living of friendship.¹⁰ This is manifest when he uses Cicero's definition of friendship, commenting, "For friendship has been rightly defined as agreement on things human and divine combined with good will and love."¹¹ In a letter he goes on to explain that agreement on human things alone is not enough; there must be agreement on divine things, if not the friendship will always be deficient in an essential way, no matter how strong the affection shared may be. This is because "there can be no full and true agreement even about human things among friends who disagree about divine things, for it necessarily follows that one who despises divine things esteems human things otherwise than he should, and that whoever does not love Him who has made man, has not learned to love man rightly."¹² *Consensio* of divine things determines human things, ordering human existence, because the love of God is the foundation of true human love.¹³ Even these men are 'enemies unto themselves,' because they know not Christ, they know not redemption, they know not themselves. For agreement on things human and divine coupled with mutual

Recherches... p.57-60. See also, J. O'Meara *The Young Augustine an introduction to the Confessions of St. Augustine* Longman, London and N.Y. (1980), for a summary of classical curriculum in late 4th century Rome.

¹⁰There are many studies on this subject. One is: Hultgren, *Le Commandement d'Amour chez Augustin; Interprétation philosophique et théologique d'après des écrits de la période 389-400* Paris (1939).

¹¹"Mecum enim familiarissimus amicus meus. . . de ipsa religione concordat, quod est veri amici manifestissimum indicium, si quidem amicitia rectissime atque sanctissime definita est rerum humanarum et divinarum cum benivolentia et caritate consensio." (*De Amicitia* 20). *Contra Acad.* III, vi, 13 in 386. See also *Soliloquia* I, 16.

¹²"Ita fit, ut, inter quos amicos non est rerum consensio divinarum, nec humanarum esse plena possit ac vera. Necesse est enim, ut aliter, quam oportet, humana aestimet, qui divina contemnit, nec hominem recte diligere noverit, quisquis enim non diligit, qui hominem fecit." *Epist.* 258.

¹³Augustine switches Cicero's order in the definition from *divinarum et humanarum* to *humanarum et divinarum*, to perhaps show the progression from *res humanae* to *res divinae*, as A. Testard points out in his work *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, Paris (1958) I, p.270.

benevolence, takes place only in “Christ Jesus our Lord our true peace.”¹⁴

There are several ideas germane to our subject common to both teachers’ life and theory of friendship. First, is the way both men seemed to enjoy friendship. They spent every day engaged in some form of it, and even structured their lives and work around it. As for their theory of a moral life, both believed friendship necessary, that true friendship can only exist between those who love Christian virtue, and that it is an important influence in forming character and living as a faithful disciple of Christ. Like Augustine, Francis believed friendship renews divine love, the love we were made for. Dying to self will have a particular meaning in friendship, serving by sharing both self and possessions in this very intense and imitate kind of loving and being loved. Let us now turn to look more closely into all of these in our two saints and Bishops’ writings.

Necessary

One of the key texts on true friendship is in *The Devout Life*, where the Doctor of love pleads with Philothea to have friendship only with those able to communicate virtuous things. Augustine appears twice in his argument, both times to show such friendships are necessary. Francis cites Augustine’s account of the unique love Ambrose had for his mother Monica, when he argues that friendship is indispensable among all the hazards of the world for those seeking Christian perfection. He goes on to give the example of Augustine a second time to say “perfection does not consist in having no friendships, but in having only good, holy and sacred friendships,” noting that Christ, Augustine, Gregory, Bernard and Jerome all had particular friendships.¹⁵ Indeed we know Augustine had some very special friends;

¹⁴“Nunc enim nobis est ‘rerum humanarum et divinarum cum benivolentia et caritate consensio’ in Christo Iesu domino nostro verissima pace nostra.” *Epist.* 258.

¹⁵“Saint Augustin tesmoigne (*Confessions* 1.6, cc 1 and 2) que saint Ambroise aymoit uniquement sainte Monique, pour les rares vertus qu’il voyoit en elle, et que’elle reciproquement le cherissoit comme un Ange de Dieu. Mays j’ay tort de vous amuser en chose si claire. Saint Hierosme, saint Augustine, saint Gregoire, saint Bernard et tous les plus grans serviteurs de Dieu ont eu de tres particuliers amitiés sans interest de leur perfection....la parfaite amitié ne peut s’estendre a beaucoup de personnes. La perfection donques ne consiste pas a n’avoir point d’amitié, mais a n’en avoir que de bonne, de sainte et

Alypius, Nebridus, and his mother Monica being a few that come to mind.¹⁶ Alypius was one of the chief instruments God used in his conversion, their lives, as Augustine recounts in the *Confessions*, were like one.¹⁷ All these friends accompanied Augustine along the stormy path to his conversion and on to Cassiciacum, where in retreat from the world they shared reflections on “things human and divine,”¹⁸ mutually edifying one another in their common life. In fact, Augustine is surrounded throughout his life by friends; there seems to be something in his nature that drew others to him.¹⁹ It was somehow able to satisfy his aching “but only to love and be loved.”²⁰ Only friendship could make him “lose half my soul,”²¹ or heal his wounds.²² It was by “talking on such subjects to my friends,”²³ he tells us, that his ruminations eventually led him to Christ. At every crucial moment of his life, even his conversion,²⁴ we find him engaged and exposed in that “most

sacree.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.202.

¹⁶Cfr. Marie Aquinas McNamara’s *Friendship in Saint Augustine*, Univ. of Fribourg Press 1958, pp.10-112, for a detailed explanation of these and other friendships Augustine shared in his youth and adult life.

¹⁷Cfr. *Confessions* VI, 7-16.

¹⁸Cfr. *Soliloquia* I, 16 and *Contra Acad.* III, 13.

¹⁹ J. O’Meara puts it this way: “How can one explain the attraction he exerted on those that met and knew him? How to explain the affection which they felt and continued to feel for him?...Some personal charm he must have had. But greater than this must have been his instant and moving sympathy for others and his desire to make common cause with them.” *The Young Augustine an Introduction to the Confessions of St. Augustine*. Longman, London and N.Y. 1980, p.87. See also for example: *De diversis quaestionibus*, q.71, 5-6. Teofilio Viñas Román recently made a similar conclusion, “Hay personas cuya vida y obra se explican fundamentalmente en función de una sola coordenada vital, de un solo rasgo catalizador, que, por un motivo especial, ha venido a constituirse en eje central de toda su existencia...Este es precisamente el caso de la amistad en san Agustín, coordenada de excepción que explica, por sí sola, lo que fue, hizo y vivió aquel hombre extraordinario.” “La amistad y los amigos en el proceso de conversión de san Agustín” in *Augustinus* 33 (1988) 195-213. See also by the same author, *La amistad en la Vida Religiosa*, Madrid 1982.

²⁰ *Confessions* II, 2; II, 4; III, 1 and 2; IV, 2, 6 and 8. This and all citations from the *Confessions* are taken from the translation of the Loeb classical Library, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Mass., ed. 1979.

²¹ *Confessions* IV, 6, 11.

²² Cfr. *Confessions* IV, 9, 14.

²³ *Confessions* IV, 13, 14 and V, 13, 20.

²⁴ Cfr. *Confessions* VI, 12, and 22.

unfathomable of all involvement of the soul—friendship.”²⁵ Yes, even before looking into Augustine’s ideas on the subject, it is enough to look at his life to know that he felt friendship was necessary for Christian perfection.

St. Francis de Sales did not have a conversion to Christianity like Augustine. His contemporaries recalled that he had always been devoted to Christ with remarkable conviction.²⁶ Whether he ached to love and be loved as much as the young Augustine is impossible to know, but we find him also surrounded by friends throughout his life. Augustine’s conversion in his early thirties presented him with a very striking contrast between two philosophies of life, especially as they played out in intimacy and friendship. Like a man who has come home after many years abroad, his talk of life over the horizon, of the interior life of the philosophers, is full to the point of bursting of things to contemplate. And although a man does not need to eat dirt to know how good it is to eat food, we cannot help noticing how loudly Augustine’s words and life say that friendship is necessary for fulfillment. There is no happiness without friends.²⁷ He prays for it, puts all effort into winning it, and then in keeping it, because through it we best attain God. It arises from mutual sympathy for another trying to know God.²⁸ To abolish it because of the pain it may cause is utterly impossible. It confers sweetness, *dulcis*. Pagan writers used this term often for friends, and rarely with the gods, but in Augustine we find the term applied for the first time to God.²⁹ “You were closer to me than I was to myself”,³⁰

²⁵ *Confessions* II, 9, 17.

²⁶ In his earliest writings we possess, while a teenager in Paris, he pledges, “poursuyvre mon enterprise en l’estude, laquelle j’oseroys bien me promettre (sans me flatter) reussira au bien que je desire” i.e. to serve God and his Prince. *Oeuvres...* XI, p.2. See also, A. Liouima *Aux Sources...* vol. 1, pp.58-60 and p.64, for more on the piety of the young Francis.

²⁷ *Epist.* 130, 4.

²⁸ “Sed quaero abs te, cur eos homines quos diligis, vel vivere, vel tecum vivere cupias? Ut animas nostras et deum simul concorditer inquiramus. Ita enim facile cui priori contingit invento, caeteros eo sine labore perducit.” *Soliloquia* I, 20. He did not always find it so easy however to live such a spiritual affection, Cfr. *Epist.* 2.

²⁹ *Confessions* I, 4, for example. “Deus meus, vita mea, dulcedo mea sancta.” See Dodds, “Augustine’s Confessions,” in *Hibbert Journal*, 26, 1927-28, p.471. For an excellent exposé of Augustine’s differences with Plotinus. See also Hultgren, *Augustine et Ciceron* IX. G. Lawless, observes that the social and personal combined in Augustine’s very conception of contemplation, in sharp contrast to Plotinus (*Ennead*, V, i, 6) and Porphyry’s ‘the flight of the

says Augustine, and the story of his conversion, indeed his life, is the journey within to unveil the indwelling of the Trinity from the obscurity of his own ignorance and pride—to an interior friendship with God. The sweetness of all true friendship is thus newly enriched; it becomes *ineffabilis*,³¹ *secreta*,³² and *sempiterna*.³³

alone to the Alone.’ Cfr. *Augustine of Hippo and his Monastic Rule*. Claredon Press, Oxford 1987, p.33-35.

³⁰“Tu autem eras interior intimo meo et superior summo meo.” *Confessions* III, 6. Compare St. Francis de Sales: “Nous sommes plus en Dieu qu’en nous mesmes, nous vivons plus en luy qu’en nous.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.202.

³¹ *De civ Dei*, VII, 31; *In Epist. Jo.* VII, 1; *In Ps.* 85, 24.

³² *De civ. Dei*, XXI, 18.

³³ *In Ps.* 85, 24. For St. Benedict it is “inerrabilis” Cfr. The prologue to the *Rule*.

The cause of friendship is God

Augustine says in one of the most celebrated texts on friendship in his voluminous writings: “There is no true friendship unless You weld it between souls that cleave together through that charity which is shed in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us.”³⁴ God alone can join two persons. “This is the heart of Augustine’s conception of friendship and his great innovation”.³⁵ Only this kind of friendship will he call true, implying all others are incomplete or false in comparison. This means that he believes true friendship is not caused by nature as Cicero contended.³⁶ Cicero had much more faith in nature than Augustine.³⁷ He argues, “Since nature cannot change, true friendships are eternal.”³⁸ While Cicero makes man the center of friendship, and his spontaneous feelings, Augustine inverts that perspective and submits man to charity. Friendship’s eternity comes from something much greater than nature, as we are about to see in detail. Friendship becomes a “divine work” vital to human perfection, like chastity, patience, charity, and all the

³⁴“Vera amicitia, quia non est vera, nisi cum eam tu agglutinas inter haerentes sibi caritate diffusa in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum, qui datus est nobis.” *Confessions* IV, 7.

³⁵McNamara *Friendship in St. Augustine...* p.202.

³⁶Recall for Cicero nature bound friends together, and is the source of its stability: “Nam si utilitas amicitias conglutinaret, eadem commutata dissolveret. Sed quia natura mutari non potest, idcirco verae amicitiae sempiternae sunt.” (*Laelius* §32). It is the cause of friendship (*Laelius* §26).

³⁷ L. F. Pizzolato explains “L’ esigenza di ancorare il fenomeno all’eternità della verità è assolta da Cicerone e da Agostino chimando in causa quello che è per loro il valore supremo: natura e Dio, rispettivamente. Il concetto ciceroniano rinvia essenzialmente al mondo stoico, per cui *natura* è anzitutto...un ordine di vita oggettivo eppure non propriamente eteronomo... come principio “nativo” di attività’ Cicerone a porsi come norma, con il rischio de egocentrismo a ciò connesso; mentre Agostino rinsalda l’amicizia, ancorandola alla soprannaturale carità di Dio... modello d’amore *oblativo*.” “L’amicizia in sant’Agostino e il ‘Laelius’ di Cicerone,” in *Vigiliae Christianae* 28, p.210.

³⁸“Nam si utilitas amicitias conglutinaret, eadem commutata dissolveret. sed quia natura mutari non potest, idcirco verae amicitiae sempiternae sunt. ‘*Laelius* §32 Death therefore poses a problem for Cicero and not for Augustine. Cicero is consoled that the thing his deceased friend loved (virtue) still lives somehow in him, Augustine’s friendship rests forever in God, both now and in eternity.

virtues.³⁹ For someone like Francis de Sales, who sought to discern the will of God in human life by the interior movements of inspirations and holy desires, the cause of the “rush of affection,” as Cicero terms that mysterious immediate ‘chemistry’ many seem to feel when they resonate with another from their first meeting, was clearly God Himself. From the first he believed this was the case with Jane, and equally with numerous other friends. It is probably no accident that he is repeating Augustine’s well-known idea that God is the cause and author of friendship on Augustine’s feast day, when he tells Jane he is convinced that God is the one who has brought them together.⁴⁰ If both feel that the Holy Spirit is the cause of friendship, then we can understand why they considered it a gift and prayed for it.

If one loves his friend ‘for what God might be in him,’ then it is only natural to pray for him. Moreover, if one carries another in his heart, those interior motions of prayer somehow include them. “I think that when you raise your good heart to the Lord,” Augustine writes his dear friend Nebridus, “you raise me with it, since you have me in it”.⁴¹ Francis, too, is full of prayers for all his friends, and enlarges upon this idea of carrying another in your heart, as we will see in detail later.⁴²

If prayer is the best way to advance in the goods of faith, then naturally prayer is the proper means for spiritual friendship’s benevolence. Augustine believes our prayers and sacrifices of charity for them are especially pleasing to God.⁴³ Moreover, if God ‘welds’ friendship between two through their charity, then prayer is indispensable not only for advancement in God, but in the very union itself. In Augustine’s troubles with Jerome, he calls upon God to help

³⁹“Cogitare debes, quamvis ad hominem id agere pertineat, hoc quoque munus esse divinum, atque ideo non dubitare opus esse divinum.” *De Spiritu et Litt.* 2.

⁴⁰“A ce grand Dieu, dis je, auquel nous nous sommes voués et consacrés, et qui m’a rendu pour jamais et sans reserve tout dedié a vostre ame, que je cheris comme la mienne... en ce Sauveur... nous joint inseparablement en luy. Vive Jesue!” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCIV.

⁴¹“Cum animam tuam tam bonam leuas ad dominum, quoniam in illa me habes, leues et me.” *Epist.* 101.

⁴² See the example of Jane de Chantal *infra* p.172

⁴³“De orando autem et gemitibus flagitando proficiendi ac recte vivendi adiutorio quae tua non fervet epistola? . . . Invicem itaque nos et consolemur in his omnibus et exhortemur et, quantum donat dominus, adivuemus”. *Epist.* 186, 41. And “Gratior enim Deo est pro fratre deprecatio, ubi sacrificum caritatis offertur.” *Epist.* 20, 2.

them avoid misinterpretation, and that an understanding might thrive.⁴⁴ God knows better than we do what is best for our friend, and by prayer we entrust our benevolence to His grace.⁴⁵ Augustine asks repeatedly for prayers from his friends: “pray my son pray” and “let us not neglect to pray for each other”.⁴⁶ These are not formulae at the end of a letter, but sincere requests for the help a friend has the right to ask.⁴⁷ Likewise, we find Francis de Sales using all these same equations of prayer, even integrating themes of letters into the Church’s liturgical year. Like

⁴⁴“Deum nostrum...et rogavi et rogo, ut hoc, quod ad te scribo...fructuosum esse nobis velit.” *Epist.* 166 (to Jerome). Cfr.*Epist.* 28; 39; 40; 67; 68; 72; 73 and 81. Their exchanges were fraught with misunderstanding and a mixture of criticism and deference, Jerome writes, “I say nothing of the flattery with which you try to make up to me for your reproof of me... Do not go on thinking that I am a master of lies... In other words, find yourself some other people to teach or criticize”. *Epist.* 75. (Praetermitto salutationes et officia, quibus meum demulces caput; taceo de blanditiis, quibus reprehensionem mei niteris consolari... Nec me putes magistrum esse mendacii... et quaeras tibi, quos doceas sive reprehendas). And later, Jerome contritely writes, “Let complaints of this sort be at an end, let there be between us pure brotherly affection, and let us hereafter send each other letters full of charity, not of questions” Many studies have been done on the relationship between Jerome and Augustine; some are J. Cavallera, *Saint Jerome, sa vie et son oeuvre*, Paris and Louvain (1922); Dom J. de Vathaire, “Les relations de saint Augustin et de saint Jérôme” in *Miscellanea Augustiniana* Nimejegen (1930) p.484 et seq.; E. Malfatti, “Una controversia tra S. Agostine e S. Girolamo” in *Schola Cattolica*, (1921), pp.321-388; 402-426. Adèle Fisk, *Friends and Friendship in the Monastic Tradition*. Civoc Cuaderno, 51, Cuernavaca, Mexico, 1970; and Marie-Aquinas McNamara, *Friendship ...* pp.177-186.

⁴⁵“Elegi, non ut exhiberem faciem meam vobis, sed effunderem cor meum Deo pro vobis et causam amni periculi vestri non apud vos verbis sed apud Deum lacrimis agerem, ne convertat in luctum gaudium meum, quo soleo gaudere de vobis.” *Epist.* 211, 2.

⁴⁶For example, *Epist.* 231, 6: “Ora fili, ora. Sentio, quid dicam, scio, quid petam; non tibi videatur indignum et quasi ultra merita tua; fraudabis me magno adjutorio, si non feceris. Non solum tu sed etiam omnes, qui me ex ore tuo dilexerit, orate pro me.” and “Sane meminertis et pro nobis non negligenter orare. Nolumus enim sic nobis honorem, quem periculosum gerimus, deferatis, ut adjutorium, quod necessarium novimus auferatis.” *Epist.* 130, 31.

⁴⁷“Ne minus ores, ut sim, quod iam esse me credis.” *Epist.* 110 and “Ad hoc bonum debemus et a quibus diligimur duci, et quos diligimus ducere.” *De Civ Dei* X, III, 2.

Augustine, he relied on prayer to cement his friendships, to help himself and others in distress, and even to rally a number of friends to pray for a mutual friend in particular need. In fact he sees it as an obligation “by the law of our alliance”.⁴⁸

Praying that God send us friends is not all we can do; Augustine envisioned help from God within human means and collaboration. He does not think we should just sit back and wait for one to appear, we must choose as well. “God is He who helps us, but one can only help him who also makes an effort.”⁴⁹ How do we find and make friends?

Testing, choosing & the beginning of friendship

Augustine counsels that we should use caution in choosing friends, yet he encourages us to always think about an inferior as a possible friend. For “There is no man who is not able to have some hidden good you lack, in which no doubt he can be superior to you.”⁵⁰ A true friend is such a treasure, that to dismiss the possibility of friendship with such a person could be a great mistake. He advises us to seek friendship among the humble, after the example of Christ, who chose fishermen, and warns the man with superior qualities against feelings of condescension.⁵¹ Augustine believes, as Cicero, that a chaste and fraternal intimacy cannot exist, without humility founded on true self knowledge. For friendship to be sustained, it is vital that the friends are aware of the limitations of human nature and their duties as friends to one another.⁵² To understand our own failings as human beings gives us

⁴⁸ “Priez fort pour moi... Vous me devez cette charité par les lois de notre alliance.” *Oeuvres...* Itr. CXC. See, for example, the story of Monsieur de Charmoisy’s bannishment from the Savoyard court, beginning on page 357.

⁴⁹ “Adiutor enim noster deus dicitur nec adiuuari potest, nisi quid aliquid etiam sponte conatur.” *De Peccator. remissione* II, 6.

⁵⁰ “Deinde etiam illud cogitandum, nullum esse hominem qui non possit habere aliquod bonum quod tu nondum habes, etiamsi lateat, in quo sine dubio possit te esse superior.” *De diversis quaest.* 83. 71, 5.

⁵¹ “Dominus, ut pro salute nostra potentium amicitias contemnamus, noluit prius eligere senatores, sed piscatores. Magna artificis misericordia.” *Serm.* LXXXVII, x, 12:

⁵² “Pleraque enim mala generis humani non aliunde oriuntur, nisi de suspicionibus falsis. Credis de homine quod oderit te, qui forte amat te; et per prauam suspicionem fis inimicissimus amicissimo. . . Corda ergo nostra in hac vita videre non possumus, donec veniat Dominus et illuminet abscondita tenebrarum, et manifestabit cogitationes cordis.” *Serm.* 306, IX, 8. See also

a humble understanding for the failings of others.⁵³ “Every heart is closed to every heart,”⁵⁴ which can mislead us about the love of a friend, or cause misunderstanding. Friendship is best preserved through the storms and troubles that jeopardize it, by the humble forgiveness we ourselves have experienced so many times from Christ, the ‘First friend.’ Moreover, since Christ has abased himself in assuming our humanity and thereby offering us friendship, we only imitate him, treating others with respect and openness, even when we appear superior to them. St. Paul’s injunction that we must judge no one is like a medicine in friendship, rounding the edges of misunderstandings, and feelings of betrayal.

Never does Augustine make the practice of benevolence depend upon the moral dignity of one in need, or even upon the other’s love for us, as does Cicero or Aristotle. “Never reject friendship with someone who tries to offer it,”⁵⁵ he says, but instead we should wish friendship possible, and welcome them, treating them in a way to make friendship able to grow. This doesn’t mean we should let dishonest friendships begin, but concerns, of course, only sincere persons. He even says that if there is someone who does not dare to advance to form a friendship, because he is intimidated by our position, then we must reach out to him and offer our friendship modestly and affably.⁵⁶ This calls to mind

Serm. XLVI, xii, 27: “Quis enim homo iudicat de homine? Temerariis iudiciis plena sunt omnia. De quo desperauerimus, subito convertitur, et fit optimus: de quo multum praesumpserimus, subito deficit, et fit pessimus. Nec timor noster certus est, nec amor noster certus est. Quid sit hodie quisque homo, vix novit ipse homo: tamen utcumque ipse quid hodie; quid autem cras, nec ipse.” St. Francis was often emphasizing the importance of humility in friendship, as we shall see.

⁵³“Non enim deerit, quod in vobis invicem sufferatis, nisi cum vos ita protaverit dominus absorpta unitur; quosdam novimus nec videmus, quorum nobis caritas et affectus innotuit, in quibus et te adnumeramus. . . quem iam novimus, amico interiore perfruamur.” *Epist.* 210. See also *Epist.* 231, 5: “Quid autem putas esse, o bone homo, nisi quod te talem virum etiam non visum feci amicum, si tamen non visum dicere debeo, cuius non corpus sed animum in ipsis tuis litteris vidi?”

⁵⁴“In hac peregrinatione carnalis vitae quisque cor suum portat, et omne cor omni cordi clausum est.” *En. in Ps.* LV, 9.

⁵⁵“Nullius itaque repudianda est amicitia sese ingerentis ad amicitiam copulandam” *De diversis quaest.* 83, 71. Francis de Sales will develop something he calls “freedom of mind,” in this same vein. See, *infra* page 159.

⁵⁶“Et si quisquam sit qui se non audet intenerere ad amicitiam faciendam, cum aliquo nostro temporali honore aut dignitate revocetur, descendendum est

the many and various friendships the Doctor of love had with members of the court, to the illiterate and simple-minded Anne-Jacqueline Coste.⁵⁷ Like Augustine, Francis understood it as a Christian duty to never refuse someone's sincere offer of friendship. He advises, "Never scorn the meeting of anyone."⁵⁸ As we shall see, Francis de Sales never suffered the number of betrayals that Augustine did; perhaps his judgment was better. Both men advocate a certain caution in the beginning, and see friendship as passing through stages, each with varying degrees of confidence. We will see later that this humble attitude is very central to his development of friendship and his idea of Christian perfection.⁵⁹ Augustine also speaks with much more persuasion than Cicero for the duties we have to care for our neighbors in every difficulty. All of this stems from that spirit of gratitude that the healing redemptive love of Christ sculpts in a soul.

Like Plato and Cicero, Augustine holds that there must be a mutual attraction, an affinity in thought and feeling for friendship to be formed. They are inclined to one another by some *similaritas* of virtue, which is that manifestation of 'God in him'. This "sweetness" one sometimes (but not always) enjoys in a friend from its beginning is one of the foundations of friendship and should grow in time.⁶⁰

If one believes to have found this resemblance in a person, Augustine explains that the first step in beginning a friendship is to make our admiration known to the person, for "There is no greater invitation to love than to lovingly make the first advances."⁶¹ In a text from the *De*

ad eum, et offerendum illi quadam comitate et submissione animi, quod petere per se ipse non audet. " *De diversis quaest.* 83, 71.

⁵⁷Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XIV, 231. See too, .M. H-Coüannier *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés*, monastère de la Visitation Paris, (1979) p.139-142.

⁵⁸"Ne mépriser la rencontre de personne" *Oeuvres...* XXII, p.37.

⁵⁹ "Apprenes de moy" dit-il, [Jesus] "que je suis doux et humble de coeur", l'humilité nous perfectionne envers Dieu, et la douceur envers le prochain. *Oeuvres...* III, p.161

⁶⁰"Ut ille ita me exhorruit ut inimicum admonitque mirabili et repentina libertate, ut, si amicus esse vellem, talia sibi dicere desenerem. . . Solus fletus erat dulcis mihi et successerat amico meo in deliciis animi mei." *Confessions* IV, 8. And he says further on in IV, 14: "Hoc est quod diligitur in amicis et sic diligitur, ut rea sibi sit humana conscientia, si non amaverit redamantem aut si amantem non redamaverit."

⁶¹"Nulla est enim major ad amorem invitatio, quam praevénire amando; et nimis durus est animus qui dilectionem si nolebat impendere, nolit rependere." *De Cathed. Rud.* IV, 7. Francis de Sales employs this advice vigorously, as we will see.

Trinitate, Augustine describes how he would feel the need to approach, to know and to bind himself in friendship to a person whose love for Christ had been proven in some trial or persecution. He would have a great respect for him, and love him for his virtue as much as for his love of God. He agrees with Aristotle's idea that these feelings must be expressed for friendship to begin, saying: "I would express my feelings for him with all words possible."⁶² Words are all one has in the beginning, for as we have seen, friendship requires time before the hidden depths of a person may be manifested. Yet, he explains, armed with a new courage he is willing and able to risk reaching out to this new person who inspires him to engage and expose himself in friendship, expressing his admiration, while desiring that they feel the same. "I go, by faith, for I could not in so little time discover and scrutinize his interior, to the point of embracing his very inner being. I would feel then for this man faithful and strong, a love chaste and fraternal."⁶³

As we will see, Francis de Sales begins friendship with Jane and many others by forcefully declaring his affection for them. It is the way Antoine Favre will also solicit the young Francis himself to their life long companionship. If friendship is begun and sustained by making love known, it will therefore also be damaged or even ruptured if one believes that his love is not returned for love. The communication of love is what constitutes friendship in his mind. This explains Augustine's warning that nothing cuts friendship like the belief that we are not loved.⁶⁴ But then, to advance in loving is the solution he offers as a follower of Christ, even if the one with whom friendship is desired becomes an enemy.

⁶²*De Trinitate* IX, vi, 11.

⁶³ "Nam unde in me fraterni amoris inflammatur ador, cum audio virum aliquem pro fidei pulchritudine et firmitate acria tormenta tolerasse? Et si mihi digito ostendarur ipse homo, studeo mihi conjungere, notum facere, amicitia colligare. Itaque si facultas datur, accedo, alloquor, sermonem confero, affectum meum in illum quibus verbis possum exprimo, vicissimque in eo fieri quem in me habeat atque exprimi volo, spiritalemque complexum credendo molior, quip pervestigare tam cito et cernere penitus ejus interiora non possum. Amo itaque fidelem et fortem virum amore casto atque germano. *De Trinitate* IX, vi, 11.

⁶⁴"Quid enim aliud cavemus in offensione amicitiae, nisi ne amicus arbitretur quod eum vel non diligimus, vel minus diligimus quam ipse nos diligit? *De catech. rud.* IV, 7.

In the likeness of divine love

Francis uses Augustine to explain the nature of divine love, which moves our hearts not so much to possess it, but to renew, and share its joy. Love is dynamic, “one searches always he that one loves always, says the great saint Augustine.” Francis explains that whoever desires God while possessing Him, desires Him not to find Him, but to exercise this affection. For Love “searches what it has found not to have it, but to have it always.”⁶⁵ It is a way to explain the maxim of the scholastics “*bonum diffusivum sui*”; some goods are so noble that one can never possess them, and by some mystery they grow and thrive in the measure they are given away. Indeed, Augustine explains, there is nothing better in the world than friendship, because it includes the things we have already known and tasted which are somehow renewed when we return to them with a friend, for “Friendship renews all.”⁶⁶ Friendship with God, Augustine acclaims, more than any other, compels one to diffuse its good with others. “What limits can there be to my love of this beauty?” Augustine asks, “Not only do I not envy it to others, but I encourage as many as possible to seek it with me, to aspire after it with me, to possess it with me, to delight in it with me. And I shall always hold as more truly my friends those who share more intimately the object of my love with me.”⁶⁷

The Doctor of love believed friendship with God was something the human heart was made for. God, Francis will later say, “Lets the soul feel His presence by a thousand consolations” that move the soul to cling to Him, and in turn become eternal resolutions. He uses Augustine’s authority here with one of his most famous sayings, “You have created my heart for Yourself oh Lord, and never will it have rest if it does not have it in You.”⁶⁸ He believes, like Augustine, that there is

⁶⁵ “On cherche tous-jours celui qu’on ayme tous-jours, dit le grand saint Augustin (in Ps 104): l’amour cherche ce qu’il a treuvé, non affin de l’avoir, mais pour tous-jours l’avoir.” *Oeuvres...IV*, p.267.

⁶⁶*De catech. rud.*, XII, 17.

⁶⁷“Quem modum autem potest habere illius pulchritudinis amor, in qua non solum non invideo caeteris, sed etiam plurimos quaero qui mecum appetant, mecum inhiant, mecum teneat, meque perfruantur; tanto mihi amiciores futuri, quanto erit nobis amata communior”. *Soliloquia I*, 22.

⁶⁸ “O Dieu, dit saint Augustine, (*Confessions I*, 1) ‘vous avez crée mon coeur pour vous, et jamais il n’aura repos qu’il ne soit en vous!’ Mais *qu’ay-je au ciel sinon vous*’, o mon Dieu, *et quelle autre chose veux-je sur la terre?* Ouy, Seigneur, car vous estes *le Dieu de mon coeur, mon lot et mon partage*

a profound resonance in our nature with God's eternal love, and that all our loves only aspire to "that grand and solemn nuptial kiss, which must last eternally."⁶⁹ This eternal love begins with our loves in this life, but can only be consummated in the next life. "Nonetheless, this union to which our heart aspires cannot achieve its perfection in this mortal life; we can begin our loves in this world, but we can only consummate them in the next."⁷⁰ The loves we may share here and now are "signs of the future union between my beloved and me," Francis writes.⁷¹ Loves in this world somehow resemble, though imperfectly, the one love of the next. Augustine has a similar experience,

I confess that I readily throw myself entirely upon the charity of my friends, especially when I am wearied with the scandals of the world, and I rest in that without anxiety. Indeed I feel that God is there, and I cast myself upon Him and rest in Him without care. In that carefree state I do not in the least fear the uncertain tomorrow of human frailty. Whenever I feel that a man burning with Christian charity and love for me has become my friend, when I entrust any of my plans and thoughts to him, I am entrusting them not to a man, but to Him in whom he abides, so as to be like Him, for 'God is charity, and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God.'⁷²

eternellement (Ps 72:26)." *Oeuvres...* IV pp.187.

⁶⁹ "L'Ami de mon coeur, ou le coeur de mon ame m'a preparés, hé je ne souspire ni n'aspire qu'a ce grand et solemnel bayser nuptial qui doit durer eternellement, et en comparayson duquel les autres baysers ne meritent pas le nom de bayser, puisqu'ilz sont plustost signes de l'union future entre mon Bienaymé et moy, qu'ilz ne sont pas l'union mesme." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.189.

⁷⁰ "Neanmoins, cette union a laquelle nostre coeur aspire ne peut arriver a sa perfection en cette vie mortelle; nous pouvons commencer nos amours en ce monde, mais non pas les consommer qu'en l'autre." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.187.

⁷¹*Oeuvres...* IV, p.189. See also V, p.205: "l'homme envers l'homme est la vraie image de l'amour celeste de l'homme envers Dieu."

⁷²"In quorum ego caritatem, fateor, facile me totum proicio praesertim fatigatum scandalis saeculi et in ea sine ulla sollicitudine requiesco. Deum quippe illic esse sentio, in quem me securus proicio et in quo securus requiesco. Nec in hac mea securitate crastinum illud humanae fragilitatis incertum, de quo superis gemui, omnia formido. Cum enim hominem Christiana caritate flagrantem equer mihi fidelem amicum factum esse sentio, quidquid eo consiliorum meorum cogitationumque committo, non homini committo sed illi, in quo manet, ut talis sit; Deus enim caritas est et, qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet." *Epist.* 73, 10.

When friends love one another in Christian friendship, it is somehow a human expression of God's very love for us. This theme is a buttress supporting the entire superstructure of St. Augustine's theory of friendship, and some of his most moving passages are in this vein.⁷³ This is the source of all true consolation for both doctors of Christianity. Both men believed that there is no consolation greater in this life than the mutual understanding of true friendship. When we grow weary from life's struggle, it is a comfort and consolation to have one of these good men at our side, as Augustine says, "who is happy with the happy and mourns with the weeping, and who knows how to speak to us in a way that cures." We see both men turning to friends in trials not only to be comforted, but also to take courage and thereby "to make palatable bitter things, to lighten heavy things and to overcome our adversaries."⁷⁴

Right love vs. bad love

There is one other text where the Doctor of love cites Augustine twice in the context of friendship, this time regarding the character of love itself. He argues calling upon "most of antiquity" that "Christian doctrine subjugates the spirit to God so that He may guide and help it, and subjugates all the passions to the spirit in a manner that they might

⁷³ As for example, "Despite the cares which surround and beset me. . . I do not want, my dear Marcellinus, to delay any longer in paying my debt to your affection, which is so precious and so delightful to me. Truly, I could not wait any longer, for not only have I yielded to the impulse of charity itself which unites us in Him who is unchangeably one, and who must transform us in a more perfect manner, but I was afraid to offend by a refusal the God who inspired you with this thought. I wished, in obeying you, to obey Him. "*De peccatorum meritis et remissione* I, 1: ("Quamvis in mediis et magnis curarum aestibus atque taediorum, quae nos detinet. . . studio tamen tuo, Marcelline carissime, quo nobis es gratior atque iucundior, diutius esse debitor nolui atque, ut verum audias, non potui. Sic enim me compulit vel ipsa caritas, qua in uno incommutabili unum sumus in melius communitandi, vel timor, ne in te offenderem deum, qui tibi desiderium tale donavit, cui servendo illi serviam qui donavit.")

⁷⁴ "Homines autem boni videntur etiam in hac vita praestare non parva solatia. Nam si paupertas angit, si luctus moestificat, si dolor corporis inquietat, si contristat exsilium, si ulla calamitas alia vexat, adsint boni homines qui non solum gaudere cum gaudentibus, verum etiam flere cum flentibus norunt, et salubriter alloqui et colloqui sciunt; plurimum illa aspera leniuntur, relevantur gravia, superantur adversa "*Epist.* 130, 4.

be converted to the service of justice and virtue.”⁷⁵ He goes on to explain this with a second citation, summarizing that right love comes from an ordered will, and a bad will only yields bad love. If it is possible for love to be good or bad, this will naturally have an affect on friendship. Augustine is in agreement with the Classics, yet not completely. Both Augustine and St. Francis de Sales agree that when the pagan ideal of virtue is compared to the love of God it is unsatisfactory.⁷⁶ He cites Augustine to argue that the virtue of the pagan heroes was hollow because “True virtue requires, not for vanity of glory, but for the glory of the truth,” like the Martyrs which are “one hundred times more worthy of admiration and the only worthy of imitation.”⁷⁷ Such friendships have their “proper enticement,” and are a “sweet tie” the Bishop of Hippo agrees, but they are dangerous, because they can easily be loved immoderately. “For these low things have their delights, but nothing like my Lord God, who hath made these all: for in Him is the righteous man delighted.”⁷⁸ True friendship can only exist

⁷⁵ “Saint Augustin (*De Civ.* l. 14. cc.7, and 9) reduisant toutes les passions et affections a quatre comme ont fait Boece (*De Consol. Phil.* 1, I metrum VII), Ciceron (*Tusc. Disp.* 1, III c. XI, 1, IV c VI), Virgile (*Aeneis*, 1,VI, 733), et la pluspart de l’antiquité, “L’amour”, dit-il “tendant a posseder ce qu’il ayme s’appelle convoitise” ou desir: “l’ayant en possedant, il s’appelle joye; fuyant ce qui luy est contraire, il s’appelle crainte; que si cela luy arrive et qu’il le sent, il s’appelle tristesse; et partant, ces passions sont mauvaises si l’amour est mauvais, bonnes, s’il est bon. Les citoyens de la Cité de Dieu, craignent, desirent, se deulent, se res-jouissent... La doctrine chrestienne asujetit l’esprit a Dieu, affin qu’il le guide et secoue, et assujette a l’esprit toutes ces passions, affin qu’il les bride et modere, en sorte qu’elles soyent converties au service de la justice et vertu.” *Oeuvres... IV*, p.33

⁷⁶St. Francis says “Ces vertus payennes ne sont vertus qu’en comparayson des vices, mais en comparayson des vertus des vrays Chrestiens ne meritent nullement le nom de vertus”. *Oeuvres... V* p.274.

⁷⁷“Y ayant de ce temps-la’, dit saint Augustin [Lib. 5. *De civ.* ch. 12] ‘deux “Romains grans en vertu, Cesar et Caton, la vertu de Caton fut beaucoup plus approchante de la vraye vertu que celle de Cesar;’ et ayant dit en quelque lieu [*De Ordine*, 1.I, c. XI] que ‘les philosophes destitués de la vraye pieté avoyent resplendi en lumiere de vertu,’ il s’in desdit au livre des ses *Retractions* [ch.3] La vraye vertu le requiert, non pour la vanité de la gloire, mais pour la gloire de la verité: comme il advint a nos Martyrs... vertues cent fois pous dignes d’admiration et seules dignes d’imitation.” *Oeuvres... V*, p.275.

⁷⁸*Confessions* IV, 9 “The life also which here we live hath its proper enticement, and that by reason of a certain proportion of comeliness of its own, and a correspondence with all these inferior beauties. That friendship also

among the virtuous, and this has its source in God and grace. The opposition Paul writes about in Romans between the flesh and spirit is *sous entendu*. Without this, one is only able to love badly, or destructively. Augustine gives us the Christian insight here to the interior cause of virtue.⁷⁹ The order of love imposes a discipline upon us without which one is alone and a stranger even to himself. The disordered soul suffers the greatest afflictions from itself,⁸⁰ he says, and this is most relevant in the life of friendship where the benevolence, the kind of good wished, is not truly good and beneficial but only a kind of selfish using. Their friendships are disordered because their love and lives are disordered. If there is no honor among thieves, it is because their friendship has nothing to do with honorable things. If one is not a friend of God, Augustine believes, then he is an enemy to himself and incapable of friendship.⁸¹ Francis adds, for the will becomes like the things it loves.⁸² It is undisciplined without virtue, and selfish. The love of God, on the other hand, affects a person, orienting the will to love rightly, and this plays a fundamental role in their friendships. Francis de Sales echoes Christian tradition when he says that charity reigns as king over all the affections and passions of the human heart, transforming the

which is amongst societies, we see endeared with a sweet tie, even by reason of the union of many hearts. Upon occasion of all these and the like, is sin committed, while through an immoderate inclination towards these, which are goods but of the lowest alloy, better and higher are left out; even thou, our Lord God, thy Truth and thy Law. For these low things have their delights, but nothing like my Lord God, who hath made these all: for in him is the righteous man delighted, and he is the deliciousness of the upright in heart.”

⁷⁹ One of Augustine’s major themes and the general scheme of his morality is summarized in this principle. “Unde mihi videtur quod definitio brevis et vera virtutis, ordo est amoris” *De civ. Dei* XV, 22 and “Ille autem iuste et sancte vivit, qui rerum integer aestimator est: ipse est autem qui ordinatam dilectionem habet.” *De doct. christ.* I, 28. This order is achieved by harmonizing all under God the highest good. See also, *De mor. Eccles. Cathol.* I, 14, 24.

⁸⁰ Cfr. *Confessions* III, 8.

⁸¹ “Whoever does not love Him who has made man has not learned to love man rightly...[before his conversion] since I therefore hated my own soul how could I have chosen true friendship, for I had to suffer enmity to myself. “ *Epist.* 258.

⁸² “La droite volonté est l’amour bon, la volonté mauvaise est l’amour mauvaise” dit Augustine (*De civ. Dei* L.9, c.5 and c.7) ...la volonté change aussi de qualité selon l’amour qu’elle espouse.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.33.

person.⁸³ “Patience is not patient enough, nor is faith faithful enough, nor good-naturedness gentle enough, if the love of God does not animate them”.⁸⁴ Faith and grace helps render them “justified,” which is the submission of the lower powers to the higher powers, in a nutshell, submission to the life of reason by the authority of faith. A submission, we shall see, that is not crushing, but rather which opens into a new life in friendship with the Trinity, and wisdom. “Charity has been diffused in our souls,” Augustine comments, “not that we may be loved, but that it might make us lovers.”⁸⁵

Francis de Sales warns Philothea against fawning and craving loves between the sexes with no pretension of marriage; they are false friendships full of sighs, vanity, and love taps.⁸⁶ Augustine warns of these same “scandalous and degrading loves” which by every flattery and monstrosity of affection try to claim love in return by some appeal to justice from the heart it wishes to seduce.⁸⁷ Augustine goes on to draw from this that if love is solicited and won in this way from hungry and selfish persons, seeking only to love and be loved, ‘to tickle their ears,’ how much more so it is important in true friendship to openly express love for one another. Then Augustine goes on to point out an important difference in Christian friendship, a difference Francis de Sales will never explicitly apply to friendship but often to love. Augustine says if the friend is not so weak as to let himself be cooled by the offense of failing to communicate its good-will, he will hold himself to continue in friendship, because its purpose and meaning is “to love

⁸³“La charité, comme première de toutes les vertus, les regit et tempère toutes.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.48.

⁸⁴“Il faut rapporter tout leur honneur à l’amour sacré, qui a toutes les vertus; la patience n’est pas assez patiente, ni la foy assez fidele, ni l’esperance assez confiante, ni la debonnaireté assez douce, si l’amour ne les anime et vivifie.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.248.

⁸⁵ *De spir. et litt.*, 32, 56 PL 44, 237. It is the great Augustinian theme of participation by which we become *divinae consortes naturae* by grace. Cfr. 2 *Petri* I; *De Trin.* XIV 6 (PL 42, 104); *De morib. man.* IV 6 (PL 32, 1347) and *Epist.* 140, to name a few.

⁸⁶Cfr. *Oeuvres...* III, p.197.

⁸⁷“Quod si in ipsis flagitiosis et sordidis amoribus videmus, nihil aliud eos agere qui amari vicissim volunt, nisi ut documentis quibus valent aperiant et ostendat quantum ament; eamque imaginem justitiae praetendere affectant, ut vicem sibi reddi quadam modo flagitent ab eis animis quos illecebrare moliantur.” *De catech. rud.* IV, 7.

not to enjoy, but to heed the interests of the other.”⁸⁸ For both Christian doctors, love is a kind of service which listens to the one loved, but which has a definite good to share with him. If it can be mutually shared in some measure, even between unequals, it can be called a friendship. And because its loving and being loved is not for gain, but “overflows from the riches of its benevolence,”⁸⁹ in friendship it is constant despite the lulls it may suffer in communication or even love. We will see this in detail in Francis de Sales’ life. He believed it imperative to communicate affection again and again in friendship, “not so much to assure, as to savor together the assurance they have” of one another’s fidelity.⁹⁰

Bad love brings us to another important point that St. Francis de Sales makes using Augustine’s authority: remedies against bad friendships. We will see in more detail later that the Doctor of love sees a grave danger in friendship’s ability to drag a person down into a love of lesser things. They entangle a person in “foolish loves,” and “whimsical impurities.”⁹¹ A person “stung by love will heal difficulty of this passion,” he warns, and says sternly that one should rupture such friendships without hesitation or care for gentleness. In such difficulties, he counsels to reclaim God’s aid, and cites Augustine, saying God’s love “will take yours into its protection so that it may live only for Him.”⁹²

Augustine would be one of the first to assure us that friendship influences a person greatly, its enticement holds sway, sweeping us along wherever it may capriciously will.⁹³ In his *Confessions* he tells of

⁸⁸“Si crederit, frigidior erit in eo amore quo invicem homines mutua familiaritate perfruuntur: et si non ita est infirmus, ut haec illum offensio faciat ab omni dilectione frigescere; in ea se tenet, qua non ut fruatur, sed ut consulat diligit.” *De catech. rud.* IV, 7.

⁸⁹“Ibi enim gratior amor est, ubi non aestuat indigentiae siccitate, sed ubertate beneficentiae profluit.” *De catech. rud.* IV, 7.

⁹⁰“Il ny a remede, il faut que vostre amour s’esgaye a me demander des certitudes du mien, dont toutefois il ne peut douter. Nous savons bien cette douce importunité des amans, ... non pour s’assurer, mays pour se complaire en l’assurance qu’ilz ont, qui semble estre mieux savouree quand ell’est plus souvent repetee.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCLXXXVII.

⁹¹ “Mais quelz remedes contre cette engeance et formiliere de folles amours, folastreies, impuretes?” *Oeuvres...* III p.209.

⁹² “Reclames Dieu; il vous secourra et son amour prendra le vostre en sa protection, affin qu’il vive uniquement pour luy.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.209.

⁹³ Cfr. *Confessions* III and IV.

“friendship too unfriendly,” and how he was led by a group of friends to do things he would have never done. His famous tale of stealing pears for the pleasure of stealing with his adolescent friends leaps to mind.⁹⁴ He describes the yearnings of his youth many years later: “I sought what I might love, in love with loving, I defiled, therefore, the spring of friendship with the filth of concupiscence.”⁹⁵ That “spring of friendship,” pure and whole, is the Classical love of another for their own sake that Cicero describes. Elsewhere Augustine calls it “that moderation of one mind’s loving another mind”.⁹⁶

The Bishop of Hippo uses more than once terms like “clouding” or “fogging” true friendship with selfish desires during his youth, indicating that these obscure the heart, and thereby one’s judgment is somehow disrupted. “I was seduced myself, and others I seduced; deceived, and deceiving in diverse lusts, and I did them with my friends, who were deceived with me and by me.”⁹⁷ And even that friendship of the philosophers with the unnamed friend he loved so completely before his conversion, he will later consider as “impure tickling,” saying: “I had split my soul upon the sand, in loving a man that must die, as if he never had been to die.”⁹⁸

⁹⁴ He reflects on the incident: “Alone, I had never committed that theft, wherein what I stole pleased me not, but that I stole; O friendship too unfriendly! (O nimis inimica amicitia) When it is said, ‘Lets go, let’s do it,’ we are ashamed not to be shameless.” *Confessions* II.17.

⁹⁵*Confessions* III, 1 O’Meara gives a good summary of the saturnalian atmosphere of Carthage at the time citing both the *City of God* and contemporaries of the adolescent Augustine. *The Young Augustine...* pp.48-55.

⁹⁶ “And what was it that I delighted in, but to love and to be loved? But love kept not that moderation of one mind’s loving another mind, as the lithesome boulder of true friendship; but out of that puddly concupiscence of my flesh, certain mists and bubblings of youth fumed up, which beclouded and so overcast my heart, that I could not discern the beauty of a chaste affection, from a fog of impure lustfulness.” *Confessions* II.2. See also III, 1.

⁹⁷“Seducebamur et seducebamus, falsi atque fallentes in variis cupiditatibus .et sectabar ista atque faciebam cum amicis meis, per me ac mecum deceptis.” *Confessions* IV, 1. Compare Francis de Sales’ comment: “La tyrannie du péché est cruelle, elle ôte le jugement, oui même à ceux qui n’en ont pas.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCXLIV.

⁹⁸ “I had split my soul upon the sand, in loving a man that must die, as if he never had been to die. For the comfortings of other friends did mostly repair and refresh me, with whom I did love, what afterwards I did love: and this was a great fable, and a long lie; by the impure tickling whereof, my soul, which lay itching in my ears, was wholly corrupted.” *Confessions* IV, 8.

Not only does he caution against being swept away from truth by friendship, but Augustine also experienced betrayal several times in his life. Boniface, the commander of the Roman Garrison in northern Africa, married a Vandal princess and betrayed the empire as well as his Catholic faith, bitterly disappointing Augustine, his former confidant.⁹⁹ Julian of Eclanum was a more famous example. Augustine continued to address him as “my dear son Julian” throughout the twelve years of venomous public criticism from the son of Menorius, a Bishop and close friend.¹⁰⁰ Julian backed the cause of Pelagius with stinging letters ridiculing Augustine’s defenses, and spiced them with personal invectives.¹⁰¹ Augustine’s responses in his old age remained peaceful and without any bitterness, yet one senses a certain sorrow in them. Through these and other betrayals, Augustine had learned the fickleness of human beings, and the importance of testing before opening oneself up to another. Nonetheless, he does not expressly profess that one must test a friend, yet when he says things like “Of men one can never be sure,”¹⁰² we can gather he too believed we should be cautious. Yet Augustine says, on the other hand, that it is better to risk oneself and fail than be too prudent when it comes to friendship.¹⁰³ Francis too believes it necessary to be careful; he writes Jane regarding weighty things: “Have little confidence in men, even though they might seem

⁹⁹Augustine once wrote him, “Laudo et gratulor et admiror, fili dilectissime ..., quod inter curas bellorum et armorum uehementer desideras ea nosse, quae Dei sunt.” *Epist.* 185. See also *Epist.* 189 and 220. For the story of Boniface Cfr. P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo, a Biography*, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1969. pp.421-426; McNamara, *Friendship...* pp.173-177; and Procopius, *De Bellis Van.* I, 3, 22-26.

¹⁰⁰Cfr. *Admonitio in opus imperfectum, contra secundam Juliani responionem* (PL 45, 1035-53), *Epist.* 418-430; and *Contra Jul.* (PL 44, 701).

¹⁰¹For example, “Eruditissime bipedum, homo omnium impudentissime, Aristoteles Poenorum, subtilissime disputator, philosphaster Poenorum, coniugalis operis criminator, libidinum expiator; impugnator innocentiae et divinae aequitatis infamator.” McNamara *Friendship...* p.171.

¹⁰²“De homine autem nemo prudenter securus est.” *De cat. rudibus* XXV, 49.

¹⁰³ Augustine cautions: “Frequently however, what happens in friendship when we desire to receive from it, is that first of all we notice what is bad rather than what is good, and because of those offenses we are repulsed and relinquish it, and never come to appreciate the good things hidden in the person.” *De diversis quaest...* 83, q.71, 5-6.

like angels.”¹⁰⁴ Both men suffered betrayals, and both believed friendship still worth its risks.¹⁰⁵

From both of these points of view, then, friendship is dangerous: first, because it can communicate things that will only bring us down, and secondly, because the initial rushes of affection can propel us to give our friendship to one that only knows to talk of love and virtue. Francis de Sales, like Augustine, therefore warns that one must test the qualities of a friend before entrusting them wholly with one’s confidence.¹⁰⁶

Friendship or charity?

Amor, *dilectio*, and *caritas* are all terms commonly used by Augustine to refer to the reality that is most properly called *amicitia*, *vera amicitia* or *amor amicitia* in other places.¹⁰⁷ He uses the term ‘charity’ in a much larger sense than ‘friendship’. St. Thomas will later define charity, for the Christian tradition as ‘friendship with God,’¹⁰⁸ which at first glance can cause confusion. One might ask, isn’t friendship’s love in God and for God just another form of charity?¹⁰⁹ Francis de Sales also believed charity had all the criteria necessary to be considered friendship with God.¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, he believes like Augustine, the difference between charity and friendship to be quite clear. He says charity must be born for all, but in spiritual friendship,

¹⁰⁴“Ayes peu de confiance es hommes, quoy qu’ilz semblent des anges; je veux dire pour des confiances grandes et entieres.” *Oeuvres... DIV.*

¹⁰⁵Augustine dedicated his *Berata Vita* to Mallius Theodorus with whom he claims there “a spiritual fellowship”. Theodorus abandoned their ideals for a worldly life that later awarded him consulship. Honoratus and Fortunatus disappointed him because they failed to accept truth, Julian and Boniface because of pride and weakness. Cfr. Marie Aquinas McNamara’s *Friendship ...* pp.162-192, for an account of Augustine’s heartbreaks in friendship, which never left him bitter or stopped him from risking himself.

¹⁰⁶Francis advises Jane in especially delicate matters “Ah! je veux croire qu’il n a pas tant de mal; mais il y en encor moins d’estre bien discret.” *Oeuvres... ltr. CDLXXXI.*

¹⁰⁷ Cfr. *De civ. Dei*, 14,7; *Serm.* 355; *De diversis quaest.* 83.

¹⁰⁸“Caritas non solum significat amorem Dei, sed etiam amicitiam quamdam ad ipsum: quae quidem super amorem addit mutuum redamationem, cum quadam communicatione mutua.” (I II, q.65 a.5). See also, II II, q.23.

¹⁰⁹ This question is discussed in more detail infra under “All love is not friendship” p.388.

¹¹⁰ Cfr. *Tratié*, IV p.163.

souls communicate their “devotion, their spiritual affections and render each other one sole mind.”¹¹¹

Augustine asserts that without reciprocity there is no friendship: “friendship is founded upon reciprocal love”.¹¹² In the *Soliloquies* he distinguishes between friendship and love of humanity. Both are based on a love of the dignity of reason, but our relations with men vary according to their moral attitude.¹¹³ Love of reason becomes the love of an individual if that person makes good use of his reason, which is precisely in what friendship consists. The common interest, and communication he shared with Monica, Alypius, and others may not have differed in kind, for all loved God in each other. Yet surely, the degree of this communication differed greatly from those Augustine loved as shepherd. Both of these concepts, reciprocity and degrees, we will also find in the Doctor of love.

Reciprocal communication then becomes a kind of differentiating factor between friendships and charity. Augustine may not use the term communication, but it is implied in the meaning of reciprocity. Indeed, Francis says, as we have seen relying on Aristotle, that what one communicates defines friendship.¹¹⁴ Charity diffuses out to all, including friends, and enhances each rung of human relationships, giving them all one and the same orientation. Yet charity need not be mutual. This is most evident in loving of one’s enemies. Like Christ, both Augustine and Francis de Sales loved their enemies. It is one of the wholly Christian aspects of their way of loving men. But that’s not all. They hoped, as Augustine says, that by loving their enemies they might “convert to become a brother.”¹¹⁵ In the following chapters we will witness this in the life of Francis de Sales. It seems to be one of the most startling traits of the life of every saint. One can never speak of friendship with an enemy, but one may speak of charity for him.

¹¹¹ “Je ne parle pas ici de l’amour simple de charite, car il doit estre porte a tous les hommes; mais je parle de l’amitie spirituelle, par laquelle deux ou trois ou plusieurs ames se communiquent leur devotion, leurs affections spirituelles, et se rendent un seul esprit entre elles. *Oeuvres...* III p.202.

¹¹² “Quis enim mutua caritate diligitur ab aliquo, cum sit invisibilis ipsa dilectio, si quod non video, credere non debeo: Tota itaque peribit amicitia, quia non nisi mutuo amore constat.” *De fide rerum ...* IV.

¹¹³ *Soliloquia* I, 7

¹¹⁴ See infra “Communication: the intimacy of friendship” beginning on page 410.

¹¹⁵ *In Epist. Joan X, 7.*

Friendship, however, is extremely personal and unique, as we will see as this study progresses.

Union

In another of the texts where the Bishop of Hippo is cited,¹¹⁶ Francis refers to Augustine's loss of his unnamed friend. He uses it as an example of the importance of sincere speech, because Augustine later said in his *Retractions* that he found his account ("sweeter than all sweetness of my life") as absurd and foolish.¹¹⁷ Augustine says in his *Confessions* that he and his friend were "one soul in two bodies,"¹¹⁸ he himself using a saying well known to Antiquity to describe friendship.¹¹⁹ Francis was well aware of Augustine's image of two persons being profoundly one by love, and explicitly refers to Augustine's account of friendship in his youth with his fellow Neo-Platonists, seeking wisdom in liberation from everything material in order to possess a vision of the pure eternal world of Forms.¹²⁰ Christ who is Wisdom and Love will replace the Neo-Platonism of Augustine's youth and forever change his philosophy of man and relations with men. The friend will no longer be a kind of stepping-stone to be lost in the Absolute, but a necessary part of one's journey to God and perfection. Through loving and being loved humanly God revealed Himself in the incarnation and continues to reveal Himself in friendship.

Twice Francis refers to Augustine concerning unity by love.¹²¹ We get an insight into Augustine's thought in his commentary on the golden

¹¹⁶ "St. Augustin avoit dit au quatriesme livre de ses *Confessions*, (ch 6) que son ame et celle de son ami n'estoyent qu'une seule ame, et que cette vie luy estoit en horreur apres le trespas de son ami, parce qu'il ne voulait pas vivre a moitié, et que aussi pour cela mesme il craignoit a l'aventure de mourir, affin que son ami ne mourust du tout. Ces paroles lui semblerent par apres trop artificieuses et affectees, si qu'il les revoque au livre de ses *Retractions* et les appelle un ineptie." *Oeuvres...* III, p.245.

¹¹⁷ *Retractions* II, 6.

¹¹⁸ *Confessions* IV, 1.

¹¹⁹ Aristotle uses this same expression in the *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 10.

¹²⁰ Cfr. *Oeuvres...* III, p.245.

¹²¹ The second is a commentary on a verse of the *Song of Songs*: "Qu'il me bayse d'un bayser de sa bouche? Le bayser de tout tems, comme par instinct naturel, a este employe pour représenter l'amour parfait, c'est a dire l'union des coeurs, et non sans cause. ... et Saint Augustine (*Confessions* I.4,c.6) disent que

rule. He explains: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and soul and with thy whole mind" and "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." First he notes there is agreement on divine things, then on human things, joined with good will and love. He says, "If one is with his friend in holding firmly to these two commandments, his friendship will be true and everlasting, and it will unite him not only to his friend, but to the Lord Himself."¹²² Augustine was convinced, and often repeated that one must love a friend not for himself, but for God. "He truly loves his friend who loves God in his friend, both as He is in him and as He might be in him."¹²³ We love our friends, Augustine teaches, if and only if we love them in a way that brings them closer to God.¹²⁴ The love of God, self and others in friendship is therefore like the sides of a pyramid which gradually become one as they approach the summit. It unites all in one common love, the love of God for Himself. Loving others in God in turn allows for a greater understanding and concomitant trust. "And when they hear me confessing of myself, how do they know whether I speak the truth? The charity by which they are good, tells them that in my confession I do not lie about myself; and the charity in them believes me."¹²⁵ By living in friendship with God, they are somehow able to see when a man is being true, and give their assent out of this same loving kindness. So God is both the source and term of friendship's love. Sharing a love of God is analogous to sharing a virtuous good, to speak in Aristotle's language, and it also is the kind of good that permeates a person's being and changes their entire character, rather than being something possessed. In this way, sharing God is sharing what He is in each one of them, what Francis would call the temple, the heart, or fine point of the

leurs amis avec eux n'avoyent qu'une ame...la fin donques de l'amour n'est autre chose que l'union de l'amant a la chose aymee." *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.50-53.

¹²² "Diliges dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo et ex tota anima tua et ex tota mente tua et: Diliges proximum tuum tamquam te ipsum (Mt. 22, 37-40). . . In illo primo rerum divinarum, in hoc secundo rerum humanarum est cum benivolentia et caritate consensio. Haec duo si mecum firmissime teneas, amicitia nostra vera ac sempiterna erit et non solum invicem nos sed etiam ipsi domino sociabit." *Epist.* 258.

¹²³ *Serm.* 361, 1; see also *In Ded. Eccl.*, II, 2: "Illum enim veraciter amat amicum, qui Deum amat in amico, aut quia est in illo, aut ut sit in illo."

¹²⁴ *Serm.* CCCLVIII, 4; see also: CCCXLVII, 11; *De civ. Dei* X, 7; *De moribus eccl. cath.* I, XXVI, 49; *In Jo. Ev.* XVII, 11; *De doctrina Christiana* I, xxxii, 21; and I, xxix, 30; *Epist.* 155, 14; *Epist.* 168, 16; and *Epist.* 130, 14.

¹²⁵ *Confessions* X, 3.

soul.¹²⁶ But the real glory of this kind of love is that it unites not just two to virtue and each other, but as Augustine says, to God Himself. Somehow God is experienced, communicated and known through friendship.

The Bishop of Geneva adds another dimension to all this when he focuses on the condition of their heart, which for him is the inner sanction of the soul and seat of our very personality.¹²⁷ Since his spirituality was especially attentive to the inner desires, unity between friends has a special significance. He tells Jane on one occasion that God has given them similar hearts, feeling the same “violent inspirations” for perfection. This “unity of inspiration” is proof for him that God wishes them to be one soul.¹²⁸ And that union has a definite purpose, it is meant for the pursuance of a common work and for their mutual perfection. We will see later how fundamental this theme of union is to his friendships. It is not merely union in common interest, or in love of God, but even a union of persons, of their qualities, of their innermost desires and inspirations. One soul in two bodies is the perfection of love, and thus of friendship. To say “one soul” for the Doctor of love, is to mean one heart, which is manifested by a common movement, outside itself, and a common movement within, stirred by the mystery of grace. Union, he explains, is the end to which everything in friendship tends.¹²⁹

Permanence

There is another lesson to be drawn from Augustine’s story of the loss of his unnamed friend. The Bishop of Geneva speaks many times about permanence in friendship, and in two of these texts he mentions

¹²⁶“Dieu soit vostre coeur” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXI.

¹²⁷The Biblical origins of the heart as center of the human being are explained in the notes of the Jerusalem Bible, New York, Doubleday, 1985, beginning with the note on Eph. 1:8.

¹²⁸“Et remarquons que Nostre Seigneur ne vous donne jamais de violentes inspirations de la pureté et perfection de vostre coeur, qu’il ne me donne la mesme violonté, pour nous faire connoistre qu’il ne faut qu’une inspiration d’une mesme chose a un mesme coeur, et que, par l’unité de l’inspiration, nous sçachions que cette souveraine Providence veut que nous soyons une mesme ame, pour la poursuite d’une mesme oeuvre et pour la pureté de nostre perfection.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXIII.

¹²⁹“La fin donques de l’amour n’est autre chose que l’union de l’amant a la chose aymee.” *Oeuvres...* IV p.53.

St. Augustine.¹³⁰ If the cause of friendship is the respect in which mutual benevolence is communicated and shared, it follows that friendship resting upon permanent goods is the only one that will be permanent.¹³¹ Both men clearly agree that permanence and stability come not from some ideal of virtuous character, but from Christ. "The friendship that could cease was never truly a friendship,"¹³² Francis says, giving credit to the chorus of a long tradition on friendship. Like them he attributes true stability to Christ who will never perish, and thus those who love in Him will never be confounded. Augustine explains in one of his first books composed as a Christian, "Nor yet should you place your hopes even in the good themselves who either go before you or who accompany you on the way to God, but in Him, who by justifying both them and you, makes you such as you are. For of God, you are sure, because He does not change, but of man, no one can be prudently sure."¹³³

Such stability founded on Christ's unconditional love for a soul will give it a new respect and dignity, in other words, a self love in the honorable sense of the word. When a person is bought back from sin, from ignorance and disordered love, his love of God, himself and others is made healthy. This is the essence of happiness, and it provides both

¹³⁰ The first is raised in a situation of conflict, where Francis is writing to correct a friend, and the second is written to reassure a friend in doubt who asks: will you always love me? *Oeuvres...* ltrs.DCCXI and MDCCLXXXIII respectively. Note that the latter citation is not an authentic Augustinian text, but really Aelred of Rievaulx's *Spiritual Friendship*, as will be shown in the following chapter.

¹³¹"C'est la vraie verité, Monsieur, qu'encore que mes amis meurent, mon amitié ne meure point,...car, bien que les personnes que j'aime soient mortelles, ce que j'aime principalement en elles est immortel, et j'ai toujours estime cet axiome fondamental pour la connaissance des vraies amitiés, qu'Aristotle, saint Jerome et saint Augustin ont tant solemnise: L'amitié qui a pu cesser, n'a jamais ete veritable." *Oeuvres...* ltr . DCCXI.

¹³² "Bien aymer et pouvoir cesser de bien aymer sont deux choses incompatibles. Les amitiés des enfans du monde sont de la nature du monde: le monde passe, et toutes ses amitiés passent, mais la nostre elle est de Dieu, en Dieu et pour Dieu.. *Mundus perit, et concupicentia ejus* [I *Joan.*, 2.17]; *Christus non perit, nec dilectio ejus consequence infallible.*" *Oeuvres...*ltr. MDCCLXXXIII.

¹³³"Nec tamen etiam in ipsis bonis, qui te vel precedunt vel tibi comitantur ad Deum, spem tuam collocare debes. . . sed in illo qui eos et te iustificando tales facit. Securus es enim de Deo, quia non mutatur: de homine autem nemo prudenter securus est." *De catech. rud.* XXV, 49.

joy that reaches out to share with others, and even a different way of looking at others. Augustine remarks, "If souls please you, let them be loved in God; for they are mutable, but in Him they are firmly established, or else they would pass and pass away."¹³⁴ The strength of that *agapev* will make the risks of human rejection and changeable allegiance less damaging, for it will spring not from a vague and confused ache to 'love and be loved,' but from a desire to share something beautiful and dignifying.

If true friendship can only exist in Christ, it follows that sin will destroy friendship. Augustine and Francis both teach that if one of the friends turns from God, he turns from the bonds of charity that weld them together, and though affection and goodwill may remain, their communication and participation that is their dynamism cannot continue.¹³⁵ Augustine laments this in his *Confessions*, "Wretched I was; and wretched is every soul that is bound fast in the friendship of mortal things; who becomes all to pieces when he forgoes them, and then first he becomes sensible of his misery, by which he is already miserable even before he forgoes them.... Thus was I wretched enough, and that wretched life I accounted more dear than my friend himself."¹³⁶ A friendship less dear than mortal things is no friendship by either of our authors' accounts. Francis underlines Augustine's idea, noting that "friendship tends to descend more than to ascend,"¹³⁷ and that even spiritual friendship can suffer set-backs, because of the proclivity of human nature.¹³⁸

¹³⁴"Si placet animae, in Deo amentur, quia et ipsae mutabiles sunt et illo fixae stabilintur: aloquin irent et perirent." *Confessions* IV, 18.

¹³⁵"L' affection aux grans pechés rendoit tellement la verité prisonniere de l' injustice,... Aussi, les affections au peché veniel n' abolissent pas la charité mays elles la tiennent comme un esclave, liee pieds et mains, empeschant sa liberte et son action; cette affection nous attachant par trop a la jouissance des creatures, a laquelle la charité, comme vraie amitié, nous incite, et, par consequent, elle nous fait perdre les secours et assistances interieures, qui sont comme les espritz vitaux et animaux de l' ame, du defaut desquelz provient une certaine paralisie spirituelle, laquelle en fin si on n' y remede nous conduit a la mort." *Oeuvres...* IV, p..221.

¹³⁶ *Confessions* IV, 6.

¹³⁷"Dieu soit nostre tout, car l' amitié descend plus qu' elle ne monte." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCXCV.

¹³⁸"Mon Dieu, n' est ce pas dommage que ces baumes des amitiés spirituelles soyent exposés aux mouscherons?" *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXVIII.

Of course, this stability is not only in this life, but extends into eternity. Augustine says, “Blessed is he who loves his friend in Thee, for he alone loses none dear to him, to whom all are dear in Him who cannot be lost.”¹³⁹ In death this is especially reassuring.¹⁴⁰ Friendship has an immortality not in *memorium*, as the Stoics would say, but in the immortality of the soul through Christ’s love. “Friendship is the return of love which another has offered,” the Bishop of Hippo remarks, “it is nothing other than love from which it draws its name, [*amor* vs. *amicitia*] and it is faithful only in Christ in whom alone it can be eternal.”¹⁴¹ That same orientation to eternity will give friendship, as it gives an individual life, a certain wisdom and detachment from things like power, wealth or acclaim that Cicero warns so often destroy friendship.

If you will recall, Aristotle attributed true friendship’s permanence to virtue’s constancy. This does not mean that stability of character is not necessary in the two Christian doctor’s minds for friendship, but that the real cause even of this sort of character comes from grace and our feeble human efforts.¹⁴² Christ’s permanence binds friends together in a way that lets them rest securely in one another, trusting that their love will not change. It gives them a certain freedom to dare to correct one another without fear of rupture, and reciprocally, to receive criticism without fear of malice. It is perhaps one of the greatest gifts of

¹³⁹ *Confessions* IV, 14.

¹⁴⁰ Francis consoles at times of loss from death with these thoughts, “Mays que dans peu de tems nous le suivrons au Ciel, lieu de nostre repos, Dieu nous en faisant la grace. Ce sera la ou nous accomplirons et parvairons sans fin les bonnes et chretiennes amitiés que nous n’avons fait que commencer en ce monde.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXIX.

¹⁴¹ “[*Amicitia est*] amorem rependere inpensum. Quid est enim alius amicitia, quae non aliunde quam ex amore nomen accepit et nusquam nisi in Christo fidelis est, in quo solo esse etiam sempiterna ac felix potest?” *Contra duas epist. Pel. I*, 1. Cicero says in his *De Amicitia*, 26: “Amor enim, ex quo amicitia nominata est, princeps est ad benivolentiam coniungendam.”

¹⁴² Francis summarizes in the *Traité*, “Dieu, sans doute, n’a préparé le Paradis que pour ceux desquelz il a preveu qu’ilz seroyent siens; soyons donques siens par foy et par oeuvre, Theotime, et il sera nostre par gloire. Or il est en nous d’estre siens: car bien que ce soit un don de Dieu d’estre a Dieu, c’est toutefois un don que Dieu ne refuse jamais a personne, ains l’offre a tous, pour le donner a ceux qui de bon coeur consentiront de le recevoir.” (He cites the Council of Trent in this same context) *Oeuvres...* IV, p.186.

redemption that friends of God may rest in one another's love as in the love of God.

Friendship extends to the family of the friend

When Francis de Sales first befriends Jane de Chantal, he tells her that his friendship and affection for her also embrace her children. True, Jane was a widow, and as a mother her first worries were for her children. But that offer is not just to comfort an obvious need he recognized in Jane's life. It was part and parcel of his vision of friendship, as we will see with Antoine Favre, Antoine des Hayes, and many others. Augustine was the same way. Francis even cites one of Augustine's letters when offering his friendship to Jane's family. He says, "I greet your father-in-law sincerely and offer him my services. I wish a thousand graces to your little ones, which I hold as my own in Our Lord. These are the words of the son of your mistress, writing to Italica, his spiritual daughter."¹⁴³ That mistress was of course St. Monica, the faithful mother of Augustine, who like Jane was also a widow and mother.¹⁴⁴ The Bishop of Hippo must have been in the forefront of his mind when he began to cement these kinds of relationships. It shows the important influence of Augustine on Francis' relationships with his own 'spiritual daughters,' and, for that matter, in his friendships in general. They all were like his family, and his service even in the swarming business as Bishop was always available to them and theirs.

With heretics a distant friendliness

Francis uses Augustine's example and authority when he advises Jane to go ahead and permit herself to see the Huguenots, but rarely and reticently in a gentle and humble simplicity. He then refers to Augustine saying, "The good son of your fair mistress (Saint Monica) wrote one day to the devout Maxime, his good spiritual daughter, and said to her

¹⁴³"Je salue monsieur vostre beau-pere avec sincerité et luy offre mon service. Je souhaite mille graces a vos petits et petites, lesquelz je tiens pour miens en Nostre Seigneur: ce sont les paroles du filz de vostre Maistresse, escrivant a Italica, sa fille spirituelle [S. Augustine ltr. 99]." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCIV.

¹⁴⁴Note he also makes Rachel of Genesis ch. 30 her "abbesse" or mother superior. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCIV.

practically these words: be with the heretics simple and gracious as a dove when speaking to them, having compassion for their misfortunes; be prudent as the serpent, and slip quickly out of their company, of meetings and opportunities, and again by way of a few rare visits."¹⁴⁵ Francis will later be known as one of the most compassionate and gentle voices of the Catholic Reformation, something rare for his age. He reveals in this letter the roots in Catholic tradition of his distant friendliness with them. Augustine's attitude with the Donatists and other heretics like Palegius was perhaps less conciliatory, but in his latter life his patience with Julian is very similar to the Bishop of Geneva. Both men agreed that friendship and charity were a powerful means to win them back to the Church.

Die to self and possessions

St. Francis de Sales, citing Augustine in two different contexts, speaks of the need to die to oneself in order to love God and others well. "Such was St. Augustine when he wrote 'oh to love! oh to walk! oh to die to oneself! oh to come to God!'"¹⁴⁶ This sacrifice extends to one's possessions too, as Francis comments again citing his favorite Father of the Church, "Mine and yours, these are, St. Augustine says, the two words which have ruined the charity in the world."¹⁴⁷ Francis comments that love of one's neighbor requires the stripping of all possessiveness. This applies to spiritual as well as temporal goods. Augustine's early Christian life at Cassiciacum with a handful of family and friends was a community life devoted to studying Christianity and practicing this kind of detachment.

¹⁴⁵ "Je vous dis que vous pouviés voir les huguenots; je dis maintenant: ouy, voyez-les, mais rarement, et soyés courte et retroussee avec eux, neanmoins douce et reluisante en humilité et simplicité. Le filz de votre bonne Maistresse (sainte Monique) ecrivait un jour a la devote Maxime, sa bonne fille spirituelle, et il luy dit presque ces paroles "[S. Augustin Ep. 264;10] Soyés avec les heretiques simple et gracieuse comme une colombe a leur parler, ayant compassion de leurs malheurs; soyés prudente comme le serpent [Mt. 10.16] a bien tost vous glisser hors de leur compaignie aux rencontres, aux occasions et encore par maniere de quelque rare visite." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCIV.

¹⁴⁶ "Tel fut Saint Augustin quand il s'escria: 'O aymer! O marcher! O mourir a soy mesme! O parvenir a Dieu!'" *Oeuvres...* V, p.322.

¹⁴⁷ "Le tien et le mien, ce sont, dit saint Augustin, les deux mots qui ont ruiné la charité au monde." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCCXVII. and again in CCCXXVII.

About five years later, when Augustine returned home to Thagaste, and even as Bishop at Hippo, the community life he founded opened its doors to all kinds of men who sought to know God and themselves in friendship.¹⁴⁸ All his life as a Christian was lived in a community of friendship. The Bishop of Hippo is one of the great authors of the monastic life in the history of the Church. His ideas on sharing a common life were bred in practical experience. The ideal Christian life for Augustine seeks *anima una et cor unum in Deum*, an expression found frequently in his writings. It is the equivalent of *vera amicitia*, because only there do the souls of friends melt into one.¹⁴⁹ There, too, their possessions are not their own, but put in common.¹⁵⁰ “True friendship,” “the love of friendship in God,” and “fraternal charity”: all three of these ideas blend together in the *Regula* as in no other place in his works. “He conceived monastic life as a supernatural friendship,”¹⁵¹ and lived this way in Hippo during his entire episcopate. “Mine” and “yours” lose their sense when hearts are melded into one, extending to one’s possessions. Its motive is generosity, not gain. Since his conversion, Augustine’s experience of friendship with God, the desire to have cedes to a desire to share.¹⁵² An individual approaches God, he later suggests, through life’s experiences and in formal study.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Cfr. P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo, a Biography*, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1969.

¹⁴⁹ Cfr. *Epist.* 243, 4; *Epist.* 211, 2; *Enarr. in ps.* 132, 6; 131, 5; and 99, 11; *Regula ad servos Dei*, 1; *Contra Faustum*, V, 9.

¹⁵⁰ “Primum propter quod in unum estis congregati: ut unanimes habitetis in domo, et sit vobis anima una et cor unum in Deum, et non dicatis aliquid proprium sed sint vobis omnia communia.” *Regula ad servos Dei*, 1.

¹⁵¹ Fr. A. Trapé has put it thus: “Pocos han cultivado la amistad como el obispo de Hipona y pocos han entendido como él su dignidad y su belleza. Llevado de esta necesidad del corazón ha concebido la vida monástica como una amistad sobrenatural, por la que los hermanos viven juntos; y juntos, ayudándose y soportándose, elevarse a Dios.” “San Agustín y el monacato occidental,” in *La Ciudad de Dios*, 189 (1956), p.412. See also T. Viñas Román, “La verdadera amistad, expresión del carisma monástico agustiano” in *La Ciudad de Dios*, t.194, (1981).

¹⁵² “How lovely I suddenly found it to be free from the loveliness of those vanities, so that now it was a joy to renounce what I had been afraid to lose. For you cast them out of me... And I talked with you as friends talk, my glory and my riches and my salvation, my Lord God.” *Confessions* IX, 1.

¹⁵³ *Ord.* II, 20.53. In the treatise *On Order*, Pythagoras and to a lesser extent Varro offer rules for living the best possible life. Augustine reflects this heritage by saying that glimpses of beauty in one’s search for God are available

Augustine believed that the challenges, inspirations, intellectual exchanges and consolations of daily living with others in a community of friendship made it an excellent method to approach God.¹⁵⁴ In a community like Cassiciacum, they freely gave of their possessions and themselves, aiding each other in a life of the mind befitting Christian virtue. They did not even hold on to their friendships jealously, but shared everything with each other, including each other.¹⁵⁵ It is a good example of the free and generous nature of this kind of friendship. Secure in the love of God, they were rich in love, rich enough to give it away.

Free, joyful and serious

One of the characteristics of friendship's life resulting from this kind of largesse is naturally that it be free and joyful. The spirit of friendliness, Augustine believed, is balanced with a healthy seriousness. One of the pleasures of friendship is indeed that we are able to be ourselves there. We can laugh or cry, and seek refuge in so many ways with this kind of friend. We get a glimpse of the daily character of Augustine's friendship in the *Confessions* where he is describing what his friendships were like.

To discourse, and to laugh with them, and to do obsequious offices of courtesy one to another; to read good books together; sometimes to be in jest, and other whiles seriously earnest to one another; sometimes so to dissent without discontent, as a man would do with his own self, and even with the seldomness of those dissenting, season our more frequent consenting; sometimes would we teach, and sometimes learn one of another; wish for the company of the absent with impatience, and

to the individual who 'lives well, prays well, studies well.'

¹⁵⁴ Alypius says to Augustine one day at Cassiciacum, "You have just put before our eyes, with a completeness that matched your precision, a magnificent plan of life. Because of your daily teaching we have longed for such a life, but today you have made our desire even more ardent." And Augustine in his turn repeats in several places his respect for Alypius. "You have no difficulty in following these rules of conduct. You have eagerly put them into practice with such whole heartedness that I am your master by my words, you have become mine by your example." *De Ordine* II, X, 28. See also, *Contra Acad.* III, 13, and *De Ord.* II, XX, 54.

¹⁵⁵ "Quia ergo charitati nihil adversius quam invidentia; mater autem invidentiae superbia est." *De catech. rud.* V, 9

welcome home the newcomers with joyfulness. With these and the like expressions, proceeding out of the hearts of those that loved and repaired one another's affections, by the countenance, by the tongue, by the eyes, and by a thousand other most pleasing motions, did we set our souls ablaze, and make but one out of many.¹⁵⁶

A person can never be constrained to love or to befriend another. Francis was acutely aware of this because of its implications for the controversies about free will and grace that rent the world of his times. Augustine says, "Love and do what you will; if you hold your peace, of love hold your peace; if you cry out, of love cry out; if you correct, of love correct; if you spare, spare through love; let the root of love be within; from this root nothing can spring but what is good."¹⁵⁷ Love permits a certain freedom. Francis' *liberté d'esprit* or *sainte liberté* is essentially this. He says, "holy freedom and frankness must reign and we must never have any other law nor constraint than that of love."¹⁵⁸ The bond of love that glues souls together in true friendship, both doctors agree, is at once firm, permanent and free. That same love is serious in the sense that it is stable and founded on truth. Its benevolence is clearly defined by faith, which also gives it the joy of redemption demonstrated by affability in daily life. They were free to dissent, or to consent, because all their interactions proceeded from that freedom of loving rightly. Perhaps this is why Aelred believed that true friendship was the kind of good that could never be abused. We will see in the last part of this work that Francis de Sales develops this in an innovative way in his own spirituality and friendships.

Presence

Aristotle taught that if friends could not be present to each other, and communication between them suffered, the friendship would eventually

¹⁵⁶*Confessions* IV, 13-14.

¹⁵⁷"Dilige et quod vis fac: sive taceas, dilectione taceas; sive calmes, dilectione calmes; sive emendes, dilectione emendes; sive parcas, dilectione parcas: radix sit intus dilectionis, non potest de ista radice nisi bonum existere." *In Epist. Jo.*, VII, 8.

¹⁵⁸ "Il faut partout que la sainte liberté et franchise regne et que nous n'ayons point d'autre loy ni contrainte que celle de l'amour." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLI. And elsewhere he writes, "Il faut tout faire par amour et rien par force." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV.

die.¹⁵⁹ Augustine knew how love always desires to be with the beloved, and although he missed absent friends greatly, he took a certain solace in the interior bond of their oneness in God. He believed that the mind of a friend somehow lived in the other's mind.¹⁶⁰ Unable to dispel this longing, he tried to spiritualize it. To be with his friend is a *magnum beneficium Dei*,¹⁶¹ to bear his absence would be intolerable, because the more Augustine grew weary of the scandals of the world and tired with age, the more he longed to be with Christ, his beloved. Friends were the only consolation to that longing, because God dwelt in them, and in their friendship, Augustine was able to somehow rest in Christ's presence, though imperfectly, with them. Spiritually his friends were always present to him, and this was somehow more than bodily presence.¹⁶² It was preferable, nonetheless, to both be with them and to know them with mutual affection and love.¹⁶³ He valued their presence highly, read and re-read their letters, and always wanted news of them.¹⁶⁴ When his friends were away they remained present in his heart, as well as through whatever news he could hear of them. Yet still, physical presence was a special solace. He writes many times things like, "I can find no words to express how the intensity of my love enkindles in me the longing to see you."¹⁶⁵ Being present they were able

¹⁵⁹Cfr. *Nicomachean Ethics* IX 9-10, 1170a 28-1170b 16.

¹⁶⁰Cfr. *Soliloquia* .I, 7.

¹⁶¹Cfr. *Epist.* 9, 8.

¹⁶²To Nebridus, for example, he put spiritual union before being physically present, because of his responsibilities. *Epist.* 3. See also *Epist.* 71: "Adire possit ad animum tuum animus meus."

¹⁶³Cfr. *Epist.* 205, 1. Francis naturally complained of the same "pain of separation" as we will see in detail. He says for example: "Qu'il est impossible de n'avoir pas des ressentimens de douleur en ces separations." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDXXXVI.

¹⁶⁴Cfr. *Epist.* 92, 1. The Bishop of Geneva confesses the same pleasure. "Vos lettres me sont si agreables que, bien que le papier en soit tout endommage a force de le manier, je trouve chaque jour tant de charme a les relire qu'elles me paraissent toujours recentes, surtout lorsqu'elles ne sont pas datees." *Oeuvres...* ltr. XLIV.

¹⁶⁵"Quanto enim caritatis ardore accendatur ad uisendos uos, uerbis explicare non possumus." *Epist.* 144, 3. In another letter, Severus writes Augustine: "I confess that my well-being is from you, and I read you much....I am more with you when you are absent than when you are present, for no disturbing interruptions of temporal affairs come between us." *Epist.* 109. We find these same ideas in St. Francis "Vous êtes toujours present à mon âme, et principalement à l'autel et le jour de Noël, environ lequel j'eus cette si chère

to nourish their friendship in conversation, courtesies, corrections “and by a thousand other most pleasing motions.”¹⁶⁶

“Spiritual presence” in Christ also provided the possibility, very strange to Classic thinkers, of having a friendship with a person one has never met!¹⁶⁷ United in a mutual love of God, every Christian is in some way a friend of every other, and when conditions are right, it may happen that one meets one with whom an instantaneous friendship, latent and potential earlier, springs forth.¹⁶⁸ And finally, in heaven our friendship with those we love on earth will live in eternal happiness present to God and one another, free from the many trials and tribulations we must now endure.¹⁶⁹

In the presence of a friend, both suffering is made lesser and joy is made greater, “For when many joy together, each also has more exuberant joy for that they are kindled and inflamed one by the other.”¹⁷⁰ It is enough just “to be” together in one’s heart, or physically present, but clearly, the former is defined by the latter, which is the better.

grâce de vous voir.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXLII.

¹⁶⁶*Confessions* IV, 14. St. Francis also firmly believes in the importance of presence to nourish friendship. He comments, “Nous renouvelions cette amitié, qui ne peut vieillir, mais dont le sentiment toutefois s’accroît par la présence.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXIII.

¹⁶⁷“Insepexi ergo cor tuum in scriptis tuis, quantum potui, et inveni amplectendum.” *Epist.* 193, 2. And he confirms later, “Quantum ad oculos attinet corporales, quosdam videmus nec novimus, quorum a nobis vita studiaque nesciuntur; quosdam novimus nec videmus, quorum nobis caritas et affectus innotuit, in quibus et te adnumeramus. . . quem iam novimus, amico interiore perfruamur.” *Epist.* 205, 1. And again, “Quid autem putas esse, o bone homo, nisi quod te talem virum etiam non visum feci amicum, si tamen non visum dicere debeo, cuius non corpus sed animum in ipsis tuis literis vidi?” *Epist.* 231, 5.

¹⁶⁸“Bona opera tua Christi gratia germinantia te nobis in membris eius honorandum et plane notissimum dilectissimumque facerunt. Neque enim, si quotidie faciem tuam viderem, notior mihi esses, quam cum interiorem tuum pacis decorem pulchrum ac veritatis luce radiantem in unius tui facti candore conspexi, conspexi et agnoui, angoui et amaui.” *Epist.* 58, 1.

¹⁶⁹“Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo Domini per omnes dies vitae meae. Propter quid? Ut contempler delectationem Domini....Ibi enim contemplator mecum erit amicus, non calumniator inimicus.” *In Ps.* 38, 6. See also *In Ps.* 84, 10.

¹⁷⁰*Confessions* VIII, 4.

Limits of friendship

Augustine says that the just love that is the cement of friendship requires that we love our friends “Not less nor more than we love ourselves.”¹⁷¹ We should never become a slave to obligations to our friends, and hence love them more than ourselves, nor should we always subordinate our love for them to a healthy love for ourselves. Somewhere between these two extremes lies that just love friends owe each other. The limits of friendship ensue from the limits of the moral life. We may not risk our soul for a friend, nor may we prefer our own well being at the price of all others, especially not to the salvation of a friend. Augustine does not give us some clearly defined law, but turns our reflection inward to measure our love by our love of ourselves, which is itself governed by how we are loved by Christ. Both benevolence and the inspiration of friendship’s love are therefore not rooted in nature, nor virtue, but in the love of God.¹⁷² The healthy self-love that the Classics wrote about, Augustine finds only in God’s forgiving love.¹⁷³ The limits of God’s own love draw the boundaries of

¹⁷¹“Illam enim legem amicitiae justissimam esse arbitror, qua praescribitur, ut sicut non minus, ita nec plus quisque amicum quam seipsum diligit.” *Soliloquia* I, 8.

¹⁷²“Sicut enim te ipso, non in te ipso frui debes, sed in eo qui fecit te; sic etiam illo quem diligis tanquam te ipsum. Et nobis ergo et fratribus in Domino fruamur, et inde nos nec ad nosmetipsos remittere, et quasi relaxare deorsum versus audeamus.” *De Trinitate* IX, vii, 13. St. Francis’ ideas are a little more elastic. He believes that “La vraie vertu n’a point de limites, elle va tous-jours outre.” This is his idea of holy freedom, and he says elsewhere, “Il est force que quelquefois nous laissons Notre-Seigneur pour agréer aux autres, pour l’amour de lui. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXVII. “Il n’y a remede, il faut ceder à la necessite du prochain.” ltr. CCCLXXXV.

¹⁷³ Plato comments at length in one example of common Classic sentiment: “The greatest of all evils is innate in the soul of most men and each forgives himself without searching any way to escape it. It is that which one means when one says that every man is naturally a friend of himself, and that he is so in the order that one should so be. In reality, this is for everyone and in every circumstance, the cause of all faults, the existence of the excessive love of one’s self. For he who loves is blind for what he loves, to the point of poorly judging all else, of good and beautiful things, thinking that he should always prefer his own interests to the true; for not in himself nor in his goods should one search if one wants to be a great man...And in virtue of this same error, all are in the habit of taking for wisdom their profound ignorance; in as much as, without knowing anything or hardly anything, we believe to know it all, and

our love, because ours participates in His. It must be true, faithful, kind and forgiving. It must be just and humble, joyful and serious. In the terms of Aristotle, it must love another for his own sake *in God and only in God*. Once one understands this personal friendship with his Creator, Cicero's law of friendship is obviously a limit, as is the unlawfulness of any friendship based on pleasure or utility alone.

It seems that no matter how satisfying, holy or sacred friendships may be, somehow they still fall short. Augustine too says he yearned "*nisi amare et amari*" and found his friendships, on the one hand wonderful consolations, and still at the same time somehow unsatisfying. Near the end of his life, amidst the troubles of the fall of the empire, he writes in *The City of God*: "What consoles us in this human life, full as it is of miseries and mistakes, if not the loyalty and mutual love of true and good friends?"¹⁷⁴ And yet, even with his most intimate friends, he felt a certain frustration in the impossibility of ever being able to share his innermost self with them. His friends remained distinct from him and his struggles to communicate his hidden self never fully hit the mark. In the *Confessions* he writes: "You knew what I was suffering and no man knew it, for how little it was that my tongue uttered of it in the ears even of my closest friends! Could they hear the tumult of my soul, for whose utterance no time or voice of mine would have been sufficient?"¹⁷⁵ His difficulties in friendship, like those with Jerome, or the failure to share friendship with Ambrose, confirmed a conviction that seems to have grown over the years, that every heart is a world closed to all others, unable to ever explain itself fully to another.¹⁷⁶ Many times in his sermons, Augustine reiterated his belief that only in heaven will there be no misunderstandings, no need for words and the difficulties of communication, only then can perfect peace and intimacy between men be found.¹⁷⁷ St. Francis also felt this

because we fail to leave to others the things to which we are oblivious, we fail necessarily ourselves. So too, every man should flee excessive self love and seek always one better than oneself, without ever feeling ashamed when the occasion arises." Plato, *Laws* V, 731-d-732b.

¹⁷⁴ "Quid nos consolatur in hac humana societate erroribus aerumnisque plenissima nisi fides non ficta et muta dilectio verorum et bonorum amicorum?" *De Civ. Dei* XIX, 8.

¹⁷⁵ *Confessions* VII, 11.

¹⁷⁶ Cfr. *En. in Ps.*, LV, 9; and XLI, 13; and see also *In Jo.*, 90, 2; and *De cat. rud.* II, 4.

¹⁷⁷ For example, "Peace shall be made pure in the sons of God, all loving one another, seeing one another full of God, since God shall be all in all". *En in*

frustration of not being able to communicate himself adequately; he writes to Jane de Chantal, “There is always something to say, for I make mistakes by ignorance and weakness, because I don’t always know how to express my good will.”¹⁷⁸

The Duties of Friendship

Reciprocal love

“*Amicitia non nisi mutuo amore constat.*”¹⁷⁹ Whatever duty may follow from friendship, Augustine holds its motive must be love, for love is the first thing we owe our friends. No service will be an act of friendship if love is not its incentive. He argues that because Christ died for us while we were still his enemies, “The purpose and fullness of the law is charity. We must then love one another.”¹⁸⁰ This love is defined then by Christ’s love, and will be in its image. Augustine explains, “The mission of this love is that we carry one another’s burdens. For nothing proves friendship as well as carrying the burden of a friend.”¹⁸¹ It means we carry one another’s miseries or faults, like a friend’s anger, with gentleness and calm. At such moments “They are not putting up with each other, but they are consoling one another.”¹⁸² And he believes the only way to stimulate such a generous love is to contemplate all that Christ tolerated for us. Francis de Sales seized that essential element of Augustine’s character when he refers to him as having a truly “generous

Ps. LXXXV, 10.

¹⁷⁸“Il y a tous-jours quelque chose a dire, car je fais des fautes par ignorance et imbecillite, parce que je ne scai pas tous-jours bien rencontrer le bon biais.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXVIII.

¹⁷⁹*De fide rerum ... IV.*

¹⁸⁰ “Quia cum adhuc inimici essemus, Christus pro nobis mortuus est (Rom. V, 6-9). Hoc autem ideo, quia finis praecepti et plenitudo legis, charitas est (I Tim, I, 5 et Rom XIII, 10): ut et nos invicem diligamus, et quemadmodum ille pro nobis animam suam prosuit, sic et nos por fratribus animam ponamus (I Joan. III, 16).” *De catech. rud. IV, 7.*

¹⁸¹“*Invicem onera vestra portate, et sic adimplebitis legem Christi.* Hanc enim Christi legem dicere intelligitur, quae ipse Dominus praecepit ut nos invicem diligamus...Hujus autem dilectionis officium est, invicem onera nostra portare. Sed hoc officium, quod sempiternum non est, perducet sane ad beatitudinem aeternam.” *De diversis quaest. 83, 71.*

¹⁸² “Quanquam nec tolerare se invicem dicendi sunt, sed potius se invicem consolari.” *De diversis quaest. 83, 71.*

courage.”¹⁸³ Albeit Francis explicitly brings up this duty to love one another even when the other person is somehow repugnant in the context of religious community living,¹⁸⁴ we can readily see its implications for friendship manifested in his life, especially as regards its stability. They seem to be more concerned with loving than being loved, within certain limits, of course, as we are about to see. Besides bearing one another’s pains, love must communicate itself in the various ways we have seen in the preceding pages, otherwise it is only a kind of sweet sentimentality. For friendship to exist it must be exchanged or reciprocal.

Reciprocal love enjoyed by a mutual intimacy is what gives friendship its *raison d’être*, and therefore, Augustine notes, nothing kills friendship more than the belief that the other does not really love us.¹⁸⁵ Because their love is no longer reciprocal, there can be no communication or sharing, and even though one may not perceive this right away, the friendship has died in some respect. Although we owe love to our friends, this love is a gift that can never be fully repaid.¹⁸⁶ The more love is given the more it increases,¹⁸⁷ because nothing awakens and inspires love more than love itself.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³“Saint Augustin avoit voirement un courage genereux.” *Oeuvres... X*, p.103.

¹⁸⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres... VI*, p.72-74. He sums this up succinctly in a letter to Claude de Quoex: “Il faut s’exercer en cet amour du prochain, le caressant exterieurement; et bien qu’il semble au commencement que c’est a contre-cœur, il ne faut point laisser pour cela.” ltr. CCXVII.

¹⁸⁵“Verumtamen fieri potest ut amicus amicum etiam odisse incipiat, et eo ipso amicus esse desinat, nesciente illo, et adhuc amante.” *De Trinitate IX*, iv, 6. “Quid enim aliud cauemus in offensione amicitiae, nisi ne amicus arbitretur quod eum vel non diligimus, vel minus diligimus quam ipse nos diligit? Quod si crediderit, frigidior erit in eo amore quo invicem homines mutua familiaritate perfruuntur: et si non ita est infirmus, ut haec illum offensio faciat ab omni dilectione frigescere; in ea se tenet, qua non ut fruatur, sed ut consulat diligit.” *De cat. rud.* 7.

¹⁸⁶“Vera amicitia, non pensanda temporalibus commodis sed gratuito amore potanda.” *Epist.* 155, 1.

¹⁸⁷“Semper autem debet caritatem, quae sola etiam reddita semper detinet debitorem. Redditur enim, cum inpenditur; debentur autem, etiamsi reddita fuerit, quia nullum est tempus, quando inpendenda iam non sit . . . ; immo etiam, cum redditur ab homine, crescit in homine et tanto maior addquiritur, quanto plurius redditur. . . Sed inimicis cauta inpenditur, amicis secura rependitur.” *Epist.* 192, 1.

¹⁸⁸“It is most evident that there is no greater way to either awaken or to

Frank and confident

Once a friendship has proven to be true, Augustine was convinced that one must maintain perfect trust in the friend, knowing that the most secret thoughts and aspirations will be held as sacred.¹⁸⁹ In this way, friendship becomes a matter of faith, believing in the love of the friend and his constancy.¹⁹⁰ We give him the benefit of the doubt because of our esteem for his character in things we can see.¹⁹¹ All this involves risks, of course, and yet Augustine asserts firmly that even if we are unfortunate enough to be betrayed in our confidence it is better to have been too quick to take the risk than to have been too cautious.¹⁹² Love is always courageous.¹⁹³ In the context of friendships in God, confidence rests more in 'God in him' than in human virtue. Placing his confidence in God both gave him courage to risk his confidence as well as consoled

increase love than to know oneself to be loved, when one does not yet love, or to be loved in return when one loves already, or to hope to be loved, or to receive proofs of love. And if this is true in impure loves, how much more so in friendship!" *De catech. rud.* IV, 7.

¹⁸⁹"Illum enim receptum in amicitiam possumus dicere, cui omnia consilia nostra refundere audeamus." *De diversis quaest.* 83, .71, 6.

¹⁹⁰"Sed quisquis es, qui non vis credere nisi quod vides. . . dic mihi, obsecro te; amici tui erga te voluntatem quibus oculis vides? Nulla enim voluntas corporeis oculis videri potest. An vero etiam hoc vides animo tuo, quod in animo agitur alieno? Quod si non vides, quomodo amicali benevolentiae vicem rependis, si quod non potes videre, non credis? . . . restat itaque, ut nec visa, nec audita, nec apud te intus conspecta credatur, ne tua vita deserta sine ulla amicitia relinquatur, vel impensa tibi dilectio vicissim abs te non rependatur. . . Amici faciem cernis corpore tuo, fidem tuam cernis animo tuo; amici vero non abs te amatur fides, si non in te mutuo illa sit fides, qua credas quod in illo non vides." *De fide rerum* .. I, 2. See also *De Utilitate Credendi* X, 24 and *Confessions* VI, 7.

¹⁹¹"Sed dicis ideo te credere amico, cuius videre cor non potes, quia in tuis temptationibus eum probasti et, cuiusmodi animum erga te haberet in tuis periculis, ubi te non deseruit, cognovisti." *De fide rerum* . III.

¹⁹²"Porro si non ingeniosa, sed odiosa est ista cautela, ubi nos amari non credimus, quod amorem amantium non videmus, vicemque non rependimus, quibus eam nos debere mutuam non putamus." *De fide rerum*. II,4. And "Quia etiamsi nulla eius bona praecederent, et haec, quae postea apparuerunt mala, prius eminent, toleranda tamen erant, donec omnia cum illo ageres, quibus talia sanari solent." *De div. quaestionibus* 83, 71, 6.

¹⁹³ Augustine comments on the golden rule: "Hold yourself firm therefore to charity, and you will enjoy the greatest security of all." (Tenete ergo dilectionem et securi estote....Dilige, non potest fieri nisi bene facias.) *In Epist. Jo.* X, 7.

him when his generosity was betrayed. "For him, confidence was an act of homage to the presence of God who dwells in a friend."¹⁹⁴ He believed in them before they were proven in a limited way.

Frankness and confidence together assure that the love for a friend and its exchange is what it should be, free and true. The Bishop of Hippo remarks, "If I say what the case in hand forces me to say, where is respect for charity? But if I do not say it, where is the freedom of friendship?"¹⁹⁵ Truth is the highest good for Augustine, and inseparable from God Himself. It is therefore a necessary condition for friendship, and will surpass whatever duty we may feel not to hurt the other, or desire to avoid conflict that relations may remain comfortable and pleasant.¹⁹⁶ If the friendship is true, frankness will only strengthen it.¹⁹⁷ For "No one can be truly a friend to man without first being a friend to truth".¹⁹⁸ This view also held by Cicero and the Classics is given all the more weight by Christianity, For *the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives*. Augustine comments that the greatest lover of all teaches, in order to heal us with "suave and salubrious truth", never ceasing to work to free us from our pernicious errors, and that we should therefore learn from his example.¹⁹⁹ Francis

¹⁹⁴McNamara *Friendship...* p.207.

¹⁹⁵"Si dicam, quae me ipsa causa cogit dicere, ubi erit sollicitudo caritatis? Si autem non dicam, ubi erit libertas amicitiae?" *Epist.* 63, 1.

¹⁹⁶ We find however that Augustine was himself sometimes carried beyond this boundary by his love for his friends. He writes to Valerius for example: "By Him who has breathed into you so great a love for me that I dare not offend you, even for the saving of my soul...I beg you by that charity and affection, to take pity on me and grant me as much time as I have asked." *Epist.* 21. This is only a rhetorical form of expression consistent with his African character and literary effervescence.

¹⁹⁷"Nescio quis odit inimicum suum, et fingit illi amicitiam: videt illum facere aliquid mali, laudat: vult eum esse praecipitem, vult caecum ire per abrupta cupiditatum suarum, unde forte non redeat. . . Alter videt amicum suum tale aliquid facere, revocat; si illum non audiat, profert verba castigationis, obiurgat, litigat; aliquando veniunt ad hanc necessitatem ut litiget." *In Jo. Epist.* X, 7. See also letters to Jerome *Epist.* 73, and Vincentius *Epist.* 93.

¹⁹⁸*Epist.* 155, 1 "Nemo enim potest veraciter amicus esse hominis, nisi fuerit ipsius primitus veritatis."

¹⁹⁹ Heb. 12.5-6 Augustine comments in *Epist.* 93, 4-5: "Quis nos potest amplius amare quam Deus? Et tamen nos non solum docere suaviter verum etiam salubriter terre non cessat...Et putas nullam vim adhibendam esse homini, ut ab erroris pernicie liberetur, cum ipsum deum, quo nemo nmos utilius diligit, certissimis exemplis hoc facere videas." See also *In Epist. Jo. X*, 7.

echoes the importance of correction for ourselves and friends. He calls it a kind of circumcision of the heart which is worth practically nothing when we do it ourselves, but which is most effective when another takes the knife to our faults.²⁰⁰

Frankness in this setting is not a reproach, but a gentle correction given tenderly and sincerely by someone who understands and shares a privileged confidence with the person approached. It is the best possible way to receive difficult news, and is made in a context where both desire perfection, and count on the other to help attain it in these and similar ways. For “only by friendship is a man known.”²⁰¹ Otherwise someone’s good intentions for another can quickly become a kind of tyranny and judgmental. In this way we are helped to see ourselves as we truly are, and likewise we are obliged to dispel the illusions another may have of us. “Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee,” he says, quoting *Proverbs*, when praising Alypius in his *Confessions* for accepting Augustine’s dissuasion from his love of the Circensian Games.²⁰² The Bishop of Hippo was more than once distressed by the exaggerated opinion friends sometimes had for him. “I take no pleasure in being thought by my dearest friends to be such as I am not. Obviously they do not love me, but another in my name, if they love not what I am, but what I am not.”²⁰³

Augustine, like every author to treat our subject, says it is worse to have a bitter enemy than a friend who flatters, for to flatter a friend is to betray him.²⁰⁴ Frankness is the opposite of flattery and yet when it is appropriate to praise a friend, Augustine argues that it should be done discreetly and not exorbitantly, less it incite him to vanity.

Put simply, frankness is the workings of truth in friendship, and it is always tempered by love. Augustine considers this a basic principle of friendship, and it motivates many of his letters and actions. This truthful

²⁰⁰“Vous voyez donques combien il est necessaire qu’un autre prenne en main le couteau pour nous circoncire, car il sçait beaucoup mieux que nous mesmes où il le faut appliquer.” *Oeuvres...* X, p.157. See infra “Correction” beginning on p. 455 ff.

²⁰¹ “Nemo nisi per amicitiam cognoscitur”. *De diversis quaest.* 83, q. 71, 5.

²⁰²“Dixeris enim tu iam olim et innexueras litteris tuis: corripe sapientem, et amabit te.” *Confessions* IV, 7.

²⁰³ “Quoniam non mihi placet, cum a carissimis meis talis esse existimor, qualis non sum. Profecto enim non me sed pro me alium sub meo nomine diligunt, si non quod sum, sed quod non sum, diligunt.” *Epist.* 143.

²⁰⁴ *Epist.* 73, 4 to Jerome.

communication also charges us to listen to a friend and comfort him when in need. It is a duty of friends to share one another's sufferings: "Far be it from us to refuse to hear what is bitter and sad from those we love. It is not possible for one member to suffer without the other member suffering with him. The relief from sorrow is not given by sharing the enormous disaster, but by the comfort of affection."²⁰⁵

Hidden qualities come to light if we are humble and as patient with him as Christ has been with us. "And for this reason we are better able to put up with the faults of a friend, because their qualities charm and captivate us."²⁰⁶ Cicero, as we have seen, calls the effort of friendship the painful business of accepting our friend's correction, and resisting the temptation to flatter when it would be the easiest thing to do. In both Augustine and the Doctor of love, we find a gentle and humble patience much more salient. "This is the law of Christ, that we carry one another's burdens. For it is in loving Christ that we tolerate the weakness of our neighbor with ease, even those whom we do not yet love for their qualities."²⁰⁷ We are commanded to love them this way. It affords Christian friendship a patience one would not find in the Classics.²⁰⁸ Because it refrains from prejudging, even when a person may on first impression be repugnant, it admits friendships with those who may not at first seem our equals, and at the same time permits such friendships to progress into something better.²⁰⁹ On the other hand,

²⁰⁵ "Absit itaque, ut recusemus audire, etiam quae patitur unum membrum, si compatiuntur alia membra. Nec ipsa mali relevatio fit per communionem cladis sed per solatium caritatis." *Epist.* 99, 2 .

²⁰⁶ "Et ideo amicorum mala firmiter sustinemus, quia bona eorum nos delectant et tenent." *De diversis quaest.* 83, 71.

²⁰⁷ "Ipsa est ergo lex Christi, ut invicem onera nostra portemus. Christum autem diligendo, facile sustinemus infirmitatem alteris, etiam quem nondum propter bona sua diligimus." *De diversis quaest.* 83, 71.

²⁰⁸ "Admonet itaque Dominus Iesus Christus, qui nos vult effici imitatores suos, ut eius infirma toleremus, ut ad quaedam sana, in quorum delectatione acquiescamus, per caritatis tolerantiam perducamur." *De diversis quaest.* 83, 71, 6.

²⁰⁹ "Nullius itaque repudianda est amicitia esse ingerentis ad amicitiam copulandam; non ut statim recipiatur, sed ut recipiendus optetur, atque ita tractetur, ut recipi possit. Illum enim receptum in amicitiam possumus dicere, cui omnia consilia nostra refundere audeamus. Et si quisquam est qui se non audetingere ad amicitiam faciendam, cum aliquo nostro temporali honore aut dignitate revocetur, descendendum est ad eum, et offerendum illi quadam comitate et submissione amini, quod petere per se ipse non audet. Sane quamvis rarius, tamen aliquoties accidit ut eius quem volumus in amicitiam

because it does not also prejudge too favorably, Christian friendship should not give its affection rashly, which provides at the same time a counterbalance to that “rush of affections” Cicero warns against when he calls for testing.

Summary and conclusion

Augustine and St. Francis de Sales share many ideas about Christian friendship. They agree it is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and a source of consolation and learning about noble things. They believe its source, cause, and benevolence are in divine love. Friendship thus becomes a way to experience God’s love here and now, both in its refuge and in its corrections. Where the Classics would say in true friendship we learn virtue from the virtuous, the Christian says one learns of God’s love. *Res divinae* orders human love by some kind of participation; it comprehends the virtues of Antiquity and more.

Francis de Sales chooses Aristotle’s definition over Cicero’s, when he talks of what is essential to friendship. In so doing he seems to be stressing communication as the primary element of friendship. Augustine preferred Cicero’s *consensio* to Aristotle’s communication.²¹⁰ For both the similitude upon which the Classics founded friendship’s sharing begins in the interior life and one’s personal friendship with God. Other bonds are ephemeral and engaged in more for the hope of what ‘God might be in him’. Any other kind of foundation is not really friendship in either man’s eyes, not even by analogy, as Aristotle contended. The redemption of friendship with God enables a more pure giving, and measures the worth of the other in a more spiritual and personal way. Christian friendships are able to extend to many different kinds of people, because its wisdom comes from a life lived in grace open to all. Unlike Antiquity’s vision, Christian friendship extends into eternity, not because nature is permanent, nor in *memoriam*, but because Christ is eternal.

recipere, prius nobis innotescant mala quam bona, quibus offensi et quodam modo repercussi relinquimus eum, et ad bonorum eius, quae forte occultiora sunt, indagacionem non pervenimus.” *De diversis quaest.* 83, 71, 6.

²¹⁰ One could invent many explanations. Perhaps he was more imbued with Cicero as a Latin rhetorician, perhaps he had some metaphysical explanation in mind seeing in *consensio* a real unity of mind and soul. Or perhaps he comprehended both communication and *consensio* to be equivocal, etc. Without any treatise on the subject we are left only with conjecture.

Christian friendship is limited by the moral life in the sense that love of another can never contradict the love of God. This gives it a security and freedom in the face of the many difficulties sharing intimacy imposes. God's love gives Christian friendship a certain freedom and joy that St. Francis de Sales will develop in a most insightful way at a time of extraordinary religious radicalism. Loving God rightly will at one and the same time comprehend the discipline of virtue and liberate from the strictures of legalism. This will give a certain innocence to the struggles of daily giving and receiving of friendship's reciprocal sharing. It will permit a greater forgiveness and security in intimacy's confidence, because its security depends more upon Christ than the virtue of another. Yes, Christian friends love out of charity, but their love is communicated and exchanged, and although it depends in many ways on friendship with God, it loves the friend as a person in himself.

Friendship for Christians therefore has four duties. It must desire God and perfection for the friend. It must respect him and his vulnerabilities enough to foster confidence, which is necessary for both freedom and intimacy. It must be based upon truth and therefore be frank and never flatter. And finally it must pray for the friend. These duties obtain from the duty of love pushed to love's most demanding context: friendship, where souls are engaged and exposed to love "glued together" by the Holy Spirit, by some mystery of grace and where God meets us and where we meet ourselves in this unfathomable involvement of the soul. Because the Christian idea of "divine things" is different, his idea of love is also different than the Classics, who may have been able to conclude that God is love, but were never able to imagine him as a friend.

All of these differences are the reward of redemption, and the new lessons of humility and love it reveals to a faithful soul. Aristotle said friendship is the consequence of virtue, for Augustine and indeed every true friend of God, friendship is first the gift of Christ's merciful love, which reconciles us with our maker, ourselves and each other. Only once a person has come to peace with the anger of original sin, can he begin to be a true and eternal friend in a way that far exceeds that rare bond between the wise and constant of Antiquity.

Francis de Sales' life and vision of friendship incorporates all these basic elements of Augustinian friendship. His friendships also extended to the families of his friends, something that Augustine's biographers do not speak about. Augustine also seems to be less able or interested in communicating with women. His intimacy of the *Confessions* may have shocked many of his contemporary philosophers, but he spares it when

dealing with the opposite sex. Both men were Nobles and had friendships with both simple and powerful persons. Augustine lived most of his Christian life in monastic community, whereas Francis lived with his servants. This may explain why he was so active a letter writer. Augustine seems to have been more occupied with the doctrinal polemics and fighting heresy with his pen than preaching and winning hearts, as Francis. One imagines him of a more passionate temperament. Francis de Sales was given different graces, especially for spiritual direction and comprehending person's inner selves. Both Bishops, however, were men wholly committed to God, and relied on friendship in an important way to live that life. They both loved most person's who could bring them closer to God, and conceived of their friendships in those terms. Francis de Sales will articulate this more for us in all his many friendships, which is the same spirit of Augustine with only nuances for differences. For although Augustine was his most influential teacher, the Doctor of love will have a unique place for friendship in the interior life.

VI

Aelred of Rievaulx

Pseudo-Augustine's De amicitia liber unus

Francis de Sales never probably knew the name Aelred of Rievaulx, but his *De spirituali amicitia* is nonetheless a source for the Bishop of Geneva's idea of friendship. The Cistercian abbot of Scotland died in 1167, but his little treatise on friendship had a large success in the monasteries of the continent for several hundred years after his death. Throughout the Middle Ages, the monks regularly collected *Florilegia* or anthologies of thoughts for contemplation. These were sometimes collections of a single individual Father of the Church, (the most popular being Gregory the Great) but were usually collections of dense and brief sayings of the councils, Fathers and classic authors.¹ They were used in the cathedral schools and would later become more systematized in the form of *Sentences* found in the Medieval universities.² In this same genre falls what the monks called *compendia*,

¹Cfr. J. Leclercq, *L'Amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu. Initiation aux auteurs monastiques du Moyen Age*. Cerf, Paris 3ed. 1990, pp. 175-178.

²For an example of Medieval schools see: P. Delhaye, *Enseignement et morale au XIIe siècle*, Editions Universitaires Fribourg, Switzerland 1988.

which were limited to a resume of a single treatise. Aelred's *De spirituali amicitia* (or as it is commonly known in the English speaking world: *Spiritual Friendship*) first circulated as one of these compendia, under the title: *Compendium speculum caritatis*.³ Several versions apparently ensued over the centuries. As the Augustinian scholar P. Courcelle established, Aelred's expressions and style are very similar to Augustine's, and shows he even relies on Augustine's experiences.⁴ It begins with the phrase reminiscent of Augustine's *Confessions* "When I was a boy in school".⁵ Passing from place to place over the years it was eventually christened as one of Augustine's works. Already at the beginning of the Thirteenth century Aelred's work was commonly known as *De amicitia liber unus* of St. Augustine. It seems to have had an important influence throughout the Middle Ages, probably above all through the monasteries. It was copied many times and several manuscripts have been found as far away as Spain. It was plagiarized by another monk and contemporary, Peter du Blois, and there is reason to believe Jean de Meun, one of the authors of the medieval novel the *Romance of The Rose*, worked on a translation of Aelred's *De spirituali amicitia*.⁶ All this influence seems to have waned with the distrust of particular friendships. A problem even found at Aelred's own Rievaulx, which was subject to a papal reprimand shortly after Aelred's death.⁷

By the age of humanism Erasmus and the Maurists openly doubted *Spiritual Friendship* was ever written by the Bishop of Hippo.⁸ It was

³Cfr. A. Hoste, "Le traité pseudo-augustinien *De Amicitia*, un résumé d'un ouvrage authentique d'Aelred de Rievaulx. in *Revue des études augustiniennes*, VI, 2 (1960), Paris, pp. 155-160.

⁴P. Courcelle, "Aelred de Rievaulx à l'école des *Confessions*" in *Revue des Etudes augustiniennes*, 1957, p. 163-174. He notes, "M. Gilson a déjà signalé en quelques lignes que les pages autobiographiques de *De Spirituali Amicitia* d'Aelred peignaient une évolution analogique à celle du jeune Augustin; erreurs de jeunesse décrites sous la forme *amare et amari* ; puis lecture d'un traité de Ciceron en rapport avec la conversion." p. 163

⁵"Cum essem adhuc pure in scholis..." Cfr. The version appearing in Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, col. 831-844.

⁶Cfr. Delhaye, Phillip, "Deux adaptations de "De Amicitia" de Cicéron au XIIe siècle", in *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 15, (1948) pp. 304-331.

⁷The cause of this bull and a number of monks leaving the monastery remain uncertain. See B.P. McGuire, *Brother & Lover: Aelred of Rievaulx*, Crossroad NY, 1994.

⁸The Maurists in their *Opera omnia* of Augustine will introduce the treatise as a compilation of Aelred's *De spirituali amicitia*, by 1701. It was

first printed in Paris in 1555 as part of a collection of Augustine's works. This would have probably been the edition Francis de Sales used in his studies in Paris between 1578 and 1588.⁹ He cites the work in the context of friendship in a letter to Mr. de Malarmay de Lauray near the end of his life in 1622, saying:

Here is the question you put to me: Your heart, will it not love mine always and in every season? And here is my response: Oh my very dear brother, it is a maxim of three great lovers, all three saints, all three Doctors of the Church, all three great friends, all three grand masters of moral theology; Saint Ambrose, saint Jerome and saint Augustine (*Lib. de Amicitia*): The friendship that can disintegrate, never really was.¹⁰

Peter Young in England was probably the first to attribute the work to Aelred in the catalogue of manuscripts of Worcester he edited in 1622-1623.¹¹ The Bishop of Geneva attributes it to Augustine, but was presumably aware of its dubious authenticity. The work would have had an influence upon his esteem for the importance of friendship in the moral life, all the more so if he believed it penned by Augustine himself.

As Dom Jean Leclercq notes, letters of friendship were by far the largest portion of the epistolary literature of the monks throughout the Middle Ages. They contributed the most to resurrect the idea of disinterested friendship after the chaos of Rome's fall. He says, "The very important place that friendship occupies in the monks letters reveals the part it takes in the monastic life. It is the reflection of what

printed among the works of Augustine in Paris in: *Opera divi Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis episcopi*, Parisiis, apud Carolam Guillard 1555, where Erasmus introduces the work with his doubts of its authenticity.

⁹The first known printing of the work was edited by J. Amerbach in Basel in 1506, *Divi Augustini Opera*, pars X, who also expressed doubts about its authorship.

¹⁰"Voyci la question que vous me faites: Vostre coeur n'aymera-il pas le mien tous-jours et en toutes saysons? Et voyci ma response: O mon tres cher Frere, c'est une maxime de trois grans amans, tous trois saintz, tous trois Docteurs de l'Eglise, tous trois grans amis, tous trois grans maistres de la theologie morale: saint Ambroyse [*De Officiis min.*, lib. III, 126.], saint Hierosme [*Epist.* III, ad Ruf.], saint Augustine [*Lib. de Amicitia*], *Amicitia quae desinere potuit, nunquam vera fuit.* " *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCLXXXIII.

¹¹*Catalogus librorum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Wigorniensis*, Cambridge, 1944, p. 38 n. 76. See A. Hoste, "Le traité pseudo-augustinien *De Amicitia*, un résumé d'un ouvrage authentique d'Aelred de Rievaulx. in *Revue des études augustiniennes*, VI, 2 (1960), Paris, pp. 155-160.

is deepest in the monastic soul.”¹² Predecessors like, Peter of Celle, Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter the Venerable and Nicholas of Montiéramey, all made friendship an important theme of their writings, but none of the monastic authors of the Twelfth century did so as much nor as personally as Aelred of Rievaulx.¹³ Aelred believed, as Brian Patrick McGuire puts it, “friendship formed not just one aspect of monastic life; it became a major part of it and in an indispensable step on the path to God.”¹⁴ He provides the theoretical legs upon which the ideal of cistercian, and monastic friendship rests. And, although Francis de Sales cites Bernard of Clairvaux more frequently, we will find Bernard’s ideas best developed in his friend, the abbot of Rievaulx, who Bernard himself strongly encouraged to take up his pen and elaborate their common idea of Christian friendship. Let us pause then to see what elements Aelred of Rievaulx and the High Medieval monastic tradition might have contributed to Francis de Sales appreciation of friendship as part of Christian life.

Aelred’s sources

“Here we are you and I, and I hope a third, Christ, is in our midst...come now, beloved, open your heart, and pour into these friendly ears whatsoever you will, and let us accept gracefully the boon of this place, time and leisure.”¹⁵

Intimately in the privacy and loving trust of friendship’s embrace, Aelred begins his classic treatise on spiritual friendship.¹⁶ All of it is a dialogue between friends resting in the peaceful refuge of God’s love. “Come now beloved open your heart”. This gentle loving tone is perhaps more the message of this Scottish monk than the questions he is about to consider. This work meant to teach us how to have excellence in human love now that we are Christians, begins in the intimacy that is only found in such love. How to be the kind of person able to open your heart and be worthy of the care of another opening his heart to you in return. This was the Abbot of Rievaulx’s purpose, as

¹²J. Leclercq, *L’Amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu...*p.175

¹³Cfr. McGuire, B.P. *Friendship and Community. The Monastic Experience 350-1250*. Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo 1988, pp. 302-338.

¹⁴McGuire, B.P. *Friendship ...* p.296.

¹⁵ *Spiritual Friendship*, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, Michigan 1977 p.51.

¹⁶ Ivo the second character of the dialogue was probably Ivo of Wardon, a longtime friend of Aelred. Cfr. Basil Pennington’s introduction in *Spiritual Friendship...* p.10.

he sat down to write this now classic Christian opus from his cell in the infirmary, confined there by an illness he suffered from for at least ten years.¹⁷ The year was sometime between 1159 and 1167.¹⁸

It is not a careful systematic work like those to come out of the University of Paris a century later. It is more like the *Moralia* of Gregory, or *De Officiis Ministrorum* of Ambrose; a practical guide as explained in dialogue between people imbued with scripture and faith. But it wasn't these Christian classics the Scott had opened in his cell those days in the infirmary. *De spirituali amicitia* cites and follows the thought of the roman philosopher Cicero, more than any of its other sources.¹⁹ He asks the same questions: What is the nature and cause of friendship? Is friendship limited by morality? Is there progress in friendship? Can it exist between bad men? Aelred begins his work with Cicero's definition of friendship, albeit provisionally. He praises him in the prologue for the "depth of his ideas" and the "charm of his eloquence". Cicero's *De Amicitia*, Aelred confesses, came into his hands before he began monastic life, and had a great impact on him. "And though I saw myself unfitted for that type of friendship, still I was gratified that I discovered a formula for friendship, whereby I might check the vacillations of my loves, and affections".²⁰ Now near the end of his life many years later, Aelred takes to writing he tells us, after his many years of considering how Cicero's ideas, "could perhaps have some support from Scripture. But as we shall see, he does much more than merely replace Cicero's examples from classical mythology with biblical figures. He makes his own contribution in a field where no treatise of equal magnitude was left us by the Fathers of the Church. He clearly differs from Cicero regarding the limits of friendship. He takes up questions Cicero did not ask, like whether friendship can preserve unbroken to the end? Can a pagan know true friendship? Should friendship and wisdom be joined? And finally, he has more to say about the development of friendship, talking of tolerating some characters that friendship with such persons might eventually bloom into something better. These and other differences with the roman orator

¹⁷Aelred was probably suffering from kidney stones, complications which most likely eventually killed him.

¹⁸Cfr. *Spiritual Friendship...* p. 80 note 44

¹⁹Dubois maintains, in his introduction to the French edition, that one third of Aelred's work is taken from Cicero's *De Amicitia*, a popular source of study in the monasteries of the 11th and 12th centuries. Dubois, J., ed. *L'Amitie Spirituelle*, Latin text, French translation, notes. Bruges: C. Beyaert, 1948.

²⁰Cfr. *Spiritual Friendship...* Prologue p.46.

will be made clear when we come to them in the context of Aelred's work.

Besides *De Amicitia*, Aelred's sources for his work are principally Augustine's *Confessions* and Scripture. He also cites Ambrose, Terence's comedies, Jerome, Bernard of Clairvaux, and John Cassian.²¹ Others like Cato, Seneca, and Xenophon, are at least alluded to, though Aelred may only have known them through Augustine and the Fathers.

Basil Pennington has noted 125 different citations or allusions to Scripture in the 87 page work. Thus although one might accuse Aelred of not citing Scripture adequately, his treatise is well grounded in the sacred texts both of the Old and New Testaments. Fr. Pennington explains that like every monk living the liturgical life of the monastery in the Middle Ages, Aelred's diet of Scripture read nine times per day has imbued his thought and is ever present in his writings.²²

Augustine had perhaps the most important influence of all on Aelred, just as he did for Francis de Sales and most of Medieval theology. The Abbott's biographer, Walter Daniel, tells us that he kept *The Gospel of St. John*, *The Psalter*, and *The Confessions* in his private oratory.²³ Like Augustine, Aelred begins with his youth and his overwhelming desire "To love and to be loved". His human psychology is Augustinian through and through. But Aelred gives friendship more value than Augustine allowed in *The Confessions* after the death of the friend of his youth. It is improbable that Aelred knew Augustine's letters, but he does allude to *The City of God*, and *Soliloquies*, so it is possible he was familiar with at least some of them. However, it is his *Confessions*, Aelred avows, that inspired and influenced him throughout his life. The very style of the whole, the intimate dialogue between friends is not far removed from the very personal story of Augustine's own inner life.

Aelred's treatise is a dialogue divided into three major parts: the nature and cause of friendship, its fruition and excellence and, finally, how and among who it can be preserved unbroken even to the end.

²¹Cassian admitted only a limited importance to friendship. Aelred's optimism despite his source shows all the more his conviction of its importance. Cfr. A. Fiske, "Aelred of Rievaulx" in *Cîteaux* 13 (1962) pp. 5-17, 97-132.

²²The allegorical interpretation used with such virtuosity in his work, *On Jesus at Twelve Years Old*, is avoided in this work.

²³W. Daniel, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, ed. F.M. Powicke, London, Nelson, 1950.

Aelred's *On Spiritual Friendship*

Book one: The nature and cause of true friendship

Aelred begins apologetically with Cicero's definition "Friendship is mutual harmony in affairs human and divine coupled with benevolence and charity".²⁴ His contemporaries would ask, how can a pagan know of true friendship? Since, "he was completely unaware of its beginning and end, who is Christ". Thus the abbot of Rievaulx's work is laid out for him: How does this work of Cicero so beneficial to him and others attune with Christian doctrine? This problem is brought to focus in the word charity of the roman's definition, after all, as Ivo the dialogue's interlocutor queries, what can a pagan know of charity? Aelred proposes that Cicero may mean by charity an affection of the heart, and by benevolence, a carrying it out in deed. And thus he proposes Cicero's definition to mean, "Friendship is therefore that virtue by which spirits are bound by ties of love and sweetness, and from many are made one."²⁵ It is a virtue because it is eternal, he explains, it binds as love binds and it unifies in both joys and sorrows.

He goes on to say that such true friendship is a rare and beautiful thing, but nevertheless it is indeed possible for us to attain it, with God's grace. Indeed Christians are to love to the point of giving their life for one another. And so by faith we are offered a multitude of friends all living as the early apostolic communities of one heart and soul and sharing all their goods in common.²⁶ But charity for Christians, Aelred is quick to point out, goes beyond such friendship. For by it we also love our enemies. Whereas in friendship we entrust the secrets of our hearts to each other. This is why, he says, echoing Gregory the Great, "a friend is called a guardian of love, or as some would have it a guardian of the soul itself."²⁷ This especially includes bearing a friend's faults. "Let him as far as he can cure and endure such defects as he may observe in it."²⁸ Francis de Sales never uses the term 'custodian of the

²⁴*De Amicitia*. §20.

²⁵*Spiritual Friendship*...1: 21.

²⁶Acts 4:32.

²⁷*Spiritual Friendship*...1: 20. The phrase first appeared in Gregory the Great's *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia II, Homil. 27.4* (PL 176: 1207). "Amicus enim quasi animi custos vocatur." Isidore of Seville's medieval encyclopedia helped give the expression popularity. *Etymologiarum sive Originium Liber X*, reads, "Amicus per derivationem, quasi animi custos".

²⁸*Spiritual Friendship*...1: 20.

soul,' but develops much more, as we will discover, the notion that friends tolerate one another's faults, and that loving one another in Christ has a healing effect.²⁹

Aelred gives an interesting insight to the cause of false friendships. Partners in vice may appear to have friendship because they take pleasure in each other's association, but this is a false friendship because, "He does not love his fellow man who loves iniquity". Aelred aptly supports this reason with a quote from Psalm 10 v.6, "*For he that loves iniquity does not love, but hates his own soul. Truly he who does not love his own soul will not be able to love the soul of another.*"³⁰ Francis de Sales will warn Philothea of false friendships as a great danger for those living in the world, because love renders us like the ones we love. He will maintain too along a parallel line that only one at ease with himself is able to be a friend.

What kind of false friendships may there be then? Aelred posits two: cardinal and worldly. Not straying from classical tradition reminiscent of Aristotle's three kinds of friendship: the useful, the pleasant and the noble. Aelred allows the name "friendship" for these only because of some "similarity of feelings" found there. Cardinal friendship is motivated chiefly by pleasure. It is mindless and lustful, where "spirit is captivated by spirit". "The one will do or suffer any crime or sacrilege whatsoever for the sake of the other".³¹ Such an association of persons vacillates without any discrimination, and it has no limits, nothing is sacred to it, because all bows to its own satisfaction. It either becomes consumed by its own self or is eventually dissolved with the same levity with which it began. Worldly friendship seeks profit. It is manipulative and full of deceit. "Take away his profit and immediately he will cease to be a friend."³²

Spiritual or true friendship in contrast to these is not desired for gain or pleasure or any other extrinsic consideration, but "from the dignity of its own nature and the feelings of the human heart, so that its fruition and reward is nothing other than itself".³³ Aelred is now ready to posit his own version of Cicero's definition and comes to the culmination of this first part, supporting himself with his favorite gospel, to the cause and nature of friendship. "For true friendship advances by perfecting

²⁹See below the discussion on friendship's medicinal qualities pp.432ff. Cfr. for example *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDLXVI.

³⁰*Spiritual Friendship...*1:35.

³¹*Spiritual Friendship...*1:40.

³²*Spiritual Friendship...*1:40.

³³*Spiritual Friendship...*1:46.

itself, and the fruit is derived from feeling the sweetness of that perfection. And so spiritual friendship among the just is born of a similarity in life, morals, and pursuits, that is, it is a mutual conformity in matters human and divine united with benevolence and charity”³⁴ Thus like Francis de Sales, the abbot of Rievaulx sees true friendship as the consequence of the moral life, where each of the cardinal virtues plays its part in the progress, perfection and maintenance of each other’s relationship with God. “Surely, such friendship prudence directs, justice rules, fortitude guards and temperance moderates.”³⁵ It defines friendship’s benevolence for both writers.

Aelred agrees with Cicero that nature is the cause of that desire in the human soul for friendship. “Then experience increased that desire, and finally the sanction of the law confirmed it.”³⁶ Nature is however, the reflection of its Creator. He is “the cause of all being, the Life of all sensation, The Wisdom of all intelligence. And thus Sovereign Nature has established all natures”.³⁷ Aelred does not stop here merely identifying nature with God as exemplary cause. He continues to the very foundation of society and relationships. Unity and harmony in nature, where none exists alone, but “everything is created and thrives in a certain society with its own kind”, is by divine will.³⁸ The Creator desires that “peace encompass all His creatures and that society unite them”.³⁹ And this peaceful harmony of kinds extends to the angels and higher creatures where all are happier because they are able to mutually enjoy each other’s company and charity. Even the animals at play enjoy each other’s society. All of God’s creation is thus drawn to a unity and harmony among diversity modeled after the unity of the Trinity. The unity of friendship, the perfection of love between persons, the peaceful embrace of intimate sharing of self, is the very essential character of God’s perfection. Love by its very nature does not exist alone, but reaches out to another, is received graciously and generously returned. Within this mysterious dynamic, love is increased and goodness enriched. All these ideas will be taken up by Francis de Sales, who considers God the cause of true friendship and as participating

³⁴*Spiritual Friendship*...1:46.

³⁵*Spiritual Friendship*...1:49 In Aelred’s work *On Jesus at Twelve Years Old*, he says the four cardinal virtues are nothing more than charity exercised in different circumstances.

³⁶*Spiritual Friendship*...1:51.

³⁷*Spiritual Friendship*...1:52.

³⁸*Spiritual Friendship*...1:54.

³⁹*Spiritual Friendship*...1:53.

somehow in the intimate life of the Trinity. This plunge into the very cause of unity at every level of creation, depending on the Trinity is one of Aelred's Christian and distinct contributions. Aristotle attributed the affection of friendship (*filiva*) as the cause of the order and movements of the entire universe. Aelred says yes, but this natural inclination to society is nothing other than God's inner intimate life both mirrored in his creation and shared with it.

Aelred explains that woman was created as a "clever inspiration to charity".⁴⁰ Taken from man's side to teach us that she is man's equal, a characteristic of true friendship harking back to Cicero and the classics. Turning from the example of God and His creation he focuses on every human being's desire and compulsion to be social. It is as fundamental as our sexuality to our being. In marriage, the love between these two equals of dignity and kind, friendship unites humanity within the society or community in the complementarity of equal opposites. Man and woman become one, desiring union both physically and spiritually, and from this noble love, noble life is born into the world and nurtured. Francis de Sales will go farther in his explanation of marriage as a true friendship, but he will stick more closely to Paul's model of man as head of the family with all its incumbent responsibilities to love as Christ loves his Church.

Aelred reflects in a unique way on the condition of sin and the need it has established to distinguish charity from friendship, as well as all the risks intimacy now carries among the worldly. All of this harmony and charity originally in nature was wounded and ruptured, by original sin. For "no union of will and ideas can exist between the good and wicked".⁴¹ This created a state of affairs where charity and friendship are now distinguishable. For it is possible to love and not be loved in return in our present life. Thus the wicked grope for friendship, blinded by their iniquity, and mistake a semblance for the true thing. He concludes this part affirming that friendship like wisdom and justice is a natural good and good for its own sake. "Everyone that possesses them makes good use of them, and no one entirely abuses them".⁴² Thus Aelred ranks friendship among the highest order of goods. For in friendship "eternity blossoms, truth shines forth and charity grows sweet."⁴³ Francis de Sales stops short of contending that friendship is a

⁴⁰*Spiritual Friendship*...1:57.

⁴¹*Spiritual Friendship*...1:59.

⁴²*Spiritual Friendship*...1:61.

⁴³*Spiritual Friendship*...1:68.

good in itself, as we will discover, but sees it relegated as secondary to our true vocation which is to love God.

From this middle term, the divine attributes, Aelred poises for his final leap and perhaps his most daring statement of the entire work. He puts it on the lips of Ivo. “What does all this add up to? Shall I say of friendship what John, the friend of Jesus says of charity: *God is friendship?*”⁴⁴ Aelred is cautious to agree and instead turns to another verse of St. John. “What is true of charity I do not hesitate to grant to friendship, since *he that abides in friendship abides in God and God in him.*”⁴⁵ In these two bold affirmations our Scottish monk reveals his most revered regard for friendship and the originality of his thought. If God is friendship, then every true friendship is good and will therefore lead to Him by making us like Him. The love between persons of the Trinity is tasted in the love between human persons in friendship. There is no conflict between love of God and friends if that love is true. This affirmation is his conclusion of the first part.

So what is the cause and nature of Spiritual Friendship? God is the ultimate cause by example and by Providence in and through his creation. The associations of men apart from Him may seem like friendships, but they are only a whitewash and ephemeral. God is friendship, and Aelred has shown indeed the religious objection, what can a pagan know about friendship? is not contradicted, but rather underscored with even greater authority. If one knows not God one knows not true friendship. This makes it a good in itself and impossible to be abused. All who engage in true friendship will therefore know God, and the more one advances in knowing God the more he advances in friendship. The Doctor of love will say something similar when he writes in the *Traité*, “All therefore that man is towards man is the true image of celestial love of man towards God.”⁴⁶

Book two: the fruition and excellence of true friendship

In this second part Aelred turns to the practical advantages of friendship, its stages of development, its limits and the kind of character best suited to share it.

Nothing is more useful, more sacred, more difficult, more sweet, or more profitable. He says, “It manifests all the virtues it assails vices by

⁴⁴*Spiritual Friendship*...1:69.

⁴⁵*Spiritual Friendship*...1:70.

⁴⁶“Toute ainsy que l’homme envers l’homme est la vraye image de l’amour celeste de l’homme envers Dieu.” *Oeuvres*... V, p.205.

its won virtue, it tempers adversity and moderates prosperity". Without it there is no happiness. "He is entirely alone who is without a friend." Indeed it is difficult to conceive of anything more advantageous for human beings. Echo's of Aristotle and Cicero resound as he continues: "What happiness, what security, what joy to have someone to whom you dare to speak on terms of equality, as to another self, one to whom you can entrust all the secrets of your heart."⁴⁷

Like Francis de Sales, he cites *Sirach*, "*A friend is the medicine of life*", and explains, referring to St. Paul, that shoulder to shoulder they bear one another's burdens.⁴⁸ It heightens joy and mitigates sorrow. But this is not the greatest advantage, he reserves this for last. Friendship is a stage in our perfection, "So that man from being a friend of his fellow man becomes a friend of God". Friendship's greatest advantage to us is that it provides us a means to the love and knowledge of God. It is the highest stage of those leading us to perfection. All the joys pleasures and benefits of true friendship, Aelred continues, "Take their beginning from Christ, advance through Christ and are perfected in Christ". In friendship we imitate Him giving ourselves to our friends, and thus we are made with Christ one heart and one soul.

At this point the abbot turns to the sensual image of the mystical kiss. In this one kiss, in the mingling of breaths two meet and are united. *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth*. That holy love is metaphorically expressed in a holy kiss, a union of loves and selves. This is the kiss of Christ, a mark of interior peace and symbol of the affection of the heart, pure and honorable. It is the kiss Christ offers through another by the grace of friendship. And this spiritual kiss satisfies the soul as nothing of this world can.

Both these ideas will resurface in the Doctor of love's works. Like Aelred, he affirms that friendship is in, by and for God. He also uses the *Song of Songs* image of a kiss as the image of union, only there he adds the benefit of speaking privately as a means to the union, that Aelred is perhaps expressing with his image of the mingling of breaths.

After lamenting how rare such friendships indeed are, just as Cicero had done some 1200 years before him, the Scottish abbot turns to another point first raised by his favorite roman writer: the limits of friendship. Now Cicero says early in his work that there is a law in friendship. "Here is then the law that we must lay down in friendship: ask nothing shameful and do not respond to such a demand."⁴⁹ To this

⁴⁷*Spiritual Friendship*...2:11.

⁴⁸Gal. 6:2 "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

⁴⁹*De Amicitia*, XIII, 40.

point the Scott and the roman are in accord. They diverge however when Cicero later suggests that there may be exceptions, where one may choose friendship over morality. Whenever a friend calls upon a friend to do an injustice risking “freedom or reputation,” Cicero contends, “He must separate himself from the straight way on the condition he does not suffer dishonor. For one may in a certain measure be indulgent for friendship without neglecting the care of reputation.”⁵⁰ Now it is important to recall that earlier Cicero is careful to say: “It is not an excuse for a bad act to have acted badly to help a friend; since the bond of friendship is born from the esteem that virtue inspires, friendship could never subsist if one renounces virtue.”⁵¹ It seems that one may bend the law a bit but never transgress it. And when circumstances compel us friendship may supersede morality.

Aelred contends, however, though our goal in friendship is to love enough to lay down our life as Christ himself did for us, one ought never act against faith or uprightness, “For it is not an excuse for sin that you sin for the sake of a friend.”⁵² Which he proceeds to support with examples from scripture and the Church of his times. Indeed he thinks it insane and foolish to betray one’s self for a friend. Where is the limit between laying down one’s life and uprightness? Aelred neatly explains, “Nothing ought to be denied a friend which is less than the very precious life of the body...Since the life of the soul is of far greater excellence than that of the body, any action we believe should be altogether denied a friend which brings about the death of the soul, that is sin.”⁵³ Francis de Sales will, of course agree. The love one owes a friend should tolerate all kinds of faults and imperfections, but if the friend leads us into sin, he advises to end the friendship.

Book three: The conditions and characteristics requisite for unbroken friendship

The nature and cause of true friendship is God’s love shared between his creatures, and the fruition and excellence is in the mingling of souls in the mystical kiss of Christ. Now it remains to ask how we might maintain such a good in this valley of tears.

⁵⁰*De Amicitia*, 5 VIII, 61.

⁵¹*De Amicitia*, XI, 37.

⁵²*Spiritual Friendship*...2:68.

⁵³*Spiritual Friendship*...2:69.

Tolerance and the vices that ruin friendship

As Christians we are commanded to love all. This love of charity is the source of friendship and therefore Aelred is obliged to make a distinction from the outset of this part concerning how to make and keep friends. "There can be love without friendship, but friendship without love is impossible".⁵⁴ Love from which friendship originates, he goes on is either in nature or reason, but the love that is most beneficial to friendship is a spiritual love founded on a love of God. Friendship is a great risk, he warns, because of the harm a false friend can do. We should therefore "test with the utmost care and extreme caution,"⁵⁵ the love of those we desire to "entrust yourself as another self".⁵⁶ We may tolerate some faults in a friend, but there are some which will always be obstacles. These are irascibility, suspicion, a loose tongue, and fickleness.⁵⁷ On the other hand, Aelred argues, there are four qualities which must be tested in a friend: loyalty, discretion, the right intention and patience, if you are to trust yourself securely to him.

Once one binds himself in friendship, Aelred believed one must tenaciously hold to it. If your friend threatens your life, insults you, withdraws, disagrees with you in any opinion, or prefers his own council to yours "as though not loving you,"⁵⁸ the Scottish abbot says still you should not dissolve the friendship because of these differences. On the other hand reconciliation is impossible, he contends, referring to *Sirach* 22:27, in the case of slander, reproach, pride, disclosing of secrets (nothing is more base) or a treacherous wound, "For all these cause a friend to flee away."⁵⁹ All of these destroy the trust on which friendship is founded, and Aelred suggests in such cases to withdraw confidence slowly and gently break away from such a friendship. They strike at the mutual respect friendship, like all love, presupposes. Indeed, Aelred believes reconciliation is not possible in such cases, implying that the damage done trust is not reversible. But it seems pride is the most destructive of all to reconciliation, as he remarks, because "it excludes the remedy humility and admission of guilt by which alone the broken friendship could have been healed. It renders a

⁵⁴*Spiritual Friendship*...3:1.

⁵⁵*Spiritual Friendship*...3:8.

⁵⁶*Spiritual Friendship*...3:8.

⁵⁷*Spiritual Friendship*...3:14.

⁵⁸*Spiritual Friendship*...3:22.

⁵⁹*Spiritual Friendship*...3:23

man bold in wrong doing.”⁶⁰ But there is an objection. Ambrose and all the classics contend friendship like virtue is eternal, and thus as St. Jerome says, “if a friendship dies it was never a true friendship”. How can Aelred contend that friendship is ended by these vicious acts? The abbot of Rievaulx turns to the distinction he made at the outset and now addresses this problem on his mind from the beginning. He responds, “His conduct may compel the withdrawal of friendship but never of love”.⁶¹ Therefore though one may be unable to enjoy the familiarity, affection, security and happiness of friendship, love should never be withdrawn. Since by faith we love those who persecute us, out of the our friendship with Christ love continues even though it be not returned. This too is a point of divergence from Cicero’s *De Amicitia* .

Francis de Sales does not go into the same detail probing the vices that ruin friendship. He skips over the cited passage of *Sirach*, though he does cite *Sirach* when saying a friend is a great treasure and a medicine for the soul. He too believed it important to test a friend, but never developed that counsel as much as Aelred.⁶² In this context he cites Aelred’s work, showing he too believed true friendship should never die.

In all of these virtues and vices this is the key: that the person be reliable for the secure refuge of your heart, your secrets, your weaknesses. In a word that their love be true and faithful. They all pertain to trust, that reliance on something unknown, because friendship at one and the same time, a great benefit and a great risk. One entrusts his very self, his weaknesses which too makes it able to be the medicine of life when we can experience the Christ-like gentle humble forgiving love of a friend revealing to him our weaknesses and fears and dreams. Because of the fall friendship now has become dangerous. Although persons may inspire our love and slowly win our trust, they are always free. Anyone is capable of anything at anytime. And sadly, without virtue’s discipline we do the things we hate to ourselves and to those we love. For this reason Aelred has had to devote this first half of the last part to all the pitfalls one must labor to avoid in character and action if friendship is to endure. “For a friend ought first be selected, next tested then finally admitted, and from then on treated as a friend deserves.”⁶³

⁶⁰*Spiritual Friendship*...3:24.

⁶¹*Spiritual Friendship*...3:44.

⁶²Cfr. for example *Oeuvres*... ltr.CDLXXXI and ltr. CL.

⁶³*Spiritual Friendship*...3:56.

The virtues sustaining true friendship

The character fertile for a rich harvest of friends and which we must seek-out to have lasting friendship is first loyalty. Aelred cites the example of Jonathan three times here. For he was loyal to David while all around him called him a traitor. He chose friendship over both wealth and power. *You shall be king and I will be second.* “There is nothing more praiseworthy in friendship than loyalty.”⁶⁴ It is constant in adversity and prosperity, in sadness and joy, in poverty and wealth. A loyal friend believes no ill spoken of his friend and “sees nothing in his friend but his heart”.⁶⁵ Loyalty is tested first in small things confiding small external secrets of little importance that will do little damage if exposed. It is especially revealed by whether the person believes ill of you when he hears rumors. If not Aelred says, he is truly a loyal friend.⁶⁶

The next quality is that his love be disinterested and founded on love of goodness for its own sake. For if you love God you will truly love yourself. In poverty honest intentions are best nurtured, for there can be no hope of gain. The test for honesty is to see if your friend is more desirous of your goods than yourself. If he is rather opportunistic, seeking some gain through your efforts whether it be honor, glory, freedom, or riches, he cannot be a true friend.

Discretion is that quality called wisdom earlier and is simply a perfection in judgment about what is important and proper. Together with patience it helps daily relations be free and relaxed. Patience is important because sometimes a friend must suffer correction and sometimes bear adversity for the sake of his friend. He suggests to test a man’s patience by rebuking him once a little more than necessary and observe his reaction.

The cultivation of friendship by degrees

Aelred relinquishes that we may tolerate the faults of a person, if we have reason to hope that friendship may progress and improve as the persons learn from each other the love of those good things that make friendship on the order of eternal things---and eventually lead to God. This process is the cultivation of friendship whereby we seek to win the trust of another and enjoy them for who they are.

⁶⁴*Spiritual Friendship*...3:62.

⁶⁵*Spiritual Friendship*...3:62.

⁶⁶*Spiritual Friendship*...3:65.

What do we want our friendship to be like? Before we begin to build something we must first envision it. Aelred says, "Friendship ought to be, so to say, relaxed... free and mild, and rather incline to congeniality and easiness of approach without levity and dissipation."⁶⁷ There should be a certain equality, "for friendship knows no pride", where one of higher station honors his friend of lower station.⁶⁸ In the spirit of the monastic tradition, Aelred sees this equality extended to a sharing of self and possessions with our friends, so that one owns nothing. Holy poverty, if freely chosen is an aid to fostering true friendships.

To have such a friendship four ingredients must be cultivated: Loyalty, generosity, respect and frank counsel. Loyalty puts friendship above all other interests, especially above gain or pleasure. The example of Jonathan, *You shall be king and I will be after you* (I Sam 23:17) comes to mind. Generosity is nothing other than love in action. All that is given, must never belittle nor expect any kind of reward in return. We must indeed, not only give our things but our very selves. "Let this law therefore be held in this respect among friends, namely, that they expend themselves and their goods for one another in such a way that he who gives preserves a cheerful aspect, and that he who receives does not lose confidence."⁶⁹ Respect too is love in action, only it is a kind of justice done the goodness of a friend. "One ought so to respect the eye of a friend as to dare to do nothing which is dishonorable." He calls this reverence friendship's best companion.

Once our loyalty, generosity and respect are proven, and trust has begun to sprout, we are able to exercise the third ingredient necessary for friendship: frank counsel. Aelred, like all before him to consider the question, affirms "in friendship there is no greater pest than flattery and subservience, which are the marks of fickle and deceitful men".⁷⁰ But this frankness must be done in charity. A friend must sympathize and think of his friend's fault as his own, so that he correct him humbly. One must stop and listen to the disposition of the friend's heart and judge the appropriate time and place to approach him. For correction done in the refuge of friendship can be a great benefit to a soul, and

⁶⁷*Spiritual Friendship*...3:89.

⁶⁸*Spiritual Friendship*...3:89. Equality was one of the essential elements of friendship for both Cicero and Aristotle. For the latter, the inequality between gods and men was so great that friendship between them was impossible. See below, "Union by love" p..397 ff.

⁶⁹*Spiritual Friendship*...3:99.

⁷⁰*Spiritual Friendship*...3:108.

where else can such hard words be made easy to hear than from a good and true friend? This will also be the attitude of Francis de Sales.

The abbot of Rievaulx ends his work by recounting the qualities of two friends now deceased. He talks of his admiration for them and how he “demanded nothing and bestowed nothing but affection and the loving judgment of affection itself as charity dictated.”⁷¹ Gradually winning each other’s confidence and respect by the example of their virtue and humility, they grew freer in speech and spirit with one another, and love increased between them as they found each other frank, patient, humble, loyal and grateful, “Until we attained that stage at which we had but one mind and one soul, at which our love was devoid of fear and ignorant of offense, shunning suspicion and abhorring flattery.”⁷² This way, he contends love and charity are strengthened.

True friendship, Aelred reasons, is a foretaste of blessedness. It is a great consolation and refreshment.⁷³ For it is modeled upon God’s love. “Thus ascending from that holy love with which he embraces a friend to that with which he embraces Christ,” Aelred concludes, “he will joyfully partake in abundance of the spiritual fruit of friendship, awaiting the fullness of all things in the life to come.”⁷⁴ In that life all will enjoy the friendship enjoyed by just a few here below. For friendship, Aelred says in his final paragraph, is the possession of Supreme Goodness, which in the next life “Will be out poured upon all and by all out poured upon God, and God shall be all in all”.⁷⁵

Conclusion

Fr. Raciti numbers four original contributions attributable to Aelred’s work.⁷⁶ First, his assigning the Trinity as both cause and exemplar of the unity of friendship. “God is friendship”, is without precedent or parallel in the Twelfth century. The consequent extension of the society of the Trinity to the society of nature and between man and woman is a beautiful complement, unifying his theory with all creation. Second Aelred is original regarding the limits of friendship. Without the love of Christ friendship is not true, and thus, any

⁷¹*Spiritual Friendship*...3:119.

⁷²*Spiritual Friendship*...3:124.

⁷³*Spiritual Friendship*...3:126.

⁷⁴*Spiritual Friendship*...3:134.

⁷⁵*Spiritual Friendship*...3:134.

⁷⁶Raciti, Gaetano, “L’apport original d’Aelred de Rievaulx à la réflexion occidentale sur l’amitié” in *Collectanea Cisterciensia*, 29 (1967) pp. 77-99.

immorality which estranges us from Christ's love and the love of ourselves renders us incapable of friendship. Sin does violence to self more than to another or to God. And therefore there can be no case where, as Cicero suggests, we may bend the rules a little to accommodate a friend. Thirdly, Aelred's work is a treatise of Christian humanism par excellence. All human friendship leads to God' and is a means to perfection and knowledge of Him. Louis Bouyer summarizes: "Aelred furnishes the perfect example of Cistercian humanism: a spiritual thought profoundly biblical, but having a meditation stimulated and made fertile by the classics."⁷⁷ He harmonizes the Scriptures and the philosophy of the ancients into a new synthesis. Finally, Aelred adds a dynamic and existential perspective to friendship. He admits degrees and progress in friendship. Inferior friendships are to be tolerated because they may lead to more holy ones. The faults of a friend are to be born within limits, because of the great benefit possible to all who share friendship's refuge.

Francis de Sales repeats many of Aelred's ideas about friendship. He believes too it is beneficial to growing in God's grace, he admires the friendship between Jesus and the Father as the paragon, and like Aelred he says God is friendship.⁷⁸ Francis' work is much less dependent upon Cicero, and he focuses, as we shall see on communication's many aspects which probably has more grounding in Aristotle than Cicero. Aelred's work is, of course, written for monks in community life. The Doctor of love is more skeptical of friendships among religious, fearing that particularity may disintegrate into partiality at the expense of the community. His accentuation is on friendship in the world as a help in adversity. And where Aelred sees the danger of friendship in the pain betrayal can cause, Francis sees it not only there, but also in the subtle way the qualities of another can be transmitted between persons in friendship.

Both agree that progress is possible in friendship, and that we must test a friend's loyalty. Francis seems, moreover to differ from Aelred's conviction that friendship should always endure. He believes all human relationships have a tendency to decline more easily than to build, even spiritual friendships, he comments can be ruined by a fly in the ointment, since people can change. Therefore he perhaps stresses more the effort necessary in friendship, although both clearly feel that Christian friendship should be very tolerant, save actions that destroy

⁷⁷Bouyer, L., *La Spiritualité de Citeaux* p.191.

⁷⁸See the discussion in "Participating in the intimacy of the Trinity" below beginning on page 449.

the friendship itself, or the communication and trust in one another's love centered in God. That love centered on God determines friendship's benevolence for both to be just as Christ's love for his friends, to give and give, unto the point of giving one's life for a friend. Francis' idea of the martyrdom of love in the little things of daily life is his own particular development of this concept.

Finally there is a notable difference in the way these two men lived friendship. Aelred did not have the same number nor variety of friendships, especially with women, as the Doctor of love. Aelred is therefore not so much concerned about spiritual direction and the various conditions of living in the world.

In summary then, it is difficult to tell just what influence the work of Aelred of Rievaulx had on the Doctor of love, since he only cites him once. Nonetheless we find enough parallels to at least show there was already a well established current in theology putting great importance on friendship in the journey to holiness. In this respect Francis de Sales is building upon a tradition he recognized as important for his adaptations of rigorous spirituality for persons living in the many situations of the world. The fact he does not cite Aelred more does not mean he did not have his work at hand. He did not write any of his works we now possess with the leisure of a scholar, but with the little bits of time here and there he was able to get free. Therefore we might suggest that in view of the parallels already sketched, Aelred may have had a much greater influence than what has been commonly recognized on the Doctor of love's way of Christian life.

VII

Thomas Aquinas

St. Thomas Aquinas is such an important figure in the theology of the western Church that we must pause and consider his influence on our author. In my opinion, Aquinas is not a source for Francis de Sales' idea of friendship, and clearly not as regards our thesis, that friendship has an important role in justification. The Doctor of love cites the Common Doctor four times in the context of friendship, while he cites St. Bernard twelve times. Now it would be a mistake to draw a direct parallel between the frequency of citations and the importance of a source. We know, for example, that the only books he brought with him to the Chablais mission were Bellarmin's *Controversies*, the Bible, and "little else".¹ Let us briefly compare the two doctor's ideas on friendship; it will help contextualize Salesian spirituality in the currents of western theology.

Our problem is complex because there are several important parallels between the two men's teaching. The Bishop of Geneva is noticeably influenced by the Angelic Doctor's optimism. For instance,

¹C.A. de Sales de, *Histoire du bienheureux François de Sales, Evêque et Prince de Genève*. F. La Bottière et J. Jullard, Lyon 1634, I, p.93.

he recommends St. Thomas' teaching on virtue to André Frémyot.² He readily accepted the idea that fallen nature is wounded, yet essentially good and capable of natural happiness, yet, unlike St. Thomas, Francis believes the human being is inscribed with a *natural* desire for God.³ Grace's penetration into the human heart, leaving it free and even more human, are capital points of Salesian theology which are founded on St. Thomas' doctrine of grace never destroying nature, but building upon it.⁴ Francis also credits St. Thomas when he develops his key view that love requires some kind of aptitude for its ability to render admirers like the thing they admire.⁵ These ideas are related to our subject as a background, allowing for friendship's faith in another human being. But it remains to be seen if Francis de Sales depended on St. Thomas for the key role he attributed to friendship in making human beings whole, divinized, in a word, sanctified.⁶

²“S'ensuyvent les raysons qu'une belle nature et un bon esprit peut fort bien employer; et pour celles ci, elles se treuvent chez les Docteurs, et particulierement chez saint Thomas plus aysement qu'ailleurs. Estans bien deduites, elles font une fort bonne matiere. Si vous voules parler de quelque vertu, allés a la Table de saint Thomas, voyés ou il en parle, regardés ce qu'il dit; vous treuveres plusieurs raysons qui vous serviront de matiere : mays au bout de la, il ne faut pas employer cette matiere sinon qu'on puisse fort clairement se faire entendre, au moins aux mediocres auditeurs.” *Oeuvres... Itr.* CCXXIX.

³ The closest the Angelic doctor comes to this is admitting a natural desire to know God as the first cause of the effects we see in nature and wonder about. (*Summa Theologiae* I q.12 a.1). Thomas teaches that God is so far beyond us that we need the theological virtues to have any natural inclination to Him. See for example, III Sent. d. 23; q. 1, a. 4, gla. 3, Sol. 3, or *Summa Contra Gentiles* IIIb, c.153.

⁴Fr. Lajeunie believes especially this latter to be the key to understanding the *Traité* saving his interpretation of Christianity from the error of Jansenism. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint Francois de Sales, L'Homme, La Pensee, L'Action*. Guy Victor, Paris 1966, t. I, p.305.

⁵ See note 61 of the chapter: “Spiritual Friendship”. This is not of course unique to St. Thomas, and Francis credits him in this context to show his ideas are faithful to all schools of Catholic thought.

⁶Several studies have been done comparing St. Thomas and Francis de Sales. They note the differences in Salesian teaching on the primacy of the will, the indwelling and theory of knowledge, as well as a unity of grace and charity, and a less demanding idea of merit. All these studies find the fundamental similarities in mysticism, with practically identical ideas on the dogma of divine attributes, sense knowledge, virtues and the practical importance of love for perfection. See, B. Lavaud, *Amour et perfection chrétienne selon saint Thomas d'Aquin et saint François de Sales*, Lyon, l'Abeille, 1941; W.

Grace and Charity

St. Thomas makes a clear distinction between charity, infused virtues, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and *gratia gratis data*, the grace that enables and inspires us to will and do particular acts, leading to a state of character or habitual virtue, which is in turn sustained by another kind of grace: *gratia gratum faciens*.⁷ Francis de Sales sees grace and charity, and even the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, practically as one reality. Charity, he explains in the *Traité*, “is like a sun in the entire soul, embellishing it with its rays, in all its spiritual faculties in order to perfect them, in all the powers to moderate, but in the will as its seat in order to reside there and make it cherish and love its God above all else”.⁸ Chapter XI of the same *Traité* is entitled: “How charity comprehends all the virtues”. There he explains that God bestows a special favor on the “peak of the superior part of the soul” that we call grace, “but which nonetheless consists in charity, that purifies the soul of all sins, then decorates and embellishes it with a very delectable beauty.”⁹ Charity “reduces to its obedience” any natural virtues it may

Marceau, *L'optimisme de Saint François de Sales*, P. Lethielleux, Paris 1973, pp.89-100; and R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Perfection chrétienne et contemplation selon saint Thomas et saint Jean de la Croix*, ed. de la Vie spirituelle, St. Maximin, var, 1923, t. I pp.730-740.

⁷See *De Veritate* q.27 for example. From the complexity of human action St. Thomas uses a constellation of terms when treating grace and its nuances: actual grace, antecedent grace, subsequent grace, cooperating grace, healing grace, gratuitous grace, ingratulatory grace, sanctifying grace and operating grace, yet they all fall into this basic dichotomy. They are either momentary and for the good of the individual or the community, or lasting and transforming one's nature accidentally, or habitually.

⁸“La Charité donc est un amour d'amitié, une amitié de dilection, une dilection de preference, mais de preference incomparable, souveraine, surnaturelle, laquelle est come un soleil en toute l'ame pour l'embellir de ses rayons, en toutes les facultés spirituelle pour les perfectionner, en toutes les puissances pour la moderer, mais en la volonté comme en son siege pour y resider et lui faire cherir et aymer son Dieu sur toutes choses.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.165.

⁹“Dieu voulant enrichir les Chrestiens d'une speciale faveur, il fait sourdre sur la cime de la partie superieure de leur esprit une fontaine surnaturelle que nous appelons grace, laquelle comprend voirement la foy et l'esperance, mais qui consiste toutefois en la charité, qui purifie l'ame de tous pechés, puis l'orne et l'embellit d'une beauté tres delectable, et en fin espanche ses eaux sur toutes les facultés et operations d'icelle, pour donner a l'entendement une prudence celeste, a la volonté une sainte justice, a l'appetit de convoitise une temperance sacree et a l'appetit irascible une force devote, affin que toute le coeur humain

find in the person, and accomplishes itself any actions beyond the character flaws of the person it blesses. Friendship with God transforms, because love transforms; by its very nature it is a sharing and participating in the qualities of the other. His focus is love itself and the effects of union with God. He calls the virtues “members of charity” and aspects of love, using Ambrose as support for the former and Augustine for the latter.

St. Thomas would agree, but he was more attentive to the complexity of the human person and human acts. For the Angelic doctor, grace and charity differ.¹⁰ Charity is the effect of grace upon the soul.¹¹ It is a friendship with God that habitually changes a person. He calls charity “a sort of preeminent virtue” and in some respects admits it is the same as grace “or inseparably connected with it”.¹² Thus, it should be noted that Thomas hesitates to insist upon this difference between grace and charity, and could no doubt appreciate Francis de Sales’ view. For St. Thomas, grace is the gratuitous help God gives the one He loves, through the merit of Christ, to become pleasing to Him—divinized; first, by inspiring and aiding us to do good works, and then by habitually sustaining us in justice, by participating in the intimacy of the Trinity, since God dwells in those obedient to Him and changes their very being.¹³ Charity is not a distinct habit from grace for Francis

tende a l'honesteté et félicité surnaturelle, qui consiste en l'union avec Dieu.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.262.

¹⁰ “Others, on the contrary, say that charity and grace differ essentially, and that no virtue is essentially grace. This latter opinion seems the more reasonable.” *De Veritate* q.27 a.2.

¹¹ “It is evident, then, that grace which directs us to that end which is to see God, causes in us the love of God.” *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, c. 151.

¹² This difference between charity and grace is very tenuous for Thomas. He says for example, “For, whether grace and virtue differ essentially or only conceptually, grace refers to the essence of the soul and virtue to a power. And, although the essence is the root of all the powers, all the powers do not proceed from the essence in the same way. For some powers are naturally prior to others and move them. Consequently, it is necessary for habits in the lower powers to be formed through the habits which are in the higher powers. Thus, the formation of the lower virtues should come from some higher virtue and not immediately from grace. Hence, it is commonly admitted that charity, as a sort of preeminent virtue, is the form of the other virtues, not only in so far as it is the same as grace or is inseparably connected with it, but also from the very fact that it is charity. And in this way, also, it is said to be the form of faith. *Summa Theologiae* II q.14, a.5.

¹³ See for example the *Summa Contra Gentiles* IV, c.21 & III c.154, and his *Commentary on St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians*, c.2, lect. 6.

de Sales, but one sole reality that elevates and perfects the soul. Likewise the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are all reduced to charity.¹⁴ In his first redaction of the *Traité*, Francis used the Angelic Doctor's infused moral virtues, but in the definitive version he changes his opinion and denies their existence, opting instead for the immediate power of grace-charity to use natural virtues for all its supernatural operations.

As for the question of merit and the growth of charity, Francis is not as strict as the Common Doctor. For St. Thomas, an act must spring directly from charity to be meritorious, and only fervent acts using all its virtue dispose the soul to a growth in charity.¹⁵ For Francis, any and every noble work done by a soul loving God is indeed agreeable to Him and meritorious.¹⁶ "It is a property of friendship," he contends, "to render the friend and all in him good and noble; friendship spreads its grace and favor over all the actions of he who one loves."¹⁷ This will later become known as the "habitual intention", and may approach the fundamental option concept of contemporary moral theologians. "Every virtuous work of a heart that is a friend to God is dedicated to God: for how can it be that the heart that has given itself has not likewise given everything that depends on himself? Does not the one who gives the tree without reserve also give the leaves, flowers and fruits?"¹⁸ Even its weakness and imperfections are the limited creature's loving gift to his Creator. Even his lack of love, his revolt and his sinfulness is, pitifully, part of his loving gift. Not to say that one is pleased or even complacent about these failings, but that one offers even these to his loving friend. Protestant pessimism made Salesian spirituality regard human sinfulness with greater compassion, and brought him to emphasize more its place in Providence's plan for perfection.¹⁹

¹⁴Cfr. Book XI, chapter XV of the *Traité*, which is entitled: "How charity comprehends in itself the gifts of the Holy Spirit."

¹⁵ Cfr. *De Veritate* III, q.26.

¹⁶The Council of Trent did not maintain the distinction between fervent and less fervent works. Cfr. Session VI, Can. 24.

¹⁷"C'est une des propriétés de l'amitié qu'elle rend agreable l'ami et tout ce qui est en luy de bon et d'honneste; l'amitié respand sa grace et faveur sur toutes les actions de celuy que l'on ayme, pour peu qu'elles en soyent susceptibles." *Oeuvres...* V, p.240.

¹⁸"Toutes les *Oeuvres* vertueuses d'un coeur ami de Dieu sont dediees a Dieu: car, le coeur qui s'est donné soy mesme, comme n a-t-il pas donné tout ce qui depend de luy mesme? qui donne l'arbre sans reserve, ne donne-t-il pas aussi les feuilles, les fleurs et les fruitz?" *Oeuvres...* V, p.240.

¹⁹ Thomas agrees, "God Himself, though able to cure it [sensuality], has

Love's permanence despite the arguments and momentary detours of every human relationship was more fundamental than any separate and individual act. This philosophy will have pertinent and striking consequences in his own friendships, making them steadfast and faithful without exception, traversing all the problems and misunderstandings every human relationship knows. Sin, Francis will caution, deadens the spiritual life, and it would be a grave mistake to interpret this as a denial of sin. At the most intimate reaches of his personality, at "the fine point of the soul", Francis believes a friend of God remains faithful while failing because of his inability to perfectly control himself and remain true to his resolutions. Sin, on the other hand, is essentially an interior deliberate turning away from God and His friendship. This interior and exterior dimension of the spiritual life is a point that St. Thomas never developed. All of these concepts are reconcilable with Thomas, and the two are practically in complete agreement, no matter what theoretical difference we might be able to cite. Both may disagree on the constitution of our supernatural being and divinization, as well as the necessary conditions for merit and charity's relationship to grace, but both agree one must give his whole heart and soul to God to progress in the spiritual life. Whether or not they agree that charity and grace are one or the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are something added to the moral virtues, they both recognize the absolute practical need for grace in order to be inspired to desire and do anything pleasing to God.

The soul

Francis disagrees with Thomas when he attributes twelve movements to the sensual appetite instead of eleven. He names five passions to attain the good, and seven to avoid evil. Francis assigns two kinds of joy: joy in possessing the good and joy in having repelled an evil.²⁰ Thomas and Augustine both saw joy only as possession of the

nevertheless appointed according to the order of His wisdom that it should not be cured in this life. ... although this corruption is against the state of nature as originally instituted, it is nevertheless a consequence of the principles of nature left to itself; and it is also useful for man in order to avoid the vice of self-exaltation that the infirmity of sensuality remain: *And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of my flesh* (2 Cor. 12:7). Consequently this infirmity remains in man after baptism, just as a wise physician discharges a patient without having cured his illness if it could not be cured without the danger of a more serious illness." *De Veritate* III, q.25.

²⁰Cfr. *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.30-31.

good, and never gave it this second sense. Like Thomas and the Ancients, he sees the human person as a microcosm. He is “the epitome of the world, or rather he is a little world in himself in whom is found all that can be found in the universe.”²¹ Moreover it seems he is addressing St. Thomas, when he remarks “Those who have believed that likeness is the only affinity of love have not solved the problem.”²²

Friendship and salvation

One finds many of the ideas on friendship discussed by Aristotle, Aelred, and Francis de Sales treated by Thomas Aquinas. The Common Doctor also adopts the three fold distinction of friendship based on the nature of goods communicated, and considers *communicatio* the participation or exchange binding friends together. All the elements of Aristotle’s definition figure there; it must be mutual, it must be communicated and it must be founded on a certain justice, yet is beyond justice.²³

The idea that friendship might be a cause of charity is however another question, and a thorough study much beyond the scope of this work would be needed to show how the idea is implicitly in St. Thomas’ thought. In effect, he says very clearly that charity can only be increased by God.²⁴ Now when Francis says to Jane de Chantal, as we will discover, that since befriending her he notices an increase in his

²¹*Entretiens*, in *Oeuvres...IV*, p.165.

²²Cfr. *Oeuvres... IV*, pp.70-72. This is the opinion of J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei. A study of the religion of St. Augustine*. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1938 p.361; Irene Beck, *Liebe und Werk*, Eichstät-Wein, Franz-Sales Verlag, 1965, p.48 and H. Pauels, *Die Mystic des hl. Franz von Sales in ihrer Grundhaltung und Zielsetzung*, Eichstät-Wein, Franz-Sales Verlag, 1963, p.34. J. Langelaan addresses this and some other variations with St. Thomas in *The Philosophy and Theology of Love According to St. Francis de Sales*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, N.Y., 1994. Langelaan errs when he says there are two kinds of friendship for Francis, those based on natural duty, and those freely chosen (pp.50-51). He goes on to multiply errors when he contends that only perfect friendships are friendships for the Bishop of Geneva after discounting a text from the *Introduction* that explicitly states the contrary, when he tells Philothea not to give up or neglect friendship with parents, kin, benefactors and neighbors (p.52). Both are truly friendship, they only are different in degree and not in kind in the way Langelaan is trying to force onto these texts. The only way Francis distinguishes friendships is by what they communicate. See *infra*, the discussion under “Communication: the intimacy of friendship” p.414.

²³ See *In Ethic Nicom.* bk. 8 lec.1.

²⁴*Summa Theologiae* II II q. 24, a.2.

love of God and others, is he saying she is a cause of a greater charity in him?²⁵ As St. Thomas and St. Francis de Sales both knew, there are several senses one thing can be called a cause of the other. One shouldn't conclude that their views are opposed, rather what is interesting, and what would merit another doctorate, is the development *au cours de* the seventeenth century of a union between active and contemplative lives. Thomas says at one point that friendship, like political influence and riches may be instruments to happiness in the active life, but are obstacles to the happiness of contemplation, because of the ways they cause anxiety.²⁶ Or on another occasion he notes that while saints prefer the quiet of contemplation, they patiently endure the toil of action for the sake of their neighbor's salvation.²⁷ Yet he is quick to agree that of all external goods "a friend takes the first place, since (citing Aristotle) 'no man can live without friends'".²⁸ The friar from Aquino and Medieval theology saw a clear distinction between the life of the monk or hermit and the life of the person in the world, whether religious or layman. The whole controversy that launched his university career centered on the legitimacy of religious orders undertaking an activity until then reserved for secular priests.

A more serious study would probably discover in Aquinas that this idea of friendship as an instrument of grace, or aide to salvation, is encompassed by his understanding of charity. This is because it is proper to charity to love one's neighbor because of God.²⁹ Thomas explains, "God and our neighbor are the ones we have friendship with. But in our love for them is contained the love of charity itself; in effect, we love God and our neighbor in as much as we love that we and our neighbor love God."³⁰ For, since perfect or virtuous friendship is founded on the communication of beatitude, friends are loved, first, because they participate with us in that beatitude and, secondly, because they are one with us.³¹ "All kinds of virtuous friendships," he

²⁵ See *infra*, "Causes advancement in the love of God" beginning on page 181.

²⁶ *Summa Theologiae* II II q. 186. a.3 ad 4.

²⁷ *An Apology for the Religious Orders*, pt. 1, ch. 19, p.331.

²⁸ *Summa Theologiae* II II q. 74, a. 2.

²⁹ "Reprehensibile esset si quis proximum diligeret tanquam principalem finem : non quod pertinet ad caritatem." *Summa Theologiae* II II q. 25 a.1 ad 3.

³⁰ "Deus et proximus sunt illi ad quos amicitiam habemus. Sed in illorum dilectione includitur dilectio caritatis : diligimus enim proximum et Deum in quantum hoc amamus, ut nos et proximus Deum diligamus, quod est caritatem habere." *Summa Theologiae* II II q. 25 a.2 ad 1.

³¹ "Amicitia caritatis super communicatione beatitudinis fundatur. In qua

says, “are founded on, and ordered to, the same good as charity, and consequently, charity commands the acts of every friendship.”³² For Thomas, although friendship and charity are ordered to the same good: union with God, what is formal to charity is love (mutual and communicated) between God and the lover; what is formal to friendship is benevolence for the person’s own sake and the communication of the good mutually loved. When the good is God and divine things, then the friendship and charity have the same object; however, friendship also loves the person who loves God, and this with a greater intensity than the love charity holds for all men because of God.³³

Francis de Sales’ position is different only in its emphasis. Friendship, like every other virtue, he agrees with Augustine and Aquinas, is born and accomplished by the love of God.³⁴ Yet, he focuses more on the distinction between friendship and charity, as the following pages will expose. This is not because he would say they are directed to different ends, but because in charity we must love all equally, whereas in friendship we have a greater love and different obligations, which renders us more susceptible to the influence of a friend. Indeed, he will consider it vital for those making their way

quidem communicatione unum quidem est quod consideratur ut principium influens beatitudinem, scilicet Deus; aliud est beatitudinem directe participans, scilicet homo et angelus... Illud autem quod est beatitudinis participaans potest esse duplici ratione diligibile : vel quia est unum nobiscum; vel quia est nobis consociatum in beatitudinis participatione. et secundum hoc sumuntur duo ex caritate diligibilia : prout scilicet homo diligit et seipsum et proximum.” *Summa Theologiae* II II q.25 a.12; Cfr. II II, q.26 a.13.

³²“Cum autem bonum super quod fundatur quaelibet alia amicitia honesta ordinetur sicut ad finem ad bonum super quod fundatur caritas, consequens est ut caritas imperet actui cujuslibet alterius amicitiae : sicut ars quae est circa finem imperat arti quae est circa ea quae sunt ad finem.” *Summa Theologiae* II II q. 26 a. 7. Cfr. *De Caritate*, a. 7.

³³*Summa Theologiae* II II q.26, a.7.

³⁴“Saint Thomas, en consideration de ce que St. Paul (II Cor. 13:4) assure que la *charité est patiente, benigne*, forte: ‘La charité,’ dit il, (II II q.23 a.4 ad 2) fait et ‘accomplit les *Oeuvres* de toutes les vertus;’ et Saint Augustin dit que l’amour de Dieu comprend toutes les vertus et fait toutes leurs operations en nous... ‘la temperance soit l’amour qui se donne tout entier a Dieu; la force, un amour qui supporte volontier toutes choses pour Dieu; la justice, un amour servant a Dieu seul, et pour cela commandant droittement a tout ce qui est sujet a l’homme; la prudence, un amour qui choisit ce qui luy est profitable pour s’unir avec Dieu, et rejette ce qui est nuisible.’” (*De Morib. Eccl.* ch.15). *Oeuvres...* V, p.265.

among the dangers of the world to seek each other's help. He will go on to make friendship the intersection of the contemplative and active lives and give it capital importance for those striving for Christian perfection in the world. The Angelic Doctor never developed this crucial aspect of the influence of friendship's communication. It can be implicitly culled from his theory of connaturality, a term absent from Francis de Sales' discussion of how qualities are communicated between friends as the natural consequence of love. His concern is more practical, considering the human side of charity's activity. St. Thomas himself is not far from saying that friendship has an important role in the spiritual life when he remarks, for example, that carnal friends often thwart our spiritual progress.³⁵ Moreover, he states that there should be mutual friendship among men whereby they assist one another in either spiritual or earthly duties.³⁶ If a man lives with friends, the Common Doctor says in his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, "his virtuous activity, delightful in itself will be more continuous," and that such a companionship in virtue is advantageous to anyone disposed to virtue.³⁷ Indeed he affirms that friendship is necessary for the young to help restrain them from sin, for the old to aid in their bodily infirmities, and for the strong to perform good actions. Thomas concludes, "when two work together they are more effective."³⁸ In these scattered texts one can perceive some of the elements for making a case arguing that friendship is something important for salvation in Thomas Aquinas, although he never developed it with as much emphasis as Francis de Sales. Moreover, although Francis may have known the above culled texts, he does not refer to them in his writings.

Two different worlds, Two different theological approaches

We can find then numerous parallels in the thought of the two men, and Francis does cite Thomas several times in the context of friendship, but he is much more fond of St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Bernard and others who were more typically favored by the humanists of the Seventeenth Century. He had been schooled, like the nobility of his generation, by the Jesuits of the Renaissance who, although they counted some good Thomists among them, were predominantly

³⁵*Summa Theologiae* II II q. 189 a.10 ad 2.

³⁶*Summa contra gentes* III, ch.134.

³⁷*In Ethic Nicom.* II, bk 9 lec. 10.

³⁸*In Ethic Nicom.* bk. 8 lec. 1.

humanists. Their theology was forged by both the mortal challenge of Protestantism, and the pressing need to show that the honest man depicted in classic literature still needed Christ for true happiness—that God was revealed in the beauty of creation, but most of all in the nobility of a saint.³⁹ Their plan of attack was a return to Scripture and the Fathers, away from the scholastic speculation that St. Thomas epitomized, and which soon after him degenerated into a formalism deprived of the sense of mystery, as Bernard had warned Abelard it would when scholastic theology began on hills around Paris in the Twelfth Century. Francis de Sales was one of the most important representatives of the Renaissance spiritual literature. He uses Aristotle and St. Thomas, but he turns much more often to Scripture, the Fathers and hagiographical sources.⁴⁰ In fact, among St. Thomas' works, he preferred the *Catena aurea*, an assembly of the Church Fathers' commentaries on the Gospels.⁴¹ In his *Traité*, Cicero and Seneca are cited only three times, Plutarch 8 times.⁴² He vigorously rejects the Renaissance's fascination with pagan philosophers as "tickling the ears"⁴³ and seeks to harmonize the spiritually richer sacred texts with the classics.⁴⁴ He does not like to cite the classic authors which undoubtedly were part of his education.

³⁹Cfr. J. Calvet, *La Littérature religieuse de François de Sales à Fénelon*. Paris, Del Duca, 1956, for more on the Renaissance's religious implications and context in France.

⁴⁰In Francis de Sales introduction to the *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, he lauds the scholastic contributions of St. Thomas, Bonaventure, Dennis the Charrusian, Jean de Gerson and Sixtus the Sienois on his subject, showing that even his scholastic knowledge was much broader than St. Thomas. He considers, moreover, simple women like St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Teresa of Avila and St. Matilda, their equals. Cfr *Oeuvres...* IV, p.5.

⁴¹ Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t.1, p.150, for a more complete list including the modern theologians of his time.

⁴²Jean Menenc, his teacher at La Roche in his *Sauvegarde*, cites more than 60 pagan authors and only three Christian sources. Montaigne and many other influent scholars of the 16th century first looked to Seneca and Plutarch as spiritual masters, while remaining Christian. Cfr. Lajeunie, pp.130-137 for more.

⁴³Speaking of rhetorical excesses in this context he writes, "C'est un certain chatouillement d'oreilles, qui provient d'une certaine elegance seculiere, mondaine et prophane ...entierement de l'artifice ... ilz ne preschent pas Jesus Christ crucifié, mais ilz se prechent eux mesmes. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIX.

⁴⁴Jean Maldonat, Victoria, Louis de Granada and Bellarmin were his masters in this method.

Francis de Sales is more fond of images and allegories than philosophical distinctions. One also finds many examples from the lives of saints in his works. They are a different literary form than St. Thomas' *Summa Theologiae* and other treatises. He often calls upon the example of saints because he believes they are very useful when teaching common folk. St. Thomas wrote for the clerics who were the brightest university students their respective countries had to offer. This will have consequences for the literary form and emphasis in each teacher's method. Francis had great respect for the Aquinite, but is it any wonder that we find him relying more on the poetry of the Fathers or images of nature when writing to lay people with little or no education in theology and philosophy? He draws lessons on charity, for example, from pigeons.⁴⁵ He remarks in his preface to the *Traité* that he deliberately does not use the method he learned of *disputatio*, but relies, rather, on what serving souls 24 years has taught him to be "more suitable to the glory of the Gospel and the Church."⁴⁶ His intention is to edify, "simply and naively."⁴⁷ This doesn't mean his ideas are contrary to the Common Doctor, but only that his style and intention are different, not only because his audience differs, but because he lives in another age.

Francis de Sales was not a Thomist.⁴⁸ He was more like Bonaventure and Bernard, a theologian of the heart.⁴⁹ This is explained in a story

⁴⁵"J'admiray cette charité; car les pauvres pigeons avoyent si grand peur de fasher ces petitz oyseaux ausquelz ilz donnoyent l'aumosne, qu'ilz se tenoyent tous ramassés en un bout de la table. J'admiray la discretion de ces mendians, qui ne vindrent a l'aumosne que quand ilz virent que les pigeons estoient sur la fin du repas... En somme, je ne sceu m'empescher de venir aux larmes, de voir la charitable simplicité des colombes, et la confiance des petitz oyseaux en leur charité" *Oeuvres...* XVI, pp.314-315.

⁴⁶"J'ay touché quantité de poins de theologie, mais sans esprit de contention, proposant simplement non tant ce que j'ay jadis appris es disputes, comme ce que l'attention au service des ames et l'employe de vingt quatre annees en la sainte predication m'ont fait penser estre plus convenable a la gloire de l'Evangile et de l'Eglise." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.14.

⁴⁷As he states in his preface to the *Traité* "J'ay seulement pensé a représenter simplement et naïvement... l'histoire de la naissance, du progres, de la decadence, des operations, propriétés, avantages et excellences de l'amour divin." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.8.

⁴⁸Fresh out of university he writes Favre "secundum artem loquar" and cites Augustine, showing Augustine his primary master. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. XI.

⁴⁹His nephew tells us Francis enjoyed very much reading Bonaventure, see C.-A. de Sales, *Histoire du bienheureux François de Sales...*I, p.18. This thesis is commonly held by Salesian scholars, see, W. Marceau, *l'optimisme...*pp.100-

Francis tells of St. Thomas on his death bed in the Cistercian monastery. When the monks asked Thomas to comment the *Song of Songs* the way Bernard does, he responded “My dear fathers, give me the spirit of St. Bernard and I will interpret the *Song of Songs* like St. Bernard.”⁵⁰ The Salesian spirit is more akin to Bernard, Augustine and Jerome than Thomas, and yet all have traits in common. In the ensemble of his 26 volume works Francis cites both Jerome and Bernard twice as many times as Thomas. John Chrysostom, Gregory the Great and Ambrose all appear about as frequently as Aquinas.⁵¹ Albeit he cites him on a couple of occasions in the context of friendship, Thomas is not one of his masters.⁵² In one of the great polemics of his generation, the debate on grace and human cooperation, Francis sided with the Jesuit Lessius’ molinist position and not the Thomists championed by the Dominicans.⁵³ This is not to say one

103 for a résumé. Francis himself praises Bonaventure on several occasions, Cfr. *Oeuvres...* VII, p.72 and p.178. Bonaventure’s idea of pure love and priority of affection in contemplation are two examples. Cfr. St. Bonaventure, I *Sent.*, dist. 6, q.1 ad. 4. His counsel against temptation illustrates this difference, “Il faut se revancher avec des affections et non pas avec des raysons, avec des passions et non pas avec des considerations.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV. For an important example of his reliance on Bonaventure see infra, note 1 of Chapter XI.

⁵⁰Cfr. *Oeuvres...* V, p.225.

⁵¹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXVII, *Table Analytique*, Dressée par le R. P. Alphonse Dennis, Monastère de la Visitation, Annecy, 1964.

⁵²Two of the three citations of Thomas are used to defend particular friendships. He says, “Et saint Thomas, comme tous les bons philosophes, confesse que l’amitié est une vertu (II II Qu. 23, art. III, ad I.) or, il parle de l’amitié particulière, puisque, comme il dit (*In X lib. Eth. Arist.*, l. ix. lect XII, et *Quaest. disput. de Malo*, Qu. VII, art II ad 12) la parfaite amitié ne peut s’étendre à beaucoup de personnes.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.203. Here Francis evokes Thomas in a long line of authorities, and one can’t but wonder if Thomas is used more to assuage opposition to particular friendships than for his insights. The third citation occurs when consoling a friend on a loved one’s death that our desire for eternity would not be without fruit, because a natural desire is not meant to be frustrated. He says, “Certes, toujours fault-il que la faculté qui atteint un object ayt quelque sorte de convenance avec celui ci. (S. Thomas Ia IIae, q. 5 art. 1) Mais quand je sens que mon desir court apres ma cogitation sur cette mesme eternité, mon ayse prend un accroissement non pareil; car je sçais que nous ne desirons jamais d’un vray desir que les choses possibles.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXLVII.

⁵³It was known as the de Auxiliis controversy. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* I, p.xvi, and ltr. MCDLXI. See also, Charles-Auguste de Sales, *Histoire du Bienheureux Francois de Sales Eveque et Prince de Geneve*, 1634, tom. II, pp. 10-11.

cannot easily find points of rapprochement, since there are parallels between all great schools of theology in the Christian tradition, but the abundance of citations alone shows he preferred Augustine's kind of theology to the rigorous systematization of the Friar from Aquino. It suffices to open any page of his most systematic work, *La Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, to see he was more a mystic relying on poetry rather than philosophy to describe divine things. His anthropology is an example of this difference, for he teaches that at the deepest reaches of the human heart, the fine point or peak of the spirit, resides the faith almost untroubled by the noise, temptation and sorrow of the world. It is where Christ resides in the human heart, an undefinable, mysterious sanctuary of the spiritual life.⁵⁴

Therefore, the major difference between the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas and Francis de Sales stems from the demands of their respective contexts. Francis de Sales and theologians of his generation tried to forge a unity between the active and contemplative lives. Their solution lay in the interiorization of the religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. As a primary representative of this school, Francis counsels ejaculatory prayer among the stresses of the world, a regard always toward eternity and a serious attention to friendships, both as a potential for harm and as an indispensable aid to what we might call living as a contemplative in the world, no matter what one's profession or duties. Thomas and the theologians of his generation, on the other hand, were confronted with the challenge of Aristotelian philosophy's apparent repudiation of Christianity, recently discovered in the Arab commentators. Francis de Sales and his generation faced another kind of threat from Antiquity: the exaltation of humanity without need of God in a myriad of literature whose timelessness gave it all the more authority. The Renaissance is therefore more literary and more philological. It was a time when the nobility of Europe was reading the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a guide to living and other classics, especially the newly discovered oratory treatises of Cicero, Seneca and Tacitus.⁵⁵ This situation made it imperative for the Church to take holy

⁵⁴For example, "Mays tout cela ne touche point la pointe de l'esprit qui assuré de plus en plus de l'indissoluble et invariable unité que Dieu a faite de ce que nous sommes, demeure aussi impenetrable a toute sorte d'aprehension." *Oeuvres...* Itr. MXLV. See too, V, p.145; IV, pp.67-70; and IX, p.358.

⁵⁵Cicero's *De Oratore* was discovered in 1421 and had a large influence on the Renaissance, which embraced its ideal of rhetoric as a complete intellectual culture uniting wisdom and the word in an eloquent instrument of justice, interpreter of history, and fusion of political life and the philosopher's

men out of their hermitages in order to prove that their ethos, their discretion and their virtue was superior. This moral challenge was behind the different accents in the messages of Francis de Sales and Thomas Aquinas. Just as Protestantism had raised questions, like predestination and grace, that Thomas never explicitly addressed, so too this challenge of what Francis will call the devout life will have implications only addressed implicitly and indirectly by St. Thomas's virtue of religion.⁵⁶ Friendship, we will discover, was one of the pillars supporting the Salesian method of living this kind of life. If St. Thomas is a source for this originality, it is more in the principles from which the Doctor of love draws a practical method, principles equally basic to Augustine and Christian tradition. They were from different schools of that tradition. At the risk of oversimplifying that difference, for our purposes we might say, Francis de Sales is in the mystic tradition that makes the heart the center of human activity. Thomas Aquinas gave priority to the intellect in his anthropology. We wouldn't find Thomas writing about heart speaking to heart, save metaphorically, but for Francis de Sales he means just that.⁵⁷ Let us then now leave St. Thomas and turn to the life and theory of Francis de Sales to learn how he made this fundamental transition.

contemplation. It united the school of life and philosophy in a synthesis that flows from the very character of the orator. Seneca and Tacitus' oratory works were published in 1587 and 1574 in editions that launched them into European culture. Cfr. M. Fumaroli, *l'Age d'eloquence*, Albin Michel, Paris 1994, pp.47-70.

⁵⁶J.-M. Aubert draws this parallel in the interior homage one renders God offering obedience out of justice. See. *Abrégé de la morale catholique*, Desclée, Paris 1987, pp.229-230.

⁵⁷ As for example he writes to Jane, "Mais pour ces choses la (tentations) on ne peut ni doit entrer en dispute; il faut que cela se demesle avec des considerations tranquilles et en repos, tout a l'ayse et de coeur a coeur." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXXII and CCXXIII. The heart is one of the most fundamental aspects of Salesian spirituality, he says, "Je n'ay pas de souvenance que Nostre Seigneur nous ayt commandé de guerir la teste de la fille de Sion, mais seulement son coeur." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCIV.

Part Two

VIII

Unity in Diversity:¹ The Paradigm of Spiritual Friendship between Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal

If the Duke of Savoy had not betrayed the King of France there would have been no invasion, and no reason for Francis de Sales to make the journey to Dijon where he was to meet Jane de Chantal. If it was not for the resulting long drawn out litigation over ecclesial jurisdiction in what had become France, this thorn in his side, he would have never made the diplomatic mission to Paris a few years earlier, which launched him into prominence in the French speaking Catholic world. By a strange twist of Providence it was the most bothersome and irritating affairs of his episcopacy in these early years that prodded him into other circles that would bear unimagined fruits.² Jane will henceforth occupy the largest place in his correspondence.³ But God usually draws straight with crooked lines as we are about to see.

¹ Francis explains the perfection of creation's unity with God is in its diversity of every created perfection: "Tout leur diversité se réduit en unité, comme qui diroit unidivers, c'est a dire unique et divers, unique avec diversité et divers avec unité." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.93.

² Francis writes his friend at the French court, Antoine des Hayes seeking the King's help in avoiding litigation in court at Dijon, because "Les proces entre gens de la qualité de laquelle luy et moy sommes ne peuvent estre que scandaleux." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCX. The problem of the region of Gex would frustrate Francis for several years.

³Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XII, p.263, n.1.

The Beginning: mutual recognition from their first encounter

When the Baroness de Chantal went to listen to the young and already renowned Bishop of Geneva preach the Lenten mission at Dijon, she took a seat in the front row. Many already believed him a saint. His success in the Chablais was part of that reputation, but what filled the Sainte-Chapelle of Dijon to overflowing was the way he spoke to their hearts. His friend St. Vincent de Paul would later say, “He had in effect burning words, which like an ardent stroke, inflamed all hearts. What’s more, all his actions were like a discourse.”⁴ It was the fifth of March 1604. She was dressed in black, just beginning to emerge from her grief of losing her husband in a hunting accident a few years before.⁵ He had left her with their four children. What was about to happen is one of the marvels in both the history of friendships and spirituality. Francis and Jane would together bring forth into being one of the great spiritual movements in Christian history. Their friendship would bear abundant fruits beyond their lifetimes, enabling them to achieve things together much greater than either could have ever done alone. Jane would found more than eighty-five houses based on a new idea of contemplative religious life with flexible structures, which is an astounding number for the means of communication during the Seventeenth Century.⁶

⁴“Il avait, en effet, de ces paroles brûlantes qui, comme un trait ardent, enflammaient tous les coeurs. De plus, tous ses actes étaient autant de discours.” Vincent de Paul, 1er Procès, art. 24. Others would say “Je n’ai jamais ouï de prédicateur qui m’ait touché si doucement, ni si sensiblement que lui.” Claude Favre de Vaugelas, 1er Procès, art. 35. Cfr. *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie, textes extraits des Procès de béatification* présentés par R. Devos. Gardet Editeur, Annecy (1967) pp.181-188 For theirs and other’s accounts of his “rare gift of preaching.”

⁵Jane’s own mother died in giving birth to her brother André, the future Archbishop of Dijon when she was eighteen months old. Her father, the President of Parliament, raised her, and she lost her first two children in childbirth. She was no stranger to grief, as few were in an age when death came so suddenly and frequently. Cfr. *Mémoires sur la vie et les vertus de Sainte Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot de Chantal*. Par la Mère Françoise-Madeleine de Chaugy, in *Sa vie et ses oeuvres* t. I, p.8.

⁶Between 1615 and 1640 more than 100 religious would leave Annecy to found other monasteries. 90% of the women in the Visitation convents were bourgeois or nobles. Cfr. R. Devos, *Vie religieuse, féminine et société. L’origine sociale des Visitandines d’Annecy aux XVII-XVIIIe siècles*. Annecy Académie Salésienne 1973, 328 pgs. See also Devos’ introduction to volume II of: Burns Sr. M. P. *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance. Edition critique*, 4 vols. parus. Les éditions du Cerf centre d’études Franco-Italien. (1986-

These two beings somehow resonated with one another in a way seldom seen. Their friendship is an example, a paradigm really, of spiritual friendship.⁷ A rare purity, an ardent love of God and earnest mutual respect distinguished it.

The depths of their friendship are all the more enriched by their complementary differences as man and woman. Wendy Wright, who approaches her study of their friendship from the perspective of a feminine spirituality, sums up this complementarity: "This perhaps was one of the great strengths of their long friendship. The steady and reasoned discipline in the life of the spirit that he taught her served as ballast for her impulsiveness and impatience. On the other hand, her extraordinary ardor and her capacity for radical intimacy was to leaven his already deep religious commitment, making him ready to experience the love of God in a newly heightened way. Moreover, they seemed to appreciate in each other these complementary qualities."⁸ It is a beautiful example for us today in a too often found climate of hostility in the Church fanned by competition between the sexes. He provided his rare and innovative vision of the interior life; serenely detached, free and gentle, and yet courageously firm and energetic in its daily expression. Jane provided a tremendous will, she was passionate, but at the same time had both feet on the ground. She was a genius of organization, and it is remarkable to see how obediently she applied herself to serving, in spite of the natural inclinations of such a strong will. It balanced his intellectualism. She drew him into still greater intimacy than we see for example with his old and dear friend president Antoine Favre. He was able to express a more tender affection for her, often pouring out his weakness, trials and inmost storms at her prodding's.⁹ Her fervor but-

continuing); for an explanation of the social structures of the times and its reflection in the convents of the Visitation.

⁷A. Ravier comments, "After having read and reread all that the most objective history tells us, and especially the correspondence that passed between them, we can conclude, if we are loyal, that this friendship is one of the radically spiritual order, and directly so from its origin. It is the work of Him whom Father Fichet, one of the first biographers of Jane de Chantal, names magnificently, 'the God of encounters'." A. Ravier, *Francis de Sales Sage and Saint*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1988 translated by J. Bowler, p.137.

⁸W. Wright, *Bond of Perfection, Jeanne de Chantal and François de Sales*, Paulist Press, New York, 1985 p.66.

⁹As for example when he writes her: "Ne soyés point jalouse, encore une fois; vous n'avez pas seule cette croix. Mays mon Dieu, commenceray-je par la a vous parler de moy, puisque vous le desirés? C'est la verité; hier tout le jour et toute cette nuit, j'en ay porte une pareille, non pas en ma teste, mays en mon

tressed his hope and encouraged him. She was one of the few who could console him in his interior trials, which were sometimes so violent they left him weak. It was a complementarity that uplifted both, as we are about to see, somehow bringing out what existed in their personalities and bettering it.

Neither of them had any suspicion of these plans God had for them on that Friday in 1604. They immediately recognized in each other something that attracted their entire selves. Jane de Chantal's first biographer would say they recognized one another without ever having seen each other.¹⁰ This is different from 'love at first sight,' because it was from the beginning an attraction to what God was in each one of them and what He could be in each one of them. It is what H. Nouwen calls "a Jesus-centered affectionate friendship" and a "healing relationship."¹¹ Francis would write six weeks later, just after setting out for the return trip to Annecy, and after having had a chance to get to know Jane through her family, something that could have been her own words. "God, it seems to me, has given me to you; I am more sure of it every hour. It is all that I can tell you; recommend me to your good Angel."¹² From those first hours at the Sainte-Chapelle of Dijon, both Jane and Francis felt in some mysterious way the presence of God and their interior lives converge.

There does indeed seem to be something miraculous in this beginning, because what both recognized was from a vision in prayer. Jane

coeur; mays maintenant elle m'est otee par la confession que je viens de faire. Il est vray, hier tout le jour j'avois une volonte si impuissante que je crois qu'un ciron l'eut abattue. Or sus, mays encore quand vous auriés toute seule une croix a part, qu'en serait-ce? Elle en vaudrait mieux, et, par la rareté, en devroit estre plus chere" *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCIV.

¹⁰Cfr. de Chaugy, in *Sa vie et ses oeuvres*, t. I, p.51.

¹¹ He comments: "In an era in which so much emphasis is put on the interpersonal and so much attention is given to emotions, passions and feelings as the "stuff" that makes or breaks relationships, the Jesus-centered friendship between Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal is a challenge to us. ... There is no careful distance, no concern about possible misinterpretations ... To the contrary ... A mutual openness, a mutual sharing, a mutual confession of needs, a mutual confession and forgiveness, a mutual knowing and being known---that is the source of a community where God's strength is made manifest among weak people ... [their friendships] point the way to healing, reconciliation and new life." *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal, letters of Spiritual Direction* Paulist Press, New York (1988) preface pp.3-5.

¹² Dieu, ce me semble, m'a donné a vous; je m'en assure toutes les heures plus fort. C'est tout ce que je vous puis dire; recommandés moy a votsre bon Ange." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXV.

and her husband had been deeply in love, and his sudden death in a hunting accident in 1601 was bitter for her. Jane felt more drawn to prayer in her mourning, and had already resolved to never remarry.¹³ She would later recount the sever temptations and “inner storms,” she seems to have suffered for the first time in that initial year of widowhood. It would become one of the traits of her spirituality. She was in turmoil and confused about her inner emotions. She had prayed for spiritual guidance, and while riding one day on her estate had a vision in the distance of a man dressed as a priest would before mounting the pulpit to preach. She was immediately overcome by an understanding that, “This is the man, beloved of God and men, into whose hands you must entrust your conscience.”¹⁴ Thirty years later the imprint of that vision would still be “as recent in her mind as the day she received that heavenly favor.”¹⁵ This man she immediately recognized that day in Dijon to be Francis de Sales, and she fixed her unwavering attention upon him and his message.

Ever since about one year after her husband’s death, Jane had been living with her elderly father-in-law at Monthelon. He had summoned her, and she dutifully left their estate at Bourbilly with the children to live under his “protection.” She had a difficult life at Monthelon, living under the thumb of a housekeeper the old Baron had sired several children with, who seems to have resented Jane’s presence. She would spend seven years there. She turned to charitable activities, and humbly accepted her new life, not even complaining to her father, who would have immediately intervened, but looked for God’s will in it all.

Francis for his part had been a Bishop less than two years and was thirty-seven. Jane was thirty-two. He noticed her and her attention to his words. She too brought to mind a similar experience he had once had, praying at the chapel of the château de Sales, of beginning a congregation of devout women. He believed he saw in the spirit of Jane, the one whom God had chosen for the cornerstone of that congregation. He spoke to his audience with a sincerity that moved them, and with an erudition that brought its weight to inspire them to draw nearer to God in loving action.¹⁶ Later he had the opportunity to ask his host, the

¹³ Jane writes, “I believe that if I had not been restrained by the consciousness of my responsibility toward my four small children, I would have secretly escaped to the Holy Land there to end my days. I felt such irresistible longings to know and follow the will of God, whatever might happen.” de Chaugy, in *Sa vie et ses oeuvres*, t. I, p.36.

¹⁴Cfr. de Chaugy, in *Sa vie et ses oeuvres*, t. I, p.40.

¹⁵ Cfr. de Chaugy, in *Sa vie et ses oeuvres*, t. I, p.40.

¹⁶Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XIII, p.321 for Francis’ theory of preaching. See also the

Archbishop of Bourges André Frémyot, about “That young widow with light brown hair who seats herself across from me during the sermon and who listens so attentively to the words of truth.”¹⁷ Jane was the Bishop’s sister, and he introduced them at dinner. Francis stirred such enthusiasm in Dijon that he was overwhelmed with people wanting to see him, to confess, to converse or even just to be in his presence.¹⁸

The only time Jane could see him was at the dinners the Dijonais magistrates or principals were having for him, like her brother and father. In their first conversation alone, Francis dared to ask her if she intended to remarry, and because she fussed, he told her she should not make too much display in the way she dressed. The next day he noticed she had removed the things he had pointed out. He tested her a bit further by asking if her collar wouldn’t be better without its tassels attached. She immediately took a pair of scissors and cut them off. These actions showed him Jane de Chantal better than many hours of conversation could have ever done. With this act of obedience Jane proved in Francis’ estimation to be not only ardent, but as someone who has been seeking to do God’s will for a long time, an “old master.”¹⁹ He admired most the virtues of gentleness and humble docility, and she manifested them without hesitation. This was a great lover of God before him, and he saw their meeting as part of some grace Our Lord had in store for

English translation and introduction by J. Ryan, *On the Preacher and Preaching. A Letter by Francis de Sales*, Henry Regnery Co., Chicago (1964).

¹⁷de Chaugy, in *Sa vie et ses oeuvres*, t. I, p.51.

¹⁸“Toute la ville était dans l’étonnement: on ne se lassait point d’admirer tant d’humilité et de charité” Charles-Auguste de Sales, *Vie de Saint François de Sales, Evêque et Prince de Genève* Desclée de Brouwer & C^{ie}, Lille (1890), p.93-94.

¹⁹He must have been thinking of something he would write seven years later in a letter to Jane, “Nostre Seigneur va dire a son cher saint Pierre: Quand tu estois jeune, tu mettois ta ceinture et allois ou tu voulois; mais quand tu seras viei, tu estendras ta main, et un autre te ceindra et te menera ou tu ne veux pas [Jn 20.18]. Les jeunes apprentifz en l’amour de Dieu se ceignent eux mesmes: ilz prennent les mortifications que bon leur semble, ilz choisissent leur penitence, resignation et devotion et font leur propre volonté parmi celle de Dieu; mais les vieux maistres au mestier se laissent lier et ceindre par autrui et se sousmettent au joug qu’on leur impose, et vont par les chemins qu’ilz ne voudroyent pas selon leur inclination. Il est vray qu’ilz tendent la main; car, malgré la résistance de leurs inclinations, ilz se laissent gouverner volontairement contre leur volonté, et disent qu’il vaut mieux obéir que faire des offrandes [I Sam 15.22] : et voila comm’ilz glorifient Dieu, curcifiant non seulement leur chair [Ga 5.24], mais leur esprit.” *Oeuvres... DCCXCVIII*.

both of them.²⁰ He recognized and admired her ardor. His heart was drawn to a heart like hers. In the ensuing weeks they had many occasions to meet socially, lending time for these first steps to mature. But there was a gnawing problem in the way.

Shortly after her vision of the man that day on the Bourbilly estate, Jane accepted spiritual direction from a neighborhood priest, even though this man was not “him,” because she badly needed peace. Ironically, he represented all the traits that would discredit spiritual direction in the following decades.²¹ He made her vow to obey him, never to change spiritual directors, to keep secret everything he told her, and to never speak to anyone else of her interior life. Now that she had met Francis, this arrangement greatly perplexed her. Her imposed isolation had only exacerbated her suffering. She knew this was the one God had chosen for her, and yet she wished to remain faithful to her vows. Two things paved the way for her to break those vows and bear her soul to Francis. First, she was away from home and her spiritual director was incommunicado. And second, as one of her contemporaries notes, “Our Lord, who wanted to grant this worthy soul the freedom of children, sent her an attack of temptation so furious, that it was absolutely necessary to find calm in our Blessed Father.”²² Throughout Lent, Jane had heard his thoughts and admired his wisdom, she had observed him in the society they shared and appreciated his way of being. All of which only no doubt, quickened her need and desire to confide in him. Pushed to the limit, she lay bare her turmoil, her aspirations and her grief. Their only privacy was to find a corner in the room after dinner out of hearing range from the other guests. Her ardor and sincerity moved Francis.²³ He responded with a compassion that comforted her, and no doubt

²⁰Jane’s life as a mother and wife are full of examples of her rare spirit of obedience, faith and generosity. Her caring for the sick and clemency with criminals, her feeding the poor at times of famine without knowing if there would be enough for her own, her dressing elegantly for her husband when he was home and simply when he was absent, and her silently suffering the unfair treatment of her father-in-law are some examples of her state of spiritual life. Her brother the Archbishop considered her a spiritual director. Cfr. A. Ravier *Petite vie de Jeanne de Chantal*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1992, pp.9-16

²¹A. Ravier calls this director a dictator. Cfr. *Francis de Sales Sage and Saint ...* p.140. Francis later said these vows were “Worth nothing whatever except for destroying the peace of a conscience.” Such exclusivity was one of the condemnable traits of Jansenism, Cfr. Sainte-Beuve *Port -Royal*, édition du Pléade, t.1, p.948-950.

²²Cfr. de Chaugy, in *Sa vie et ses oeuvres*, t. I, p.51.

²³ Did Francis tell her his feelings for her were exceptional at this first con-

expressed his admiration for her. What they communicated in those first heart to heart moments we can only guess, but it was enough to lay the foundations of a life long confidence in each other's ability to understand the other. He heard she was planning a pilgrimage to St. Claude in the Jura mountains, and proposed they meet there later in the year. He would write her upon his return to Annecy. Their outstanding friendship had begun.

The hidden growth and life of their friendship: "this ocean of charity"²⁴

We have over three hundred letters from Francis to Jane. Unfortunately most of her correspondence was lost forever when she burned her letters to him after his death, leaving us with only about thirty letters from her to him.²⁵ We will have to reconstruct our portrait of their intimacy from his responses to her and the few surviving letters she penned to him, together with her statements about him at his beatification hearings, and the accounts of their biographers. Every friendship is a kind of mystery, its communication is secret. Our task to understand Jane and Francis' friendship can be at best only an approximation. We are like people looking at the life inside someone's home from what we see and hear through the windows from across the street. Jane herself underscores the difficulty in understanding their friendship in 1615 when she writes Jeanne-Charlotte de Brécharde, "You who are infinitely

fession? No record of that conversation remains. Did he remain prudent as Cicero would counsel during those first rushes of affection to see what the morrow would bring? Or did he too open himself to her and express his inner self making this first *entretien* not a confession but a heart to heart talk? My feeling is that one as humble and full of God's love like Francis would have recognized Jane's authenticity, and given himself, at least in a small way to her confidence in a situation like this one.

²⁴In the first letter Francis really opens his heart to Jane in August of 1605 he writes: "Cette affection (pour Jeanne) est blanche plus que la neige, pure plus que le soleil... Oh, cela ne se peut dire, Seigneur Dieu, quelle consolation au Ciel a s'entr'aymer en cette pleyne mer de charité puisque ces ruisseaux en rendent tant!" *Oeuvres... ltr. CCCIV.*

²⁵These are all between 1611 and 1622, and many concern business matters. Francis had been saving them because he intended to tell her soul's story one day for the edification of others. They had notes written in his own hand in the margin. Her motives for burning them are discussed in E. Stopp's biography, *Madame de Chantal. Portrait of a Saint.* Farber and Farber, London (1962) pp.190-194.

more dear to me now than you were before, and you know something of what cannot be known or understood of the union that God made between this holy heart and my own.”²⁶ Let us look then into their communication and try to discern the nature of their friendship throughout the eighteen years of its life in that unfathomable ocean of charity.

From their first letters, we find a tenderness and openness full of respect. These are some of the most interesting, because in them we witness the birth and development of their friendship as the foundations are laid. The characteristics of all of his other friendships can be traced to this one where they are all found in a quintessential way.²⁷ If we seek to know what it would be like to be friends with Francis de Sales, this is the place to start. There have already been numerous studies on their unique kind of personal sharing, it’s not our place to duplicate them.²⁸

In *The Devout Life*, Francis de Sales identifies “The man who guides and leads” in spiritual matters as a friend.²⁹ That little insight is a key to

²⁶ “Vous, qui m’êtes infiniment plus chère maintenant que vous n’étiez auparavant, et vous savez quelque chose de ce qui ne se peut savoir ni comprendre, de l’union que Dieu a faite entre ce saint coeur et le mien chétif.” Burns Sr. M. P. *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance*. ... vol 1, ltr. 80.

²⁷In a recent work devoted to their letters, Wendy Wright and Joseph Power summarize their character, and indeed all letters of spiritual direction for the Doctor of Love. They are marked by five traits: “(1) warm expressions of personal caring and concern focused on the spiritual welfare of the friend, but extending to her total well-being and indeed her entire family; (2) reflections on the friendship relationship itself as a gift of God which grows and develops without ceasing to be gift; (3) discussion of how the friendship can be nourished and sustained through God-given times of meeting and through continuing correspondence; (4) recognition of the increasing mutuality of the relationship; (5) recognition of the cross of suffering in one another’s lives--supporting the other in inevitable trials, without interfering in a purifying process or attenuating the demands of the cross.” *Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal, letters of Spiritual Direction* Paulist Press, New York (1988) p.123.

²⁸One chief among them is W. Wright, *Bond of Perfection, Jeanne de Chantal and François de Sales* Paulist Press, New York, (1985), which was reduced from her doctoral thesis: *Bond of Perfection, Jeanne de Chantal and François de Sales : A Study of the Nature of Spiritual Friendship Between Men and Women in the Christian Tradition*. Univ. of California, Santa Barbara, (1983).

²⁹ “L’Homme qui guide et conduit ...L’ami fidelle, dit l’Ecriture sainte, est une forte protection; celui qui l’a treuvé a treuvé a tresor.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.24. See infra, “Spiritual direction” p. 466ff., for more on Salesian spiritual direction.

understanding both friendship and spiritual direction with him. For Jane de Chantal he was both from the beginning. With others he was first a friend, or perhaps it is better to say “friendly,” so that he could “speak to him about the Lord.”³⁰ Friendship and spiritual direction seem to have been bound within one another. Naturally, as we are about to see, friendship and spiritual direction will coalesce in this famous friendship between two saints.

There are three main stages of Francis and Jane’s friendship: the beginning, a period of hidden growth, and finally a period of fruition and purification. The first is the shortest, but is most interesting because it reveals something about the miraculous nature of two souls binding to one another. We have already seen in the preceding pages the reality the ancients called resemblance or equality almost immediately drawing them together like a magnet. The second is the *démarche* of trust and communication enabling intimacy and a unity to develop over time. Third comes a terrible kind of detachment, renting their affections from all worldly things, and turning it wholly over to God’s love. It is a purification, not from love of one another, but from the attachments of even the microscopic remnants of selfishness, that it may truly be spiritual and that their only bond be God Himself. This last period is fruitful because it turns outward to the founding and establishment of the Visitation, sharing itself with the world, and ‘giving birth,’ so to speak. This living friendship spanned nearly a score of years, lets attempt to scan those many years and mark the turning points in a very dynamic engagement between these two remarkable souls. But before we begin to study the life, growth and reproduction of their friendship, lets consider its defining characteristic, so that we may first uncover the foundation which will be the *ratio* behind the rest.

Benevolence, the basis and first element

Benevolence is one of the defining characteristics of friendship. For the friends of Francis de Sales, that benevolence was never wanting. It was part of his life of faith, and it was able to run freely in his friend-

³⁰Shortly before his death, when boarding a boat to cross the Saône River on his trip from Lyon to Avignon, Francis and his party met with a cantankerous boatman who insisted on seeing their passports. While the other members of the group were grumbling about the man making them wait while the documents were sent for, Francis got acquainted with the irascible owner, saying “I must become friends with this man so that I can speak to him a little about the Lord.” See A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales Sage and Saint...* p.248.

ships. It extended to both the spiritual and corporal well-being of those with whom he shared friendship. His good will took action. Perhaps he was all the more inspired by Jane's vulnerability as a widow to labor for her good, but whatever the reason we find him expressing this benevolence in no uncertain terms in his letters and deeds, first to hearten her confidence, then later simply to love her as he knows Christ would, and finally to draw her nearer to the one who brought them together. In some ways one could argue that the whole life of their friendship can be explained from their mutual benevolence, which in simple terms was wishing the love of God for one another. Let us attempt to separate benevolence from how the friendship may be nourished and how it grows, to first orient ourselves to its goal, and then study the means these two friends took to express it.

This fondness he shows for Jane centers around her desire for holiness, which moves him deeply. Everything must be built upon this desire,³¹ he tells her in his first letter, it is like a great tree God has planted in her soul to bear abundant fruit in all seasons. It somehow resonates with his own interior life and draws him to her. "I shall very carefully keep the promise I made of writing you as often as I can. The greater physical distance between us, the closer I feel is our interior bond. I shall never stop praying God to perfect His work in you, that is to further your excellent desire and plan to attain the fullness of Christian life."³² That desire for holiness is both the inspiration of Francis' affection and the motive for his benevolence. He loves it in her and he desires, by friendship, to help it increase in himself as well as in Jane. More than sharing such an ardent faith, there was something metaphysical in their mutual understanding. From the beginning it was a spiritual friendship with a basis in nature. They were two beings who resonated. Their ways of harmonizing, and that 'rapacious' force of nature draw-

³¹A. Ravier comments. "Voici déjà bien dessinée la ligne selon laquelle François aidera Jeanne-Françoise: tout doit se construire sur ce désir que, depuis longtemps, mais surtout depuis la mort de son mari, Dieu a mis au coeur de la baronne: le désir de tendre à la vraie perfection chrétienne." *François de Sales Lettres d'amitié spirituelle*, DDB, Paris (1980), p.153.

³²"C'est tous-jours pour vous assurer davantage que j'observeray soigneusement la promesse que je vous ay faite de vous escrire le plus souvent que je pourray. Plus je me suis esloigné de vous selon l'exterieur, plus me sens-je joint et lié selon l'interieur. Je ne cesseray jamais de prier nostre bon Dieu qu'il luy plaise de parfaire en vous son saint ouvrage, c'est a dire le bon desir et dessein de parvenir a la perfection de la vie chrestienne; desir lequel vous devez cherir et nourrir tendrement en vostre coeur, comme une besoigne du Saint Esprit et une estincelle de son feu divin." *Oeuvres... ltr. CCXVI*.

ing them together were given all the more momentum by their extraordinary love of God. Jane's thirst for holiness has spurred him to keen feelings of affection for her, because of his own intent longing to share the love of God. A great yearning to give and the hunger to receive concur at this first encounter. There were many people the Bishop of Geneva met during his years of ministry with ardent desire for these things. He usually did not attempt a long distance relationship of this kind, even when entreated to do so.³³ There was something more in Jane, something that touched him deeply, that gave him energy and sparked him on his own way to God. Francis understood at once that such an encounter was a gift of God, and dispatched those few lines saying so immediately after leaving for home while on the road just outside of Dijon. "God, it seems to me, has given me to you; I am more sure of it every hour."³⁴ He must have already missed her.³⁵ The intimacy of this first note portrays the level their discussions swiftly attained during those hours available to them in the short weeks at Dijon. They are already on very personal terms. It seems to be one of the characteristics of outstanding friendships that they begin abruptly. For as Francis explains in the *Traité*, "When two similar things unite by correspondence to the same end, it is more like unity than union."³⁶ Of all the souls God has inspired him to love, Jane's rare detachment from the vanities of the world, evoked a passionate love in him, which was a

³³ One proof of just how exceptional it was for him to engage himself is seen in a letter to Mlle de Soulfour, who he befriended in the "cercle Acarie" two years before during his diplomatic mission in Paris. He refuses to take up a long distance relationship with her despite many expressions of respect and affection in the missive, "pour mon insuffisance et pour vostre esloignement, ne puis vous estre que fort peu utile" *Oeuvres...* ltr. CXC. See another example in ltr. MCMLXXVI.

After 1613 he regularly just referred people to his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, see for example ltr. DCCCLX.

³⁴"Dieu, ce me semble, m'a donné a vous; je m'en assure toutes les heures plus fort. C'est tout ce que je vous puis dire; recommandés moy a vostre bon Ange." *Oeuvres...* CCXV.

³⁵W. Wright believes that Jane was more emotionally attached to Francis early in their friendship than he to her, but I think he was himself already attached to her in a way we seldom find in his other friendships. Cfr. W. Wright, *Bond of Perfection...* p.55.

³⁶"Mais quand cette mutuelle correspondance est conjointe avec la ressemblance, l'amour sans doute s'engendre bien plus puissamment; car la similitude estant la vraye image de l'unité, quand deux choses semblables s'unissent par correspondance a mesme fin, il semble que ce soit plustot unité qu'union." *Oeuvres...* IV pp.48-50.

very great consolation.³⁷ His affection for her is “far beyond all comparison,” “white like snow,” which, he explains, is why he lets it run unbridled, and he is dedicated to her soul’s good as to his very own in their Savior, who has joined them in Himself forever.³⁸ Almost immediately, he felt deeply compelled to befriend her, to manifest his sincerity and integrity of heart for her in Christ. “God has given me to you,” he repeats, “I mean uniquely, entirely, irrevocably.”³⁹ Aristotle would caution us, saying that they were not yet friends, because their sincerity had not yet been proven by time. He would say rather it was only the hope for friendship that caused that initial enthusiasm.⁴⁰ But then these are two saints with extraordinary gifts for virtue and introspection.

Francis’ first concern in their new relationship is to give Jane peace. His benevolence for her begins with understanding her, feeling her agonies, and immediately attends to her needs. He writes her a long letter once back in Annecy, unfolding the thoughts that must have occupied him during most of his journey. Like a warm embrace he reaches out to calm her troubles of conscience and untangle the delicate problem of her vows. He lays down the “two columns” upon which her work to attain Christian perfection must be based; first humility and second in acquiescing to her state in life as a widow. To nurture this desire of holy love that God has sown in her is what deserves her attention now, and these two columns are most profitable. Once this, her true focus is clear, the means taken to conserve and strengthen them don’t really matter. “I desire you to have a holy freedom of mind concerning the

³⁷He explains how such persons move him in a letter to Madame de Granieu, thirteen years later. “C’est la verité, Madame, qu’entre les souvenirs que j’ay des ames que Dieu m’a fait aymer, celuy de la vostre m’est de tres grande consolation, car j’ay vue un certain depouillement des creatures et de leurs vanités, qu’il m’est impossible de n’aymer que passionnement.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCCV.

³⁸“Je ne vous diray rien de la grandeur de mon coeur en vostre endroit, mais je vous diray bien qu’elle demeure bien loin au-dessus de toute comparaison; et cette affection est blanche plus que la neige. pure plus que le soleil: c’est pourquoy je luy ay lasché les resnes pendant cette absence, la laissant courir de son effort Dieu, dis-je, auquel nous nous sommes voués et consacrés, et qui m’a rendu pour jamais et sans reserve tout dedié a votre ame, que je cherais comme la mienne, [plus encore], que je tiens pour toute mienne en ce Sauveur qui, nous donnant la sienne, nous joint inseparablement en luy. Vive Jésus!” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCIV.

³⁹“Ouÿ, Dieu m’a donné a vous; je dis uniquement, entieremnt, irrevocablement.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXL.

⁴⁰Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethic*, VIII, 3,1156b 1-5.

means to perfecting yourself.”⁴¹ He deliberately doesn’t even address her vows in this first letter, but encourages her to keep herself from excessive worries by fleeing to confidence in God’s mercy and goodness, who will not abandon her, but who for that same love, will not fail to ask her to carry his cross.⁴²

With this first letter we see that celebrated gift so many of his contemporaries noticed in Francis to discern the spirit and needs of the one who confided in him.⁴³ He does not pressure Jane, nor whip up the storm within her by direct battle, but he simply passes over it. Her temperament was a passionate one, and her commitment was always one hundred per cent.⁴⁴ In Francis’ words she had “a heart that loved powerfully and felt things strongly.”⁴⁵ She grew up with a formidable convic-

⁴¹“Louié soit Dieu, qui vous a donné ce cher et saint amour; faites le croistre tous les jours de plus en plus, et la consolation vous en accroistra tout de mesme, puisque tout l’edifice de vostre bonheur est appuyé sur ces deux colonnes. Regardés au moins une fois le moys si l’une ou l’autre est point esbranlee, par quelque devote meditation et consideration pareille... Mais je dis, si vous l’aymes mieux, car en tout et partout je desire que vous ayés une sainte liberté d’esprit touchant les moyens de vous perfectionner; pourveu que les deux colones en soyent conservees et affermies, il n’importe pas beaucoup comment.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXVI.

⁴²Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXVI.

⁴³ Jane gives the following deposition at the hearing for Francis’ beatification. “Je dis qu’entre tous les dons que notre Bienheureux avait reçus de Dieu, celui de la discrétion des esprits a été un des plus éminents, et c’est un vérité qui n’est doutée de personne qui l’ait fréquenté...plusieurs abbés, religieux, hommes ecclésiastiques, des gentilshommes et gens de justice, des princes et princesses et personnes de toutes qualités, riches et pauvres, de diverses provinces, l’ont recherché pur cela. Le nombre des âmes qu’il a conduites en la voie de la perfection chrétienne en divers lieux est quasi innombrable. ...A l’ordinaire, on ne lui pouvait rien celer...Je sais que souvent il calmait les esprits d’une seule parole.” R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie*, ...pp.267-269.

⁴⁴ M. Henry-Coüannier summarizes: “Mme de Chantal, en toute sa vie, ne fit jamais rien à demi. Nulle maîtresse de maison n’a jamais pris ses devoirs plus à coeur. Levée chaque jour à cinq heurs, elle entendait la messe avec tous ses domestiques; dès qu’elle avait donné ses ordres, elle prenait son aiguille et ne la quittait plus... le soir avant le coucher, tout son personnel s’assemblait encore pour lui rendre compte de la journée.” *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés* Monastère de la Visitation, Paris (1979) p.148.

⁴⁵ Francis writes Jane just after the sudden death of his sister Jeanne in 1607:“Je vous voy, ce me semble, ma chere Fille, avec vostre coeur vigoureux, qui ayme et qui veut puissamment. Je luy en sçai bon gré; car ces coeurs a demi mortz, a quoy sont-ilz bons?” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXVIII.

tion in her own home. Her youth was a time of civil war and roaming bands of armed men raiding the countryside, in the lawlessness Burgundy suffered in the wake of the fighting's destruction. As a teenager she watched her father, president of the powerful Parliament of Burgundy, withdraw his support of the League, a movement actively promoting the Catholic faith in France, when they sought to dispose Henry III. The King was still King whatever his vices might be. He was forced into exile in Flavigny with about a dozen magistrates. His property was pillaged and his son was taken hostage. They told him if he did not dissolve his Parliament in exile they would send him his son André's head in a sack. His response must have left a formative impression on Jane. "I would esteem my son very happy to die so young ... for the public cause, and innocent as he is, to have such an honorable sepulcher."⁴⁶ The League eventually backed down. A couple of weeks later Henri III was assassinated. Jane's father did not return to Dijon until June of 1595 to welcome the triumphant Henri IV.⁴⁷

Jane's seriousness and conviction would prove to be just as heroic at many occasions throughout her long life.⁴⁸ Already at a young age her regard was "strong, kind and full of fire and spirit," complementing her comely round face and long thick auburn hair.⁴⁹ This was exactly the kind of person that drew Francis. He used to say, "I love vigorous independent souls, who aren't mousy."⁵⁰ Francis understood well that such a spirit invariably needs some focus, some purpose upon which it fixes with great zeal, but in Jane's case it seems that besides this natural passion, God had planted an almost consuming desire for some work she

⁴⁶Cfr, Bougaud, *Histoire de Sainte Chantal et les origines de la Visitation*, Poussielgue, Paris (1863) 2 vols. t.1 p.21.

⁴⁷His financial backing was instrumental in Henri IV's success in claiming the crown. Cfr. A. Ravier. *Petite vie de Jeanne de Chantal*, ...pp.9-16.

⁴⁸Jane suffered one of the longest periods of dryness and inner turmoil of any saint known in recorded Christian history, for some forty years she lived in this spiritual anguish of "the dark night of the soul." Jane's character is traditionally shown to be exceptionally strong by three incidents in her life. First when she branded the name Jesus on her chest, second when she stepped over her prostrate son to begin religious life, and third making a vow to always do the most perfect thing. Cfr. E. Stopp, *Madame de Chantal and Francis de Sales, Jane de Chantal. Letters of Spiritual Direction*, Paulist Press, New York, 1988 pp.70-86 for an excellent discussion on Jane's character and vision as it added to Francis' perspective of the spiritual life.

⁴⁹Bougaud, *Histoire de Sainte Chantal*, t.1, p.188.

⁵⁰"Jayme les ames independantes, vigoureuuses et qui ne sont pas femelles" *Oeuvres*... ltr. MDCCCLXVII.

could not yet define. Together her temperament, education and these inspirations compelled her--but to what? Her worries and troubles sprang from that passionate desire to please God, but they were locked in confusion, dispersed upon scrupulous details and, as he would later show her, ultimately only a form of pride. Francis calms her by calling her back to simplicity, bringing that focus once again to the leitmotiv of her whole being, and begins to dispel the confusion. That gift of listening would enable him to understand a remarkable variety of individuals, to speak to their hearts, and share friendship with them.⁵¹ It enabled him to put himself in their place, to feel their words. Jane had been suffering this kind of inner agony for about ten years before submitting to Francis' direction, because as she puts it: "I was a simple country girl and had no one to tell about them."⁵² His benevolence has begun by understanding her, and therefore it is able to give not to some projected image of her, but to her in the essence of her personality. She is not a woman with worries, but Jane, unique in all the world, who has honored him with her confidence. He first works to mollify her, with assurances of his "extreme desire" for her "good and advancement."⁵³ He reveals his awareness of the fragility of human friendship when he goes on to assure her that God had given him "such a willingness to never forget" her, and begs her to never forget him.⁵⁴ He loves her in a rarely pure and honest way,⁵⁵ for the spiritual benefits their friendship promis-

⁵¹Cfr. A. Ravier, *Ce que Croyait Saint François de Sales*. 3ème édition, Ateliers Henry Lebat, Paris 1976 pp.53-55 for a good development of Francis' art of discerning the divine inspirations "by which God guides each person according to the destiny he has reserved for him."

⁵²Jane tells us, "J'ai beaucoup souffert de ces peines intérieurs pendant l'espace de dix années avant que je fusse soumise à la direction de notre bienheureux Père, car j'étais tout champêtre et je n'avais personne à qui les dire... le bienheureux m'écrivit qu'il fallait 'vivre de la mort même'." Bremond, H. *Saint Chantal*. 2éd. Paris, Lecoffre 1912.

⁵³"Ecrives-moy, je vous supplie, le plus souvent que vous pourres, avec toute la confiance que vous sçatures; car l'extreme desir que j'ay de vostre bien et avancement me donnera de l'affliction si je ne sçay souvent a quoy vous en estes." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXVI.

⁵⁴"Je vous supplie de ne jamais m'oublier, puisque Dieu me donne tant de volonté de ne jamais vous oublier aussi." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXVI.

⁵⁵ St. Francis de Sales was pure in a way that we seldom find in human beings. In Fr. Lajeunie's words, "On ne l'a jamais surpris en défaut d'amour et pour vive et hardie qu'en fût l'expression, son comportement fut toujours celui d'un homme pur sous le regard de Dieu. Jamais, on l'a dit, il ne recevait chez lui de femme sans témoin; jamais il ne se rendit à la Galerie sans être accompagné de M. Michel; jamais on n'entendit de sa bouche une parole déshonnête.

es both of them. From this first letter that love reaches out to dispel her fears and pacify her in the way we could expect Christ to do, which is the meaning of Christian benevolence.⁵⁶

It is almost as if he needs to share these things with her, “write me, I beg you.” This extreme desire for her good would cause him affliction he confesses if he doesn’t have further opportunity to serve her. Notice moreover, this first letter does not leave things with a patronizing air, but instead Francis confesses his own vulnerability. He asks something from Jane. “Recommend me to Our Lord, for I need it more than any man on earth.”⁵⁷ He reaches out to her for consolation, showing himself to be vulnerable, and reveals the keen respect he has for her. With this act of trust he gives Jane a sense of her great worth, which is one of the principal duties of a true and benevolent love. We can venture to say, even without Jane’s letters, that her own response must have been in the same vein.

Over those several months their friendship progressed, and in St. Claude no one was surprised when Jane asked him to take charge of her conscience in place of her former director. It seemed to both that the Holy Spirit had brought them there “almost by force and with consolation”⁵⁸ Francis did not accept immediately, he had been examining his own feelings and considering the proposition for months.⁵⁹ He spent most of the night in prayer and reflection seeking to know if such was God’s will. The next morning he accepted. With this natural, yet very serious step they entered into an even closer union.⁶⁰ Something has

Il faut le situer dans cette lumière pour juger exactement ce que fut son amour pour sainte Jeanne de Chantal: aucune équivoque ici n’est permise: ce fut un amour humain, ce fut un amour saint.” E.J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L’Homme, la Pensée, l’Action*, Editions Guy Victor, Paris (1966) t.2 p.282.

⁵⁶Cfr *Oeuvres...* IV, p.70-72 for Francis’ explanation of benevolence as compared with covetous love. See also J. F. Power, “Love of benevolence and Liturgy” in *Salesian Studies* III, no. 1 (winter 1966) and no. 3 (Summer 1966).

⁵⁷“Recommandés moy a Nostre Seigneur, car j’en ay plus de besoin que nul homme du monde.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXVI.

⁵⁸“Ce grand mouvement d’esprit qui vous y a porté presque par force et avec consolation” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.353).

⁵⁹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV. This letter is particularly rich for its exposition of his ideas about the discernment of the motions of the Holy Spirit in a heart, something he was exceptionally gifted in doing.

⁶⁰ At the shrine of the Black Virgin at Notre-Dame-d’Etang, Jane put her pact with him into words. “I, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyont ...make a vow to your divine Majesty of obedience to Monsignor, the Bishop of Geneva, subject to the authority of all his legitimate superiors...may it please you to receive this sacrifice of sweet fragrance and as it has pleased you to give me the grace to

changed, Francis confesses in his next letter to her. He has an even more profound longing to wish her the perfection the love of God bestows. She has grown very dear to him. "Each affection has its particular difference with the others; that which I have for you has its own particular way of infinitely consoling me, and, to say everything, it is extremely profitable for me."⁶¹ With this step their mutual benevolence, in a word their friendship, would live in a new expression that would grow stronger bringing both closer to what their hearts desired most, union with their maker.

A Servant, Nay, a Slave for Your Good!

He believed it important to communicate his benevolence for her at many different occasions. He tells her things like that he holds her in high esteem, "in the seat God has given you in my soul," as he writes in 1606, and that this affection is established in the cross.⁶² He considered himself her servant, and confesses that with her as with other friends, he cannot refuse whatever good service they might ask of him. "I have no power to resist whatever you desire."⁶³ He admits that he is a "slave" of his love for them.⁶⁴ That slavery is but his ardent devotion to sacri-

desire and offer it, may it also please you to give abundantly to me in order that I may accomplish it. Amen." de Chaugy, *sa vie et ses oeuvres...* p.65.

⁶¹"Mais maintenant, ma chere Fille, il y est survenu une certaine qualité nouvelle qui ne se peut nommer, ce me semble; mais seulement son effet est une grande suavité interieure que j'ay a vous souhaiter la perfection de l'amour de Dieu et les autres benedictions spirituelles. Non, je n'ajoute pas un seul brin a la verité, je parle devant le *Dieu de mon coeur* [Ps 73.26] et du vostre. Chasque affection a sa particuliere difference d'avec les autres; celle que je vous ay a une certaine particularité qui me console infiniment, et, pour dire tout, qui m'est extremement prouffitable." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p. 354).

⁶²"Je doy a jamais tascher de vous tenir hautement et constamment dans le siege que Dieu vous a donné en mon ame, qui est establi a la Croix." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXX. See also for example, MXLV; MDCXLII and MDCCCXI.

⁶³"Je suis hors de tout pouvoir de refuser chose quelcomque a vostre desir." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCLXXXIII.

⁶⁴ As for example in this letter to M. de Soulfour. "Monsieur; mon coeur ne peut pas garder les regles de la contenance au sujet de vostre amitié, il en est trop vivement esmue. ... *Beatius est dare quam accipere*. [Acts 20.35] Je n'ay rien pour contrechanger vostre bienfait, je confesse que je suis vaincu. Tenes moy, je vous prie, pour esclave, ma cadene me sera tres agreable; aussi sera-elle d'or, et du fin or de charité. J'ay veu en la face de monsieur vostre filz, mais encor en son ame, la vive image de son pere. Ceste double relation qu'il vous a m'oblige d'autant plus a luy desirer et voier tous mes services, et a me souhaiter beaucoup plus de capacité pour luy en rendre." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLIX. See

fice himself to the spiritual and physical well being of the one to whom he has welcomed into his world, and with whom it seems more important for him to give than receive. It is his imitation of Christ in friendship. "How happy we are to be slaves of this great God," he will one day write Jane, "who for us rendered himself a slave."⁶⁵ With Jane it shows how seriously he considered himself responsible for her. He calls her his daughter to emphasize all the more his engagement to her service. He explains, "I say my true daughter in He from whom the holy love renders me obliged, [better still] wholly consecrated to be, to live, to die and to relive forever yours and all yours. Live Jesus!"⁶⁶

The whole purpose of Francis de Sales' life was to live Jesus, and that life of love compelled him to love God's image, his neighbor in the world around him. In the letters he and Jane exchanged the words "LIVE JESUS!" often appear at the top of the page like a letterhead. It was at once a call to arms, an encouragement and a formula for their lives, as their friendship. The motto must have had a more general significance for both of them. Jane puts *Vive + Jésus* on not only her letters to Francis, but to most all her friends, continuing the practice throughout her life. It is a common custom still today with the sisters of the Visitation.⁶⁷ Living Jesus for both of them aimed above all at loving humanity and God as Jesus, by obediently laying down his life. *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*⁶⁸ He considered it the same dying to self to give himself to God, to his neighbor, and to his friends in God. This love is like the Savior's, he explains, "the Lover dies of love for him (every human person) the Lover for whom love is in his death and death in his love."⁶⁹ It was an obligation of living divine love humanly. This slavery is what will be better known in Jane's writing as the martyrdom of love.⁷⁰

also IV, p.187-189.

⁶⁵Que nous sommes heureux d'estre esclaves de ce grand Dieu qui, pour nous, se rendit esclave!" *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCLXIV.

⁶⁶"A Dieu ma Fille; ouy, je dis ma vraye Fille en Celuy duquel le saint amour me rend obligé, ains tout consacré d'estre, vivre, mourir et revivre a jamais vostre et tout vostre. Vive Jesus!" *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXI

⁶⁷Cfr. Burns Sr. M. P., Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance....t. 1 p.41.

⁶⁸John 15:13.

⁶⁹"Or il y est ce prochain ma tres chere Fille, il y est dans le sien et dans poitrine du divin Sauveur; il y est comme tres aimé et tant aimable, que l'Amant meurt d'amour pour lui, Amant duquel l'amour est en sa mort et la mort en son amour." *Oeuvres...*ltr. MCCII.

⁷⁰ See infra page 208 et passim.

With his friends, especially with Jane, the Christian mandate to serve took on a greater amplitude, because it gave his already great desire to love all the impetus of compatibility. However that slavery was clearly understood by Francis and his friends as defined and limited by living Jesus, that is, by the life of a disciple. He explains: "It is He who has rendered me all yours, and you all mine, so that we might be more purely, perfectly and only His."⁷¹ It is the sphere within which this great devotion dwells, and what gives it its equilibrium. Christian love defines this kind of slavery, giving the fullest possible weight to Christ's command to love one another. The difference is that in friendship that love has the added momentum of affection for love returned for love.⁷² This is why he considered it a pleasure and not really a slavery. He writes Jane telling her not to be afraid to cause him any hurt or effort, because it is an "extreme consolation" for him to hurry to render her some service.⁷³ He explains the meaning behind all this in the *Traité*, where he remarks, "For love has no exclusions or slaves, but reduces all things to its obedience with a strength so sweet, that, just as nothing is as strong as love, nothing is as lovable as its strength."⁷⁴ A slave for your good isn't really a slavery at all. It underlines the extent of his conception of how generous friendship should be as something within service to God and friends.

The obligations of friendship are perhaps best understood within his ideas of what he calls "holy freedom of mind." It is probably the most important of his principles for Christian life, and we naturally find a long exposé on it in his first letter to Jane as her director. In essence, he

⁷¹ Francis writes Jane the first of August, 1612, eight years after their meeting. "C'est luy qui m'a rendu tout vostre, et vous toute mienne, affin que nous fussions plus purement, parfaitement et uniquement siens. Ainsy soit il." *Oeuvres...* ltr.DCCXCVIII.

⁷² Aymes tous les prochains, mais sur tout ceux que Dieu veut que vous aymies le plus." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLIII. However, as we will see later, Francis says in his that we are obliged to love all equally with a love of benevolence, whereas as Christ loved Mary Magdalen and St. Jean more than the others by what he calls a love of "complaisance" or being pleased in the object loved's existence. Cfr. *Oeuvres...*VI, p.72-74. We will come to this in greater detail later. It is a kind of participation in the other's qualities.

⁷³"Ne craignes nullement, je vous supplie, de me donner aucune peyne; car je proteste que ce m'est une extreme consolation d'estre pressé de vous rendre quelque service." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCLXXIII.

⁷⁴"Car l'amour n'a point de forcatz ni d'esclaves, ains reduit toutes choses a son obeissance avec une force si delicieuse, que, comme rien n'est si fort que l'amour, aussi rien n'est si aymable que sa force." *Oeuvres...* IV p.50 .

explains, it is “*the freedom of beloved children.*, a disengagement of the Christian heart of everything, in order to follow the recognized will of God. That the name of God be sanctified, that his Majesty reign in us, that his will be done. The mind does not worry about anything else.”⁷⁵ In their friendship that freedom of mind or free spirit would be like a beacon keeping them from petty offenses and hypersensitivity, leaving a certain elasticity in their sense of obligation to one another, just as it affords the same freedom in serving God. It would give it a certain childlike simplicity and strip it of that demanding pride that is so deadly to friendship. You never find either of them accusing the other of any lack. “Their friendship is beyond sentimentality,” as Fr. Lajeunie says.⁷⁶ We get a glimpse of this freedom in their friendship in a letter Francis writes near the end of January 1606 after he has been traveling into the hinterlands of Savoy to visit the parishes of his diocese, and unable to communicate with Jane for seven weeks. He complains of not being able to receive any news of her, but then explains why he is able to tolerate this “affliction”: “Oh this is why we must acquire as best we can the spirit of holy freedom and indifference, it is good for everything.”⁷⁷ Accepting the necessities of life, its mystery, accepting that many things are beyond our control and embracing all for the love of God, enables their friendship to endure hardships, and even misunderstandings. It takes away that over sensitivity and strict sense of how things should be, and humbly seeks first to give. He will later explain to Jane that such a great desire for the good of those he loves is not really a slavery but “the more it presses the more it gives us ease and freedom, there is nothing so pliable, nothing so firm.”⁷⁸ It is one of the

⁷⁵“La liberté de laquelle je parle c’est la liberté des enfans bienaimés. Et qu’est ce? C’est un desengagement du coeur chrestien de toutes choses, pour suivre la volonté de Dieu reconneuë. ...que le nom de Dieu soit sanctifié, que sa Majesté regne en nous, que sa volonté soit faite, l’esprit ne se soucie d’autre chose.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV(p.363).

⁷⁶ E.J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales* ... t. 2 p.283.

⁷⁷“Mais dites-moi, ma Fille, ne m’est-ce pas de l’affliction de ne vous pouvoir écrire qu’ainsi à la dérobée? O voilà pourquoi il nous faut acquérir le plus que nous pourrons l’esprit de la sainte liberté et indifférence; il est bon à tout, et même pour demeurer six semaines, voire sept, sans qu’un père de telle affection comme je suis, et une fille telle que vous êtes, reçoivent aucune nouvelles l’un de l’autre.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXVIII.

⁷⁸ Voyla nostre lien, voyla nos chaysnes, lesquelles plus elles nous serrent et presseront, plus elles nous donneront de l’ayse et de la liberté. Leur force n’est que suavité, leur violence n’est que douceur; rien de si pliable que cela, rien de si ferme que cela.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII.

mysterious paradoxes of Christian love that its freedom is in its service, and all the more so when friendship is exchanged for friendship.

Soon Jane will become Mother in their correspondence, which reveals perhaps a change in their relationship from a blurred or quasi-director and directee relationship, to a mutually recognized equality. Jane de Chantal was first and foremost a mother. Very often her letters one sees it is the title she prefers for herself. After all she lived 38 years in the world and only 31 in the monastery. It is the key to understanding her gifts and her consolations in this relationship with Francis de Sales. Francis' use of this name for her will only increase as their intimacy progresses. As she remarked when M. Robert, her former preceptor, reproached her for weeping after she stepped over Celse-Bénigne to leave her family for the Visitation, "What do you expect, I am a mother."⁷⁹ As Jane's inner life becomes more radiant, so too will her motherhood.⁸⁰ She refers to Francis as father, which has implications for his relationship with her and their common work ---- the Visitation. They could have continued to call each other 'brother' and 'sister'. Somehow 'mother' and 'father' better grasped their personalities and the way they saw each other.

A Melding of Two Worlds

From the very first letter, Francis exhibits a warmth we find customarily in his correspondence to his friends, which with Jane like with Antoine Favre and others, he offers to the entire family of the beloved friend. He believed it one's duty to love their spouse, children extended family and friends, "each according to its rank".⁸¹ Rather than coming

⁷⁹"Que voulez-vous, je suis mère." Jane once apologized with a soft smile. Cfr. A. Ravier *Petite vie de Jeanne de Chantal...* p.55. On another occasion she commented on her son: "Celse-Bénigne est bon et a de bons mouvements mais la jeunesse l'emporte." Burns Sr. M. P., *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance...* t. 2, p.75. See too, W. Wright, "La douceur maternelle dans la direction spirituelle de Jeanne de Chantal," in *L'Unidivers salésien...* pp.307-319.

⁸⁰In an unpublished conference given to the novices of the Visitation sisters of France in 1993, Sr. M. P. Burns traces motherhood as the overriding theme of her letters and character. Text available at the Visitation of Annecy, 27 pgs.

⁸¹"Il faut bien aimer le mari et la femme d'un amour doux et tranquille, ferme et continu, et que ce soit en premier lieu parce que Dieu l'ordonne et le veut. J'en dis de mesme des enfans et proches parens, et encor des amis, chacun selon son rang." *Oeuvres...* III p.349. See also A. Ravier, *Ce que croyait François de Sales* Ateliers Henry Labat, Paris (1976) 3ed. pp.78-85. Jane was entrusted with Francis' sister Jane de Sales by his mother the third time he saw

between them, these friendship reinforced those relationships. He asks the name of her children, because he says, "I hold them as mine in God."⁸² His feeling for one dear to him enters into their heart and shares its worries. Those whom they cherish are also beloved by Francis for their sake. He offers to accept whatever role may be asked in bearing that responsibility with his friends, conceiving them as part of their own world, and not merely as individuals. Conversely, he not only offered his friendship to Jane, but also that of his own family to her and hers, and Jane responded opening her heart to all of them in return.⁸³ It seems he was raised with this devotion to service in friendship when he writes a year later saying that his mother and whole family are "won over irrevocably" to her service.⁸⁴ Jane's family too seems to have embraced Francis. His fellow Bishop, André her brother, was more likely a candidate for friendship than Jane. They had similar educations and a common responsibility. Francis would describe him as "one of the most frank, open, and vigorous souls in friendship."⁸⁵ We also have a letter to President Frémyot from the Bishop of Geneva giving him advice for the duties of his responsibility and his spiritual advancement. There too he is full of affection, and careful to be sure his intentions are not misinterpreted. He explains to Jane's father the rigor of his resolution to

her, and agreed to the marriage of her eldest daughter Marie-Aimée to Bernard de Sales, which is what Charles-August de Sales calls "a precious gage of friendship" between their families. Cfr. Charles-August de Sales, *Vie de Saint François de Sales, Evêque et Prince de Genève*, Desclée de Brouwer & Cie, Lille (1890) p.102. See also A. de Menthon, *Les deux filles de Sainte Chantal*, Firmin-Didot, Paris, 1875, for examples of Francis' attention to Jane's family.

⁸² "Je desire sçavoir le nom et l'aage de vos enfans, parce que je les tiens pour miens selon Dieu." *Oeuvres...* ltr.CCXXIII.

"Ma bonne mere est vostre servante, et tous ses enfans vos serviteurs; elle vous remercie tres humblement de vostre bienveüillance." *Oeuvres...* ltr.CCXXIII.

⁸⁴"Ma bonne mere ne sçait pas que je vous escrive, mais je sçay bien qu'elle et toute sa famille sont acquis irrevocablement a vostre service." *Oeuvres...* ltr.CCCXX. And in 1607 he writes, "Avec quel'affection ma mere vous attend, cela ne peut se dire." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXCVI.

⁸⁵"Une ame des plus franches, rondes et vigoureuses en amitié." *Oeuvres...* XII, p.328. It seems the feelings were mutual, the same year A. Frémyot writes Francis: "Après avoir eu l'honneur de vostre frequentation, l'on pouvoit vivre sans vous cherir et sans avoir du regret de vostre absence... je vis reluire tant de rares vertues en vous." *Oeuvres...* XII, p.479. See also ltr. CCXXIX, and XII, p.410. This didn't stop André, however, years later from accusing Francis of ill will, when Jane's daughter died suddenly leaving her fortune to the house of de Sales in 1617. Cfr. ltr. MCCCCLXXXVII.

love his friends rightly: "Whoever provokes me to the intensity of friendship, must be very firm, for I will not spare him."⁸⁶ As a Rabutin, Celse-Bénigne was more naturally entrusted to his grandfather for his education, but Francis feels free to give him advice when he leaves for the "high seas of the world" in the French court.⁸⁷ He also wrote at least two letters to Madame de Toulangeon, (Jane's youngest daughter Françoise) encouraging her to live a virtuous life.⁸⁸ "After all," Francis summarizes, "what more can I say? Father, brother, uncle, children, all I hold infinitely dear".⁸⁹

Over the years Francis' letters are replete with the same expression of affection and encouragement we find in the first letter to Jane. Progress together toward Christian perfection is always both their energy and focus. His first efforts to solace her will continue to be a refuge for Jane over her years of struggles with doubts against the faith,⁹⁰ and less grave temptations. He will try to reassure her and quiet her inner storms by simply advising her to not give these inmost troubles undue attention, but to humbly accept them and implore God's help with all confidence that he will take care of everything. At other times with different

⁸⁶"J'abuse de vostre bonté a vous deployer si grossierement mes affections; mais, Monsieur, quicomque me provoque en la contention d'amitié, il faut qu'il soit bien ferme, car je ne l'espargne point." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXX.

⁸⁷It is as he would be writing his own son and represents a kind of Christian manifesto. He tells him to beware of ambition and vanity, bad books, and flirtatious relationships, to "Search love more than honor," and to make an express declaration to desire to live "virtuously, judiciously, consistently and Christianly." At this point the capital importance of friendship is underlined, "Il vous importera aussi infiniment de faire quelques amis de mesme intention, avec lesquelz vous puissies vous entreporter et fortifier; car c'est une chose vraye que le commerce de ceux qui ont l'ame bien dressee, nous sert infiniment a bien dresser ou a bien tenir dressee la nostre." He then finishes with warnings against gambling and bodily indulgences. *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXXXVII.

⁸⁸Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCMLX.

⁸⁹"En fin, que voulez vous plus? pere, frere, oncle, enfans, tout cela m'est infiniment a coeur." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.362).

⁹⁰They apparently centered around the Eucharist; (Cfr. Her testimony in *Déposition pour la canonisation de S. François* in *Sa vie et ses oeuvres*, XII, ltr. 2, p.356) and a persistent fear that she was not doing well enough in her efforts to serve God. See: Burns Sr. M. P. *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance*. . . t. 1, ltr. 394, for example. Years later, her biographer tells us that between 1612 and 1617 she was given extraordinary graces that made her feel as if a fire was burning in her heart and consuming her imperfections. Cfr. EM. Bougaud, *Histoire de Sainte Chantal...* t.1, Librairie de Mme Poussielgue-Rusand (1863) Paris p.503.

persons, when he cannot communicate this kind of benevolence as openly as with Jane, he must rely on prayer so that grace might open closed hearts. And when it can be communicated, prayer nourishes it and deepens it. This benevolence extends to the total well being of the friend, and in Jane's case that is manifested in his delegating practical matters on her behalf, concern for her physical health,⁹¹ her children and coming to her aid when she had the very difficult task of resisting the will of her "guardians" her brother and her father in law, to pursue a religious vocation.⁹² Through all these trials and the new ones founding the Visitation exacted of her, Jane could look to Francis' help as together they 'bore each other's burdens'.

She was a confidant in his hardships, and someone he could depend on to realize his dream. By the beginning of 1610 he would be wholly embracing her counsel, obediently following her advice for the troubles he confided in her. She too was like a spiritual director for him, someone whom his heart could be wholly at ease. He confides, "Oh God, why do I tell you all this, if not because my heart always opens and pours itself out without hesitation when it is with your own."⁹³ It was

⁹¹ He writes her "Reposés un peu bien; manges un peu de choses bonnes ...car je voy que ces foiblesses proviennent d'abattement d'estomach et de froideur de teste." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCLXXIV. See too ltr. MCCCXXI. Francis was clear about the importance of loving our body: "La charité nous oblige d'aymer nos cors convenablement, en tant qu'ilz sont requis aux bonnes *Oeuvres*, qu'ilz sont une partie de nostre personne et qu'ilz seront participans de la felicité eternelle. Certes, le Chrestien doit aymer son cors comme une image vivante de celuy du Sauveur incarné, comme issu de mesme tige avec iceluy, et, par consequent, luy appartenant en parentage et consanguinité: sur tout apres que nous avons renouvelé l'alliance par la reception reelle de ce divin Cors du Redempteur au tres adorable Sacrement de l'Eucharistie." *Oeuvres...* XIII, p.192.

⁹²A widow in the late Sixteenth century was completely dependent on her family both financially and legally. Like their children, women were the wards of their male relatives. Her father-in-law and her brother were truly her guardians. Yet as W. Wright notes, this did not correspond to the reality, women's influence was vital to religious and political life, and as a class they were not limited to maintaining a household. Cfr. *Bond of Perfection, Jeanne de Chantal and François de Sales* Paulist Press, New York, (1985) note 31, chapt. 1. and see H. Houillon, "La femme en France aux XVIIème et XVIIIème siècles," pt. 1 of *Histoire mondiale de la femme*, publiée sous la direction de Pierre Grimal Nouvelle Librairie de France, Paris (1966).

⁹³"O Dieu, pourquoy vous dis-je tout ceci, sinon parce que mon coeur se met tous-jours au large et s'espanche sans borne quand il est avec le vostre?." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXL, see too. ltr. DCCCXXXVIII and XXI, p.89-90.

something spontaneous, something he confesses on another occasion he needs to do. He writes, "I wouldn't know how to prevent myself from doing so; my heart must dilate with yours like this".⁹⁴

He also shared other people with her, telling them of her good qualities, or introducing her to people he himself cherished and with whom she too was warmly welcomed as their friend.⁹⁵ In fact the more they shared their lives, the more we see them moving in the same sphere of friendships. It is one of the marks of friendship with Francis de Sales. For a lover of people what more can one give a friend than the trust and endearment of another friendship?

The Declaration of Their Mutual Intentions

A common interest elicited strong feelings of affection from the beginning in both of them, but as all the great thinkers over the centuries before them have remarked, these feelings must be manifested and mutual for friendship to succeed. He asks her permission to call her "sister" because it was the way the Apostles and first Christians expressed the "intimate love they held for one another."⁹⁶ Friendship begins first with a resemblance between persons, but it also begins with an expression of these hidden affections. One must tell the person of these feelings *and* of one's intentions of good-will. We never find Francis growing complacent about expressing that good-will over the years in any of his correspondences, "which seems to be better savored when it is more often repeated."⁹⁷ He was keenly aware of the seemingly insatiable hu-

⁹⁴"Mais pourquoy vous dis-je ceci? Et pour ce que je ne m'en sçaurois empescher; il faut que mon coeur se dialte avec le vostre comme cela; et quisqu'en cett'attente j'ay de la consolation et de l'esperance de bonheur, pourquoy ne vous le dirois-je?" *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXL.

⁹⁵Madame de Charmois, and Antoine Favre are two prominent examples, not to mention the founders of the Visitation.

⁹⁶"Voyla, ma bonne Seur (et permettes moy que je vous appelle de ce nom, qui est celuy par lequel les Apostres et premiers Chrestiens exprimoient l'intim'amour qu'ilz s'entreportoient), voyla nostre lien, voyla nos chaysnes, lesquelles plus elles nous serreront et presseront, plus elles nous donneront de l'ayse et de la liberté. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII. We see how serious it was for him in something he explains years later to the fledgling Visitation: "Il n'y a point de plus vraye amitié ni de plus forte que celle qui est entre les freres ... C'est pourquoy les anciens Chrestiens de la primitive Eglise s'appeloient tous freres; ... marque de la sincere et vraye amitié." *Oeuvres...* VI, p.55-56.

⁹⁷In a letter to Bénigne Milletot (with whom Francis differed vehemently on the question of Papal authority, and yet with whom he had a close friendship. Together they re-established catholic worship in the region of Gex, and

man need for affirmation, and the penchant to doubt the lasting sincerity of a friendship like his.

Concomitant with those intentions, benevolence for Jane was no doubt an open and mutual declaration of their resolve to help one another live for Christ. In a letter Francis writes years later to Jane's son Celse-Bénigne, he tells him to openly declare his commitment to Christian virtue with some friends that they may not be pulled down by those "miserable souls who attack others to reduce them to following in their train."⁹⁸ He thinks it is impossible to overestimate the importance of such an open commitment. "For it is infinitely beneficial to you to make known early such as you want to always be; and in that, you must not compromise."⁹⁹ Just as Basil and Gregory openly expressed to one another their intentions to aid one another in their mutual commitment to live virtuously, Francis believes a mutual declaration like this to be indispensable. If resolution is important for the interior life, it is equally important for the shared interior life of friendship. It gives it a clear direction, dispelling any ambiguity and the earlier it is done the better. We find him openly declaring his intentions often in letters to his friends. We can only imagine his conversation when he was able to be with them and finally free to express himself and his sincerity not merely with written pages, but with all the secret language of love's communication from 'being' to 'being'.¹⁰⁰

two of his daughters entered the Visitation.) dated 1617-1618 he explains the significance of these assurances, "Vous le sçaves donques bien, je m'en assure, je suis exempt de ces vicissitudes, ... mais il ny a remede, il faut que vostre amour s'esgaye a me demander des certitudes du mien, dont toutefois il ne peut douter. Nous savons bien cette douce importunité des amans, ... non pour s'assurer, mais pour se complaire en l'assurance qu'ilz ont, qui semble estre mieux savouree quand ell'est plus souvent repetee. Que si vous voulies neanmoins une cedula de mon coeur, comme vous me le signifiés, envoyes moy donq le vostre sur lequel je l'escriray, car nul autre papier n'est capable de cette sorte d'écriture. Or, sus, c'est asses dit pour cette verité que jamais vous ne revoqueres en doute." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCLXXXVII.

⁹⁸"Je voudrays que d'abord, en devis et maintien et en conversation, vous fussies profession ouverte et expresse de vouloir vivre vertueusement, judicieusement, constamment et chrestienement... si vous ne tesmoignes pas avec perseverance une volonté esgale et inviolable, vous exposeres vos resolutions aux desseins et attaques de plusieurs miserables ames qui attaquent les autres ou les reduire a leur train." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXXXVII.

⁹⁹"Or, il importe infiniment de se faire connoistre de bonne heure tel qu'on veut estre tous-jours; et en cela, il ne faut pas marchander." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXXXVII.

¹⁰⁰"Le langage des amans est si particulier que nul ne l'entend qu'eux

On the other hand, we live in a world where that type of pure love is the exception rather than the rule. It is readily misconstrued as something very different than seeking to advance God's kingdom in one another. Francis had suffered such murmuring and criticism on several occasions because he was so often with women. He therefore always remained discrete with his expressions of affection for Jane, saving it for their privacy. He would be mortified to know how public his intimacy with the widow de Chantal has become. He never intended us to read these letters. In 1615 he asks Jane for letters that he can show to the community of sisters or to his brothers, "For the others are too intimate in tone and content."¹⁰¹ Jane had been writing him of her affection in poetry from as early as 1607 which are always couched in clear terms of her love for his holiness. He tells her: "If I was not implicated in them, I would have them sung in my catechism"¹⁰²

Some authors tend to purify too much their friendship saying it is not a human love because it is free from emotion.¹⁰³ I would rather say it was an eminently human love, full of emotion. But an emotion turned outward, not craving to have happiness by having another person's love. True it was not like two people loving each other and only each other in the intimacy that marriage is supposed to be, but it was passionate in its own way. It comes through in their letters in a way that sometimes is even embarrassing for many readers. They had from the beginning a very natural and human attraction to one another, which was sexual only in so far as their beings are sexual and thereby complementary. Jane would later confess that throughout her life she suffered all kinds of temptations but never against purity.¹⁰⁴ Francis interpreted that strong attraction as God somehow speaking to him and immediately gave himself to her good. Emotion is rather one of the great impulses of their friendship. If grace works in human ways, what better way to move us than by passion?

mesmes ... on a point besoin du bruit des paroles exterieures ni de l'usage des sens pour s'entretenir et s'entreouïr l'un l'autre." *Oeuvres...* ltr. IV, p.304.

¹⁰¹"Car les autres sont trop intimes, de ton et de contenu." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MLX.

¹⁰²"J'ay receu vos cantiques que j'ayme bien, car si bien ilz ne sont pas de si bonne rime que beaucoup d'autres, ilz ne laissent pourtant pas d'estre de bonn'affection; et si je n'estois point meslé par la dedans, je les ferois chanter en mon catechisme." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXXXV.

¹⁰³See for example, Trouncer, M. *The Gentleman Saint. St. François de Sales and His Times 1567-1622*. Hutchinson, London 1963, p.178.

¹⁰⁴Cfr. Trouncer, M. *The Gentleman Saint...* p.178.

A Constant Steady Love

Very early they established a profound confidence and received mutual consolation from one another's presence in each other's life. Francis would not have made the exceptional step to befriend her if he did not see it as God's will for him. And he would not have been so sure it was God's will had he not received something from her that brought him closer to God. Understanding, consolation, inspiration—all these and probably more were mutually exchanged from the beginning. Mère Angélique Arnauld who was herself a friend of Jane for some twenty years, said Francis once told her he shared an intimacy with her as profound as that with Jane de Chantal.¹⁰⁵ I think she misunderstood him.¹⁰⁶ His friendship with Mère Angélique was not as powerful from the start, nor did it bear the same kind of fruits, nor did it extend into one another's family as it did with Jane.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps most important, nor did it attain the stage of purification we will later study. From the beginning this was a spiritual friendship between beings with an intense spiritual life. What better basis for spiritual direction? Clearly Francis had much to give her with his intellectual education and the spiritual movements he was acquainted with in the Acarie circle, but Jane too was an old

¹⁰⁵In 1653 she reportedly said to her nephew, "Le saint prélat m'a fort assistée, et j'ose dire qu'il m'a autant honorée de son affection et de sa confiance que Madame de Chantal." *Mémoires* 1742, t. II, p.313. Bremond believes they hardly knew each other. *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieuse*, IV, p.187. Ravier thinks they shared a true friendship grounded on the his appreciation for spiritual graces she possessed and her zeal for reform. However he hesitates to admit their friendship on a par with that between Jane and Francis. Cfr. A. Ravier, *Lettres*,... p.684. Sr. M.P. Burns points out that Angélique Arnauld's mother did not love her and she sought maternal affection in Jane, the only one to call the abbess "my daughter." Cfr. Conference unedited, April, 1993.

¹⁰⁶One sign of this is his frequent use of "our heart" with Jane, which is absent despite his abundant affection for Mother Angélique apparent in their letters. Another is this letter to Marie-Jacqueline Favre sometime after 1615, "Vous sçavez bien que vous estes la grande fille bien-aymee et que nul ne vous osterà le rang que vous tenes en mon coeur, apres et tout aupres de nostre tres chere Mere; aussi estes-vous nostre seconde mere." *Oeuvres*... ltr. MCLIV.

¹⁰⁷Francis had correspondence with the Arnauld family. He calls her sister Madame le Maistre, one of his children (MDCCL), and to Antoine he writes: "J'ay et auray a jamais part a vos contentemens et a vos desplaysirs, puisque je suis inseparable d'affection d'avec vous et vostre famille benite de Dieu." *Oeuvres*... ltr. MDLVII. But they did not themselves enter into friendship with Francis' own family anywhere nearly as deeply as Jane's family. Cfr. Perle Bugnion-Secretan, *La Mère Angélique Arnauld. 1591-1661 D'après ses écrits. Abbesse et réformatrice de Port-Royal*. Cerf, Paris 1991, p.33 et seq.

master with an authentic and well proven *sensus fidelium*. She had her own gifts to contribute to him in return. They were perhaps less conscious, but still obvious to someone like Francis. From the beginning she was not just another of the fine ladies asking for spiritual advice. Francis' reaction is most telling. Albeit he accepted to become her spiritual director, we can safely admit that he himself was advancing because of her as well. If their exchange was not equal at first, they must have recognized it had the potential to become more than a teacher student relationship. Soon, as they communicated to one another each other's qualities their relationship would grow equal, or perhaps it is better to say its potential for equality would be revealed as they walked beside one another along the 'scabrous paths' of life among the worldly.

Over the years as they shared practically one life, especially after the founding of the Visitation, that initial friendship progressed to become all the more profound. In 1610 Francis writes Jane reflecting back on those first days they met in Dijon. "Believe me, the first word I wrote you was indeed true, that God had given me to you; the feeling is every day greater in my soul."¹⁰⁸ Through the eighteen years of their friendship Francis' teeming desire to succor Jane's love of God and the way of perfection will never waiver. In his last letter to her 22 October 1622, he gives thanks to God and prays he continues to give him the abundant courage for "the perfection and excellence of this most incomparable unity of heart that it has pleased him to give us."¹⁰⁹ After all these years this phrase is bursting with meaning. Every kind word, every look and gentle gesture, his firmness and charity in the many different situations of life Jane witnessed, and above all his attention to her and the way his friendship slowly and patiently brought her closer and closer to union in friendship with God; have all been like an explanation of these words. The honesty of his good-will for her was played out in his way of being over many years. He believed love was expressed in these little ways "it attends to his (the loved one's) every necessity as much as possible." But these daily kindnesses stem from a greater desire for "the goods of grace," which love sweats to procure

¹⁰⁸ "Croyés la premiere parole que je vous escrivis fut bien veritable, que Dieu m'avoit donné a vous; les sentiment en sont tous les jours plus grans en mon ame." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCXXXVIII.

¹⁰⁹ "Mon Dieu, ma tres chere Mere, que ma volonté s'est treuvee dilatee en ce sentiment! Playse a sa divine Bonté continuer sur moy cette abondance de courage, pour son honneur et gloire, et pour la perfection et excellence de cette tres incomparable unité de coeur qu'il luy a pleu de nous donner. Amen." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCMLXVI.

“by every legal means with a great affection, with a peace of mind, without wavering, with a pure charity.”¹¹⁰

At one point in their friendship, after they had known each other intimately for many years, Francis tells Jane how he wishes he could give her a gift, but that he is too poor.¹¹¹ And then as he looks to his weakness, he praises God for the gifts that weakness has brought to him, especially the “unity, of which God having let us relish from here, as much as our infirm condition is able to bear it, he will make us enjoy it more perfectly in heaven.”¹¹² Weakness has made him dependent on her friendship. He is thankful that he is not able to live devotion’s fervent charity alone, as if to say it is better to need one another. His benevolence is spiritual above all, and as satisfying as those spiritual goods are, there remains a certain longing, because they are only an inchoate birth of the perfect love of God that awaits them. Jane too writes of their unity of heart, showing her complete accord with this method of loving in little ways as in big ways.

As passionate as such love may be for another’s good, it is not impatient, but remains placid, tempered by its respect for the differences that make each person unique. It does not smother the other with controlling good-will, but genuinely seeks to understand them and freely share itself with one who freely accepts it. To force feed a friend even good things, Francis emphasizes, is to treat him like an animal.¹¹³ The

¹¹⁰“L’amour parfait du prochain qui est selon Dieu se communique en diverse manieres: il l’ayde par paroles, par *Oeuvres* et par exemple; le pourvoit de toutes ses necessités autant qu’il luy est possible; il se re-joüit de son bonheur et felicité temporelle, mais beaucoup plus de son avancement spirituel; luy procure les biens temporelz en tant qu’ilz luy peuvent servir pour obtenir la beatitude eternelle, luy desire les principaux biens de la grace, les vertus qui le peuvent, selon Dieu, perfectionner; les luy procure par toutes les voyes licites avec une grande affection, mais avec quietude d’esprit, sans aucune alteration; avec une pure charité, sans aucune passion de tristesse ou indignation pour les evenemens contraires.” *Oeuvres*... MMLXIII.

¹¹¹“Ah! que je voudrois bien vous faire quelque don, ma chere Fille; mays, outre que je suis si pauvre, il n’est pas convenable qu’au jour auquel le Saint Esprit fait ses presens, nous nous amusions a vouloir faire les nostres.” *Oeuvres*... ltr. DCXCII.

¹¹²“Perseverons au desir de cette unité, de laquelle Dieu nous ayant fait jouir des icy, autant que nostre condition infirme le peut porter, il nous en fera plus parfaitement jouissans au Ciel.” *Oeuvres*... ltr. DCXCII.

¹¹³ “Certes, celui qui a vive force ouvreroit la bouche a un ami, luy fourreroit la viande dans le gosier et la luy feroit avaler, il ne luy donneroit pas un festin de courtoisie, mais le traitteroit en beste et comme un chapon qu’on veut engraisser. Cette espee de bienfait veut estre offert par semonces, remonstran-

benevolence he has for Jane, in a word, entails the same things he would wish for himself.¹¹⁴ She was “a person whom he loved as himself.”¹¹⁵

Both Jane and Francis’ stability and constancy, their virtue, never suffered any crisis. Their love was true from the beginning, because it’s source was a unwavering faith they had practiced daily throughout their lives. The friendship Francis shared with Jane can’t rightly be understood as something coming into existence when they first met. True, without that meeting they could have never become friends, but what they shared was the work of a lifetime before those hours in Dijon. That life of faith hope and charity, girded by obedient humility was the life of God Himself dwelling within them, pressing them onward. That’s why Francis said from the beginning that their bond of perfection *is* God.¹¹⁶ God could be that bond only if he was already present in each of them. “Very often,” André Ravier summarizes, “in his correspondence Francis wishes to his friends the ‘holy, powerful, gentle and peaceful love of our God’.”¹¹⁷ This is what friendship and benevolence

ces et sollicitations, et non violemment et forcément exerce; c'est pourquoy il se fait par maniere de desir et non de vouloir absolu.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.66.

¹¹⁴ Francis writes a beautiful good-bye to Jane in 1615 as she departs to found another monastery in Lyon, which sums up his benevolence for her. “Voyci le souhait de vostre Pere, ma tres chere Fille: Dieu soit avec vous au chemin par lequel vous ires; Dieu vous tienne tous-jours vestu de la robe de sa charité; Dieu vous nourrisse du pain celeste de ses consolations; Dieu vous ramene saine et sauve en la mayson de vostre pere; Dieu soit a jamais vostre Dieu, ma chere Mere. Ce sont les benedictions que Jacob se souhaitoit quand il partit de Bethel [Gn 28:20-21], et ce sont celles la que je me souhaite a moy mesme, ma tres chere et tres unique Fille, a vostre despart de ce lieu, ou vous demeurez en partant, et d'ou vous partes en demeurant..” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MXXXVI.

¹¹⁵ These are Jane’s own words describing herself, from her deposition at the first hearing for his beatification. Cfr. Devos, *Saint François de Sales, par les témoins de sa vie...* p.178.

¹¹⁶ Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr.CCXXIII.

¹¹⁷ “Très souvent, en sa Correspondance, François souhaite à ses amis le saint, puissant, doux et tranquille amour de notre Dieu.” A. Ravier, *François de Sales Lettres d'amitié spirituelle*, DDB, Paris 1980 p.776. Cfr *Oeuvres...* ltrs. CDXXIX; MCCLV; CCCLXXVIII; DCXVII; CCCLVIII and DLXXXVIII. Just what is entailed in this wish? It is a very rich theme encompassing really everything Francis was. “Que je voudrais volontiers mourir pour l'amour de mon Sauveur! mais au moins, si je ne puis mourir pour cela, que je vive pour cela seul.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.CCCXXX. And it is, he admits, hard to define: “Nous ne sçavons pas que c'est d'aymer Dieu. Il (l'amour) ne consiste pas aux plus

mean for the Doctor of love. Loving action best communicates that love of God, so that what the soul has experienced interiorly with the divine, is brought forth and incarnated in every action with others. "The great Friend of our heart,"¹¹⁸ as he says to Jane, is the "great Uniter,"¹¹⁹ because their friendship is not only modeled upon the Trinity, but itself a trinity, reposing in the "pierced side of the Savior," without whom nothing would be possible or desirable.¹²⁰ "Human friendship is so agreeably lovable and spreads such a delicious fragrance upon those who contemplate it," he writes in the *Traité*, that it is a sign for us of how wonderful the reciprocal love must be between the Father and Son.¹²¹

Friendship and confidence increase then over time as love awakens love, and true friendship, based upon that in the intimacy of the Trinity, is exchanged for true friendship. For St. Francis de Sales the purpose of benevolence and friendship is very clear. It imitates Christ's love, communicating it both explicitly and implicitly. Anything less is a kind of patient waiting, gently stirring the loved one to see the value of this kind of life by loving him purely. Several centuries earlier Aelred of Rievaulx said "God is friendship."¹²² Francis seems to agree. The bond and cause of friendship is God, its benevolence is the love of God, its

grans goustz et sentimenz, mais en la plus grande et ferme resolution et desir de contenter Dieu en tout, et tascher, autant que nous pouvons, de ne l'offenser point, et de prier que la gloire de son Filz aille tous-jours augmentant. Ces choses sont signes d'amour." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMLXXI.

¹¹⁸"Ce grand Amy de nostre coeur ne le remplit, ce me semble, de desirs que pour le combler d'amour, ...Il me tarde, ma tres chere fille, que ce coeur que Dieu nous a donné, soit uniquement et inseparablement donné et lié a son Dieu par ce saint amour unissant qui est plus fort que la mort et que tout." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXIII.

¹¹⁹"J'ay une lumiere toute particuliere qui me fait voir que l'unité de nostre coeur est ouvrage de ce grand Unisseur, et partant, je veux des-ormais non seulement aymer, mais cherir et honorer cette unité comme sacree." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMLX.

¹²⁰"Il m'est bien avis que nous ne demeurerons plus en nous memes, et que, de coeur, d'intention et de confiance, nous nous logerons pour jamais dans le costé percé du Sauveur; car sans luy, non seulement nous ne pouvons, mais quand nous pourrions, nous ne voudrions rien faire." *Oeuvres...* DXCII.

¹²¹"Mais, O Dieu, si l'amitié humaine est tant agreablement aymable et respand une odeur si delicieuse sur ceux qui la contemplent, que sera-ce, mon bienaymé Theotime, de voir l'exercice sacré de l'amour reciproque du Pere envers le Filz eternal!" *Oeuvres...* IV, p.208.

¹²²Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship* translated by M. E. Laker, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, Michigan (1977) I, 69 p.65.

constancy is from God, as indeed its whole way of being. It is “All in God, for Him and according to Him”.¹²³ This explains its constancy its purpose and its resilience.

Prayer

Finally there is one more trait found in Francis’ letters to Jane to include under this theme of benevolence, namely prayer. Its whole purpose concerns the good of the one we ask God to protect, guide, nourish and perfect. Francis begs for Jane’s prayers, especially in the beginning of their friendship, because he confesses he is “so very miserable and overburdened by my self and others”.¹²⁴ He reveals just how much he cherishes her, because he has brought her into the most private part of his life, into the intimacy of his prayer. “I never say the holy Mass without you,” he confides, “and what touches you more directly; I never receive communion without you.”¹²⁵ Those prayers he had said hundreds of times before with the Church celebrating the Mass, like “grant us” and “give us,” would no longer only represent a general form of speaking, but since Dijon, he confesses months later, a few particular persons come to mind when he says this word *us*, and Jane is “almost regularly the first,” and when she’s not, it is because he saves her for last to stop there a little longer.¹²⁶ It seems he has newly learned some-

¹²³“Vous ne sçauriés croire combien mon coeur s'affermir en nos resolutions et comment toutes choses concourent a cet affermissement. Je m'en sens une suavité extraordinaire, comme aussi de l'amour que je vous porte. Il est fort, impliable et sans mesure ni reserve, mais doux, facile, tout pur, tout tranquille; bref, si je ne me trompe, tout en Dieu. ... Dieu, qui voit les intimes replis de mon coeur, sait qu'il n'y a rien en ceci que pour luy et selon luy.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.CDII.

¹²⁴“Madame, pries-le pour moy, qui suis fort miserable et accablé de moy mesme et des autres, qui est une charge intolerable si Celuy qui m'a des-ja porté avec tous mes pechés sur la Croix ne me porte encores au Ciel.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.CCXXIII.

¹²⁵“Je ne dis jamais la sainte Messe sans vous et ce qui vous touche de plus pres; je ne communie point sans vous.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.CCXXIII.

¹²⁶“Grand cas ce me semble, ma Fille: la sainte Eglise de Dieu, a l'imitation de son Espoux, ne nous enseigne point de prier pour nous en particulier, mais tous-jours pour nous et nos freres Chrestiens: ‘Donnés nous,’ dit-elle, ‘accordés nous’ et en semblables termes qui en comprennent plusieurs. Il ne m'estoit jamais arrivé, sous cette forme de parler generale, de porter mon esprit a aucune personne particuliere: depuis que je suis sorty de Dijon, sous cette parole de nous, plusieurs particulieres personnes qui se sont recommandees a moy me viennent en memoire; mais vous, presque ordinairement la premiere, et quand ce n'est pas la premiere, ce qui est rarement, c'est la derniere pour my

thing about the importance the Church places on praying for each other. How much more so then for our friends in Christ? Those moments alone with God in the privacy of our own heart are the most intimate of all, and Francis has warmly invited Jane to somehow participate in the intimacy of his prayer. "What happiness to be there alone together with God," he writes of prayer, "without any one that may know what happens between God and the heart, save God and the heart that adores him."¹²⁷ This is why he finds himself a little embarrassed with these revelations and says "I've said a little too much, although in all truth and purity,"¹²⁸ and asks her to tell no one about this rare affection he holds for her. Able to trust in the honesty of her warm benevolence for him, because he knew his own for her, it was still privacy to have her with him in prayer.¹²⁹

A gift of grace

From the very beginning Francis tells Jane more than once that he is convinced that the affection he feels for her is a precious gift from God, and is growing daily. He believed it to be something God has given to both of them for their own advancement and therefore he labors to nourish this affectionate benevolence.¹³⁰ For Francis de Sales, love was

arrester davantage. Se peut-il dire plus que cela?" *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.354-55).

¹²⁷"Quel bonheur d'estre la seul a seul avec Dieu, sans que personne sache ce qui se passe entre Dieu et le coeur, que Dieu mesme et le coeur qui l'adore". *Oeuvres...* ltr.CCCXIII. "Un si rare bien comm'est celui de parler coeur a coeur avec son Dieu." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXI. Francis also teaches that one should follow one's good affections which are spontaneously drawn from the heart in God's presence with simplicity, for they come from the Holy Spirit. These jaculatory prayers, he says are more worthy than any other kind of prayer. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltrs. MCDXLI and CDXIX.

¹²⁸"Mais, a l'honneur de Dieu, que ceci ne se communique point a personne; car j'en dis un petit trop, quoy qu'avec toute verité et pureté." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.355).

¹²⁹It is reminiscent of Augustine in his turmoil fleeing with Alypius to the garden of Milan. "Alypius was close on my heels: for it was still privacy for me to have him near, and how could he leave me to myself in that state?" *Confessions* VIII, 25.

¹³⁰"Je ne vous sçaurois pas expliquer ni la qualité ni la grandeur de cett'affection que j'ay a vostre service spirituel; mais je vous diray bien que je pense qu'ell'est de Dieu et que pour cela je la nourriray chèrement, et que tous les jours je la voy croistre et s'augmenter notablement." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIII.

not merely a feeling, but a resolute effort following a decision.¹³¹ St. Paul says grace helps us to desire what is good and to do what is good.¹³² In friendship, grace somehow inspires affection for a certain person, by what Francis de Sales calls a “secret instinct.”¹³³ It also brings the future friends into encounter. Providence leads the paths of their lives to a confluence at some moment most suitable, and something clicks. If the movement of grace, that “rush of affections” Cicero attributed to nature, does not accompany a resolute choice, friendship will not begin. Francis is not only saying that this decision pertains to expressing one’s feelings and approaching the person with one’s affection and good-will, but also the very interior affection planted by grace should be nourished by deliberate acts like contemplating their qualities or how we may be of service to them. Then once begun these same resolutions and their virtue assure that love last.

True friendship, especially spiritual friendship, is a gift of grace, but human efforts cooperate with that gift in friendship’s daily exercise of charity. Any who expose themselves to friendship are cognizant of the possibility of that confidence being broken with but a word. To say friendship is a gift from God doesn’t mean it magically is created *ex nihilo*. It also requires our part, that we love not only in word and speech but in deed and in truth requires a daily effort. This is why we find him on other occasions thanking a person for the gift of their friendship.¹³⁴ Only those who respect and treasure the secrets of another person deserve their confidence, because in confiding in a person, one gives them a weapon that may be used to hurt oneself. Seeing all things

¹³¹“Nous ne sçavons pas que c'est d'aymer Dieu. Il (l'amour) ne consiste pas aux plus grans goustz et sentimenz, mais en la plus grande et ferme resolution et desir de contenter Dieu en tout, et tascher, autant que nous pouvons, de ne l'offenser point, et de prier que la gloire de son Filz aille tous-jours augmentant. Ces choses sont signes d'amour.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMLXXI.

¹³² Phil. 2:13: “For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

¹³³Writing about one of the members of the Visitation to Mère Favre the year of his death, 1622, Francis calls this spontaneous affection for a person an instinct. “Dieu n'est il pas bon, ma tres chere Fille, d'avoir ainsy explané le chemin de la retraite a cette chere ame, laquelle, comme vous sçavs, je ne connois pas; mais j'ay certain secret instinct pour elle, qu'il ne se peut dire combien elle m'est chere. Je suis bien ayse que vous la soulagies de vostre presence en cette affaire” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCMIX.

¹³⁴Cfr. for example, *Oeuvres...* ltrs. IX (to A. Favre); CCCXIV (to Fr.Possevino); and MDCCV (to Mère Marie de Jésus, daughter of Mme Acarie).

in the greater scheme of God's Providence, especially when people are loving and helping one another advance in God's love, Francis could appreciate the gift of friendship as two-fold. The great debate of justification by grace versus works comes to bear in his life of friendship being guided by Providence, and yet somehow due to human efforts. It is striking how very aware Francis seems to have been from the beginning that their friendship was a gift from God, a responsibility and great help towards salvation. "Oh Lord, my good daughter," he writes Jane, "how your letters console me and how they show vividly your heart and confidence in me, but with such a pure purity, that I am forced to believe that it comes from the very hand of God."¹³⁵

Communication increases with confidence

Every friendship is a living thing that like the persons it involves changes and grows. Indeed, Francis would say that it comes undone more easily than it builds.¹³⁶ But if the friends remain constant in their love of the things they share and in their desire to communicate those goods out of a mutual benevolence, it will grow as time passes. The key to this growth is communication. What they communicate, Francis will later explain, determines and distinguishes their friendship. As the friends share noble things more, they become more able to share, united by their common interest and a mutual respect. Their lives evolve together, grafting one to the other. They take on one another's qualities. In spiritual friendship they aid one another in a difficult struggle of loving in the obscurity of faith. That too binds them in their trials and consolations. For all of this to come to be, one cornerstone must first be laid, namely confidence in the truth of the person, and therefore in the truth of their friendship. Without confidence in the other's sincerity and ability to regard what friends exchange as sacred, there can be no real and profound communication. It is like the pavement through swampy ground to trust and intimacy. As confidence grows, communication grows, and with these friendships progress in greater degrees of intimacy.

¹³⁵"Mon Dieu, ma bonne Fille, que vos lettres me consolent et qu'elles me representent vivement vostre coeur et confiance en mon endroit, mais avec une si pure pureté, que je suis forcé de croire que cela vient de la main mesme de Dieu." *Oeuvres* ...ltr. CCCLVIII.

¹³⁶He writes Jane in 1613: "Dieu soit nostre tout, car l'amitié descend plus qu'elle ne monte." *Oeuvres*... ltr.DCCCXCV.

What then do we find in the first letter Francis writes to Jane, when he is beginning his friendship with her and at the same time trying to define their relationship in the midst of that sticky problem of her doubts about her director? It is like a Magna Carta of confidence. Once Francis was able to administer to Jane's exigencies he could turn to their new friendship and labor to cement and fortify its newly erected girders. Several weeks later he sends her the first real letter that gives us insight into friendship with him. He dispatches it with a second letter enclosed for her director to read,¹³⁷ because he wishes to speak to her *coeur à coeur* and freely.¹³⁸ Isn't this exactly what confidence entails? He seeks to encourage Jane's confidence by risking his own. By avowing his trust in her, by becoming vulnerable, he is revealing his own trustworthiness. He hasn't taken a great and unmeasured risk, and he is not asking for some terrible step from Jane. How does he know Jane is trustworthy? There is no doubt she expressed her esteem and benevolence for him explicitly,¹³⁹ but most of all her confession and docility

¹³⁷Some may ask if Francis wasn't deliberately deceiving him, and therefore lying in doing so. It raises an interesting moral question, all the more accentuated by the fact that Francis was himself a highly respected director and extremely careful to respect the rights of others. He seems to be saying that Jane's privacy exceeds any right to know her director may suppose himself to enjoy. And one might also ask would Jane be violating Francis' confidence by sharing this second letter with the man (and what if he asked?).

¹³⁸“L'autre lettre vous servira pour contenter le bon Pere a qui vous desires la pouvoir monstrier. J'y ay fourré beaucoup de choses pour empescher le soupçon qu'il eut pu prendre qu'elle fut escrite a dessein, et l'ay neanmoins escrite avec toute verité et sincerité, ainsy que je doy tous-jours faire; mais non pas avec tant de liberté comme cellecy, en laquelle je desire vous parler coeur a coeur.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII.

¹³⁹The oldest letter from Jane was written to Francis' brother, Jean-François de Sales. [Monthelon, June 1605] It gives us a reflection of what her explicit expressions of friendship were probably like for Francis. “Monsieur mon tres cher frère, J'avois un peu d'envie de fumer contre vous de ce que vous ne m'écrivés point, mais c'est grand cas que je ne saurais tenir mon coeur, ni l'empêcher de vous témoigner ses affections qui sont toutes pures et toutes entières à vous souhaiter les cheres bénédictions de notre bon Dieu. ... Je souhaite ardemment que mon Dieu, mon Seigneur, nous unisse tous ensemble à Lui par le lien de son divin amour. (bond of perfection?)... Je vous tiens maintenant pour être vers notre cher évêque. Hé! mon bon Père, que vous êtes heureux, et tous ceux qui voient les merveilles que Dieu fait en lui! Oh! Dieu, Dieu puissant et bon, nous le veuille conserver plein de ses plus chères grâces et d'une parfaite santé! Mandés-moi de ses nouvelles. Je suis du tout, votre très humble soeur et servante.” *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance. Edition critique* 5 vols (of six). Les éditions du Cerf centre d'études Franco-Italien.

gave poignant meaning to her words, manifesting qualities Francis had painstakingly cultivated in himself. He recognized familiar things in her character, which were windows into her interior life with Christ. Perhaps it was intuitive, like the compatibility they mutually recognized so quickly in one another. Jane's loyalty and generosity were clear to him as the hidden parts of her life became part of his own private life. He would have seen for example how generously she cared for the illegitimate child of her husband Christophe, providing for the girl's education, and later her dowry, which was far and beyond what was expected at the time.¹⁴⁰ Besides all this he had seen the kind of father and brother she grew up with. He knew he had good reason to trust her.¹⁴¹

The importance of confidence in his good intentions is evident in how he addresses the question directly in that first letter, explaining that confidence with a spiritual father is not exclusive. She has the right to seek confidence, and in other words friendship with others, provided she remains deferential to her director's judgments.¹⁴² Friendship, he firmly believed, permits other friendships, provided one remain respectful to the confidence of each different friend and not share all with all. Confidence requires some basis, since it believes the person to be reliable, but can never have absolute certainty because people are always free to change. Jane has already shown him her courage and belief in him by risking her inmost fears and turmoil during their talks in Dijon. He now seeks to strengthen those first daring steps with his own firm resolution to seek her good, perhaps even repeating something he had already said to her in the corner of their host's house that Lenten

(1986) t. 1 p.46-47.

¹⁴⁰Cfr. Ravier, *Petite vie de Jeanne de Chantal...* p.19. See also Jane's letter regarding her testament providing for the Claudine. Jane brought her to Annecy in 1610 and arranged her marriage to Nicolas Busact treating her as her very own child. Christophe was a passionate fighter and courtesan like a true Rabutin in his twenties. He fought some twenty duels before settling down to a very different kind of life with Jane. Her own inner strength and beauty was apparently enough to tame him, as much as her organizational skills repaired the state of ruin of his properties.

¹⁴¹ In fact André was a Bishop more for his title and benefice than conviction. It wasn't until later in life that he would convert and devote all his energy to eternal things. Cfr. Th. Mallet, *Saint François de Sales et André Frémyot, archevêque de Bourges*, Notes salésiennes n° 27 (1936).

¹⁴²"C'est pour vous dire que l'unité de pere spirituel ne forclost point la confiance et communication avec un autre, pourvue que l'obeissance promise demeure ferme en son rang et soit præferee." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII.

evening. "I know that you have complete and perfect confidence in my affection, I have no doubts about that, and that you receive consolation from it. Know too, I pray you, and really believe it, that I have a keen and extraordinary willingness to serve your spirit with every ounce of my strength."¹⁴³ Assured of this good will they mutually bear for one another they can speak freely and heart to heart. Once those doors are open every inner trouble, every sorrow and doubt can be shared and dispersed. Without a doubt Jane, who had been suffering for many years now must have been greatly consoled to find someone who understood her and in whom she could trust both his wisdom and the honesty of his love for her. In this very important first letter Francis is able to speak of their relationship he is pledging his benevolence, aiming to foster Jane's confidence, because only such love is worthy of friendship. "Make my affection work for your benefit, use all God has given me for the service of your spirit: here I am wholly yours, and do not think about how or in what degree I am so."¹⁴⁴ Just a year later he will feel free to say, "But why do I tell you this? Because I speak to you as with my own heart."¹⁴⁵

Such complete confidence was, he understood, something very dangerous. On one occasion he writes Jane to beware even of men who seem like angels in matters of great confidence. And yet he confesses in the same breath to Jane that hers is "a soul who I know and in whom I have reason to have absolute confidence"¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³“Je sçai que vous avez une entiere et parfaite confiance en mon affection; de cela je n'en doute nullement, et en reçois de la consolation. Sachés aussi, je vous supplie, et croyés-le bien, que j'ay une vive et extraordinaire volonté de servir vostre esprit de toute l'estendue de mes forces.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII.

¹⁴⁴“Faites valoir mon affection, usés de tout ce que Dieu m'a donné pour le service de vostre esprit: me voyla tout vostre, et ne pensez plus sous quelle qualité ni en quel degré je le suis. Dieu m'a donné a vous; tenes moy pour vostre en luy et m'appelles ce quil vous plaira, il n'en importe.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII.

¹⁴⁵“Mais pourquoy vous dis-je ceci? Par ce que je parle avec vous comme avec mon propre coeur.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXX.

¹⁴⁶After hearing someone complain about the private affairs of a Jesuit priest, Francis writes Jane thinking of his little ones at the Visitation, “Tout cela, ma chere Fille, me fait desirer que mes seurs, mes filles, ne s'abandonnent guere a nulle sorte de grande confiance qu'en la seule confession; car, mon Dieu, voyla pas des grans dangers? Ah! je veux croire qu'il n a pas tant de mal; mais il y en encore moins d'estre bien discret... Or, j'ay dit tout cela par ce quil m'est ainsy venu, et avec un'ame que je connoy et en laquelle j'ay rayson d'avoir confiance absolue. Serves vous des avis de tous quand il en sera besoin, mais ayes peu de confiance es hommes, quoy qu'ilz semblent des anges; je

The bond of perfection: friendship's obligations and limits

Just as Jane had given him her own self when she obeyed him without hesitation in changing her dress, he now pledges a similar obedience to her, within the confines of Christian friendship. He tells her, "I never intended there be any liaison between us that carried any obligation whatsoever, if not that of charity and true Christian friendship, which bond St. Paul calls *the bond of perfection*."¹⁴⁷ Their friendship is limited by what is permissible in Christian life. In other words it is within their friendship with God. Even for good things, they both understand like a self evident principle that the limits of their friendship are the boundaries of the life they have long ago resolved to live. He has tethered himself to her, and openly tells her of his commitment to her well being. But these chains, he assures her are ones that "the more we tighten and press, the more they will give ease and liberty. Their force is but sweetness, their violence is but gentleness, nothing is more flexible than this, nothing so firm as this."¹⁴⁸ Anticipating any misunderstanding, he assures her this commitment is not contrary to any other obligation Jane may have, "whether it be of vows or of marriage."¹⁴⁹ By putting it in this context of two of the most serious commitments a person can make in his eyes, we begin to understand how serious friendship was for the Doctor of love, and all the more so with one to whom he was drawn as strongly as with Jane de Chantal. That bond is a very major theme of this first letter of friendship. Friendship therefore has two limits, charity first and foremost, and secondly the responsibilities of one's state in life.

veux dire pour des confiances grandes et entiers. Or ceci soit dit entre nous deux..." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLXXXI.

¹⁴⁷"Je n'ay jamais entendu qu'il y eut nulle liayson entre nous qui portast aucune obligation, sinon celle de la charité et vraie amitié chrestienne, laquelle le lien est appellé par saint Paul le lien de perfection ." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII. (Col. 3:14 reads: "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.")

¹⁴⁸"Plus elles nous serreront et presseront, plus elles nous donneront de l'ayse et de la liberté. Leur force n'est que suavité, leur violence n'est que douceur; rien de si pliable que cela, rien de si ferme que cela. "*Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII.

¹⁴⁹"Ce lien n'est contraire a aucun autre lien, soit de voeu soit de mariage. Demeurés donques entierement en repos de ce costé-la." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII.

He explains in *The Devout Life* that the “excellent” bond of true friendship *is* God.¹⁵⁰ It is as if he appreciated a sacred and living nature of this engagement, which was the most intimate expression of one’s interior life. Once he agrees to become her spiritual director, we will find little or no talk of bonds, but here in the initial steps he stresses it like a pact of their alliance in devotion to God’s love.¹⁵¹ There is only one law in this alliance, as in every friendship with him, and it is a theme that occurs hundreds of times in his letters, “Everywhere holy freedom and frankness must reign,” he tells her, “and we must have no other law or constraint than that of love.”¹⁵² More importantly, he gives this engagement all the more force underscoring something unique to Christian friendship, something which makes confidence all the easier. This friendship is eternal, “It is exempt from the sharp cut of death.” For, he explains citing *The Song of Songs*, “love is as strong as death.”¹⁵³ In Paradise, he will explain to an aunt after the death of her

¹⁵⁰“Mais si vostre mutuelle et reciproque communication se fait de la charité, de la devotion, de la perfection chrestienne, o Dieu, que vostre amitié sera pretieuse! Elle sera excellente parce qu’elle vient de Dieu, excellente parce qu’elle tend a Dieu, excellente parce que son lien c’est Dieu, excellente parce qu’elle durera eternellement en Dieu.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.203.

¹⁵¹ In this first “heart to heart” letter to Jane the word “lien” occurs six times, in his mentioned pivotal text from *The Devout Life* on friendship the word figures three times, and in his first letter to her as her director (his longest) “lien” appears just once. Its seriousness is suggested by the fact it occurs also in the context of marriage as a friendship twice (*Oeuvres...* III p.270 and MCCCLXXXIX). In the constitutions of the Visitation, Francis again uses the term “bond of perfection.” “Surtout (la directrice) tachera d’imprimer dans le coeur de ses novices que toutes les soeurs de la congregation ne doivent avoir qu’un seul coeur et qu’une seul ame... Notre Seigneur et Notre Dame... les a jointes et unies ensemble, afin que jamais elles ne fussent séparées d’amour et de dilection, ains qu’elles demeurent en unité d’esprit par le lien de la charité qui est le lien de la perfection.” *Oeuvres...* XXV, p.97. See also his *Entretiens* in *Oeuvres...*XXV p.135.

¹⁵²“Il faut partout que la sainte liberté et franchise regne et que nous n’ayons point d’autre loy ni contrainte que celle de l’amour.” *Oeuvres...* Itr. CCCLI. Jane took the lesson to heart, consider her remarks many years later to one of the sisters of the Visitation, “I desire that our sisters have a great and holy freedom of mind, and that we have generous hearts for taking up true and solid virtues. Lets not amuse ourselves with trifles, but let us observe well and heartily what the Institution commands us in its spirit: for our blessed father (i.e. Francis) used to say that such little trinkets degrades too much.” Burns Sr. M. P. *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance...* t. 2, p.166.

¹⁵³“Il est exempt du tranchant de la mort, de laquelle la faux fauche tout sinon la charité:” *La dilection est aussi forte que la mort et plus dure que l’enfer*

husband, friendship that has but begun in this life continues in a perfect way.¹⁵⁴ How much more stable and permanent can any bond be?

On one occasion he tells Jane about how he was giving a catechism lesson, “Playing like a child with the children.” The adults there laughed and joked with him as they applauded. “There is nothing else I can do,” he confesses, “I show you my heart as it is in the variety of its movements, so that as the Apostle says, you not think more of me than there is in me.”¹⁵⁵ Such humble honesty gives tremendous security and freedom. There is no controlling, no worries about what others will think, only the desire to share the truth of his humanity as an adopted son of God. That honesty of his life had really no greater effect than in his dealings with others, and that was to no greater degree than with those with whom he shared his very self in friendship’s all encompassing refuge.

Causes advancement in the love of God

How does friendship aid one’s advancement toward God? The most revealing text on this score is in a letter written to Jane in January of 1606. Francis tells her, “I feel a little more loving of souls than usual; it’s all the advancement I’ve made since seeing you.”¹⁵⁶ Her friendship has been an instrument in Providence’s molding his heart to love more and more. True friendship, he explains in the *Traité*, incites us to “the spiritual privacy between God and us.”¹⁵⁷ It exercises our charity, and

dit Salomon” (*Song of Songs*, 8:6). *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII.

¹⁵⁴“Ce sera là (au Ciel) où nous accomplirons et parferions sans fin les bonnes et chrestiennes amitiés que nous n'avons fait que commencer en ce monde.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXIX.

¹⁵⁵“J'estois en mes belles humeurs, et un grand auditoire me convioit par son applaudissement a continuer de faire l'enfant avec les enfans. On me dit quil me siet bien, et je le croy. O Dieu me face vraiment enfant en innocence et simplicité! ... Il ni a remede, je vous fay voir mon coeur tel qu'il est et selon la varieté de ses mouvemens, affin que, comme dit l'Apostre, [II Cor, 7:6] vous ne pensiez de moy plus quil ni a en moy.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXXXV.

¹⁵⁶“Je me sens un peu plus amoureux des âmes que l'ordinaire; c'est tout l'avancement que j'ay fait depuis vous.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXVIII.

¹⁵⁷ He gives us an insight into how friendship helps us to learn to love rightly when he speaks of venial sin in the *Traité*: “Le peche veniel n'abolissent pas la charité mays elles la tiennent comme un esclave, liee pieds et mains, empeschant sa liberte et son action; cette affection nous attachant par trop à la jouissance des creatures, nous prive de la privauté spirituelle entre Dieu et nous, à laquelle la charité, comme vraye amitié, nous incite, et, par consequent, elle nous fait perdre les secours et assistances interieures, qui sont comme les

just as a man learns to play the piano by playing the piano, in exchanging the charity of true friendship, one learns to love God and others rightly. Able to exchange a pure love with her in the image of God's love for him somehow increased charity in his heart, as it no doubt did in Jane's. Since everything they were seeking to exchange was spiritual and oriented to a mutual desire to know God, is it any wonder that communication would do just that? Grace brought them together, it inspired a rush of affection and lifelong desire to serve, and most of all it revealed something to each through the other about divine love.

The spiritual friendship one shares interiorly with God leaves an impression that is reflected in human friendship. He comments, "charity, by the multitude of actions that it produces, imprints in us a certain facility to love, which it leaves in us even after we are deprived of its presence."¹⁵⁸ If friendship with Jane is at all akin to charity, then Jane's friendship had helped him increase his love for souls. The charity they communicate has left its mark on him. Aristotle tells us virtues are gained by an activity. Since God is the cause of their union and the faculty to love as he loves, God and the two friends therefore are intricately related. If Jane's friendship has helped him increase his love for souls, it has also increased his love for God and himself, because these three are inseparable. He had found in her "one according to his heart,"¹⁵⁹ one with a heart that feared God, humbly seeking her spiritual advancement with great ardor.

St. Thomas comments, and our author seconds, says that our love for God is fostered by considering how good He is, and how unworthy we are of His love.¹⁶⁰ Not only does advancement come by the exercise of charity---loving, but also in being loved. The Bishop of Geneva's friendship with Jane is helping both to advance in their love of God in

esprit vitaux et animaux de l'ame, du defaut desquelz provient une certaine paralisis spirituelle, laquelle en fin si on n'y remede nous conduit à la mort. Car en somme, la charité estant une qualite active, ne peut estre long tems sans agir ou perir." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.221.

¹⁵⁸"Ainsy la charité, par la multitude des actes qu'elle produit, imprime en nous une certaine facilité d'aymer, laquelle elle nous laisse apres mesme que nous sommes prives de sa presence." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.247.

¹⁵⁹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* III, p.24.

¹⁶⁰Francis cites this particular passage "Comme dit le grand Docteur Angelique [II II q. 82 a.3] le vray moyen d'atteindre a l'amour de Dieu, c'est la consideration de ses bienfatz, plus nous les connoistrons plus nous l'aymerons; et comme les benefices particuliers esmuevent plus puissamment que les communs, aussi doivent-ilz estre considerés plus attentivement." *Oeuvres...* III, p.146.

these ways. The benefits of Jane's true friendship were a frequent cause to consider the quality of God's love. Francis discloses that he has been suffering interior turmoil, but that these together with the very tiring and nearly overwhelming responsibility of serving one of the largest dioceses in the world, are all relieved by the consolations her friendship gives him. "You are very good for me and console me more than you would know to believe. There is a certain benediction of God in this affiliation, no doubt."¹⁶¹ Jane's friendship gives Francis a greater energy to work for the things he most desires. It is as if God uses her to make him an even greater lover, pressing him further with the help of her support. As the angel sent to comfort Christ in the Garden,¹⁶² her spiritual friendship aids him in his suffering for the love of God. A spiritual friend, he will later explain in the beginning of *The Devout Life*, should be considered like an angel sent to lead the way to heaven. A faithful friend, he repeats with Scripture, is a "medicine for the soul", counseling us against the deceit of the evil one.¹⁶³ Christ the great physician loves us through them and with them. Without any surviving letters there is no way of knowing if Jane offered any advise during these trials, but surely his belief in her love was his greatest consolation. In 1608 Francis writes her complaining that she overestimates him, almost to the point of idolatry. "My daughter, I am nothing but vanity, and nonetheless I do not esteem myself as much as you esteem me."¹⁶⁴ If

¹⁶¹ "Est ce pas asses dit, ma bonne Fille? Je dis ma bonne Fille, parce que vous m'estes fort bonne et me consolés plus que vous ne sçauries croire. Il y a une certaine benediction de Dieu en cette filiation, sans doute." *Oeuvres ...* ltr. CCCXXVIII.

¹⁶²Lk 22:43.

¹⁶³"L'ami fidelle, dit l'Escriture sainte, est une forte protection; celui qui l'a treuvé a treuvé un tresor. L'ami fidelle est un medicament de vie et d'immortalité; ceux qui craignent Dieu le treuvent. cet ami fidelle qui guide nos actions par ses advis et conseilz, et par ce moyen nous garantit des embusches et tromperies du malin. ... vous le debes escouter comme un Ange qui descend du ciel pour vous y mener." *Oeuvres...* III, p.24.

¹⁶⁴"Ma fille, je ne suis que vanité, et neanmoins je ne m'estime pas tant que vous m'estimes. Je voudrois bien que vous me conneussies bien; vous ne l'irries pas d'avoir une absolue confiance en moy, mais vous ne m'estimeries guere.... Je voy donques ce que vous m'estimes, et il m'est avis que cette estime vous contente beaucoup: cela ma Fille, c'est un idole. Or bien, ne vous fasches point pour cela; car Dieu n'est pas offencé des pechés de l'entendement, bien qu'il s'en faille garder, s'il est possible. Vos affections fortes s'addoucironent tous les jours par les frequentes actions de l'indifference. Revoyés une lettre que je vous escrivis au commencement de la liberté de l'esprit." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLXXXVII.

you really knew me, he goes on, you would not have such an absolute confidence in me or even esteem me. This letter shows how Jane did not spare her own affection and encouragement for Francis, perhaps to the point of exaggeration. Her praises did not sit well with Francis' self effacing humility, but we can gather that she was a consolation in his trials, and after four years it is hard to believe he could say she did not really know him. Leaning on her friendship he was able to gather strength for the miles he had yet to go before he sleep.¹⁶⁵ But it is not limited to life's dramas. He also owns that even able to freely recount little troubles is also a consolation, revealing how it was not just bearing burdens, but the whole warmth of friendship's peaceful embrace that comforted them both.¹⁶⁶

Since 1604 Francis and Jane had been living their rare friendship in a hidden way. That great tree he once wrote her of, that the Holy Spirit had planted in her heart, that desire for the love of God, had stretched out and grown strong from the soil of both their lives. It was now time for it to bear fruit. His friendship with Jane would be able to thrive once she moved to Annecy, as they began planning the foundation of the Visitation and to share the treasures of their hearts.

The Visitation: a new stage of fruition and intimacy

Towards 25 March 1610, Francis sent for Jane to begin the life they had discussed many times over the last several years, borrowing the theme from the *Song of Songs*, he writes, "Come, dear daughter, come to our mountains. God wishes to have you see the sacred Spouse there, who bounds through the peaks and leaps over the hills, who looks in the windows and through the trellises upon the soul that he loves!"¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ At the different moments of calumny in his life, like the forged letter to a woman of poor reputation asking for an hour alone with her which the Duke believed authentic, Francis seems to have been above any worries, and for that reason doesn't really lean on Jane. The consolation she seems to have provided applies more to his work and inner storms, two faces of his life of loving God. Cfr. M. Henry-Couïannier for the different episodes of slander and Francis' patient love of his enemies. *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés...* p.263-271.

¹⁶⁶ "Je vous dis ainsy mes petites affaires parce qu'il me fait grand bien." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLII.

¹⁶⁷ "Or bien, venés, chere Fille, venés es montagnes. Dieu vous y face voir l'Espoux sacré qui tressaille es mons et outrepassé les collines, qui regarde par les fenestres et a travers la treille, [Cant. 2:10;13] les ames qu'il ayme" *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXXIII.

The first Sunday of Lent a few days later, Jane de Chantal said her good-byes to the world to go to Annecy and begin a life completely devoted to religion. A crowd of peasants gathered to honor her one last time with much regret. She had gained a reputation for her generosity with the poor and the sick. There always seemed to be someone coming for treatment of some ailment to the little pharmacy she had in her home, or for some food. When her father saw her kneel to ask his pardon for the times she might have made him unhappy, he withdrew into his study because he could not hold back his tears. After Jane had embraced the relatives and friends who had gathered he came forward to give her his blessing.¹⁶⁸ He would never see her again. Much to her consternation, her son Celse-Bénigne lay across the doorway to prevent her departure. She stepped over him weeping, to begin her new life.¹⁶⁹

The idea was something new. Francis had become a spiritual friend and director for a number of women who he dreamed might live together in some type of organized religious community the interior life they had been cultivating privately with him.¹⁷⁰ What he recognized in Jane that first Lenten evening in Dijon proved to be real. She would be the cornerstone of this new kind of religious life that left the cloistered walls of the monastery a couple of times a week making visits to the sick and the poor. Its inspiration came from Mary who went to the mountains to visit Elizabeth after the annunciation, symbolizing its double purpose of contemplation and works of charity.¹⁷¹ They were to

¹⁶⁸“Go, then, my dear daughter,” he said, “to where God is calling you and let us both stop the flow of our just tears in order to do greater homage to the divine will and also so that the world may not think that our constancy is shaken.” A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage and Saint...* p.187.

¹⁶⁹He later admitted that if his mother had remained in the world she could not have given him better attention. Cfr. Burns Sr. M. P. *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondence....t. 2*, p.195. His mother’s tears later saved him from being executed ignominiously for his involvement in conspiracy with his friend the Prince de Chalis. He died fighting on the front lines of battle at the age of 30 on the ile of Ré. Cfr. A. Ravier, *Francis de Sales...* p.187 for a discussion of Celse-Bénigne’s theatrical character and later life. See also *Oeuvres...* XII, p.328, n.2.

¹⁷⁰Francis had a particular gift for understanding women, he often uses images of motherhood, (Cfr. for example IV p.330). W. Wright considers chief among his insights to women’s spirituality his encouragement of Jane’s feminine capacity for surrender balanced with self-direction and independent thought. Cfr. *Bond of Perfection...* pp.134-142.

¹⁷¹Francis explains Mary’s motives as her humility and charity, “Car la charité n’est point oisive: elle bouillonne dans les coeurs ou elle regne et habite, et la tres sainte Vierge en estoit toute remplie” *Oeuvres...* IX, p.157-160.

share the hours of their days giving “a good portion to the exterior works of charity and the best portion to the interior (work) of contemplation.”¹⁷² The congregation would not practice aesthetic mortifications, but in typical Salesian fashion that outward appearance is deceptive because the spiritual discipline was rigorous. The Visitation became the infant of Jane and Francis’ friendship. He calls her more often “My dear mother” than Jane in his later letters. From the Visitation’s beginning until the end of her life, Jane would be commonly known as Mother de Chantal.¹⁷³ Its spirit was the reflection of the spirit of their intimate life together with God. They wanted it to be “little” and flexible, “Because it is one of the advantages of simple congregations that they be able to be employed in diverse ways, according to the variety of places, time, and circumstances.”¹⁷⁴ Just as Francis had gone to the essential of Jane’s life when he wrote to calm her after he had first met her, his conception of religious life focused on the charity of their common life rather than monastic strictures. “If (the spirit of devotion) does not reign there, the strictest cloister in the world will not suffice,” he would later say in defense of his little congregation.¹⁷⁵ The weak health of the women more accustomed to a less rigorous life was another factor Francis and Jane took into account. The flexibility of the childlike simplicity and freedom of spirit he had taught Jane would be the source of the unprecedented success of the Visitation, the first religious order the world had seen founded for women independent of any affiliation with a men’s order.

It began as a community of friendship, with just four women housed outside Annecy with a grand view of her lake’s glacial blue waters on June 6, 1610. They named it the Gallery. Jane, the co-founder and ‘mother’, was thirty-eight. The eighteen year old Marie-Jacqueline Favre, the eldest daughter of Francis’ dear friend President Antoine Favre, joined her. She was pretty and known for her independent spirit and her love of worldly things until she was struck by the fragility of life. Jeanne-Charlotte de Bréchar, a neighbor and old friend of Jane was the third. She was the God-mother of Charlotte de Chantal, Jane’s youngest daughter. It may have been her cousin who accidentally killed Jane’s husband, and some believe this explains the loss of communica-

¹⁷²*Oeuvres...* XIII, p.311.

¹⁷³When Francis died there were 13 monasteries in France, by the end of the century there would be 146 in Western Europe. Today there are numerous houses in the Americas and it continues to thrive on several continents.

¹⁷⁴*Oeuvres...* XXV, p.226.

¹⁷⁵*Oeuvres...* XXV, p.291.

tion between them for a number of years.¹⁷⁶ Jeanne-Charlotte had lived most of her life scorned by her father, who was widowed by her birth. She was treated like a servant in her own home, abandoned during the plague, and survived all kinds of perils. In spite of such a hard life she began to care for the local sick and poor and took up a life of devotion. Jane welcomed her when the Carmelites of Dijon refused her entry because of her poor health. Their friendship was renewed, and when Francis came to Dijon to celebrate the marriage of his brother Bernard and Jane's Marie-Aimée.¹⁷⁷ Jeanne-Charlotte gave her conscience to his care with the same enthusiasm Jane had shown in 1604. Since then she had been waiting to found the Visitation with them. She was thirty. The fourth founder was Anne-Jacqueline Coste a simple soul who Francis had met practicing her faith clandestinely in Geneva years before. We will look at more closely at her life later.¹⁷⁸

This time of the foundation of the Visitation enabled Jane and Francis to communicate more frequently and richly than they ever could by letter. For five years the Gallery will remain in Annecy as the only foundation of the Visitation. It is a time they will never again have together, a time of almost daily visits, stimulated by the excitement of creating something they both valued together. The few letters we have of this period are therefore more often of practical details than soul to soul outpouring. Their friendship's already sound foundation was unifying them even more and bearing fruit. Francis himself recognized this, and because he was very much aware of the Christian understanding that there is really only one love, and therefore all true loves are but one, united in the same good;¹⁷⁹ he saw the Visitation itself as the fruit of the loving friendship between Jesus and Mary. "Our little congregation is a work of the heart of Jesus and Mary," he tells Jane as they were just beginning.¹⁸⁰ Just seven months after first meeting her Francis

¹⁷⁶Cfr. H-M. Couannier, *Saint François de Sales...* p.221. M. d'Anlézy was also the cousin of Christophe, which makes him and Jeanne-Charlotte somehow related. Sr. Mary Pat Burns is one who does not believe this hypothesis.

¹⁷⁷The 13th of October 1609 at Monthelon Francis blessed the marriage of his brother Bernard and Marie-Aimée de Chantal. Jane's father and brother the Archbishop discussed the foundation of the Visitation with him on this occasion. They were opposed to it being founded in Annecy. Cfr. A. Ravier, *Lettres...* p.259.

¹⁷⁸ See infra, "Anne-Jacqueline Coste" pp. 310ff.

¹⁷⁹ He develops this idea in the *Traité*: "La mesme charité qui produit les actes de l'amour de Dieu, produit quant et quant ceux de l'amour du prochain:" *Oeuvres...* V, p.205.

¹⁸⁰"Nostre petite congregation est un ouvrage du coeur de Jesus et de Ma-

had written Jane, “from the first time that you consulted me about your interior life, God granted me a great love for your spirit. When you confessed to me in greater detail, a remarkable bond was forged in my soul that caused me to cherish your soul more and more.”¹⁸¹ That bond was now a full fledged friendship, communicating one another’s gifts, counterbalancing in a dance that was an example to all. Now that they were united and fortified by one another they were able to create something in the likeness of the good things they mutually brought about in each other. With such popularity, *The Devout Life* had inspired many women to offer their lives wholly to devotion. That wave of religious fervor was asking for some form of religious life, and the Visitation provided it. Jane had all the qualities necessary, she understood Salesian spirituality better than anyone after Francis. As a widow and a mother, she had rare qualities for a founder that would inspire many women to follow her, and give the Visitation a certain generous leeway that was very uncommon for the times.

We get a good feel for the tone of daily life during these years when Francis writes Jane one evening apologetically, because the responsibilities of the day prevented him from coming to see her. “This beautiful day, so fitting for coming to see you, my very dear daughter, slips away without giving me such a contentment, at least I can try and make up for it with this small note that I get off to you between the affairs certain religious men bring me.”¹⁸² It shows his tenderness and consideration for her, and how careful he was not to disappoint her. He goes on to say “Good night again my very dear daughter, do not be worried, laugh at the enemy, for you are in the arms of the Almighty. Tomorrow, by means of his grace, we will go to see you.”¹⁸³ With only their

rie.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXCIII. See also IV, p.328 for more on the friendship and unity between Mary and Jesus.

¹⁸¹“Des le commencement que vous conferastes avec moy de vostre interieur, Dieu me donna un grand amour de vostre esprit. Quand vous declarastes a moy plus particulierement, ce fut un lien admirable a mon ame pour cherir de plus en plus la vostre, qui me fit vous escrire que Dieu m'avoit donné a vous.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.354).

¹⁸²“En fin, ce beau jour, si propre pour aller vers vous, ma tres chere fille, s'scoule ainsy sans que j'aye ce contentement; au moins faut que je supplee en quelque sorte par ce petit mot, que je sauve d'entre les affaires que certains Religieux m'apportent...Bonsoir donq, ma tres chere Fille. Ayés bien soin de soulager doucement vostre pauvre coeur;...car c'est signe qu'il est bon, ce coeur, et qu'il abhorre les mauvaises fantaisies.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXXXVIII.

¹⁸³“Bonsoir de rechef, ma tres chere Fille; ne vous inquietés point, mocqués-vous de l'ennemy, car vous estes entre les bras du Tout Puissant. Dieu soit

letters to judge by and the passing commentaries of some biographers, we gather that their friendship was marked by a gentle kindness. They were extremely considerate of one another's feelings and desires. They often were forced to communicate on the run and were both being gradually more taken by the affairs of their growing congregation and the Church. One example of that tender consideration is when Jane leaves for her seven day journey to Lyon at the end of January 1615, to found the second Visitation house. Francis sends one of her companions, Sister de Blonay, with a packet of seven letters one for Jane to open at the end of each day of the trip. They are full of praise and encouragement, with a sense of apostolic mission.¹⁸⁴ Francis admits the effect of Jane's departure has shaken him to gentle and tender tears, with the thought that his heart can no longer find "its soul" there where it is accustomed to find it. As painful as the privation of the good that his heart loves "more than any other in the world," it does not disturb the unity he shares with her deep within the fine point of the spirit which God has made from what they are.¹⁸⁵ They would see each other only a few more times and briefly, before Francis' death.

Their friendship in the storms of life

Two episodes from the early days of the Visitation reveal something about Jane and Francis' friendship. The first is a story of slander, and the second is one of fraternal correction. In 1613 a young and pretty woman named Mademoiselle Bellot, who had gained a bad reputation wished to change her lifestyle. She visited the Bishop, made a confession and at his suggestion went to the Gallery to pray in retreat for a few days. But her conversion did not last long, and a few months later

a jamais nostre force et nostre amour! Demain, moyennant sa grace, nous vous irons voir, ma tres cherement unique Fille de mon coeur." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXXXVIII.

¹⁸⁴Cfr. MXXXVI.

¹⁸⁵ "[Notre coeur] ne se vid plus soyemesme, il demeura en une douce tendreté et quelques larmes; mais quand je le portay la premiere fois ou il avoit accoustumé de trouver son ame [Jane] et quil ne l'y trouva plus, il fut saisi d'un estonnement nonpareil qui luy a duré trois ou quatre jours et le resaisit souvent, c'est a dire quand il y pense par maniere de privation du bien quil ayme plus que tout autre du monde. Mays tout cela ne touche point la pointe de l'esprit qui assure de plus en plus de l'indissoluble et invariable unité que Dieu a faite de ce que nous sommes, demeure aussi impenetrable a toute sorte d'aprehension." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MXLV.

she was again the cause of scandal.¹⁸⁶ This time it was with a member of the Duke de Nemours'¹⁸⁷ entourage. The Duke had come to Annecy to spend the summer in his castle. Because her lover was close to the Duke, the couple felt secure and began openly living together. In such a small and reverent town like Annecy, this caused a public scandal that forced the Bishop to try and intervene. When his private attempts fell upon deaf ears, he resorted to speaking against the couple from the pulpit. Their reprisal was to counterfeit a letter to the lady begging her pardon and asking for time alone with her. It seems her lover was skilled in forgery. They showed the letter to the Duke and a few others, who believed Francis to be the author. The Duke showed it to a friend of Francis, M. Guillaume de Foras, who refused to believe it.¹⁸⁸ He showed it to the Bishop who read it unmoved. He then denied he had written it, admired how well his handwriting had been copied and gave it back to his friend without giving it any more attention.¹⁸⁹ M. de Foras went to the forger and challenged him to a duel. When Francis learned of this he had his friend brought to him. He was much more upset with his friend than with the false accuser and told him that if God so wished he would know how to show his innocence, and that M. de Foras was very pretentious to give himself that role.¹⁹⁰ He then told him that if he

¹⁸⁶ "Cette pauvre miserable Bellot a une ame qui ne veut point estre corrigee par censures, car elles ne luy ont pas manqué,... et la bonne mere de Chantal n'a rien esparagné de ce quelle pouviot penser estre propre pour l'en retirer....Neanmoins, on ne sçait pas les conseilz de Dieu et ne faut jamais cesser de cooperer au salut du prochain en la meilleur façon que l'on peut...il faut tesmoigner que vous estes portee d'amour envers elle, et que vous n'aves point eü horreur de son malheur." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMLVIII.

¹⁸⁷At this time in history, the Duke of Namour was cousin and vassal of the Duke of Savoy. Annecy was the family residence for the Dukes of Nemours-Genève, who were the more powerful in reality.

¹⁸⁸M. de Foras was one of the first to abjure along with the Protestant pastor Pierre Petit in Thonon at the climax of Francis' mission there when 2,300 heads of family registered their conversion at the forty hours celebration in 1598. Cfr. A. Ravier, *Francis de Sales...* p.92 His enduring friendship is an example of how inter woven friendship was during the mission with the conversion of the people. At heart he would always be a missionary of both faith and friendship.

¹⁸⁹ He believed that in such cases one should deny slander out of respect for the truth, but if the accusation persists one should oppose it by indifference and silence. Cfr. his letter to M. de Foras, *Oeuvres...* XVI, p.320.

¹⁹⁰On his death bed the young man avowed his forgery and asked the Duke's doctors to offer his regrets to both the Duke and the Bishop and ask for his pardon. Cfr. M. Henry-Couïannier, *Saint François...* pp.264-266.

went ahead with the duel, he would not see him again. M. de Foras submitted to Francis' wishes, but in his anger he destroyed the famous letter and the only way to prove Francis' innocence. Never do we find Francis more severe with a friend than this. Would he really have shunned his friend for such an act? If M. de Foras had gone ahead against his will, it would have shown a severe breach of respect, and it would have proved him a man of indomitable pride. If those two qualities are virulent to friendship among the philosophers, they are all the more so with Christian friendship. Still, there is no reason to believe that reconciliation would have been impossible if the offender showed genuine contrition.¹⁹¹

During this affair the only record we have of Jane's reaction is that she wished to pursue civil justice when someone wrote on the Gallery's front door in the heat of the scandal: "M. de Geneva's harem." Years later, at the end of 1619 Jane would rush to Francis' defense when a campaign to discredit him emerged, because the Archbishop of Paris wanted to name him coadjutor. His reaction is telling. "My Mother, you are too sensitive regarding me, should I then be the only one in the world spared reproach? I assure you nothing touched me more in this affair than to see you touched."¹⁹² Rest in peace, he tells her, and confide both storms and sunshine to God's Providence.¹⁹³ It bothered him more to see Jane upset than to be the victim of derision. For, as he muses, to wish for everyone to like us, or that everything we do be glorious, is only pride.¹⁹⁴ Francis seems to have been above these libels, even having an affectionate pity for his malefactors, and although we see his friends rallying to his defense, they all seem to have bowed to his wishes and adopted the same attitude.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ He reasons with Jane attempting to persuade her to pardon her husband's assassin saying, "Je suis passionné, quand je voy les graces que Dieu me fait, apres tant d'offenses que j'ay commises." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXCVII.

¹⁹²"Ma Mere, vous estes trop sensible pour ce qui me regarde; et donq, faut il que moy seul au mond je sois exempt d'opprobres? Je vous assure que rien ne m'a tant touché en cette occasion que de vous voir touchee. Demeures en paix." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDLXXVIII.

¹⁹³"Quant a moy, ma tres chere Mere, j'ay remis toutes ces mauvais vens a la providence de Dieu: qu'ilz soufflent ou qu'ilz s'accointent (s'apaisent) selon qu'il luy plaira; la tempeste et la bonace me sont indifferentes. Bienheureux seres vous quand les hommes diront tout mal contre vous pour l'amour de moy." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDLXXVIII.

¹⁹⁴"Ma chere Mere, il y a bien de l'amour propre a vouloir que tout le monde nous ayme, que tout nous soit a gloire." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDLXXVIII.

¹⁹⁵ There were many different accusations, including two of treason. Years

We will look more closely in the third part at the delicate business of correcting a friend and the Salesian idea of frankness with charity versus cold candor. We have very few anecdotes of Francis correcting Jane. They both seem to have mutually consoled one another about spiritual as well as bodily health.¹⁹⁶ We find them in their letters mindful of the other's suggestions and dutifully following them. Especially when it concerns spiritual matters, as they grew closer, Francis' place as the spiritual director ceded more and more to Jane's own advice, as he shared his inner life with her and his respect for her own judgment about advancement in God's love increased.¹⁹⁷ One incident from the early days at the Gallery is worth mentioning to understand their *entente*. Francis had stressed simplicity in the spiritual life, and both he and Jane wished it to be one of the cornerstones of the Visitation's spirituality. For the first anniversary of their profession of religious life begun in the Gallery, Marie-Jacqueline Favre's father had promised a special gift for the altar. Now Francis was never opposed to adornments or the cultivation of beauty in women, nor in the environment. He saw it as way to express the beauty of spiritual things. However, when Jane let Jeanne-Charlotte and Marie-Jacqueline borrow money from the already meager Visitation funds to dress up the alter for the ceremony, because the things expected from president Favre hadn't yet arrived, Francis was upset. The few gold coins the Bishop had given the group were expressly meant for the care of the poor and sick. They had intended to replace the money once president Favre's gift arrived, but began to have doubts about the decision. Jane sent Francis a letter ad-

later when one of the daughters of the lawyer who had written those words on the door of the Visitation wanted to enter, Francis enjoined Jane to take her without a dowry. Cfr. M. Henry-Couannier for the different episodes of slander and Francis' patient love of his enemies. *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés...* p.263-271.

¹⁹⁶ Francis gives Jane the following advice: "Ma tres chere Mere, reposés un peu bien; manges un peu de choses bonnes ... car je voy que ces foiblesses proviennent d'abattement d'estomach et de froideur de teste. Du moins trempés un peu vostre nes et vos pouls de vin, et mangés une douzaine de raisin Damas apres souper." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCLXXIV.

¹⁹⁷ About one year after the foundation of the Visitation he writes Jane: "Je me porte extremement bien, a mon avis, et observe soigneusement vos ordonnances pour ma santé. Mays, pour ma sainteté, qui est ce que vous affectionnés le plus, je ne fay guere de choses, sinon mille continuelz desirs et quelques prieres particulieres, affin qu'il plaise a Nostre Seigneur les rendre utiles et fructueuses pour tout nostre coeur." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXIII.

vising him of what they had done. They both had an uneasy rest that night.

Francis was upset and set out the next morning for the Gallery to correct Jane, not knowing the circumstances. When Francis arrived he was visibly saddened and displeased. He corrected her before Jane could explain. Jane wept. They both understood what had occurred as a breach of obedience, more importantly, the spirit of their life had been transgressed, because Jane and the others had made the adornment more important than it should have been. Jane gave in to the pleas of her young companions, and forgotten the simplicity and abandonment to God's Providence, which was the hinge of the spirit of the interior life they were trying to found.¹⁹⁸

The incident gives us a small insight into how important the abandonment and detachment to all personal desires were to Francis and Jane. Their disappointment was like that parents feel when one of them makes a mistake with their child. Francis had entrusted the Visitation to Jane's leadership because of his great respect for her. He still had no doubts about her. Their unity enabled both to understand the lapse and how each felt about it. Francis believed that it was better to try and make a person see for themselves their faults than to embarrass, or even humiliate them with too frank and candid reproaches.¹⁹⁹ It is just as characteristic for Jane to immediately understand and be so upset by her small mistake. Her desire to please her friend was an integral part of a larger desire to please God by obedience. The strength of that desire only attests to her love for both of them. Her immediate understanding of Francis' thoughts shows how close they were. Yet even granting that degree of mutual understanding they were still susceptible to misunderstanding. If their understanding was perfect, Francis would not have had to scold Jane, nor should he have been upset. Hadn't she been the one to advise him of the situation because of her misgivings? Francis for his part was perhaps too quick to see the fault without asking for an explanation. Jane's tears show that whatever he said it was probably unnecessary. The real lesson is how quickly they surmounted it.

¹⁹⁸Cfr. Chaugy, sa vie et ses *Oeuvres*... p.150.

¹⁹⁹“Michel Favre, confessor of the Visitation since its foundation, recounts in the hearing for Francis' beatification, that Francis had a habit of correcting his servants by “making them see their faults without criticizing them, not practically even showing that he knew them, wanting them to recognize themselves, and esteeming that they would amend them better this way than if one reproached them.” *Saint François de Sales par les témoins*... p.165.

Union

Francis starts to identify himself with Jane as their lives merge more and more into one. “Our dear heart,” Francis asks one day, “how is it doing in you?”²⁰⁰ He begins to refer often to “our heart,” “our soul” and “our love.”²⁰¹ Jane does the same in her letters to him. If we group together all the texts of his letters to Jane where these three terms are found we have an excellent photograph of Francis’ understanding of their intimacy and “bond of perfection.” He considers it a gift, telling her he prays for its flourishing, and asks Jane to pray for it. He treasures it. It is like the symbol of their intimacy and their union. He has become more hers in Christ, he says, and that “great friend of our heart”,²⁰² has drawn them into an even closer union. When Jane has to return to Dijon for several months, to put in order the affairs of her children’s heritage upon the death of her father-in-law, Francis writes her reflecting on this incredible union he feels they share. He points out that the Lord never arouses her heart for its perfection without also giving him the same desires. He explains this as a sign that “by the unity of inspiration, we might know that this sovereign Providence wants us to be one same soul, for the pursuit of one same work and for the purity of our perfection.”²⁰³ For Francis, like Bonaventure and Scripture, the heart is the sum and substance of the person.²⁰⁴ It is the core, or what he calls, the “fine point of the soul,” the citadel that remains free during the storms and shaking of passions and worldly troubles. It is there where the soul dwells together with its God.²⁰⁵ Perfect union of two

²⁰⁰“Nostre cher coeur comme se porte-il en vous?” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCLXXXIII.

²⁰¹ Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltrs. DCLXXXV; DCCLXIV; CCCLIX; CCCLVIII; CCXXXVIIIbis; MDCCXXI; DCLX; DCXCH; CCCXX; CCCXXI; DCCCLXIV; DCCCLXXXIII; DCI; MCMLXVI; DCCXIII; CCCXXXI; CCLXXXIII; DCCXII; MDCCCLXVII; CCXL; and CDXII.

²⁰² “Ce grand Amy de nostre coeur ne le remplit, ce me semble, de desirs que pour le combler d’amour.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXIII.

²⁰³ “Et remarquons que Nostre Seigneur ne vous donne jamais de violentes inspirations de la pureté et perfection de vostre coeur, qu’il ne me donne la mesme violonté, pour nous faire connoistre qu’il ne faut qu’une /this text was missing) inspiration d’une mesme chose a un mesme coeur, et que, par l’unité de l’inspiration, nous sçachions que cette souveraine Providence veut que nous soyons une mesme ame, pour la poursuite d’une mesme oeuvre et pour la pureté de nostre perfection.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXIII.

²⁰⁴ Cfr. for example 1Pet. 3:4 and Luke 6:45.

²⁰⁵ Cfr. for example, *Oeuvres...* ltrs. MMLXX; CCLXXIII and DXLL.

persons is therefore the union of their hearts, and that union is only accomplished by the “great Uniter” who by dwelling in each enables them to abide in each other, and makes it sacred.²⁰⁶ This is how Francis understands their unity when he tells her she is another self²⁰⁷ and always present.²⁰⁸ As united as they are, this heart they share is wholly in God: “If we have one sole fiber of affection in our heart that was not for him and from him, oh God, we would strip it out immediately.”²⁰⁹ To be wholly in God means not only that it loves him more than itself, but that it is fashioned by the cross.²¹⁰ And yet, this understanding, this desire for a pure affection, did not leave him inhumanely cold and detached, as we saw when Jane left him to found the Visitation of Lyon.

Francis has been writing Jane about that one heart since 1605, just one year after their meeting. His hope and purpose has always been to come to a greater and greater union with her heart in their one love of God.²¹¹ After five years that grafting has achieved a rare union of desire, soul, inspiration, work, indeed of everything that makes a person what he is.²¹² “Why do we think that God has wanted to make one sole

²⁰⁶“J’ay une lumiere toute particuliere qui me fait voir que l’unité de nostre coeur est ouvrage de ce grand Unisseur, et partout, je veux des-ormais non seulement aymer, mais cherir et honorer cette unité comme sacree.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMLX.

²⁰⁷“Or, sus, qu’est-il besoin de parler ainsy a une ame qui me connoist comme elle mesme?... Faites donques actions de graces pour ce coeur, comme pour le vostre mesme. Dieu vous bénisse de sa grande benediction; c’est le continuel et invariable souhait de ce coeur qui est vostre en Jesus Christ.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXXVIII.

²⁰⁸“Je seray tous-jours present a vostre chere ame comme vous mesme, et respandray soigneusement la benediction des Sacrifices divins sur vostre peyne, affin qu’elle vous soit duce et utile au saint amour.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXIII. See also CCXVI.

²⁰⁹“En fin nous sommes tout a Dieu, sans reserve, sans division, sans exception quelconque, et sans autre pretention que de l’honneur d’estre siens. Si nous avons un seul filet d’affection en nostre coeur qui ne fust pas a luy et de luy, o Dieu, nous l’arracherions tout soudainement.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLVIII.

²¹⁰“Ouy, ma tres chere Fille, si nous sçavions un seul brin de nostre coeur qui ne fust pas marqué au coin du Crucifix, nous ne le voudrions pas garder un seul moment.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLVIII.

²¹¹In December of 1605 he writes, “O ma fille, il a fallu que mon coeur ayt jetté cette pensee sur ce papier, jettant aux pieds du Crucifix ses souhazit, affin qu’en tout et partout le saint amour divin soit nostre grand amour.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXI.

²¹² One example of their unity of mind is that we find in both Jane’s and Francis’ letters the expression “nous ferons prou.” Compare ltr. 54 of Sr. M. P.

heart from two,” he asks Jane one day, “If not so that this heart be extraordinarily hardy, brave, courageous, consistent and loving in its Creator and its Savior, by whom and in whom I am all yours.”²¹³ By their union, their true friendship in their love of God, each has somehow become stronger, more able to love as their God loves. Because of it, Francis tells Jane he has an “extreme consolation and contentment,”²¹⁴ and an “absolute confidence.”²¹⁵ “My heart,” he writes, “entertains you in its thoughts and my thoughts are most often entertaining your heart, which is surely, one same heart with mine.”²¹⁶ Jane for her part reveals her own feelings, and the kind of things she must have said to Francis during these years in a letter to Jeanne-Charlotte de Brécharde who remained in Annecy when Jane went to Lyon to found the Visitation there. “Alas!” she wrote, “you should have pity on me when you speak to me of seeing me again in our poor little retreat in Annecy. It is the place of all my sweetness and rest because it contains my heart’s one treasure, indeed, and I can say this to you, all my spiritual well-being in Jesus Christ in the person of our honored lord and father.”²¹⁷ Their let-

Burns, *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance....* t. 1 and *Oeuvres... ltr.* CCCXXVIII. Another expression frequently used by both is “Dieu soit notre tout” Cfr. ltrs 62 and 66 of Burns Sr. M. P. *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance....*t. 1; and for example, *Oeuvres... XXI*, p.89-90. The more unique expressions to Salesian spirituality, like *douceur* or fine point of the soul are also used by Jane.

²¹³“Pourquoy pensons-nous qu’il ayt voulu faire un seul coeur de deux, sinon affin que ce coeur soit extraordinairement hardi, brave, courageux, constant et amoureux en son Créateur et son Sauveur, par lequel et auquel je suis tout vostre.” *Oeuvres... ltr.* DCI.

²¹⁴“Ne craignes nullement, je vous supplie, de me donner aucune peyne; car je proteste que ce m’est une extreme consolation d’estre pressé de vous rendre quelque service. Ecrivez moy donques, et souvent et sans ordre, et le plus naïvement que vous pourres; j’en recevray tous-jours un extreme contentement.” *Oeuvres... ltr.* CCLXXIII.

²¹⁵“Or, j’ay dit tout cela par ce quil m’est ainsy venu, et avec un’ame que je connoy et en laquelle j’ay rayson d’avoir confiance absolue.” *Oeuvres... ltr.* CDLXXXI.

²¹⁶“Mon coeur vous entretient de ses pensees et mes pensees s’entretiennent le plus souvent de vostre coeur, qui est, certes, un mesme coeur avec le mien.” ltr. ML.

²¹⁷“Hélas! vous m’attendrissés quand vous me parlés de me revoir en notre petite retraite d’Annecy qui est mon lieu de suavité et de repos, puisqu’il possède l’unique trésor de mon coeur, voire, et je le puis dire à vous, tout mon bien spirituel en Jésus-Christ, en la personne de notre très honoré seigneur et père.” Burns Sr. M. P., *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance....* t. 1 p.78-

ters are full of such open and warm affection, that at one point Francis asks Jane to please not call him “my father, my dear love” when writing, because he wants to be able to show her letters to the other sisters of the Visitation who ask for news of her.²¹⁸

That union he now nourishes with Jane is the very term of love. Using the *Song of Songs* as his launching pad, he explains in the *Traité* : “That he might kiss me with a kiss of his mouth,” represents the souls desire to pour itself out into the one it loves, to share itself completely, in other words, “perfect love, which is to say the union of hearts.”²¹⁹ All of this is what Francis envisions with Jane when he speaks of their one heart. Together their friendship draws them into the intimacy of the Trinity and a communion with the Kingdom of God. “If we only will what God wills,” he explains to her, “his will and ours will be one will.”²²⁰ That purity of wills, that one heart is the secret to their union and the motive of their every resolution. In spiritual friendship union is not between two, but in and through the mutually shared love of Christ. Jane and Francis’ love seeks union not so much with one another, but with another. In March of 1612 he closes his letter saying just this.

“Jesus, sweet Jesus, the unique heart of our heart, blesses us with his holy love.”²²¹ The center and source of their love and basis for their friendship is Jesus, their one heart. Seeking union with him has kindled this friendship, so it is no wonder that they somehow find spiritual union of their desires in him. Their friendship seeks therefore a kind of

79.

²¹⁸*Oeuvres...* XVI, p.331.

²¹⁹“*Qu’il me bayse d’un bayser de sa bouche? (Song of Songs 1:2) Le bayser de tout tems, comme par instinct naturel, a este employe pour represente l’amour parfait, c’est a dire l’union des coeurs*” He continues, “Ainsy donq le bayser estant la vive marque de l’union des coeurs, l’Espouse qui ne pretend en toutes ses poursuites que d’estre uni avec son Bienaymé, Qu’il me bayse, dit-elle, d’une bayser de sa bouche; comme si elle s’escrioit: Tant de souspirs et de traitz enflames que mon amour fette incessamment, n’impetreront-ils jamais ce que non ame desire? Je cours, he, n’atteindrai-je jamais au prix pour lequel je m’eslance, qui est d’estre uni coeur a coeur, et qu’il versera son coeur dedans mon ame, et qu’ainsy heureusement unis, nous vivrons inseparables!” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.50-53.

²²⁰“Je vous dresseray, Dieu aydant, quelque petit exercice pour nostre chere volenté divine. Je dis nostre, car si nous ne voulons que ce que Dieu veut, sa volenté et la nostre ne seront qu’une volenté. O quel bonheur!” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXI.

²²¹“Jesus, le doux Jesus, coeur unique de notre coeur, nous benisse de son saint amour. amen.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCLXIV.

destruction of themselves. Just as the goal of their spiritual life is that 'not I but that Christ may live in me', as St. Paul says, so too is the goal of their friendship's love. "Ah!" Francis writes her, "how I desire that our life not live in us, but in the life of Jesus Christ Our Lord! And what better could I desire for our heart?"²²²

Their union is their intimacy --- the very expression of their friendship. Love goes to the very being of the thing loved, one of Francis' favorite authors, Pseudo-Dionysius explains, it shares itself, it communicates itself and the two somehow meld into one. They participate in one another's qualities, and to use St. Thomas' terminology, they become "conatural" as the lover becomes like the one he or she loves, imitating their being.²²³ In a remarkable way they become one soul, one heart, one mind. It is in a word a mystical union.²²⁴ This kind of "union

²²² "Hé! que je desire que nostre vie ne vive pas en nous, mais en la vie de Jesus Christ Nostre Seigneur! Et que puis-je desirer de mieux pour nostre coeur?" *Oeuvres...* MDCCCXI.

²²³Jane writes to Marie-Jacqueline Favre in 1616, "Oui, certes, ma fille, nous avons un père qui est admirable en son humilité, douceur et modestie: imitons-le fidèlement." Burns Sr. M. P. , *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance. Edition critique* ... t. 1 ltr. 65, p.147.

²²⁴St. Thomas comments on Dionysius : "Love as distinct from knowledge, draws us to things. Nevertheless, not every kind of love can be termed ecstatic. There is one kind of love that makes us love things, not because of what they are but because of an advantage it brings to the lover. For example, I love wine or justice, but only for my own sake; such a love may be legitimate, but it is not ecstatic. But the love which tends towards objects because of what they are, which desires the very goodness of the thing loved, such a love causes ecstasy and carries the lover outside himself. Now if the beloved is God, the lover has nothing to keep back; he can and should abandon everything; and it is in this very abandonment of self for God that the creature recovers himself, that he returns to himself, to his condition as creature....Since mystical knowledge derives from ecstasy of love, it is a knowledge by way of sympathy. Love brings with it the mutual clinging together of the lover and the Beloved. Secretly, intimately, imperceptibly the Beloved begins to enter into the lover because of the intrinsic pleasantness of the Beloved; as a consequence, the lover, while yet remaining himself, loses himself in the Beloved. This is the mystery of love, similar in its way to the mystery of knowledge: the lover dwells in the Beloved, lives in Him, abandons himself for Him; in some mysterious fashion he experiences all the vicissitudes and all the riches of the Beloved, as though they affected his own being; as Dionysius dares to say, the lover "suffers" divine realities; by means of sympathy he experiences them in the way God Himself does. He knows these realities, not as one separated from them, but as one enveloped by them, plunged into them. ... *He who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.* ...Mystical knowledge does not use concepts as a normal

by the Spirit"²²⁵ the Doctor of love underlines their love must be ecstatic, stepping outside itself and resting completely in "the pierced side of Christ."²²⁶ As a result, he tells her their union is inseparable and stronger than death, because it transcends human changeable affections.²²⁷ The Holy Spirit has glued them, welded them, united them, so that they love each other and their God as they love themselves. Francis writes Jane during these years often referring to themes of the liturgical year and their friendship.²²⁸ It reveals their implicit understanding that their friendship had a certain integration in the Church, which for them both meant the same as being united to God and the entire communion of saints.

means of cognition. It is, however, a true knowledge-- though as such it is only one part or one aspect of mystical experience; but it is a knowledge without concepts or, more exactly, a knowledge beyond concepts." *Expo. in Dionysium De Divinis Nomibus* ch. 4; l.10.

²²⁵Francis writes Jane early in their friendship, "A mesure que je m'esloigne de vous selon les lieux, je me sens interieurement de plus en plus joint et uni a vostre coeur selon l'esprit; et je connois bien par la que c'est le bon plaisir de Dieu que nous ayons ce sentiment de veritable et sincere dilection." *Oeuvres...* ltr.MDLV.

²²⁶"Qui demeure en moy et moy en luy, il porte beaucoup de fruit; car sans moy, vous ne pouvés rien faire [John 15, 5-11]. Il m'est bien avis que nous ne demeurerons plus en nous mesmes, et que, de coeur, d'intention et de confiance, nous nous logerons pour jamais dans le costé percé du Sauveur; car sans luy, non seulement nous ne pouvons, mais quand nous pourrions, nous ne voudrions rien faire. Tout "en luy" tout "par luy", tout "avec luy" [canon of the mass] tout pour luy, tout luy." *Oeuvres...* ltr.DXCII.

²²⁷"Il me tarde, ma tres chere Fille, que ce coeur que Dieu nous a donné, soit uniquement et inseparablement donné et lié a son Dieu par ce saint amour unissant qui est plus fort que la mort et que tout. Mon Dieu! ma tres chere Fille, remplissons nostre coeur de courage et faysons des merveilles pour l'avancement de nostre coeur en cet amour celeste." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXIII; see also DCLX.

²²⁸As for example when he writes her from Thonon in 1611: "Le tres grand et miraculeux saint Paul nous a reveillés de grand matin, ma tres chere Fille, si fort il s'est escrié aux oreilles de mon coeur et du vostre: Seigneur, que voulez vous que je fasse? [Acts 9:6] Ma tres chere Mere... quand sera-ce que, tous mortz devant Dieu, nous revivrons a cette nouvelle vie [col 3:3]." *Oeuvres...* ltr.DCCXLVIII. See also CCLXXXIII; DCCXCVIII (St. Peter's feast); IX, p.369-371 and X, p.283-284 (on the communion of saints) .

Two Imperfect Aspects to this Union

But this union is still imperfect. Even having one heart they still suffered misunderstandings and a certain inability to comfort one another. It is due to the limits of our ability in this human condition to express ourselves fully. As Augustine lamented, the intimacy of each person's heart is a world closed to all others, and we will only be able to find a perfect understanding or unity in the next life.²²⁹ With Jane and Francis those misunderstandings seem to have been few, which is perhaps the most one can expect. We get a glimpse of one such case during their years together at Annecy. His reaction is what we have come to learn to anticipate. He simply asks her not to misinterpret the "little words" he wrote the other day with misgivings, and says they will talk about it later. He tells her in the same breath that he sees her more than ever as his daughter "in the heart of Jesus."²³⁰ Misunderstandings are unavoidable in friendship, and on this occasion he falls back upon the confidence Jane has learned to have in his benevolence and virtue to turn those good wishes into action. By gently pointing to the misunderstanding so as not to sweep it under the rug, which has a way of making these kinds of things grow, he points it out, softening it all in a bouquet of reassurances of his esteem.

If their heart was truly one we would expect it to feel the same peace and consolation, or at least to be able to communicate it and comfort one another in distress. But it seems that all Francis can tell Jane is that she must patiently wait on God to comfort her in the "bitter bitterness of her heart,"²³¹ she suffers within. He can only suffer it with her.²³²

²²⁹Cfr. *En in Ps. LV, 9.*

²³⁰Ma fille, il faut que je vous die que je ne vis jamais si clairement combien vous estes ma fille que je le voy maintenant, mais je dis que je le voy dans le coeur de Nostre Seigneur, c'est pourquoy n'interpretés pas a desfiance ces petits mots que je vous escrivis l'autre jour; mais nous en parlerons une autre fois." *Oeuvres...* ltr.DCI.

²³¹"Ce n'est pas luy qui nous est amer, c'est luy seulement qui permet que nous, nous soyons amers a nous-mesmes. Voicy, dit Ézechias, que neanmoins, emmi mes travaux, ma tres amere amertume est en paix [Isaih 38:17]. O le Dieu de douceur veuille addoucir vostre coeur, ou au moins faire que vostre amertume soit en paix ." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCXXXIX.

²³²"Vous m'aves fort bien exprimé vostre souffrance, et n'aves rien a faire pour remede que ce que vous faites, protestant a Nostre Seigneur, ...que vous voules mesme vivre de la mort et manger comme si vous esties morte, sans goust, sans sentiment et connoissance. En fin, ce Sauveur veut que nous soyons si parfaitement siens, que rien ne nous reste, pour nous abandonner entierement a la mercy de sa providence, sans reserve. Or, demeurons donq ainsy, ma tres

“Love is sweet and sour” Francis says in the *Traité*, because it is never satisfied in this life, yet nonetheless it remains very seemly, “Its bitterness refining the suavity of its sweetness as its sweetness sharpens the grace of its bitterness.”²³³ Despite these imperfections, despite our human limits, our great compulsion to love and be loved continues to struggle to express itself, to believe in what it cannot see and to resist selfishness with an almost supernatural resilience. So within union of persons there remains distinction, within understanding remains a need for communication and even misunderstandings. The relationship is a process, as that “gentle struggle of friendship”²³⁴ brings two together in a deeper and deeper reciprocal sharing of the goods they love.

The Cross and Purification

Jane and Francis’ remarkable friendship progressed from its first stages as a kind of spiritual director and his directee sharing their ardent love of God, to a more mutual partnership sharing daily consolations and joys as they gave birth to the Visitation. Their friendship had always been an aid to each one’s desire to draw nearer and nearer to God. As they sought to completely detach themselves from all selfishness, their friendship would be marked by a new stage, a stage of purification. In the last years of his life, Francis will seem to withdraw from her the consolations and intimacy they had both grown to cherish, seeking to completely renounce any worldly attachment in his heart and in the heart of his friend. Neither will consider this as a rupture of the unity they have long worked to cultivate. Their friendship has always been founded on each one’s love of God. It is what they have communicated and the definition of their mutual benevolence. Since the terms of their friendship increase by this purification, their friendship also increases. However it will take tremendous effort for both of them. What more

chere Fille, parmi ces tenebres de la Passion.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCLXIV. See also ltr. CMIV.

²³³“Certes, Theotime, l’amour est ainsy aigre-doux, et tandis que nous sommes en ce monde il n’a jamais une douceur parfaitement douce, parce qu’il n’est pas parfait ni jamais purement assouvi et satisfait; et neanmoins il ne laisse pas d’estre grandement agreable, son aigreur affinant la suavité de sa douceur comme sa douceur aiguise la grace de son aigreur.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.348.

²³⁴Francis already clearly understood this in his mid twenties, he writes Antoine Favre: “Si quo feri posset modo, promerendae tanto tenebar desiderio, ut cum illud amplius animus meus capere non posset, omnis modestiae ruptis repaculis, nisi brevi per aliquam occasionem licentiam impetrassem, opportune, importune, ipse qualis qualis sum tirunculus gravissimum senatorem in suavissimum amandi certamen evocare non dubitasset.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. IX.

did they have to give God? Yet they knew it was just, because their friendship, as every other good thing they had ever known was a gift of his grace. “The Lord has given it to me the Lord has taken it away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”²³⁵ The turning point came when Mère de Chantal went on a personal retreat the week before Pentecost 22 May 1616. Both of them have been anticipating this and gradually preparing themselves for years. He told her in 1605, “Yes, one day you will leave everything, you will come to me and I will put you in a total stripping away of everything, a nudity for God.”²³⁶ Francis has been ill and writes her that he plans to take advantage of his imposed rest to prepare his soul. He adds that Jane should do the same as he has instructed.²³⁷ They have already spoken of this day, probably more than once.²³⁸

The letters between them during this retreat reveal their pain just below the surface as they encourage one another to abandon themselves to God’s benevolent grace. Finally on the last day of the retreat Francis says in starkly frank terms just what they are attempting: “Don’t think any more neither of friendship nor the unity that God has formed between us, nor of your children, nor of your body, nor of your soul, in short of anything whatsoever; for you have given all back to God. Reclothe yourself with Our Lord crucified, love him in his sufferings, what you must do, don’t do it from now on because it is your inclination, but purely because it is God’s will.”²³⁹ Completely stripped of any

²³⁵ Job 1:21. This is one of the texts of Scripture Francis cites twice in the same letter to Jane, well into the retreat.

²³⁶“Oui, un jour vous quitterez toutes choses, vous viendrez à moi, et je vous mettrai dans un total dépouillement de nudité de tout pour Dieu.” Chaugy, *sa vie et ses oeuvres...* p.71.

²³⁷“Je sçai bien qu’il me faudra demeurer encore aujourd’huy en solitude et silence, et peut estre demain: si cela est, je prepareray mon ame, comme la vostre, ainsy que je vous dis.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.MCCIII.

²³⁸For example in 1611 he closes a letter saying, “Bon soir, ma tres chere Fille. Ce feu sacré qui change tout en soy, veuille bien transmüer nostre coeur, affin qu’il ne soit plus qu’amour et qu’ainsy nous ne soyons plus ayman, mais amour; non plus deux, mais un seul nous mesme, puisque l’amour unit toutes choses en la souveraine Unité. *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXCII.

²³⁹“Ne penses plus ni a l’amitié ni a l’unité que Dieu a faite entre nous, ni a vos enfans, ni a vostre cors, ni a vostre ame, en fin a chose quelconque; car vous aves tout remis a Dieu. Revestes vous de Nostre Seigneur [Romans. 13,14] crucifié, aymes le en ses souffrances, faites des le oraysons jaculatoires la dessus. Ce qu’il faut que vous facies, ne le faites plus parce que c’est vostre inclination, mais purement parce que c’est la volonté de Dieu.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCV.

selfish desires, they are striving for a spiritual nudity, where their desire be but one and the same as God desires, for themselves and each other. In doing so they seek to serve God better, sacrificing their own wills for whatever might be God's good pleasure. Jane's words best summarize their pain and consolation during this trial: "Oh God! how easy it is to leave what is around us! but to leave one's skin, one's flesh, one's bones, and to penetrate into the intimacy of the marrow, which is, it seems to me what we have done, is a grand thing, difficult and impossible, but for the grace of God."²⁴⁰ As stringent as that may seem, they both understood it to be essential to perfect Christian love. Without obedience to the divine will until death, death on a cross, love is still dominated by selfishness. It is a heroic purification that God is bringing both of them through. This kind of love is difficult to understand in human terms. It is among the peaks of the spiritual life. Francis is known by most for his gentleness, and some of the most frequently voiced criticisms are that he is too sweet. He closes his *Traité de l'amour de Dieu* revealing a very different view of the great strength loving the way he did demands. "Mount Calvary is the mountain of lovers. All love that does not begin with Our Savior's Passion is frivolous and dangerous. How unhappy death is without the love of the Savior and how unhappy love is without the Savior's death."²⁴¹ Here we see in action one of the paradoxes of Christianity, leaving themselves they would find themselves, and in leaving their friendship they would find it.

After the Retreat

Did Francis' friendship with Jane de Chantal change after the famous Pentecost retreat of 1616? Two incidents seem to point to a striking change in their friendship. The first was in 1617, when Jane is overwhelmed with grief at the loss of her son-in-law, her daughter Ma-

²⁴⁰"O Dieu! qu'il est aisé de quitter ce qui est autour de nous! mais quitter sa peau, sa chair, ses os, et pénétrer dans l'intime de la moelle, qui est, ce me semble, ce que nous avons fait, c'est chose grande, difficile et impossible, sinon à la grâce de Dieu." Burns Sr. M. P., *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance...* vol 1, ltr 75.

²⁴¹"Le mont Calvaire est le mont des amans. Tout amour qui ne prend son origine de la Passion du Sauveur est frivole et perilleux. Malheureuse est la mort sans l'amour du Sauveur. L'amour et la mort sont tellement meslés ensemble en la Passion du Sauveur, qu'on ne peut avoir au coeur l'un sans l'autre. Sur le Calvaire on ne peut avoir la vie sans l'amour, ni l'amour sans la mort du Rédempteur: mais hors de là, tout est ou mort éternelle, ou amour éternel, et tout la sagesse chrestienne consiste à bien choisir." *Oeuvres...* V, p.346.

rie-Aimée and her new-born baby, all within several weeks. Francis had loved her as his own, his brother Bernard was her husband, and he too was deeply grieved. Jane became convinced that she had not properly baptized the infant, and was extremely distressed. Francis' response to her entreaties seems cold: "Why should you be so intensely self-reflective, Mother? Do you still retain some self-interest?"²⁴² A second time, in December of 1622, at their last interview in Lyon just days before Francis' death, when she tells him anxiously that she would like to begin because her heart "greatly needs to be attended to," it seems almost cruel on his part to quip: "What my dear Mother, do you still have urgent desires and personal choices? I thought I would find you quite angelic." Jane then folded the little piece of paper she had written her concerns and let him move their discussion to the business of the congregation.

Fr. Van Steenberghe believes that Francis quelled his friendship with Jane, because the relationship had become an obstacle to his own spiritual growth.²⁴³ That position seems tenable when we hear, for example, Jane testify at Francis' beatification hearings, that he had once told "a person he loved as his very self," that if God commanded him, he would sacrifice that person as Abraham had sacrificed his son Isaac.²⁴⁴ If such a simple explanation was true, how could one account for Francis' very clear belief that true friendship is permanent? It is a weighty problem, because if two saints saw even spiritual friendship as an obstacle to their spiritual growth and therefore unsowed their friendship, the necessity, stability, and even benevolence of spiritual friendship would be brought into question. Moreover, what value would human friendship have as a potential for progress to eventually sharing divine things?

Wendy Wright takes the contrary position, arguing that their love and friendship were altered, but in no way cooled. She sees it rather as a process of maturing the manifold richness of human love and its dynamic between independence and dependence, separateness and union. All of which is the very essence of perfect Christian love's duality be-

²⁴²Chauby, *sa vie et ses oeuvres...* p.188. Jane fell ill and all feared she was too near death, which suggests how troubled she was by these events and puts all the more in contrast the sternness of Francis' remark.

²⁴³Cfr. the article "l'Amitié" in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* p.528.

²⁴⁴"Parlant une fois, ce Bienheureux, à une personne qu'il aimait comme lui-même, de ce souverain amour qu'il portait à Dieu, il lui dit: 'Si Dieu me commandait de vous sacrifier, comme il fit à Abraham son fils Issac, je le ferais.'" Cfr. Jane's testimony, 1st Hearing art. 26; in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie*, tpp.178-179.

tween Christ the bridegroom and Christ on the cross. Love must die to all selfishness, and become naked as Christ is naked on the cross to be true and perfect. This, she argues is the way of union by love in the Christian tradition. Jane's shift was from dependence on Francis to dependence on God alone in her view.²⁴⁵

Fr. Ravier leans toward the opinion that there was a change. The main pillar of his argument is the dates he gives certain letters where Jane appeals repeatedly for more personal news from Francis. He traces an absence of the kind of open and intimate expressions he freely recounted at her request in previous years, and argues that this would seem to indicate an ebbing in their friendship.²⁴⁶ He reconstructs an image of Jane calling for news of him, and then painfully accepting his deliberate silence as part of her own advancement in union with God. Because he cannot be cruel with her, Père Ravier explains, now and then Francis briefly yields to her supplications gently returning to their former intimacy. In one particular instance, Francis acquiesces and writes her about a certain consolation in the truth of his faith that he experiences "more clearly and agreeably than ever".²⁴⁷ He reaches out and gives her a loving caress, saying: "Now know, I said these four words to obey your heart, which I cherish incomparably and as my very own".²⁴⁸ At another time Francis leans on Jane when one of his priests, the nephew of Msgr. de Granier, the Bishop Francis succeeded, re-

²⁴⁵Cfr. W. Wright, *Bond of Perfection...* pp.162-173.

²⁴⁶Cfr. A. Ravier *François de Sales, Lettres...* pp.308-326. He gives the following letter dated 1620 as an example of Jane's trial: "Vous m'obligés grandement de me dire des nouvelles de votre tout bon et tres aimable coeur. Faites-le toujours, mon Père, je vous prie, c'est ma tres chere consolation. Mais ne vous dois-je pas dire en simplicité que par deux ou trois il m'est venu un peu d'émotion en l'amour propre, de ce que vous ne répondez rien à tout ce que je vous demande qui touche mon particulier et sur mes plaintes?" Fr. Ravier comments, "Nous ignorons de quel jour de l'année 1620 il faut dater ce reproche filial. Si la lettre était de janvier ou février, la réponse de François marquerait chez lui une intention bien déterminée de silence." A. Ravier, *Saint François de Sales, lettres...* p.314.

²⁴⁷"Mon ame est un peu plus solidement établie en l'esperance qu'elle a eue, de pouvoir un jour jouir des fruits de la mort et resurrection de Nostre Seigneur ... [laquel] m'a fait voir plus clairement, mais avec une certitude et consolation intellectuelle et toute en la pointe de l'esprit, les sacrés axiomes et les maximes evangeliques, plus clairement et suavement, dis je, que jamais." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCXLII.

²⁴⁸"Or sus, j'ay dit ces quatre motz pour obeir a vostre coeur, que je chers incomparablement et comme le mien propre." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCXLII.

nounces Catholicism and leaves for England and the Anglican creed.²⁴⁹ So in summary, in his opinion, their friendship's change is nuanced, sometimes reverting to the intimacy we often saw in former years, but clearly their communications are less frequent and in general less personal. Père Ravier is one the greatest experts on Francis' letters, and his authority gives much weight to his choice of dates.

Even if we cannot grant Père Ravier's grouping of those letters after the retreat, all those studying their friendship agree there is a kind of reserve apparent in the last years. The affairs of the burgeoning Visitation kept them busy and separated.²⁵⁰ Their letters are less frequent and less intimate. Jane writes things like, "Ah! can't you draw a few words from your heart for me? Because it is so long since you have said anything to me."²⁵¹ When Jane was finally able to meet Francis in Lyon just days before his sudden death they had not seen each other, nor had she confided her interior to him for almost three and a half years! That is very different from his assurances to write her "the most often I possibly can",²⁵² back in 1604, and his complaints in 1606 of not being able to communicate with her for several months.²⁵³

²⁴⁹Francis writes Jane the 22 of November 1620: "Je suis grandement affligé, ma tres chere Mere, de la perte spirituelle de cet amy qui a tant demeuré avec moy. O la vanité de l'esprit humain tandis qu'il se fie en soy mesme! ... Laisser l'Eglise, o Dieu quelle frenesie! ... Que de consolations, au contraire, de sçavoir que nostre petite Congregation se multiplie en bonnes ames... Or sus, .. ma tres chere Mere, que par la cheute de ce jeune homme, Dieu m'a gratifié de nouvelles douceurs, suavités et lumieres spirituelles, pour me faire tant plus admirer l'excellence de la foy catholique." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCXXIX.

²⁵⁰There are many examples of resistance to the foundation of Visitation monasteries by the public and magistrates. Cfr. Devos, *La correspondance de sainte Jeanne de Chantal, son interet du point de vue de l'Histoire sociale des mentalités*. Congrès des Sociétés savantes de la province de Savoie, Chambéry 1972, p.107.

²⁵¹"Vous n'avez point de nouvelles à m'écrire dites-vous? Eh! n'avez-vous point quelques mots à tirer de votre coeur? Car il y a si longtemps que vous ne m'en avez rien dit. Bon Jésus! Quelle consolation d'en parler un jour coeur à coeur!" A. Ravier, *François de Sales, lettres...* p.322.

²⁵²"C'est tous-jours pour vous assurer davantage que j'observeray soigneusement la promesse que je vous ay faite de vous escrire le plus souvent que je pourray. Plus je me suis esloigne de vous selon l'exterieur, plus me sens-je joint et lié selon l'interieur. Je ne cesseray jamais de prier notre bon Dieu qu'il luy plaise de parfaire en vous son saint ouvrage, c'est a dire le bon desir et dessein de parvenir a la perfection de la vie chrestienne." *Oeuvres...* ltr CCXVI.

²⁵³"Mais dites-moy, ma Fille, ne m'est-ce pas de l'affliction de ne vous pouvoir escrire qu'ainsy a la desrobee? O voyla pourquoy il nous faut acquerir

I don't think the charitable love of any person would be perceived as an obstacle to the love of God for Francis, what he saw as an obstacle to the love of God in their relationship was rather his own attachment to the consolations it afforded him and probably the same attachment and dependence on Jane's part. As he writes her on the retreat, he wishes for them a love perfectly obedient to the pure love of God, free from pleasures, sympathies, graces and every kind of self interest.²⁵⁴ If we look at the first letter of spiritual direction Francis sent Jane after their interview at St. Claude of October 1604, the same letter that he confesses she is his favorite, he tells her she seems to write as if she is sure they will see each other again, but his duties prevent him from seeing how that can be possible. "We'll see", he continues, "what God wants of us, may his holy will be ours".²⁵⁵ Francis was a person who sought with his whole heart, mind and strength to love God above all things. When the Bishop's envoy came to him at his parents' château in Sales, to insist that he take the episcopacy of Savoy and Geneva a few years earlier, he silently paced along the colonnade of the rear garden with his arms folded. It was a terrible effort for him to accept it. With a sense of duty and responsibility as strong as Francis', the burden of serving as Bishop must have been staggering. Besides that, he had other pet projects in mind, like the conversion of England. Finally, he conceded to the unanimous opinion that such was the will of God, and

le plus que nous pourrons l'esprit de la sainte liberté et indifférence; il est bon a tout, et mesme pour demeurer six semaines, voire sept, sans qu'un pere de telle affection comme je suis, et une fille telle que vous estes, reçoivent aucune nouvelles l'un de l'autre." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXVIII.

²⁵⁴"Quand sera ce que cet amour naturel du sang, des convenances, des bienseances, des correspondances, des sympathies, des graces, sera purifié et réduit a la parfaite obeissance de l'amour tout pur du bon plaisir de Dieu? Quand sera ce que cet amour propre ne deserera plus les presence, les tesmoignages et significations exterieurs, ains demeurera pleinement assouvi de l'invariable et immuable assurance que Dieu luy donne de sa perpetuité? Que peut ajouter la presence a un amour que Dieu a fait, soutient et maintient?" *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCII.

²⁵⁵"Vous m'escrives en un endroit de vostre lettre en façon qu'il semble que vous tenés pour resolu que nous nous reverrons un jour. Dieu le veuille, ma tres chere Seigneur, mais pour mon regard je ne voy rien devant mes yeux qui me puisse faire esperer d'avoir liberté d'aller de dela; je vous en dis la rayson en confiance estant a Saint Claude; Je suis ici lié pieds et mains; et pour vous, ma bonne Seigneur, l'incommodité du voyage passé ne vous estonne-elle point? Mais nous verrons entre ci et Pasques ce que Dieu voudra de nous; sa saint volonté soit tous-jours la nostre." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV(p.369).

agreed to obey.²⁵⁶ The purpose of his life was to do God's will. He had no personal indulgences like friendship outside of that sphere. He would often say, "That which is not God is nothing for us."²⁵⁷ He did see Jane again, of course, and that step like every other in their friendship was first motivated by the maxim: "may his holy will be ours". It is also important to note that in that first letter he writes of the example of John the Baptist, who for love of God patiently stayed in the desert, obediently suffering while the one he longed most to be with, Christ, was near.²⁵⁸ Could he be suggesting that like John he too could not go to find Jane, but must remain obedient? What's more the first several paragraphs of the letter are devoted to discerning that their liaison is the will of God. If what they loved from the beginning was 'what God was in them and what God could be in them',²⁵⁹ if God's love was their bond, the good they wished for one another and communicated, then their friendship did not cool because they no longer shared those frequent communications and consolations of early days. In a mysterious way giving their friendship back to God brought them into an even greater spiritual union, because it brought them into a greater participation of the one love of the universe.

Many years after Francis' death Jane would tell of the great consolation she had, not only on that day but in many other difficult times of her life, thanks to Francis' seemingly harsh words as she grieved Marie-Aimée's death: "Why should you be so intensely self-reflective, my Mother? Do you still retain some self-interest?"²⁶⁰ In fact, this was a kindness that not only consoled Jane, but strengthened and changed her in a way that enabled her to not only become independent from him, but to give more to others. The incident impressed upon Jane that one must look not so much at oneself and the fault, as to God the one against whom it was committed and his compassion. It was a fatal blow

²⁵⁶Cfr. M. Henry-Coüannier, *Saint François de Sales...* pp.92-94.

²⁵⁷"Ce qui n'est point Dieu, n'est rien pour nous. Comment se peut il faire que je sente ces choses, moy qui est le plus affectif du monde, comme vous sçaves, ma tres chere Mere? En verité, je les sens pourtant; mais c'est merveille comme j'accommode tout cela ensemble, car il m'est avis que je n'ayme rien du tout que Dieu et toutes les ames pour Dieu." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCCLXVII.

²⁵⁸Cfr. also Sermon XLIX, John the Baptist was an inspiration of sanctity for the Doctor of Love.

²⁵⁹Recall Augustine's words: "Illum enim veraciter amat amicum, qui Deum amat in amico, aut quia est in illo, aut ut sit in illo." *Serm.* 361,1 *In ded eccl.*, II,2.

²⁶⁰Chaugy, sa vie et ses *Oeuvres...* p.188.

to that scrupulousness she suffered from for so many years.²⁶¹ She will explain it in later years as “the martyrdom of love,” where one gives their life a thousand times in the many sacrifices of love for the glory of God.²⁶² Jane learned to be more grieved over an offense to God than her own guilty worries about the correctness of her action. A closer look at their last meeting in Lyon reveals that it was not such a clear rebuff after all. According to Mère Chaugy, who knew them both, Francis appreciated how advanced Jane was in the spiritual life. He believed she didn’t need him as a director, but should turn directly to the Lord.²⁶³ After that apparent quip, he added that they would have a chance to speak of themselves later at Annecy.²⁶⁴ Or perhaps he was just teasing her, and they ran out of time then and there to address her concerns so they postponed them a few weeks.

As Francis would write her in July of 1621, God had disposed their souls to be one in his love, and her heart is more precious to him than his very own. “Oh! how I desire that our life live not in us, but in the life of Jesus Christ our Lord! And what can I desire better for our heart?”²⁶⁵ It is the perfection of the benevolent generosity that marked

²⁶¹ Jane interpreted it this way years later. Cfr. W. Wright *Bond of Perfection...* pp.173-177.

²⁶²“For myself,” Jane explains near the end of her life, “I believe that there is a martyrdom called the martyrdom of love, in which God preserves the lives of His servants so that they might work for his glory... ‘love is as strong as death,’ and martyrs of love suffer a thousand times more by staying alive to do God’s will than if they had to give a thousand lives in witness of their faith, love and fidelity.” Chaugy, *sa vie et ses oeuvres...* pp.356-357. Jane voices by experience something St. Thomas explains some four hundred years earlier, commenting on Christ’s “take up your cross and follow me,” two kinds of death are signs of the greatest of loves: martyrdom and a life devoted to others. Cfr. *In Mt. XVI, l. 3, 1410.*

²⁶³Chaugy, *sa vie et ses Oeuvres...* p.211.

²⁶⁴“Sr. M. P. Burns believes the retreat of 1616 is given too much importance by modern scholars, pointing out that Mère de Chaugy doesn’t even mention it, yet she underscored Jane’s ardor in 1622. She does not agree with Ravier that there was ever an ebbing in their friendship, nor that Francis deliberately kept Jane at arms length. She writes, “He was a busy Bishop with a big diocese, and knew Jane was totally dependent on God, and in a way, didn’t really need him.” Taken from an unpublished letter written to me, commenting on this chapter, 28 March 1993.

²⁶⁵“Dieu qui a disposé de nos ames pour n'en faire qu'une en sa dilection soit a jamais beni. Je salue vostre coeur qui m'est plus pretieux que le mien propre. Hé! que je desire que nostre vie ne vive pas en nous, mais en la vie de Jesus Christ Nostre Seigneur! Et que puis-je desirer de mieux pour nostre

their friendship from the beginning. Indeed his words from as far back as October of 1604 show how strongly Francis felt there was some divine purpose in their friendship, to bring them to greater plateau of God's love and bear fruit. By achieving something they could have never attained alone, Francis and Jane did not abate their friendship, they fulfilled it. Friendship is not an end in itself, and yet it is more than a mere instrument. They were friends, not so much for the consolations and benefits, as for the 'corporal grace' it was for them and the Church.

In the last letter Francis ever penned to Jane, just a couple of months before his death, he gives us a small insight into this phenomenon, saying something puzzling. He reminds her that as they have resolved together, their heart has "for its sovereign law the greater glory of God." To achieve that, he explains, the love of God burns and consumes everything that is foreign to it, to convert it all to itself. While God's love has progressed in him and purified him, it has also somehow perfected the "incomparable unity of heart" that he has given them.²⁶⁶ It is as if they are one and the same movement, towards union with God and towards union of heart. Ironically by their annihilation of every trace of selfishness, drawing nearer to God draws them nearer to each other. As their friendship grew, so did their communication, and confidence. They understood each other and grew more and more one. What they were learning to communicate more openly was their charity. It was their friendship with God that united them most, and as they grew closer to him, they grew closer to one another. At the same time as they grew closer to God they grew closer to themselves.²⁶⁷ This is one of the mysteries of spiritual friendship, remaining different these friends be-

coeur? *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCCXI.

²⁶⁶Ainsy l'avons nous dit, ainsy a il esté resolu, et nostre coeur a pour sa souveraine loy la plus grande gloire de l'amour de Dieu. Or, la gloire de ce saint amour consiste a brusler et consumer toute ce qui n'est pas luy mesme, pour reduire et convertir tout en luy. Il s'exalte sur nostre aneantissement, et regne sur le throsne de nostre servitude. Mon Dieu, ma tres chere Mere, que ma volenté s'est treuvee dilatee en ce sentiment! Playse a sa divine Bonté continuer sur moy cette abondance de courage, pour son honneur et gloire, et pour la perfection et excellence de cette tres incomparable unité de coeur qu'il luy a pleu de nous donner. Amen. *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCMLXVI.

²⁶⁷Père Ravier explains this mystery saying "En s'anéantissant par amour, la personne humaine atteint sa plénitude. L'amour de soi et l'amour pur de Dieu coïncident à leur sommet." We would add, if the love of God and self coincide, then too the love of one we love as ourselves, one we love for God in him and him in God must also coincide. Cfr. A. Ravier *Ce que Croyait Saint François de Sales*. 3ème editon, Ateliers Henry Lebat, Paris (1976) p.144.

come one, participating in the one love of the universe in an increasingly complete way, as they quit every selfish desire for the love of God. As the Doctor of love explains in the *Traité*: “Theotime, to love our neighbor by charity, is to love God in man or man in God. And this is why, not only does divine love command numerous times the love of our neighbor, but it produces it and diffuses itself in the human heart as its image and likeness, since in this way man toward man is the true image of the celestial love of man toward God. For the fulfillment of love of the heavenly Father’s divine goodness consists in the perfection of the love of our brothers and companions.”²⁶⁸ Sharing the treasure of charity in their hearts only served to make it grow all the more in each of them.

Conclusion

Would Francis de Sales have been the same person if he had never met Jane de Chantal? Would Jane be the same? The influence of one life upon another may be impossible to determine, and yet it can shape whole nations. Henri Bremond believes that Jane’s “silent influence” led Francis into a whole new dimension of mysticism.²⁶⁹ We can never answer that question, but we can conclude that these two souls were compatible in a rare way. Their ardent love of God, their resolution, their equality of class, and natural chemistry, were all an important basis for friendship to build upon. Although those qualities drew them together, and surely would have existed in them had they never met, it seems that friendship enhanced the things they valued most in them-

²⁶⁸“Theotime, aymer le prochain par charité c'est aymer Dieu en l'homme ou l'homme en Dieu... Et c'est pourquoy, non seulement le divin amour commande maintefois l'amour du prochain, mais il le produit et respand luy mesme dans le coeur humain comme sa ressemblance et son image; puisque toute ainsy que l'homme envers l'homme est la vraye image de l'amour celeste de l'homme envers Dieu.... puisque le comble de l'amour de la divine bonté du Pere celeste consiste en la perfection de l'amour de nos Freres et compaignons.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.205-206.

²⁶⁹He says, “Il est incontestable en effet que peu à peu la vie interieure de saint François de Sales est entrée dans une phase toute nouvelle sous l'influence silencieuse de sainte Chantal. S'il est aujourd'hui le docteur incontesté, non seulement de la dévotion commune, mais encore et surtout de la mystique, il le doit, après Dieu, à sainte Chantal.” He supports his argument noting Francis dedicated his *Traité* to Jane. H. Bremond. *Sainte Chantal*, 2éd. Lecoffre, Paris 1912, p.139. A. Ravier gives Jane's role much less importance in Francis' interior growth.

selves giving them an even greater splendor. Would they have been saints had they never met? Probably, since God would not deprive someone earnestly seeking Him. Yet, God seems to have chosen friendship as a means to bring them to holiness and to instruct others.

Francis de Sales' friendship with Jane de Chantal is in many ways unique. He was known for his rare ability to understand women, and had numerous friendships with them, but none was as affectionate, nor as fruitful as with the widow de Chantal. Our study of their progress in friendship has revealed a concomitant progress in the love of God in each of them. It was the common work that bound them and bore fruits both within and outside their reciprocal communication. Their friendship with each other has been a means to an ever deepening friendship with God, in some way complimenting grace. It bound them and "opened each to new insights of God's beauty and perfection."²⁷⁰ They were a refuge and support to one another in the slippery and difficult mountain passes of life in the world.

Francis believed, in the spirit of the Catholic Reformation, that grace works in very human ways. It is hard to imagine a more human way that grace might operate to bring persons to perfection than the daily business of loving Christianity in friendship. If it is charity that defines their friendship; meaning it is their common interest, the thing they communicate and wish for one another, then it is not surprising that their charity is increased somehow through their friendship. If we agree with Aristotle, and the Doctor of love that we learn virtue from the virtuous, then can we not also admit that we learn charity from the charitable, in other words, friendship with God shared and activated by sharing it humanly adds another dimension to the experience of that love of God. In concert with the subtle movements of grace, friendship brings the love of God to earth. This is why they both recognized their friendship from the beginning so clearly as a gift from God, meant for their perfection in a way that would only become evident in time.

That development passes through three main stages. First in the mystery of an almost metaphysical compatibility, that each immediately recognizes in the other and spontaneously gives rise to a rush of affection. However, that first resemblance must be mutually communicated and expressed. It must then be somehow shown that it is not merely based on some physical pleasure or benefit, but that it is spiritual, and seeks the spiritual good of each person. Its benevolence must first be declared and then proven in consistent action. This leads to the second stage in which their friendship communicates their inner lives, partici-

²⁷⁰H. Bremond, *Sainte Chantal*, p.142.

pating in each other's qualities, mutually supporting and mutually consoling one another. This second stage, 'the gentle struggle of friendship', is the proof of the quality of that love first declared. The truth and strength of that love are proved in the many difficulties of life, its patience, its attention, its tenderness and consideration are all ways that will to benefit one another in a spiritual way is lived out. They generously give to one another, seeking the other's benevolence in every aspect of each other's life, their family, their physical health, bearing each other's burdens in big ways and in small. It was marked by a free spirit and gentleness characteristic of Salesian spirituality. It was attentive to little things, quick to forgive, and always looking towards eternity. They could probably communicate with just a look what they felt to one another. Yet each remained different, with the obstacles our human condition entail. This is indeed the sign of the third stage of their friendship and its perfection: unity in diversity. Participating in each other's innermost qualities, communicating every aspect of themselves over the years they became one of heart and soul. They considered their bond as something sacred, something given them by God for their perfection. Their friendship was therefore something to be nourished, and somehow an important part of their spiritual life. Their complementarity as man and woman gave their intimacy all the more force, rounding each other's weaknesses and enlarging their worlds.

If one could compare the friendship with Antoine Favre and Francis with this one with Jane, one important difference seems to be in the degree of unity they reached. Favre's life was exemplary, but he was not acclaimed by his contemporaries a saint like Jane and Francis. Sharing such a faith added another dimension to friendship with Jane. Being in her presence, especially in the later years, must have been very much like being with his Lord. The understanding went deeper, as is perhaps indicated by the letters we have of him sharing his innermost turmoils and temptations with Jane. His frustrations during the mission to the Chablais he shared with Favre are not as intimate. There is more affection in his friendship with Jane, he relies more on her for consolation, as if to rest his head in her lap. Perhaps one could say he was able to be more relaxed with Favre, and shared intellectual projects and worries. Trying to judge one friendship greater or more intimate than another is dangerous with our sketchy evidence, and moreover isn't it like comparing apples and oranges? They are different. Both are at his inner circle, what comparison does afford however is some reflection on the difference between man-man and man-woman friendship. In both cases their friendship conferred an energy and inspiration, enabling them to both better serve Christ and love Him.

The life of friendship inspires friendship in return, because as confidence grows they share more and more of themselves and become united in a most intimate way. But that growth is not merely into intimacy, it is also oriented outside the friendship, it is ecstatic. This aspect is of capital importance, because it is the very cause of their friendship. Sharing the bond of perfection, God himself draws them together and presses them onwards, first to bear the fruits of the Visitation, and later through the process of purification to a unity in detachment. Through their friendship each had become more firmly established in the love of God, and so too more able to give themselves to others. Is it any wonder then that Francis saw spiritual direction as a kind of friendship? Both have the same inspiration and love. Jane's many letters attest to the hundreds of friendships she cultivated over the twenty years she lived after Francis' death. Her heart had learned the 'virtue of friendship', and diffused that gift. This interior fruit of friendship's healing power when it is centered on Christ is perhaps the best explanation of friendship's role as a corporal grace. It communicates Christ's love, as the image of his love for us. Through its intimacy spiritual friends become rich in love, so rich they can give it away.

Jane and Francis were such friends. Through their friendship the being of each was shared and increased, emptied and fulfilled. That first resemblance they spontaneously recognized eventually became a resemblance with the God they loved. The one heart they spoke of was also one with their Lord. Their friendship's *raison d'être*, its limits and its orientation were wholly in God, as they assured one another again and again. *Vive Jésus!*, the often repeated maxim of their lives, brought them to the spiritual nudity of the cross, to give each other as they gave themselves to him. This "martyrdom of love," as Jane will later call it, best summarizes the third and final stage of their friendship. The purification they suffered together was the fulfillment of that first desire to love one another as Christ loves them and the Father. Their friendship was not an obstacle to that kind of love, it was an aid. What they lived and strived for in those last years was not a separation but a union in the one love of the Universe.

Both Francis and Jane were therefore able to become more themselves through this friendship. First in sharing a common purpose and later in participating in one another's qualities. He for his part grew in her consolation and practical genius. Jane on the other hand acquired his freedom of spirit that freed her from scrupulousness and his courage which in the end helped her to be independent. Their friendship permitted each to exercise to the fullest extent their personality and thus brought the best out of each. At the same time like two drops of water

falling down a window, joining together doubled their progress, strengthening them along their way amidst the many adversities of the world.

IX

“An Exceptional Friend,” Antoine Favre, President of The Savoy Senate ¹

“Our friendship is without limit, it is as old as my heart”²

This was one of the great friendships of his life. It begins with his return home from his many years sequestered with books and tutors in foreign lands, his entry into adult life. Like the other great friendship of his life with Jane de Chantal, this friendship began very quickly. In many ways Francis de Sales’ friendship with Antoine Favre is more vast than that with the widow de Chantal. Jane enjoyed an exceptional education and culture through her father and family’s social position. She met some of the most important dignitaries of France and far away kingdoms in her own home. It gave her an appreciation of the affairs of the world few women of her age acquired. Yet all this was not the same

¹In 1594 Francis writes according Favre this distinction: “Ut nimirum qualis unus es in me talem me esse erga te nusquam dubites; sic enim summa mea voluptate conficio omnia te fratrem amantissimum et omni meliori modo meum esse, qui adeo me fratrem tuum esse perspicio ut a me fere alter mihi videar, ne si alter a me non sim, tyro graegarius, idem summo meo incommodo cum tanto fabro esse nequeam.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.. XIX.

² *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXLII.

genre of the education someone like Francis would have attained in thirteen years of study abroad. Antoine Favre was his equal in this respect. He studied with brilliant success in both Paris and Turin.³ The Parliament of Paris once called him, “the greatest magistrate in the world.”⁴ He was first a superior court judge (1584), then Senator to The Savoy Senate (1587), President of the Geneva Council (24 December 1596), and was named first President of The Savoy Senate (1610). In the absence of the Marquis de Lans and of Prince Thomas de Savoy Carignan, he held the function of governor and military head of the duchy. His *Codex Fabrianus* made him a celebrity throughout Europe. He was a prolific author. At twenty-three he published the first three volumes of his *Conjecturarum juris civilis*, which had revolutionary impact on European law. He instituted a new method for interpreting Roman law that was an instant success. Rather than taking the opinions of erudite jurists of modern times, he used Roman law itself to comment Roman law, preferring the jurisprudence of Roman civilization to the opinions of commentators. He published many books with that basic philosophy, and although some attacked his method it prevailed to have lasting import.⁵

Francis de Sales was able to share things on a more intellectual level with Favre. They cooperated in the responsibility of governing Savoy, one in the temporal kingdom and the other in the heavenly kingdom. Favre was the son of a lawyer and also a noble from Bourg in western Savoy. He had a long nose and narrow chin that ended in a pointed beard, so common in Renaissance portraits. His temperament will slowly become apparent in these following pages, as we observe him in friendship. His contemporaries recognized his qualities early, at 29 he was named to the Senate.⁶

³12 years before Antoine Favre received uncommon acclaim by his masters just as Francis would in Padua. Cfr. F. Mugnier, *Histoire d'Antoine Favre*, Paris 1902-1903, p.57-59.

⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres*... XI, p.18. n. 1. Favre was born October 5, 1557.

⁵ Alciat and Cujas introduced his method in the universities of his generation. His works were frequently reprinted, in 1706 for example the Leipzig edition is augmented with notes pertaining to usage in Germany. Cfr. *Dictionnaire des biographies françaises*, “Antoine Favre,” cols. 453-456.

⁶He probably bought the post which was made available by Bourg's debts from recent plague and penury. Buying such positions was normal practice during the 16th and 17th centuries. By creating parliaments with advisory capacities, European Princes could gain revenues from the growing and prosperous bourgeoisie by selling seats. They were the “noblesse de robe”. It

Favre's friendship was older than that with Jane. He was Francis' friend from his first consolations on the eve of his priestly ordination, through the conversion of the Chablais and throughout his episcopacy. Favre was often with Francis at his home in the evening. His daughter Marie-Jacqueline was one of the founding four of the Visitation. She would found the second Visitation with Jane in Lyon, and go on to Montferrand herself five years later, and then on to Bourg-en-Bresse in 1627, to found new communities. Antoine Favre jr became a priest of Francis' diocese.⁷ Favre's brother, Jean-Antoine Favre, also became a chanoine of St. Pierre, and was vicar general until his death in 1615, when Jean-François de Sales replaced him.⁸ His family was part of Francis' world and the Church. It perhaps shows how both men were similar in their loves, and how much their lives intersected.

We find Antoine Favre hazarding himself at the crucial moments of Francis life: mediating when his father opposed him, rallying behind him in the mission to convert the Chablais, cheering him at his interview for the episcopacy in Rome, guarding his back on his secret mission to see Theodore de Beza, Calvin's cohort and successor at the Academy in Geneva, defending him against detractors, lending him his home, and so on. Favre is usually silently in the background because we have little record of their correspondences. For many years they both lived in Annecy, so we don't possess many letters. We can only piece together his personality from fragments, noting the times and places he is with Francis, and try to shape a portrait of this very important friend, and his intimacy with the Bishop of Geneva. That friendship is most documented and telling in its early stages, when we find Favre supporting him in the most difficult tests of his life. As their mutual trust and love grow stronger their friendship takes shape, proving itself so to speak, so that after some seventeen years of friendship Francis can come to say, "Our friendship is without limits, and being so strongly naturalized in my heart, it is as old as it."⁹ Let's turn to study their friendship, especially in its early years, not only because that is the period of exterior battles and formation, but also because it is the period

wasn't enough, however to be the highest bidder, competence was normally equally important. Cfr. Mugnier, *Historie...* p.87.

⁷Cfr. F. Mugnier, *Histoire et correspondance du premier Président Favre*. H. Champion, Paris 1902-1903, p.511.

⁸Cfr. F. Mugnier, *Histoire ...* p.155.

⁹ "Car il me semble que nostr'amitié est sans limites, et qu'estant si fort naturalisee en mon coeur, ell'est aussi ancienne que luy." *Oeuvres...*ltr. DCXLII.

that the most information is left to us. There we will see already the proof of the “so worthy and so rare affection” between these men, and admire it as they themselves did with their contemporaries.¹⁰ In the words of Georges Roland, Francis’ trusted servant for more than twenty years, their friendship “was forged between them with so much blessing that it is a matter known to all that never had anyone seen a more perfect friendship and one that continued until death. And I saw it practiced daily.”¹¹

The Beginning

Antoine Favre was friends with Monsieur de Boisy, Francis’ father. The first time we hear of him is in the winter of 1592.¹² Monsieur de Boisy called upon the young Senator and a couple of other close friends to persuade Francis to agree to the marriage he had arranged with the ravishing Françoise Suchet. She was the daughter of the principal judge of Savoy and counselor to the Duke: the Lord of Vergy. In Monsieur de Boisy’s eyes it was an ideal match, and promised to strengthen his house into the next century. Francis had only recently returned from a brilliant success after thirteen years of study.¹³ He hadn’t yet found the words to explain to his aged father that all his plans for his son to take his place as head of the house of Sales, and launch an effulgent career as an attorney, were not what he wanted. For some time he had been drawn to the priesthood,¹⁴ and these events were forcing him to make a decision, made all the more ticklish in the face of M. de Boisy’s hopes.

¹⁰Francis Francis writes Favre in December of 1610, “Continuons, Monsieur mon Frere, en cette si digne et si rar’affection, affin que...tout le monde l’admire et louë des-ormais.” *Oeuvres...*ltr. DCXLII.

¹¹George Rolland, 1st Hearing, art. 8; in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie*, ...p.69.

¹²Favre had gained a shining reputation throughout the land, and it seems that Francis had already tried to introduce himself in a letter from Padua two or three years earlier as an aspiring lawyer. The attempt failed to establish any communication between them. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. VI.

¹³ On September 5, 1991 Francis satisfied his oral examiners for the doctorate in law at Padua. Guido Pancirolo, a renowned legal consultant, was strongly attached to the twenty-four year old Francis and asked to preside. His concluding remarks exceed the conventional adulation: “One cannot love virtue,” he said, “without loving you.” The applause was confirmed by all thirty examiners and the audience. They had found him “as learned as he was devout.” Cfr. A. Ravier *Saint Francis de Sales Sage and Saint...* pp.42-43.

¹⁴In 1578, when his son was eleven, Francis’ father yielded to his boy’s

The matter was delicate, not merely because of Francis' respect for his father and his wish to not disappoint him, but because, what is more important, he had a responsibility to his ancestors and those of the family not yet born as a trustee of the family possessions and stature. For the nobility of Europe at this time, their social position was something rooted deeply in the past and the future. They loved and served their children's children, who were not yet born, as much as their parents and grandparents. Because that responsibility came from birth, it was seen as something entrusted them by God. M. de Boisy had groomed Francis' younger brother Gallois for a career in the Church. He was only sixteen and had already acquired a canonry at St. Peter in Geneva, and did not manifest the qualities a head of the house required. Francis' other brother, Louis, was fifteen, and Monsieur de Boisy had already decided he would become a knight of Malta. The house of Sales needed Francis. His father was in his seventies, far older than the average life span at the dawn of the Seventeenth Century.¹⁵ He was tired and full of hopes for his promising attorney. It had been his purpose from the beginning when he sent his eldest son to the best schools of Europe for his education in law and letters.¹⁶ He had even bought an estate for Francis to assume and assembled a rich library of law books for him.

The young noble's brief engagement lasted until the beginning of the summer. Francis disclosed to his friend Albert de Geneva-Lullin that "His heart might have yielded, had not his desire to give himself to the

desire to receive "tonsure," because it was not a contract of future commitment. Rarely did a child tonsured in this way have the intention to become a cleric. His eldest son was his heir. But Francis' heart was already firmly set, as he will confide to Mère Arnauld years later, tonsure meant for him a commitment to priesthood. "From my twelfth year I had resolved so firmly to belong to the Church that I would not have changed my mind for a kingdom." Cfr. A. Ravier *Saint Francis de Sales Sage and Saint...* p.23.

¹⁵ P. Louys de la Rivière, one of Francis' contemporary biographers concurs that it was above all his sense of duty that troubled him during these months, and the same obedience that brought him into his chaste and courteous relationship with Mlle Suchet. Cfr. *La vie de l'illustrissime et Reverendissime François de Sales... où sont contenuës ses principales Actions, Vertus et Miracles*. Pierre Rigaud, Lyon (1625), pp.95-96.

¹⁶In 1575 when Francis was sent to Paris, M. de Boisy had to obtain special permission from the Duke who had forbidden study outside of his States, because he feared heretical ideas infiltrating with returning students. Cfr. *Lajeunie, Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...* t.1 p.107.

Church and his love of chastity, which he had vowed, been stronger.”¹⁷ He also confided his intentions to “embrace an ecclesial career to several persons,” he writes, people who he considers “always sacred.” These are his friend Amédée Bouvard and his cousin Louis-Amédée de Sales.¹⁸ The former was a priest from La Thuille, and one time servant of his home at de Sales. He was an assistant at the parish of Thorens, and was probably the family chaplain.¹⁹ He and Francis had been friends since Paris, and his affection for him was as profound as his confidence. He asked his cousin Louis, already a priest for the diocese to approach his father.²⁰ While all looked for the right time to break the news to M. de Boisy, Louis was also taking steps to prepare Francis’ ordination. A high ecclesiastical charge and its revenues would make it easier for the old man to accept his son’s choice. François Empereur, the provost of the diocese had recently passed away. Louis orchestrated behind the scenes, with several of Francis’ confidants, an effort to obtain from Rome his nomination to the vacant post. With the firm backing of the Bishop, M. de Granier, that nomination would be quickly accorded.²¹

Antoine Favre was ten years older. He had been a member of the Senate of Savoy for six years.²² He must have been especially interested

¹⁷ 2nd Hearing, art. 13, in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie*, ... p.82. The baron d’Hermance was Albert’s grand-father and friend of M. de Boisy. It was his château at Allinges which would become Francis’ base and refuge for his mission into the Chablais.

¹⁸Cfr. E.J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L’Homme, la Pensée, l’Action*, Editions Guy Victor, Paris 1966, t.1 pp.184-185.

¹⁹Shortly after his decision was known to all, Francis would choose Louis alone to accompany him on a retreat before receiving minor orders as his confessor. He was a comfort and a “treasure” in a severe temptation Francis suffered there, as he puts it “to the ends of my hair.” Cfr. A. Ravier, *Sage and Saint...* pp.53-54.

²⁰Cfr. Charles-Auguste de Sales, *Vie de Saint François de Sales, Evêque et Prince de Genève* Desclée de Brouwer & Cie Lille 1890, p.15.

²¹ In fact Claude de Granier believed Francis would be his successor ever since he had seen him quickly settle a nettlesome theological debate at a contest he had organized to test the young noble’s erudition. From that day he prayed and worked to that end. He admitted a tender affection for his protégé and high esteem for his future role in the church. He was the principal motor behind Louis’ efforts to secure the office of coadjutor for him from Rome. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie *Saint François de Sales, L’Homme...*t.1 pp.186-187.

²²The Senate of Savoy was established in 1559, under Charles Emmanuel it had 2 chambers and 16 senators with 3 presidents (Dijon had 10 presidents).

in this young and eminent fellow Savoyard whose reputation had also no doubt found its way to the young and gifted Senator's ears. The whole region had heard of the rare acclaim he had received from his examiners at Padua. Like most who knew the newly returned and promising star from the house of Sales, he believed Francis apt and ready for an outstanding legal career, not to enrich himself, as success in law means today, but to advance justice and wise decisions in the land. He must have been eager to have the young man begin an active role in the many tasks before them. He wanted to see Francis beside him on the Senate.

While the Bishop and his friends were working to secure a high position in the Church, Francis didn't dare to tell his father of his desires. He submitted to M. de Boisy's wish he register with the bar. At that time it was possible for a priest to be also a lawyer, so this step didn't repudiate his hidden intentions. It was not Favre, but another family friend, Jacques Slateur, who presented him to the attorney general with his credentials.²³ On the 24 of November 1592 he was allowed to address the Senate where he acquitted himself with distinction in the minds of those who were not already convinced by his reputation. Antoine Favre was among the Senators in his audience and shared the general sentiment that this man was one of the most capable ever presented to that body politic. There was even talk of making him a judge.²⁴

He wanted to visit Favre, but there was a call to arms recently sent out over the nation by the Marquis de Treffort obliging him to return home quickly.²⁵ The two men felt a mutual admiration that was exceptional, yet they had never met. It was just a matter of time before those feelings would be expressed and give birth to a great and fruitful oak. But first one more thing was to occur that would force Francis to declare openly his intentions to his father.

The Senate had the right to debate the Duke's edicts but their decisions had to be approved by the Duke. It was mainly an executive organ of the Duke with no political power. The Duke retained all legislative power. Cfr. Devos and Grosperin, *La Savoie de la Réforme à la Revolution française*, Ouest France, Rennes 1985, pp.49-51.

²³Charles-Auguste de Sales reports it was Favre. Cfr. *Vie* pp 13-15. We adhere to Fr. E.-J. Lajeunie's research which is more thorough. Cfr. *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme....* t.1, pp.187-188.

²⁴Cfr. Favre's letter to Francis, *Oeuvres....*XI, p.371.

²⁵Cfr. *Oeuvres....* ltr. IX.

Just a few weeks after his speech before the Senate and his acceptance by the bar of Savoy to practice law, a message arrived from the Duke concerning the young attorney. The Baron d'Hermance, a friend of the family and governor of the Chablais, came from Turin bearing the Duke's appointment of Francis de Sales as Senator of the same body he had addressed only a few weeks earlier.²⁶ Francis was only twenty-five.²⁷ Normally one needed to be thirty and such an appointment came only after a long wait and many petitions to even the most qualified candidates.²⁸ Favre had used his prestige with the help of three influential friends to secure this grace from the Duke.²⁹ Even with such cogent friends this nomination was something unheard of. Such an honor impressed everyone greatly, all except Francis who must have seen these events as a door slowly closing upon his hidden desires. He turned to Louis his cousin who encouraged him to persevere a little longer, things were happening in Rome.

The family's lack of money³⁰ made their dependence upon him the most distressing for the young Francis in his dilemma. When news came from Rome on May 7, 1593, that he would be named the second

²⁶The first letter we possess from Francis is to the same Baron d'Hermance who apparently visited him during his school days in Paris it is dated November 26, 1585. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XI, p.1.

²⁷Using Père A. Ravier's dates, I calculate Francis was 25 not 24, as Père A. Ravier indicates. Cfr. A. Ravier *Saint Francis de Sales Sage and Saint*. p.51. His birthday is August 21, 1567. He was called before the Bar on November 24, 1592 he would have received his nomination after that date which would make him 25.

²⁸Favre writes: "Hinc illa singularis erga te propensia serenissimi ducis nostri qui senatoriam dignitatem quam plerique alii ambire tam anxie solent, tibi nuper nihil minus cogitanti ultro jam destinavit, confestim haud dubie collaturus, si plus apud te prudentissimi principis iudicium totiusque ordinis nostri ratio, quam moderatio tua valuisset." *Antoni Fabri libri Coniecturarum*, 1598 p.78 cited by E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*.t.1 p.190.

²⁹Cfr. A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...*p.51. The Duke's maître de requêtes, Claude Guichard was also devoted to Francis' cause and was probably one of those Favre approached. The Baron d'Hermance was also highly esteemed by the prince. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*, t.1, pp.190-191.

³⁰M. de Boisly was unable to obtain certain responsibilities for his son because of a lack of money and confessed that the family was rich in coats of arms, but weak in revenues. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*.t.1 p.191.

man of the diocese, a career in the Church finally opened to him, because it came with the financial means to surmount the family's troubles. The next day Francis asked his father's permission to begin his life of service in the Church. After his vehement protests, M. de Boisy yielded to his son's resolution and gave his benediction. Francis knelt down and thanked him. His mother withdrew to weep privately.³¹ On May 12 Bishop de Granier installed him as provost of Geneva. His education and familiarity with the Bishop made any preparation in a seminary unnecessary. Francis retreated for a few days in prayer and received the minor orders that June from Bishop de Granier. He was to receive ordination for the priesthood the following December.

“Admiration excites the desire to know”

It was friendship with the father that had brought the young Senator Favre into the intimate life of the family, but that friendship would be minor in comparison with the friendship he would soon throw himself into with the son. It will become one of the great forces in his life. That summer, shortly after Francis made public his desires to give his life to the Church, Favre writes him a letter offering his friendship.³² He tells Francis it is his reputation of “singular virtue, honesty and erudition” that so drew him to want to enjoy his company.³³ He pours himself out in just a couple of pages offering his good-will and admiration, and confessing his desire to be friends with the young Francis, to “tie the bonds of a perpetual obligation.”³⁴ In that first letter Favre, who was clearly Francis' superior in responsibility as in age, reveals his humility, admitting first he is not as learned as Francis, and second in expressing his desire to be his friend. Favre is the first between them to dare to

³¹Cfr. Charles-Auguste, *Vie...* p.16. Francis revealed his desires to her earlier, and though she resisted at first, she agreed to use all her power to appease his father, which was difficult enough. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t.1 p.191.

³²Favre's letter is dated July 13, 1593. Francis' response comes sometime in August.

³³“Tu vixdum equidem mihi de facie notus, sed nominis tui fama pro singulari qua excellis virtute, probitate ac eruditione notissimus, tanta me fruendi tui cupiditate allectum devinctumque habes, ut jam inde a quo tempore mihi ad eadem ista bonarum literarum et jurisprudentie studia,” *Oeuvres...* XI, p.371.

³⁴“Licet minus feliciter, incumbere contigit, de amando te et observando non tantum consilium cepisse videar, sed etiam obligationis perpetuae vinculum contraxisse.” *Oeuvres...* XI, pp.371-372.

reach out and express his hidden admiration and benevolence. He writes in an embellished Baroque style, full of adulation and the subjunctive, but none of this masks his clear and bold offer of his friendship and sincere admiration for Francis.³⁵ It reveals a man himself a great admirer of everything best in men and at the same time respectful of the one he speaks to, almost to an extreme. Its tone is not subservient, but vigorous and stalwart. He tells Francis he hopes to win his friendship by being the first to bear his soul, for “to conquer is to conquer first.”³⁶

Francis’ reply is carefully worded in the most eloquent and subtle kind of language Latin allows. It betrays a student of wide lore and is full of respectful homage. The Senator’s offer for friendship surprised and delighted him. He “reads and re-reads without end” Favre’s gesture of simple sincerity. He confesses that he too has long harbored an admiration for Antoine Favre that he has not dared to express. Indeed he has held him up as a kind of a model for a long time, striving “day and night” to be like him. He tells the young Senator that he finds him a man of rare qualities, which is all the more inspiring for him because he is from his own country. Francis admits that he himself was on the brink of coming forward eventually to “provoke” the Senator “to this sweet and gentle struggle of friendship,” because his love had grown stronger than his fear, and because in Aristotle’s words, “admiration excites the desire to know.” He had even sought Favre out on one occasion when he was in Chambéry but the Senator was absent. But now their friendship has begun, and the young robust Francis takes Favre’s offer as “a signed contract,” with which he has “provoked a combatant who is

³⁵ F. Strowski says these early letters are tedious and school boyish with their plays on words, compliments and overly ornate prose. The simple clarity and perspicacity of his later writings, he observes, are in sharp contrast in both their form and depth. pp.192-194. But his criticism errs by reading another time with the terms and customs of our own. The Baroque is noted for such style, especially among learned men, who like calligraphy with the intelligentsia of China, showed their learning by the beauty of their words, more than the stark perspicacity of their meaning. His style is like St. Paul of Nola’s intimate poetry in his letters to St. Augustine. Erasmus thought the Christian identity of a person was revealed in their letters. He was no doubt familiar with both. Cfr. *Saint François de Sales, introduction à l’histoire du sentiment religieux en France au dix-septième siècle*, Plon, Paris, 1896.

³⁶“Nam et plus praestat qui prior amat, et in praeclaro isto et laudabili contentionis genere ex quo suavissimam sibi quisque speret victoriam, priorem vinci vincere est.” *Oeuvres*.... XI, p.373.

by nature very ardent in these kinds of struggles.”³⁷ He is honored and grateful. Though he doesn’t consider himself worthy of the Senator’s friendship, and fears he has expressed too much affection, remains confident in the ability of Antoine Favre’s good-will and virtue to see through any misunderstanding, as well as anything false others may say about the young noble of Sales. That same confidence brings him to faith in the permanence and resolution of Favre’s kindness. He was no doubt already experienced in the demands of friendship,³⁸ but Favre

³⁷“Accepi litteras tuas, vir clarissime et Senator integerrimo, tuae in me benevolentiae pignus suavissimum, quae animum meum tanquam insperatae adeo commoverunt ut permixta admirationi gratulatio mihi meummet ingenium eriperet. Ea videlicet tua humanitas qua juvenem tirunculum vir gravissimus senatorii ordinis ad amicitiam provocas, [et] vetus tuae in me pietatis promoterendae desiderium, parem cum gratulatione admirationem concitarunt. Si qualis in me fuit jam pridem observandi te et amandi propensio, ejus et fuisset aliqua significatio, non tam ad amandum te, ut modestissime loqueris, aliqua provocatione opus mihi fuisse cognovisses, quam concessione libere id agendi ac palam profitendi quod intimis haerebat sensibus. Universo enim orbi litterario cum ex fructu arbor optima et sis et habearis, (Mt. 7, 16 & 20) mihi unus perpetuo propositus es quem noctes diesque respicerem, et ad cujus exemplar quam maxime possem genuine animum meum efformare, non tantum quod nullibi superiorem, paucos etiam habeas pares, sed quod provincialia, civilia aut, ut ita dicam, domestica exempla nescio quid habeant acutioris energiae ac efficaciae. Cum vero non solum speciem, sed ne quidem specimen tam expressae virtutis in me ullum post aliquot annos viderem, meae tenuitatis mihimet satis conscius, videndi te coram et audiendi manebat consilium; ac tuae in me benevolentiae, si quo fieri posset modo, promoterendae tanto tenebar desiderio, ut cum illud amplius animus meus capere non posset, omnis modestiae ruptis repaculis, nisi brevi per aliquam occasionem licentiam impetrassem opportune, importune, ipse qualis qualis sum tirunculus gravissimum senatorem in suavissimum amandi certamen evocare non dubitassetm...Quare cum jam per litteras ac obsignato veluti rescripto ferventem jam et suapte natura pugnacissimum hoc in genere certandi militem provocaveris, videndum est utique tibi non tam quis prior in aleam descenderit observes, quam quis posterior supersit...Ego quo minus me vel de nomine tibi notum esse divinabam ac adeo tuas expectabam litteras, eo magis tantam tuam humanitatem sum praeter modum admiratus, quo factum est ut in immensum tui aspectus et colloctionis desiderium creverit. Admirationem enim cognoscendi desiderium parere philosophiae in limine tutum est proverbium.” (Aristotle’s *Metaph.* 1. I, c. II) *Oeuvres*... ltr. IX.

³⁸See for example, *Oeuvres*... XI, pp.3-18 Where letters to fellow students (one of whom he attends in illness) and even a professor are full of affection. One is of particular interest because it treats a misunderstanding apparently due

must have excited a rare affection in the young Francis. It comes through in the ardent conviction to serve him teeming in this epistle. He tells him, "While waiting for the happiness of seeing you, I thank you, and I promise you that I will not let myself be surpassed in the care to honor and to correspond to your friendship."³⁹

What is striking about this first letter is that Francis mentions nothing explicitly about God. It is all cloaked in terms like goodness and virtue. Whereas in initiating friendship with Jane de Chantal his central concern seems to be whether it is the will of God, and once this is apparent, it is his principal motive for pursuing friendship with her. Here it seems his friendship is more human, perhaps due to a more natural confluence of their lives. At this early beginning of his active life, Francis had not yet made the commitment to the Church and taken on the charge of responsibility he had assumed shortly before knowing Jane, nor had he passed through the ordeals waiting for him in the Chablais. He is just coming home to a life already organized for him, meeting prominent people he never really had a chance to know in his visits, and finding himself warmly welcomed among them as one of their peers. Favre will prove a devout man, if he hadn't already. I doubt he would have been repulsed by a letter couched in the terms of God at the center of their friendship. It is hard to imagine a man enjoying as much respect from so many the way Antoine Favre did in Savoy in the late Sixteenth Century, without also living an exemplary Christian life.⁴⁰

to doubts about Francis' sincerity, and even believes him angry, which seems in part due to the unreliability of letters being delivered. Francis tries to fortify his friends trust in his love. He writes, "Quid mihi culpa est?...his timoribus locum deinceps ne dederis; quamvis enim ii ab amore proficisci videantur initio, postea tamen saepe parvulis et brevissimis mutationibus temporisque processu genitorem ipsummet suum interimunt." Dom Mackey believes it was this same friend who approached Favre on Francis' behalf. Cfr. *Oeuvres...XI*, p.11. And in the words of the editors of the Annecy edition: "Déjà notre Saint est l'ami tendre et dévoué qu'il sera toujours. L'amitié, il la faut à son âme si pure; il en goûte les charmes, elle est une partie de sa vie." XXI, p.ix-x.

³⁹"Interim, dum id expecto, et mihi quam maximae agenda gratiae quod prior scripseris, promitto me in colendo te et observando nullum unquam habiturum superiorem, ac tuae in me humanitati intima responsurum voluntate, quamvis meae minus tersae litterae juncundissimis et elegantissimis quas dedisti non respondeant. Quas dum capio, lego identidem ac relegendi finem facio nullum, tanta me capit voluptas ac tui observantia quantam animus meus capere potest; adeo scilicet verum est captum esse qui caeperit. (Is 14:2)" *Oeuvres....* ltr. IX.

⁴⁰ M. Henry-Couannier, for example tells us that the citizens of Annecy

The absence of explicit allusion to God in this first letter shouldn't be given too much importance. Goodness and virtue were clearly Christian for Francis, as he had verified for all by his life at Padua. His friendship with Jane de Chantal raised questions. People were especially sensitive to a friendship between a distant Bishop and a widow. With Jane he had to make the purity of his intentions obvious from the beginning, even though she may not have required those assurances.

Another thing that shows the importance of this exchange, is that it is unique and immediate. With so much adulation, Francis must have had more than one person solicit his friendship.⁴¹ Between him and Favre there was something uncommon they both recognized and even admired in one another, even before they had spoken to each other. One letter expressing those feelings was enough to ignite their lifelong soul to soul engagement.

Favre presses for a legal career

The young noble had decided to give his life to the Church, but that decision did not preclude his serving on the Senate as his predecessor, Monsieur Empereur, who was also a priest and doctor in law. When Francis hesitated to accept the Duke's extraordinary offer, his entourage began to pressure him to welcome it. To refuse such an honor would be embarrassing. Antoine Favre wrote him in October (1593), trying to convince him of the compatibility of service to the State and service to the Church.⁴² He argues there are many Bishops and Abbots in the Senate, and that M. Empereur was a serious theologian. Are not, he submits, Senators like priests dealing with the mystery of human and divine things alike? The Senate often would have need of the opinions of a prominent theologian. He believes that their friendship requires they both devote themselves to study the same subjects, so much so in fact that if Francis doesn't leave theology, he, Favre, will be tempted to leave law for theology, provided he receive the permission from the

were required by law to all assist any obligatory Church procession, and that the cooperation and understanding between State and Church were perfect. Cfr. *Saint François et ses amitiés...*p.45. Besides his letters of recommendation and degree in law, Francis had to confess his Catholic faith to be admitted to the bar.

⁴¹See for example *Oeuvres...* ltr. VIII, where Francis responds that year to two letters from the regent Jean Ménenc, who dedicated a book to Francis in 1600. He writes, "Verum qualis sum me tuum optimo modo scias esse."

⁴²*Oeuvres...* XI, 374-376.

Senate and his wife. Indeed, Favre concludes, serving on the Senate is not vain glory, but the best way to serve both the common good and the State. How could he refuse such an honor with so much woe in the land? He waited anxiously for Francis' reply.⁴³ We see already how important the intellectual life is in their friendship and Favre's own keen sense of duty, that not only sets their friendship in its proper place, but perfectly conforms to Francis' own vision of the value all of these held in his life.

About a month later, when he finally had the time to answer, Francis explained why he was not convinced. He wrote pointing out that his predecessor was obliged to spend most of his time in the Senate. He responds to his father and Favre's inducement by insisting that he is inspired to serve the Church not half time, but uniquely, "For this master wants no rival."⁴⁴ Favre may have been exasperated at first, but like most others he could only admire such a rare display of modesty and ardor. It is the first time we witness Salesian spiritual detachment, the annihilation of selfish desires in deference to God's will, that will be one of the great buttresses of his spirituality and have such a strong influence upon his generation. He had already at the age of twenty passed through one of the greatest mystic trials: the temptation to despair. His famous crisis centered on predestination and the dreadful fear that he would be deprived of the love of God. It lasted for about six terrible weeks. The horror that such a thought posed for him shows how deeply a loving experience of God had already touched him.⁴⁵ His desperation ended as abruptly as it came when he voiced this prayer of pure giving: "Whatever it is to be, Lord, at least let me love you in this life if I am unable to love you in eternity."⁴⁶ The experience marked

⁴³Favre wrote Francis three times before having his response. The birth of his sister Jeanne, his new duties, and the unreliability of the post were to blame. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. XII and vol. XI, pp.377-382.

⁴⁴E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t.1 p.195, cites Hauteville, *Maison naturelle, Histoire et chronologique de S. François de Sales, par Nicolas des Hauteville prêtre, Docteur en théologie et Chanoine de la Cathédrale de Saint Pierre de Genève*. Paris (1669) p.189.

⁴⁵This occurred while he was a student at Paris from December 1586 to January 1587. Years later he told Jane de Chantal and Jane de Creil this story to comfort them in their own trials. Cfr. Their depositions in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.58-59. See too *Oeuvres...* XXII, pp.xiv-xxii for more.

⁴⁶"Quoy qu'il arrive, Seigneur, vous qui tenez tout dans vostre main, vous dont toutes les voyes sont *justice* et verité; quoy que vous ayez descrete a mon

him, and since then he had abandoned himself to divine providence and cultivated all the more a very rich interior life. It was no doubt galvanized by the four month fever that brought him very near death. That crisis was seven years ago now. It had chiseled a rare combination of worldly qualities, and the humble devotion to use them entirely to serve God. It is one of the most striking things about him that being so gifted he was so humble and resolute to serve his Lord. He was an extraordinarily pure being and it seems people recognized that force in him from the earliest part of his adult life.

“More than ever I need your benevolence”

Favre accepted Francis’ decision not to join The Savoy Senate, and gave his full support to his young friend. We know this from the tone and content of his next letter to Favre on the eve of his ordination. Francis doesn’t hesitate to call upon his new friend for consolation, and bare his inner turmoil to him. He cites John Chrysostom confessing, “Your sympathy will be very beneficial to me, for I am being assailed by the greatest tumult that I have ever felt.”⁴⁷ He goes on to tell Favre, “more than ever therefore I need your benevolence.”⁴⁸ It is normal between persons who love one another, Francis notes, to entrust their apprehensions at crucial moments. It soothes those fears somehow to communicate them to one we love. He calls Favre “My true friend,” and says he is the only one capable of understanding his turmoil, because of his great respect for the responsibility of a priest’s sacred duty.⁴⁹ This is

esgard dans l’esternel secret de vostre predestination et de votre reprobation, ...vous qui estes un Juge toujours juste et un misericordieux Pere, je vous aimerai, Seigneur, au moins en cette vie. Au moins en cette vie je vous aimerai s’il ne m’est pas donné de vous aimer dans l’esternelle vie! ...Si, mes merites l’exigeant, je dois estre maudit parmi les mauditz...accordes moi de n’estre pas de ceux qui maudiront vostre Nom.” *Oeuvres...* XXII, p.19-20.

⁴⁷“Appetente et imminente jam tremendo illo ac, uti Chrysostomi verbo loquar (Hom. L in Mt. 3), horrendo mihi tempore, quo ex Antistitis placito, id est, Deo volente tantum...postquam per omnium ordinum gradus sacratissimos iter hucusque feci, tandem ad augustissimum sacerdotii apicem evehendus sum...et haec omnium quae in hac mortalitate expectari queunt mutationum sit maxime gloriosa, multo tamen mihi jucunda erit [compassio tua]. Cum enim me omnium quas antea sensi maxima me torqueat sollicitudo.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XIII.

⁴⁸“*Timorque et tremor venerint super me, [tua benevolentiae maxime indigeo.]*” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XIII.

⁴⁹“Id enim moris est amantibus, si quid arduum ac periculosum

not so much a cry for help as a “useful remedy” to “relieve his suffering heart.” At the age of 25, Francis already has the insight into the nature of friendship to recognize that even though a friend may not be able to save us from our pain, it is somehow enough to be able to see his compassion to be comforted. He feels the same pain, and tells Favre this is “the incontestable mark of friendship.” How much better it is to share each other’s pain than to exchange a “cold benevolence,” he muses. Despite these fears, his hope remains, he assures the Senator, and with it a happiness that permits him to look forward beyond his own merit to the joy of his approaching priesthood.⁵⁰

Antoine Favre writes him a long response full of consolation and profound Christian sincerity. He shows himself one already far in his own understanding of the battles of the interior life. Why be so troubled, he asks his friend, you are not an angel, but only a man. He must cast out his fear with love and humility, Favre says, echoing ideas on childlike freedom of spirit we find later as one of the pillars of Francis’ own vision of the spiritual life: “You show yourself worthy precisely because you judge yourself unworthy,” he tells him. If only more felt this way, rather than seeking their priesthood for ambition and exercising it with such little reverence for Christ’s tears and blood shed for them.⁵¹ “Indeed,” Favre says, “by the conjunction of our souls your

aggreddimur, sollicitudinem ac formidinem nostram solari amicis [communicatione] facta, ac formidinis motus sedantur si negotium ipsum mentemque nostram amicis exponere possimus...Et quidem non eram nescius, observantissime vir, magno cum periculo hanc tantam (*sic*) sacram dignitatem conjunctam esse...Tu vero unus es, amplissime vir, qui huic mentis meae perturbationi percipiendae maxime mihi videris idoneus. Tanta namque observantia, tanta veneratione rerum divinarum [cultum] prosequeris, uti facile tecum reputes quam periculosum sit ac tremendum earum officinae praeesse, in iis quam facile simul et graviter peccetur.” *Oeuvres*.... ltr. XIII.

⁵⁰“Verum haec dixisse sat est; tantum commovendae [misericordiae tuae] gratia ita tibi sensus meos explicavi, quod scirem medelam esse aegris amicis opportunam. Quamvis nescio ...quanam id ratione fiat ut cum amicus commiseratione malum abesse velit ab amico misero, miser hic contra miseratione amici recreetur, cum miseratione mali particeps [miserens] non feriqueat. Nisi forsitan illud est quod miseratione clarissime illucescit amicitia, quae cum sit optima rerum omnium, in amico longe melius est deprehendere cum miseratione quam si sine ulla mali communione vel nulla vel exigua superesset benevolentia.” *Oeuvres*.... ltr. XIII.

⁵¹“Quod facere et possum et debeo, non te hortabor ad istam dignitatem sic tuendam tractandamque ut appareat dignitatis functionem tibi cum multis communem esse functionis vero dignitatem cum paucis (neque enim tu is es qui

happiness was wholly poured into me.”⁵² Favre couldn’t attend the ordination, but he did attend his first mass on December 21, and receive communion from Francis’ hand with his family. The two were able to meet on Christmas eve, and he probably attended Francis’ famous inauguration sermon as provost to the Geneva presbytery, which was like a battle cry: “Geneva must be reconquered!”⁵³ It would be his main occupation for the rest of his youth.

Forging bonds

Their friendship and mutual affection were quickly growing very strong. They call each other “*amicissime*,” “*suavissime*,” and “brother.” They use adjectives to describe one another like “most gentle,” “loving,” and “excellent.” Favre christens him “my soul”, and “*mellisissime*”⁵⁴ and Francis responds calling him “*amantissimo*.”⁵⁵ They are best friends. In the beginning of 1594 Francis fell ill with a fever. In the late Sixteenth century a fever often meant sudden death. Favre expressed that anguish in a letter. Francis’ response reveals an evolution in their trust and endearment. His style has changed from literary and profuse to a fresh and cordial simplicity. He tells Favre that he couldn’t have a better medicine than the joy his letter gives him, even though it saddens him to learn how his illness has worried his friend. We see how close they have become when Francis comments, “I would almost say *our fever*, if between us hurts were as shared in common as goods are.”⁵⁶ Each would gladly take upon himself the

moneri aut excitari debeas), sed illum ipsum Christum qui sacrificator tecum erit supplex orabo, ut qui tam sancti propositi autor fuit idem sit et adiutor perpetuus et remunerator, tantaeque pietatis furctus in dies tibi praestet uberiores et cumulatiores.” *Oeuvres...XI*, pp.379-382.

⁵²“Quod si accidet, non tantum in felicitatis tuae partem venisse me putabo, verum etiam pro animourm nostrorum conjunctione felicitatem tuam quanta tota erit in me transfudisse si non invidabis.” *Oeuvres...XI*, p.382.

⁵³Cfr. A. Ravier. *Lettres... p.9*.

⁵⁴Cfr. For example, *Oeuvres...XI*, p.382-385.

⁵⁵“Ego molestissime ferrem praesentiam etiam pro matre vicariam cuiquam tunc confere cum ex ea ab amantissimo tuo conspectu sequeretur absentia, enimvero factum est ut, rebus aliter succedentibus.” *Oeuvres...ltr. XV*.

⁵⁶“Ac cum tu per summan amicitiam de febricula mea doleres, prope fuit ut nostra dicerem si malorum ut bonorum inter nos communio inducta foret.” *Oeuvres... ltr. XIV*.

burdens and pains of the other. Indeed, somehow they do so in virtue of what he calls “this communication of suffering.”⁵⁷

The young Francis then moves on to tell Favre how he looks forward to celebrating Carnival with him, that “honest recreation” Christian friends allow themselves since antiquity, to have the spirit more free in the coming penance and prayer of Lent, implicitly assuring him his health is fine. They simply enjoy each other’s company in, “Not only serious conversation, but amicable babbling.”⁵⁸ To be in the presence of one another is a relief in suffering and a pleasure in recreation. Being in one another’s presence is not just something nice, it is the way friendship is maintained and nourished. It will always be an “extreme contentment” for Francis.⁵⁹ That is why he compares it in another letter to Favre to the notion of “noblesse oblige.”⁶⁰ Francis even tells him on one occasion he feels his existence in Annecy without his friend present seems as if he is only there in some kind of dream.⁶¹

Francis and Antoine Favre exchanged letters on certain business and legal matters in the following months; as he relies more and more on Favre’s professional experience. Even in these letters, hints of their friendship appear now and then, one example is especially telling. Francis writes noting that Favre’s last letter treated the same subject on the very same day he himself was writing Favre about the matter. “This shows clearly,” Francis writes, “The perfect unanimity of feelings that exist between two brothers, above all in matters of friendship.”⁶² They probably even spoke to each other about what friendship should be and how they might realize it. He goes on, “In consequence, it is just that in

⁵⁷“At mihi jam vicissim dolendum de tuo dolore foret, nisi iis doloribus modum facere tandem aliquando satius esset.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XIV.

⁵⁸“Cum non modo colloquium, sed garrimum verni ipsius temporis leges permittere videantur.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XXI.

⁵⁹“Vous ne m’eschapperez pas pour un seul jour de tout cet hiver... mon tres cher Frere, car je ne vous en dispenseray nullement; non tant fondé com sur l’extreme contentement que j’ay en vostre presence.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMXVII.

⁶⁰“La bienséance et la noblesse exigent que des amis tres affectionnes prennent au moins autant de soin pour conserver entre eux la concorde et l’amitié, a raison de la souveraine jouissance attachée a ce bien.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XXI.

⁶¹“Me voyci de retour a Neci ou il me semble que je ne suis qu’en songe, puisque vous n’y estes pas. *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMXVII.

⁶²“Jam vero epistola illa tua postrema cum mea quam ad te eodem die scripseram adeo mente convenit, ut eosdem duorum fratrum animorum sensus esse, in animando praesertim.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XIX.

your turn, you might do for me what I have done for you up to now, since I hold you for a friend without equal, consider me also as such; you are becoming thus for me, the brother the most loved, and all mine in the best manner possible, and I feel I have become yours, to the point of believing myself another man than myself.”⁶³ He trusted Antoine Favre and was letting himself be molded in some degree by this person he admired. If he was not able to stop and appreciate a way of being different from his own, if he was not looking and listening to an existence beyond common egoism, he muses, he would never have been capable to be one with a man of love and virtue like Favre.⁶⁴ That little almost parenthetical phrase is one of the keys to understand Salesian friendship. Only when a person is willing to give rather than to have, to live what Francis will later call “the holy ecstasy of true love,” can they not only learn the art of friendship in Christian virtue from others, but also become something greater, become like the God they love together, become divinized.⁶⁵

On another occasion Francis asks Favre to intervene for a laborer from Thorens, which he pursues and supports to its conclusion.⁶⁶ He asks him to take a case of a family maid, and other disadvantaged individuals he knows. Their mutual desire to defend the innocent and the little ones is spelled out in the letters of these years.⁶⁷ Favre, for his part, defers to Francis’ judgments about certain persons, and undertakes their cause. That kind of cooperation will continue later in their lives, and become a part of greater public affairs, like acting to stop the pillaging military troops,⁶⁸ or being diplomatic envoys for the Prince to

⁶³“Quo fit ut quod hactenus feci tu quoque vicissim faciendum existimes, ut nimirum qualis unus es in me talem me esse erga te nusquam dubites; sic enim summa mea voluptae conficio omnio te fratrem amantissimum et omni meliori modo meum esse qui adeo me fratrem tuum esse perspicio ut a me fere alter mihi videar.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XIX.

⁶⁴“Ne si alter a me non sim, tyro graegarius, idem summo meo incommodo cum tanto fabro esse nequeam.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XIX.

⁶⁵“Ainsy donques se fait la sainte exstase du vray amour, quand nous ne vivons plus selon les raysons et inclinations humaines, mais au dessus d’icelles, selon les inspirations et instinctz du divin Sauveur de nos ames.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.35.

⁶⁶ The man’s name was Rodolphe Démeiller. Cfr. *Oeuvres...*XI, ltr. XII.

⁶⁷As for example the affair of Jean Menenc, his former grade school teacher, *Oeuvres...*XI, ltr. VIII.

⁶⁸Cfr. *Oeuvres...*ltr. DCLXXII.

Paris. These bits of evidence say nothing of the many daily ways they could have helped and counted on each other to help others.

Francis was the kind of man that felt an immense affection for people with great hardiness in their giving and commitment. One of the few times he speaks of Antoine Favre's character is in praising him for exactly this. He tells him that what first excited his affection for the Senator was how "By the scorn of perishable things of time, by the expectation of incorruptible goods of eternity, you have brought to the ultimate degree of perfection the strength of soul nature has blessed you with."⁶⁹ It was that strength of soul, that "zeal,"⁷⁰ that unrelenting purpose and energy to love without compromise or fear of failure, that Francis loved in Jane and in Antoine Favre.

Family and world

One of the marks of Salesian friendship is, as we have seen with Jane de Chantal, that it extends to the whole family of his friend, and even in some cases, the whole de Sales family welcomes the friend. Francis' friendship with Favre included Favre's wife, Benedicte, and his children.⁷¹ In 1594 Favre had six children, René was the oldest at eleven. The older children wrote Francis and he writes back to his "very dear friends" asking them for a second letter because he has read and re-read the first so often that he's damaged it. He tells them to follow the excellent example of their father so that they can become noble "artisans" (a play on words with the Latin *faber*, which means artisan), and so that they may especially learn to love him. The letter closes

⁶⁹"Noveram te, mi Frater, rerum omnium mortalium et temporum accurata observatione ac despectione, immortalium et aeternitatis expectatione et amore, ejus qua te natura donavit animi fortitudinis numeros omnes absolvisse." *Oeuvres...*ltr. XLV.

⁷⁰ Francis writes Favre in May of 1595: "Quamquam et tuam illam diligentiam quibus quaeso modis supplere poteram? *Oeuvres...*ltr. LIII.

⁷¹ Francis writes Favre of Benedicte: "Bene vale, expectatissime Frater. Suavissimae sorori, conjugii tuae clarissimae et charissimae, salutem dicerene debeam non satis scio, qui te illi jam nolim sane addicere nisi tu ipse vicissim eam etiam nobis tecum addicas. Christum vobis precor propitium et nobilissimis liberis." *Oeuvres...* ltr. XXIV. They wanted to name one of their children after him. Cfr. XIII, p.399. But they had a girl and named her Lucrecia. In 1605 Benedicte was pregnant for the 10th time. This time they planned to name the child Francine if it was a girl and Francis if a boy. Both mother and child died in childbirth. Francis never was godfather for one of Favre's children. Cfr. Mugnier, *Histoire...* p.315-316.

underlining his respect for their mother.⁷² Favre had apparently wholly welcomed the young Francis into his home as he had welcomed him into his life. He must have been like an uncle for the Favre children who no doubt rushed into his arms when he visited their household. Years later he would welcome their spouses into his intimacy and consider them too his “nieces” and “nephews.”⁷³ Favre also seems to have taken a new enthusiasm for Francis’ family. Their friendship doesn’t only embrace one another, but each other’s universe. Francis calls this “a proof of affection.”⁷⁴

Winning others to befriend him

Not only did Antoine Favre offer his friendship to him and use his influence to lobby for his appointment to the Senate, he also shared his friends with him. His praise and esteem for Francis won him their friendship as well. Favre was a generous man, and he sought not to possess in friendship, but above all to share. Francis saw this immediately, and it only increased his affection for the young Senator. He writes thanking him in October of 1593, and says, “Everyone can love, many can make themselves loved in my opinion, but to elicit love

⁷²“ Duo maxime nunc praestabo, Amici charissimi: alterum quidem ut vestris litteris quibus non ita pridem auctiorem me sane fecistis et jucundiorum respondeam; alterum vero ut quoniam sentiunt ex iterata lectione detrimentum, hac eadem epistola, recentes a vobis exectam, cum eadem utrumque ratione nitatur. Rectissime namque facitis qui, patris vestri clarissimi et optimi auctoritatem secuti, ad me tam amanter sripsistis. Hunc vobis praelucentem sequamini, quaeso, religiose; in hoc Amici charissimi, splendidissimum exemplar oculos vestros noctes diesque intendite. Sic enim fiet ut ex ejus officina ingenui nunc quidem tyrones, subinde fabri nobilissimi prodeatis, ac me uti facit imprimis diligatis. Meo nomine impensissime salutem clarissimam matrem vestram, quam tanta prosequor observantia nulla ut aptius qua filiorum reputari possit. Itaque eam meo nomine salutem.” *Oeuvres*.... ltr. XXVIII.

⁷³As for example when he writes of Favre’s eldest son, René de la Valbonne’s wife André de Nicole de Crescherel saying, “Ma nièce est une vraye Soeur de la Visitation du dehors,” in 1620. Cfr. A. Ravier, *Lettres*... p.40. Or this closing in a letter to Favre from the fortress of Allinges in 1594, referring to his wife and children.: “Sororem meam et commatrem nepotesque omnes salutatos omnino velim.” *Oeuvres*....ltr. XXXVII.

⁷⁴“Obrunt me potius tot tantaque beneficia quibus non sine labore Tullianis nostris tuam in Salesios tuos benevolentiam navasti; quae, qua parte tui in me amoris sunt effectus, recreant illa etiam plurimum, obrunt dum cum tanto otii sacri tui incommodo proficiscuntur.” *Oeuvres*....ltr. XX.

for others from friends is in the power only of one who enjoys a transcendent and recognized authority. All love me only because of their love for you.”⁷⁵ Favre’s kind consideration moves him to say: “What can in effect can be better humanly speaking than such a friend?”⁷⁶ Even as a young man Francis was a person who gave friendship a pivotal place in his life. He considered its love, trust and respect the riches of our heart. He explains to Favre, how unworthy he is of such a gift, because sharing one’s friendships is like sharing one’s self. It is inviting another person “To participate in the singular treasure of your soul, that is in the intimacy of your friend”.⁷⁷ Francis will later regard friends sharing their friends with one another so fundamental to friendship that he will call it “the rule of communication.”⁷⁸

François Girard was one such friend that both men were close to. Francis writes him on one occasion “Today is the nineteenth day I am spending life in the sweetest way with my brother, our dear Favre; the only thing lacking it seems our happiness is to have you with us.”⁷⁹ Another was Claude Guichard, the Secretary of State, who Favre had been close to since his school days in Turin. He was best man at Favre’s wedding, and Favre was quick to put his two friends in contact.⁸⁰ They in turn soon became familiar.

⁷⁵“Amare namque omnes possunt; amicos sibi concilare permulti, ut ego quidem censeo, aliis vero, non nisi quorum autoritas praecipua atque exundans omnio sit. ...amor erga me tuus singularis qui satis sit uti omnes me diligant, quem tam fortunatum eo vident nomine...Quare consentaneum uti eum socium appelles qui sua voluntate quidem sed tuo solo me diligit amore, quem tui non sui cognoverit opinione.” *Oeuvres*... ltr. X. Cfr. also ltr XI, where Francis thanks him a second time.

⁷⁶“Quid enim tali amico optabilius in humanis esse potest?” *Oeuvres*... ltr XI.

⁷⁷“Ei quam tu mihi tecum esse voluisti amicitiae consentaneam, qui mihi bonum illud animi tui singulare, hoc est, voluntatem eximii viri Francisco quoque Girardo tuo in solidum adduxeris, ne vel minimae rei inter vos societatis desideraretur.” *Oeuvres*... ltr. XI.

⁷⁸In 1603 as Bishop he will write to M. de Soulfour: “Je doy une lettre a monsieur Asseline et un’autre encores, que je luy adresseray, a un de ses amis qu’il a voulu rendre le mien par la regle de la communication.” *Oeuvres*...ltr. CLXXXVII.

⁷⁹“Est enim undevigesimus hic dies quo cum fratre meo Fabro nostro vitiam ago suavissimam, cui ad perfectam foelicitatem id defuisse unicum videbatur quod te nobiscum non haberemus.” *Oeuvres*...ltr. XXVI.

⁸⁰Cfr. R. Fourrey, *Les amitiés de Saint François de Sales dans les pays de l’Ain*. in *Visages de l’Ain*. Nos. 91, 92, and 93. 1967, p.9-11. and *Oeuvres*...

The Siege upon Calvinism

One sign of Favre and Francis' unity of mind in these early days is evident in the confraternity of "The Penitents of the Holy Cross." From his first sermon Francis' gift as a preacher affected his audience in a remarkable way. This, together with his zeal to catechize, to visit the sick and imprisoned, and hear confessions, inspired the Bishop to give him the privileged title as the diocesan penitentiary, which gave him the most extensive powers of absolution.⁸¹ He would sometimes hear confessions from dawn to noon. As provost, he was also eager to assist other priests if they were ever overburdened or ill. In the midst of all this zeal he founded a confraternity that he named "The confraternity of the Holy Cross, of the conception of blessed Mary and of the holy apostles Peter and Paul." It was immediately popular, and was meant to be a first step in his counteroffensive against Geneva, the font of Protestantism.⁸² Francis' parents, two thirds of the clergy and a large number of citizens throughout Savoy joined its ranks. It stirred enthusiasm for conversion and devotion through works of charity and prayer.⁸³ Favre founded another chapter at Chambéry,⁸⁴ and one day in the spring of 1594 the two chapters, "a few thousand bare feet," made a pilgrimage to the Church of Aix, to venerate the relics of the cross.⁸⁵ It

ltr. XXXVI.

⁸¹Confession was one of the disputed points with Protestantism. Père E.-J. Lajeunie summarizes the significance of this title: "If one wants to understand the extraordinary effectiveness of his apostolate, one must study him in the confessional, all his life he will give priority to this ministry: he will leave everything, meals and rest, to hear the confession of peasant or poor woman...It was for him the place par excellence of divine love." E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t.1, p.212.

⁸²Several times a year they joined in public procession dressed in black sac cloth. During the rest of the year they knelt to say a Hail Mary at noon every day when the church bells of Annecy sounded the Angelus, wherever they might be. Their first meeting was in September of 1593, while Francis was still a deacon. Cfr. M. Henry-Coüannier, p.47. It had the full backing of the Pope and Bishop de Granier.

⁸³ Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXIV p.387.

⁸⁴ Composed of many members of the Senate, the Prince so esteemed them that every Holy Thursday he gave them the power to pardon a prisoner condemned to death. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXIV, p.347 note 1.

⁸⁵ Francis wrote Favre regarding their planned pilgrimage revealing this shared zeal to serve God. "Leges hujus nostrae Societatis ex ordine descriptas jam habetas; si quid incommodum vobis videbitur pro locorum varietate,

is at times like these that we see the real basis of their friendship was an ardent love of God. The confraternity somehow captured the spirit of the Catholic Reformation in Savoy. Already from the first days of his life as a priest, Francis de Sales plunged himself into what would be the great work of his life—the conversion of souls.

The group would have never enjoyed so much success however without the full backing Bishop de Granier gave it. His fatherly affection for Francis developed into a true friendship, and their united efforts lent a redoubtable force to the movement. The Bishop was one of Antoine Favre's "best friends,"⁸⁶ which no doubt also played a role in friendship's beginning between the two. Francis' own success strained that friendship when jealous members of the clergy whispered to the Bishop that Francis was talking badly about him behind his back. The Bishop saw his brilliant provost eclipsing him in popularity, and for a time their relationship cooled. Fortunately, he couldn't harbor these feelings for his "son" for long and one day he took Francis aside and revealed his heart's concerns. Francis sincerely assured the Bishop of his loyalty, and when he saw the Bishop's anger against those who had spread this calumny, he begged him on his knees to not punish them. This experience made his friendship with Claude de Granier all the more firm.

From his first sermon Francis was an ardent proponent of the Catholic Reformation. His sermons from 1593 to 1594, like the confraternity, followed that end by three means: catechism to instruct the elite on the errors of Calvin, raise the Savoyard consciousness against Calvinism, and increase devotion and prayer to assail Geneva with Christian love.⁸⁷ Antoine Favre was happy to take his place as one

immutabitur. Haec una omnino vobis nobisque lex sit perpetua, uti fratres hinc inde vicissim omnes et *filius Dei nominemur et simus*. [2 Jn 12]" *Oeuvres*.... ltr XXIII.

⁸⁶ Francis writes Favre in 1594, "Bene habet Antistes noster, tui cum primis amantissimus." *Oeuvres*... ltr. XXI.

⁸⁷A cadre of enthusiastic young friends from the corps of clergy formed around his leadership. Louis de Sales and François de Chissé, the Bishop's nephew, were first among them. The latter was vicar of the diocese and like Jonathan the friend of King David of the Old Testament, could have claimed succession his right, but was one of Francis' strongest advocates. They were joined by Francis' old friend Jean Déage and Jean Portier, who was intimate with both Francis and Favre, Marc-Antoine de Valence, Francis' confessor and Jacques Burnet, liturgist and musician at the cathedral. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme*..., t.1 p.201.

of the standard bearers for this strategy, which took its embryonic form in the confraternity. But Francis' genuine youthful fervor would be revealed deep in enemy territory in the years to come, as would be the efficacy of his own Christian love. There too he would lean upon the young Senator for consolation and encouragement against very daunting odds.

The mission to the Chablais

The most revealing information the historian has of Francis' inner thoughts and fears during his mission to the Chablais is from his letters to Antoine Favre. He was his main support, especially in the early years that were the most difficult. It is one of the most documented times of their friendship. It is also one of the most critical times of Francis' life, and as Fr. Ravier puts it: "In the lifetime of Francis de Sales there is probably no period when he appears greater."⁸⁸ He will leave his amenities as number two man in the diocese to live as an itinerant missionary, have several attempts made on his life, and suffer the jeers and pelting of both pastors and residents. Indeed the risk was grave enough for him to repair every evening to the fortress of the governor of the Chablais, the Baron d'Hermance, at Allinges with his garrison. All of this was in a very unsure and tense political climate. The region had been under Protestant domination for over sixty years. The people of the Lake of Geneva basin regarded the Savoyard Duke and his soldiers as intruders. Only over the Baron d'Hermance's fortress did the flag of Savoy fly, even though the region had been under its shaky governance for several years. Geneva was their natural cultural and commercial center, not Turin. The soldiers didn't dare travel except in armed groups and they avoided villages. For many of these rustic people a Catholic priest was a "sorcerer" or a "devil,"⁸⁹ and his patronage from the invading armies of the Duke of Savoy didn't help gain their esteem.⁹⁰

⁸⁸A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales Sage and Saint*p.61.

⁸⁹ Cfr. A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage*....p.65.

⁹⁰ A complex series of changing alliances between Geneva, Bern and France with attacks and counter attacks against the Duke of Savoy through the 1580's and 1590's had left the region in a state of suspense for many years. The second treaty of Nyon, negotiated with the Bernese in 1589, finally enabled the Duke enough legitimacy to act cautiously to convert the region. Meanwhile in Bern the Senate refused to ratify the treaty. Charles-Emmanuel was intent on welding the region in the classic formula of "one State, one faith, one law." An

Francis' father vehemently voiced his opposition to the idea of going there as a missionary, but his son's tenacity eventually won his begrudging consent. He could only respond to Francis' rare faith, even in the face of death, with a reserved blessing. It was a delicate situation and Favre played an important role in persuading M. de Boisy to accept his son's pursuit.⁹¹ Even so, a few days later, September 14, 1594, when he left with his cousin Louis for the Chablais, the old man refused to say good-bye and did not give them a cent for the journey, nor would he permit anyone to travel with them.⁹² Sometime later he dispatched a servant, Georges Roland, with a horse to bring Francis back home. Francis refused and sent Louis home to reassure his worried parents. The mayor of Thonon politely received the missionaries despite the high degree of anti-papist tension there. The city was in an uproar when the populace learned Francis would be allowed to use the Protestant temple to preach immediately after their services. For this reason, on Saturday before, September 17, Francis presented the Duke's mandate to the local authorities of the Chablais, forcing them to let him preach.⁹³ The situation was dangerous, and M. de Boisy was vigorously campaigning against this foolishness. Everyone was nervous, and for a moment even Favre would teeter in his support of Francis daring plan.

earlier attempt sending about 50 priests lead by François Bochut in 1590, failed when the Duke withdrew his armies from a siege on Geneva with ambitions to snatch the Provence from France. Cfr. *Die Eidgenössischen Abschiede aus dem Zeitraume von 1587 bis 1617*, J. K. Krütli et J. Kaiser, in *Amtliche Sammlung der Aelteren Eidgenössischen Abschiede*, ed. J. Kaiser, vol. V. Bern (1872) pp.182-189. See also, E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t.1 pp.226-232

⁹¹Albert de Genève testified in the beatification hearings M. de Boisy had asked his grandfather to try and dissuade Francis, who tried, but was instead himself won over to Francis' cause, and together with Favre had the greatest influence on M. de Boisy's yielding to his son's ambitions. Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...*, p.85.

⁹²Cfr. A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales Sage and Saint ...* p.64. In fairness, M. de Boisy was known throughout his domains for his generosity to the poor, his compassion and his piety. A constant flow of people came to the de Sales home for every need from food to money, because they gave willingly. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales L'Homme...*t.1, pp.103-105.

⁹³Lajeunie believes it was Favre who presented the legal papers. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t.1 pp.223-226. A. Ravier contends it was Francis himself who presented the papers to the mayor of Thonon, Pierre Fournier, who would later be one of his early converts. Cfr. A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales Sage and Saint...* p.66.

The young Senator Favre accompanied the old man when he went to plead with the Bishop to recall his son. The Bishop believed in Francis' mission, but despite his optimism he relinquished to M. de Boisy's fears, and agreed to recall his provost. Favre, like the Bishop, was taken by M. de Boisy's arguments. They all resolved to remove him from jeopardy. Caught between friendship with the father and son, as a father himself, Favre sympathized with M. de Boisy. He wrote Francis trying to persuade his friend to relent and abandon the Chablais. He told him he was throwing his pearls before swine.⁹⁴ The Protestants were apparently only hardening, and the Catholics softening, as the number of critics in Annecy grew. Then suddenly on the 31 of October 1594, after about three weeks of reflection, Favre writes Francis a little ashamed of having faltered, and tells him that he alone can be the judge of the situation and if he had some hope of succeeding he should not leave the fruits of his labor to another.⁹⁵ Once he understood his young and talented friend's resolve, he closed ranks behind him.

In the Chablais the Baron d'Hermance judged Francis' departure impossible, which was just what Bishop de Granier needed to oppose M. de Boisy. He rescinded the withdrawal. Francis wrote his father reassuring him, but he remained obdurate in his opposition. While he continued to refuse to send any aid whatever to his son, Francis' mother was helping him and secretly writing letters with her own encouragement.⁹⁶ She and Favre worked to appease the old man, whose opposition remained a thorn in the young missionary's side.

M. de Boisy's fears weren't so amiss. For the next several years Francis would be facing the threat of assassination daily.⁹⁷ He was confronting nothing but obstacles. The Duke hesitated to give his open backing, allowing Francis only to preach, and leaving him to his own devices for fear of provoking the neighboring Protestant armies. There was an uproar in Thonon. The local principals had met and decided that neither they nor the people would attend any Catholic sermons. How

⁹⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres*...XI, p.384-386.

⁹⁵Cfr. *Oeuvres*...XI, p.387-389. Perhaps the fact that Favre's wife gave birth to a son just a few days before had some bearing on his renewed conviction.

⁹⁶“Je sais assurément que pendant les quatre années que ce Bienheureux demeura au Chablais, il s'y entretint tout à fait à ses dépens” George Rolland tells us in the beatification hearings. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie*... p.121. Cfr. *Oeuvres*...XII, p.244.

⁹⁷ There were at least three attempts made on his life. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme*..., t.1, pp.253-254.

could he persuade them if they would never hear him?⁹⁸ These frustrations he communicates to Favre, who had himself told Francis how obstinate he found these men on an earlier visit.⁹⁹ One can almost hear him sigh when he writes Favre, “What would you have me do my brother?” In the face of asperity on every flank he looks to someone who understands perfectly. But Francis refuses to let either the doubts and fears of his allies, or the hardness of his flock discourage him. He responds manifesting his utter determination to “not leave one stone unturned.”¹⁰⁰ His first step will be to restore the celebration of the Eucharist. Yet all these labors, he admits, depend on the durability of the “temporary peace we enjoy.”¹⁰¹ The political conditions could sour at any moment, throwing the Chablais into another war.

Favre’s friendship is a great well of refreshment in all this loneliness and derision. “For no other thought is so sweet to me,” Francis writes him from the fortress a few weeks after beginning, “nor recreates me so much as that by which I try each day to imagine you in my mind as faithfully as I possibly can.”¹⁰² He doesn’t hesitate to thank Favre nor to reveal how important that relief is in this hour of need. Sometimes his attachment to the young Senator pains him “gravely”, he confesses, when he is far from him.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ His solution was to write his sermons on pamphlets and slip them under the resident’s doors. This is why he is the patron saint of journalists.

⁹⁹“Enimvero tum post densissimas tenebras mihi lux quaedam oboriri videtur, adeo mihi caliginosus hic est aer, cui procul dubio princeps *tenebrarum harum* [Eph. 6:12].” *Oeuvres...* XXXIII.

¹⁰⁰“Nullum non movere lapidem, obsecrare, increpare *in omni* qua nos Deus donaverit *patientia et doctrina* omnio ac firmissime constitutum est [II Tim. 4.2].” *Oeuvres...* XXXIII.

¹⁰¹“Verum ea in re magnam requiri video prudentiam, ut nimirum ea expectetur conditio: si hac temporaria pace diutius fruamur.” *Oeuvres...* XXXIII.

¹⁰²“Non antea potui, mi Frater, suavissimis illis tuis litteris respondere quam hic idem qui tuas attulerat Chamberium versus rediret. Fecissem id quidem libentissime, nulla enim cogitatio alia me dulcius recreat quam ea qua quotidie te mihi praesentem quoad expressissime fieri potest efficio.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XXXIII

¹⁰³“Sentio tamen graviter et moleste recentem hunc meum a te discessum.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XLII. Francis also had the de Blonay family supporting him in the Chablais, where he could “catch his breath.” It was a home, like Favre’s where he was welcomed anytime. After his wife’s death Claude de Blonay would become a diocesan priest, his son Jean-François would do the same, and Marie-Aimé de Blonay, his daughter, would join the Visitation. Cfr. Ravier,

In December of 1594, when Francis came to reassure his father, Favre was there with him to persuade the old noble by pointing to the renown his son was gaining throughout the land, and praising his courage for the honor it would bring to the family.¹⁰⁴ Favre was one of the few he could rely upon to assuage his father, and he was an important accomplice for such a delicate task. Favre's friendship with both, and his own responsibility in the affair, made him uniquely able to make peace between father and son. He understood both men, and they respected him. This is one of the moments that reveals just how important Antoine Favre already was in the Apostle of the Chablais' life. The only other person Francis turns to help to thaw his father is his mother. Favre's place in the intimacy of the de Sales family couldn't be greater.

Their nervousness reached a climax in the beginning of March the next year, when Francis and Roland were surprised, while traveling one day, by two men hired to assassinate the papist missionary. He walked right up to them, looking them steadily in the eye, and spoke calmly to them. They were so taken aback that they begged his pardon, and confessed what they were paid to do. They told him they had no argument with him and left. Roland was so stricken with fear at this incident that he found a horse and hastened immediately to report all to M. de Boisy. That was the last straw. M. de Boisy sent for his son to come home, and began to again apply all his influence upon the Bishop, the Baron, the Duke and anyone else who would listen. The Baron d'Hermance suggested a military escort from now on, but Francis adamantly refused both the escort and the appeals to retreat. The Baron decided to have a couple of guards follow at a distance all the same.

Over these months and the next six years of the mission, Favre will be a constant support. Francis will confide in him his hopes, his disappointments and his joys. When he finally has a ray of hope because of the kindness one of the inhabitants showed him, he quickly dashes a note off to Favre. It was against the law to speak to him, and Francis saw this man's act as heroic.¹⁰⁵ Favre's letters encourage him

Lettres... p.517. Francis writes his old friend years later to say, "Je participe a tous vos contentemens et a tous vos desplaysirs, selon nostre reciproque, ancienne et invariable amitié." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDXXXI.

¹⁰⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres...*XI, p.393, and 395-396.

¹⁰⁵"Nunc demum nihi de rebus Tononiensibus bene sperare licet, quod te scire par est, Frater suavissime, cum me nudiustertius ex eis quidam tanto [obsequio] prosecutus fuerit quanto nihil jucundius nihil gratius, immutata jam ex parte eorum lege qua cautum fuerat uti ne mecum non beneficiis modo, sed

now like nothing else. "In effect," he writes the Senator, "I find that I have become so much another you yourself, that without you I could never deal with these men."¹⁰⁶ Perhaps Francis did depend upon other friends just as much, perhaps he had similar exchanges with his cousin Louis who was there with him sharing the same hardships, but if this is true we have no record of it.¹⁰⁷ Favre's esteem and understanding, his support and confidence despite the adversity were unique. Didn't he also have a friendship with Bishop de Granier, and wouldn't he also understand? Yes, but there is something deeper here, something special that bound these two men together. They identified with one another. They shared more perhaps because of their positions in life and their youth. Or perhaps it was that mysterious element in friendship, that metaphysical communication between two beings who bind together spontaneously and recognize that correspondence immediately. Francis says, "without you" as if Favre's comfort and friendship are essential to what he is achieving. It seems that the refuge he finds there enables him to face the storms around him, and remain aloof from discouragements and jabs. Their letters are a source of "vivid pleasure" for one another.¹⁰⁸

Whatever bond these two friends may have shared, what tied them most was the way they loved. We get an insight into this fact in a letter written near the end of 1594, praising the qualities of Fr. Chérubin, a Capuchin priest sent to help him. He tells Favre, that his charity toward God and others is so remarkable that, "He can't be loved worthily but by men who love like us."¹⁰⁹ Francis appreciated such a love in Antoine

ne quidem verbis agerent." *Oeuvres...* ltr. XXXVI.

¹⁰⁶"Tuas nimirum litteras Tononienses quidam attulerant: et quidnam praestantius, quaeso, quo mihi munere ingentes erga eos animos addiderunt? Adeo nempe alterum te esse me comperio, ut sine te hourm hominum colloquiis uti minime possim." *Oeuvres...* ltr. XXXVI.

¹⁰⁷Years later, Francis would make Louis his vicar general, or right hand man in the management of the diocese. Cfr. Lajeunie, t.1, p.201. His cousin remained one of his intimates, but this friendship with Favre was still closer.

¹⁰⁸"Non sum nescius, mi Frater, quantopere te mea litterae delectent; id enim facile ex ea qua tuae me vivissima afficiunt voluptate conjicio." *Oeuvres...*ltr. XLV

¹⁰⁹"Pro sua in Deum ac eos qui sunt Dei charitate omnem omnium mereatur observantiam, et nonnisi ab nostri simillimis amatoribus satis amari possit." *Oeuvres...* ltr. XXXVII. Charles-Auguste tells us that in 1608 Chérubin will be behind charges from Rome that Francis has been lax letting heretical pamphlets originating from Geneva circulate in his diocese. If it is true, it didn't change his admiration for Fr. Chérubin enough to prevent him

Favre for the same reasons. Favre was not a priest, but a family man charged with the responsibilities of the world, and those feelings were mutual. That one love Francis and Favre mutually esteemed and shared, was the real basis for every kind of communication between them. It sprang from a rich interior life, a life that knew the price of a sincere Catholic faith, and rejoiced to find it in another.

Francis was sharing the mission with Favre. He seems to feel Favre's impatience and enthusiasm. "I wish that you be instructed about what I do every hour of the day," he writes.¹¹⁰ Slowly he was having an impact. He has but a handful attend his advent services that year, but he tells Favre he will combat maliciousness with prayer, fasting and alms, and bind this adversary with a cord of grace.¹¹¹ From the heights of his fortified refuge, his "Sparta,"¹¹² looking out over a land hostile to his coming, and unable to forget his Father's rigid opposition, he writes his hopes to Favre who has been like a buttress of his resolve. "It seems to me that this divine watering of the word of God is going to bear better fruits each day. When I will have verified it, I will tell you, you who have employed your counsel, your authority, your action to favor this enterprise."¹¹³ He reads and re-reads Favre's letters until the paper they are written on becomes worn and tattered. He relates to his *amicissimi*, "Every day I find so much delight in re-reading them that they always seem recent to me."¹¹⁴

from weeping at his grave. Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, l'Homme...*t.1 pp.520-522.

¹¹⁰"Sic enim te quid etiam singulis agam horis scire vellem." *Oeuvres*.....ltr. XLIV.

¹¹¹"Je commence aujourd'huy a prescher l'Avent a quatre ou cinq petites personnes; tout le reste ignore malicieusement ce que veut dire Avent...L'oraison, l'aumosne et le jeusne sont les trois parties qui composent le cordon difficilement rompu par l'ennemi [Qo. 4.12]; nous allons avec la divine grace, essayer d'en lier cest adversaire." *Oeuvres*..... ltr. XXXIX. This is the first letter Francis writes Favre in French, all the previous ones were in Latin. Favre will take a year to abandon Latin. It is a sign of their growing familiarity.

¹¹² *Oeuvres*... ltr. LVII.

¹¹³"Laetiores enim fructus in dies allatrua mihi videtur verbi haec divini pluvia, quod ubi paulo pressius deprehendam, non committam quin te, qui rem tantopere consilio, auctoritate et opera promovisti [certiorem faciam]." *Oeuvres*..... ltr. XXXVII.

¹¹⁴"Quod me tantopere tuae delectant litterae, ut quamvis continua confractatione detrimentum charta sentiat, novam tamen mihi quotidie suggerant voluptatem qua mihi recentes subinde videantur esse, maxime cum

In his darkest hour, almost one year after arriving, when he is ready to give it all up because the Duke of Savoy continually hesitates to give him the backing everything needs to succeed, Francis turns to Favre. This task “is beyond my strength,” he says wearily, “but I have resolved not to abandon it without your agreement, by your command.”¹¹⁵ The frustration torments him, and his hope is running out. Perhaps he is being obstinate. Who but Favre shares his ardor for this project, and who else could he trust to be the last to renounce their dream of converting the Chablais in the face of so many obstacles? For years all his strength has been spent with so little progress. But Favre refuses to give up, and succors Francis by attributing his frustration to his *impatientia Christiana*, his zeal to win these people to the faith. That encouragement refreshed him and he began to redouble his efforts.

In the meantime Antoine Favre was gaining his own renown. On November 21, 1596, Charles-Emmanuel named him the First President of the Genevois.¹¹⁶ The change required Favre to reside in Annecy, which would give the them many more occasions to visit one another and communicate personally, since Francis often had things to do there. The new opportunity to live in his dear friend’s presence elates Favre. He writes him, “You will be the President of the President,” and that he is counting on being with him several hours every day.¹¹⁷ It also gave

nullam temporis habeant notam.” *Oeuvres*.... ltr. XLIII.

¹¹⁵“Onus messis Tononiensis, meis impar humeris, non nisi te volente, jubente, deponere constitui; in eam tamen rem alios operarios iisdemque commeatum dum artibus modisque omnibus pergo parare, nullum, inter infinitas hostis generis humani versutias, exitum, nullum finem facio. Id me non leviter torquebat, torquet autem maxime, tot clades capitibus nostris, mi Frater, imminere, ut interea vix ullus pietatis procurandae, cum ipsa maxime sit necessaria, superesse locus videatur. Animus tamen in meliorem spem, Christo propitio, attollendus est.” *Oeuvres*....ltr. LVII.

¹¹⁶In a letter written nine months before Favre’s nomination, Francis writes him reproaching his ambition. Cfr. *Oeuvres*...ltr. LXIV. But that doesn’t dampen in any way his enthusiasm and joy for his friend’s success. Cfr. *Oeuvres*...ltr LXXIV. That the Duke of Savoy would name one of his citizens President of Geneva and its environs, a city not in his realm, only shows the volatility of the political climate. The Savoy had not renounced its claim to the Geneva since Bern’s invasion in 1533, as the escalade, still commemorated today in Geneva attests. Cfr. J. Lecler, *Histoire de la tolérance au siècle de la Réforme*... pp. 306-310.

¹¹⁷Favre writes full of enthusiasm just after hearing the news from M de Charmoisy, “Apprestes vous seulement d’estre le president du President, et de rabbatre trois ou quatre heurs tous les jours de vostre plus serieuse estude.”

Francis an important advocate in his frustrating struggles to acquire the funds pledged by the Knights of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus to maintain the newly formed parishes.¹¹⁸ He had been writing and traveling most of 1596 trying to persuade either the Duke or the Papal Nuncio or even Rome to provide the desperately needed finances.¹¹⁹ By December of 1596 there were some 80 converts and a number of new parishes opening. The mass was still not permitted because of the treaty of Nyon, and the Duke remained silent giving Francis no legal leverage to procure the needed funds. He decided to act. He would dynamite the logjam by flagrantly celebrating three Christmas masses at St. Hyppolite of Thonon that year! He asked Favre, the newly appointed President, to attend! Favre advised against this daring move, arguing that the treaty was almost finished, and if it was broken, "The enemy would run in haste from the borders of Thonon, only to cast down the altar that you would have had constructed."¹²⁰ Although he sincerely wanted to go he could not get away from Chambéry for the Christmas masses.¹²¹ Finally, on January 7, 1597, the letter bearing the Duke's support, which Francis had been awaiting for three years, finally arrived. He approved of the mass at St. Hyppolite and complimented him for his many good works in his lands.¹²² It wouldn't be until the end of 1597, however, before the Duke would send Senator Antoine Favre to determine by due process if the citizens of Thonon desired to re-establish Catholic worship.

It was Christmas of 1597 when Favre arrived. Francis was apparently in Annecy nursing an illness. The people of Thonon affirmed their desire to legally reinstitute Catholic services to the Senator. Favre seems to have been carried away by his zeal and to have tried to force

Oeuvres... XI, p.416.

¹¹⁸Cfr. *Oeuvres...*ltr. LXXVIII. See also E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*, t.1 pp.278-283. The Duke's financial problems were so acute that in the winter of 1599-1600 he had to sell some of the duchess' jewelry to cover the cost of his voyage to Paris.

¹¹⁹ There was a plague in Annecy at the end of 1596 and the beginning of 1597 making travel all the more dangerous. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XI p.215.

¹²⁰"La Treuve estant sur le poinct de finir, il ne faut doubter que si elle estoit finie ou rompue l'ennemy courroit quant et quant du costé du Tonon, quand ce ne seroit que pour abbatre l'autel lequel vous auriez fait construire."
Oeuvres... XI, p.421-422.

¹²¹Even if he could have come, the invitation came too late. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XI p.418.

¹²²Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XI, p.447.

the people to convert.¹²³ When Francis later learned of his friend's methods, he probably reprimanded him.¹²⁴

The Harvest

The story of the conversion of the Chablais is itself a story of friendship.¹²⁵ Never before had anyone seen an entire region converted by the sole gentleness of one man.¹²⁶ He won them first to himself and his "friendship" and through himself to the Church. He clearly declared his intention from his first speech as provost. "We must reconquer Geneva with Charity!" If one wish to understand Francis de Sales as a friend and as a saint, it is here in the adversities of the Chablais that we find him most clearly as both. Favre's friendship and consolations are essential to his success here. The backing of Favre and friends like him rejuvenated his courage and bolstered his faith. It gave him the depths to draw from when he returned jeers with gentleness. It somehow made what was already there stronger and more resplendent. On April 11, 1595, he wrote Favre, "At last, a few ears of grain are beginning to yellow of this great harvest."¹²⁷ Pierre Poncet, the most esteemed legal expert in the entire district, had decided to convert sending after shocks through the province. Three years later at the famous celebrations of the

¹²³Cfr. Trochu, *Saint François de Sales...* t. 1, p.537.

¹²⁴If Favre did in fact attempt to force the people, it was truly a moment of passion. He knew full well that the treaties of Lausanne and of Nyon stipulated that any conversion must be made freely and without any duress. The Duke was quick to write him reminding him of this fact. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXII, p.325.

¹²⁵ One could argue that it was more the language of the heart than arguments that converted the several thousand families. The testimony of one of them, M. de Brotty is only one example: "La chose la plus digne d'admiration c'était son humeur très douce et condescendante...au point que même les hérétiques ne pouvaient jamais remarquer en lui la moindre chose à censurer, ni en ses actions, ni en ses paroles...nous lui eussions de l'aversion à cause de la religion, nous ne pouvions malgré cela nous empêcher de l'aimer et de l'honorer." R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...*, p.104. See also E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t.1 pp.244-248.

¹²⁶There were a number of other Capuchins and Jesuits at work to that end, like Chérubin, but Francis' unique role in that common effort is revealed in the testimony of de Brotty, who remarks that he was the only one sought out among them all by those converting. Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales...* t. 1. p.344.

¹²⁷"Nam tandem aliquando albescunt aliquot hujus tantae messis spicae." *Oeuvres...*ltr. XLIX

Forty Hours of Thonon, some 2,070 heads of households would abjure in favor of the Catholic faith, effectively converting the entire region.¹²⁸ With that open confession by the people of the Chablais, funding was finally forthcoming, permitting Francis to organize the ministry of the newly formed Church. He would be known for the rest of his life as the apostle of the Chablais.

Although it is clearly true that religion and political alliance were so intermingled in the Seventeenth Century it is hard to distinguish them, politics is not enough to explain, as some have attempted, the conversion of the Chablais.¹²⁹ Consider the testimonies of the people themselves who converted, and the fact that most wished to abjure at Francis' own hands. It suffices to witness the veneration the people of Thonon and its environs have even today for St. Francis de Sales, to

¹²⁸ The Protestant historians dispute this claim, beginning with Gaberel, *Histoire de l'Eglise de Genève depuis le commencement de la réformation jusqu'en 1815*, Genève (1855-1862) 3 vols., who accuses Francis de Sales of employing everything from coercion and tyranny to bribery, to convert the Chablais and steal their freedom of conscience and speech "their greatest treasure." (Vol. II, p.420) He explains the region's conversion as a consequence of political change, arguing the people would have never quit the reformed religion if their parishes and ministers were not expelled by Charles Emmanuel. He estimates the population of the Chablais at only 7,000. Charles-Auguste de Sales probably exaggerates when he estimates the population of the Chablais to be 25,000 at the time. Cfr *Vie...* I, p.91.

¹²⁹R. Kleinman, contends it is easier to argue that the conversion of the Chablais was due to "the evolution of exterior political circumstances" rather than any special qualities of one man. She tries to argue the inhabitants reluctance to convert without the Duke's express mandate, and Francis' own frantic efforts to secure money for the mission, attest to this. However her history is based on the assumption that the "pious" biographies of his contemporaries cannot be trusted as historically objective. Cfr. *Saint François de Sales et les Protestants...* p.112-135, especially. Her study has its merits, however, regrettably, she discounts their testimony without any proof. Moreover, her account is one-sided. She omits the political intolerance of Geneva, or the methods of force used to install the Reform in Lausanne and the Chablais, as well as the political climate of the times and the union of Church and State. Consider Francis de Sales' comments about pious biographers "L'on ne fait donques point de tort aux Saintz quand on raconte leurs defauts et pechés en parlant de leurs vertus; ains au contraire, ceux qui escrivent leur histoire font un grand tort a tous les hommes en les celant sous pretexte de les honorer... crainte que cela diminue ou amoindrisse l'estime qui l'on a de leur sainteté." *Oeuvres...* X, p.345-346. See too IX, p.73-75. See the following chapter's discussion on friendship with Protestants for more on page 366ff.

understand that there was more involved than fear of their Duke and his forcing the Protestant ministers to leave his territories. Yet, admittedly, this too must have been a part of the equation. Favre warns in 1597 that the Duke's reluctance to write any kind of mandate obliging even implicitly the people of Thonon to listen to Francis' sermons is the most prudent way to avoid any "necessary violence" if they rebelled. "For, in sum, they have not capitulated to his majesty in the least."¹³⁰ To conclude from this their conversion was capitulation to the Duke is too facile. It is more likely that both reasons of State and reasons of friendship, or the influence of Francis and the others evangelizing the region, were responsible for the conversion of the Chablais. At any rate we cannot deny that it was politically expedient to convert, and even necessary to remain, once the Duke returned to govern.

Rome and the examination for the episcopacy

In the meantime Bishop Claude de Granier chose Francis to succeed him. Near the end of 1598, shortly after the Forty Hours liturgy at Thonon, marking the conversion of the Chablais, Francis went to Rome to be consecrated Bishop *in partibus* of Nicopolis and coadjutor of Geneva with Antoine Favre, who himself had other business in Italy. The two friends lodged together near the Church of the Holy Savior and visited the eternal city's monuments together.¹³¹ An indult from 1451 entitled the Dukes of Savoy to name the Bishops of their realm and dispense them from the normal examination from Rome. Confident of Francis' competence, the Pope wanted to give him the examination anyway, so that all might know of his learning. His success in the Chablais had made him a *cause célèbre*. We can only imagine Favre's delight to see his friend succeed magnificently in answering more than thirty of the most difficult theological questions Cardinals Bellarmin, Borromeo, Borghese and Baronius¹³² could pose on subjects as obscure

¹³⁰*Oeuvres...* XI, p.423.

¹³¹Favre had been sent by Anne d'Este and her son the Duke of Namours in a dispute with César d'Este over the succession of Alphonse II Duke of Ferarre. Cfr. Sr. M. P. Burns, "Deux Amis François de Sales et Antoine Favre," in *Mélanges de poétique et d'histoire littéraire du XIVe siècle*, offerts à Louis Terreaux. Honoré Champion, Paris, 1994, pp.505-513.

¹³² Francis developed friendships in different degrees with each of them. Frederick Borromeo was the cousin of St. Charles Borromeo, and succeeded him as Archbishop of Milan. He and Francis would be friends collaborating in his reform of Savoy. Borghese would soon become Pope and would consult

as the vision of Christ, before a packed house replete with Cardinals and dignitaries of the Eternal City. Afterwards François de Chissé, Bishop de Granier's nephew, who had also accompanied him to Rome to recommend his candidacy, wrote Annecy of Francis' outstanding success. Francis commented in a letter to Louis his cousin, "Remember that our friends exaggerate as often our good qualities as our enemies exaggerate our bad ones, and in the end we are only what we are before God."¹³³ He arrived back in Annecy June 1, 1599 to take up his duties as coadjutor, and first among them was the Chablais. It wouldn't be until Bishop de Granier's death in December of 1602 that Francis de Sales would become the Bishop of Geneva. He was thirty-five. To think of himself as Bishop was humbling. He didn't feel worthy, and he must have shared those feelings with his companion Antoine Favre. They must have spoken about it in the same terms he wrote to his friend Pierre de Bérulle ten days later, replying to his own distress at continuing to be full of imperfections, "There is no remedy: we will always need to wash our feet, because we make our way on dust. Our good God renders us the grace to live and to die in his service."¹³⁴

Francis on the nettlesome de Auxiliis problem. Bellarmin's *Controversies* was one of Francis de Sales' main sources during the mission to the Chablais, they also exchanged letters. But it is with the disciple of Philip Neri, and superior of the Oratorio, Cesare Baronius, that he will develop the most intimate friendship. He was a buoyant and happy man, loyal and affectionate. Through this friendship Francis became involved with the Oratory movement, where he met Giovenale Ancina, with whom he became fast friends and together they introduced the Oratory in Thonon. (Francis visited him in Carmagnola in 1602, shortly after he was named Bishop of Saluces. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XII, 54-57 and Trochu, *S. François...* II, 46-48.) Père E.-J. Lajeunie believes his idea for the Visitation came from the "secular community" he witnessed in the Oratory. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t. 1, pp.377-379, and *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCX.

¹³³"Souvenez vous que nos amis exagerent aussi souvent nostre bien que nos ennemis exagerent nos maux, et qu'en fin nous ne sommes que ce que nous sommes devant Dieu." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CXXII.

¹³⁴"Ce que je vous dis par ce que je vous veux rendre conte de mon esprit comme vous me faites du vostre, disant que vous continués en une grande variété d'occupations et multitude d'imperfections. Il ne a remede: nous aurons tous-jours besoin du lavement des piedz, puisque nous cheminons sur la poussiere. Nostre bon Dieu nous face la grace de vivre et mourir en son service." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXI. Favre was busy during this trip writing a large part of his *Jurisprudentia papiniana*, a work where he intended to reduce and systemitize the eclectic 50 volumes of the *Pandectes* of ancient Rome. He

A friend in practical needs

Favre's help during their long friendship was not only in his encouragement in the darker hours, but he also assisted on the different fronts the young Francis faced. He helped the Doctor of love negotiate with the Prince Charles-Emmanuel for the financial support the fledgling Church needed to survive, and for his dream of a Jesuit college in the Chablais.¹³⁵ That kind of practical help was typical throughout their long friendship, as Favre lent his influence and competence to numerous projects and perplexing situations.¹³⁶ Most of these are lost to us because there is no record of them, but if we see them cooperating so closely in their youth, we can only imagine that kind of cooperation continuing, for their friendship never changed, and they remained in close communication. Favre could have been helpful in finding funding necessary for the Visitation, especially in the beginning. When Favre went to Chambéry to become President of The Senate of Savoy, he left Francis his house to use.¹³⁷ Years later in 1610, when Jane de Chantal came to Annecy to found the Visitation, she was welcomed into Favre's home.¹³⁸ We find Favre there serving his friend in little ways¹³⁹ as in big ways, all balanced by his other responsibilities to his family and profession. There were of course many others apt and willing to help the Bishop of Geneva in practical matters, but Favre's

never got beyond the first volume. Cfr. *Dictionnaire des biographies françaises*, "Antoine Favre."...

¹³⁵Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.141.

¹³⁶For example, he named Favre as moderator in his negotiations for a conference on the faith in Geneva with the Protestants in 1598. The conference never got off the ground. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXIII, p.58.

¹³⁷That new separation was cause for their joy when Francis went to Chambéry in 1612 to preach the Lenten mission. We can venture to guess he chose Chambéry over all the other requests such a famous preacher always receives because Favre lived there. He stayed with Favre and his family. Cfr. A. Ravier, *Lettres...* p.41. For a testimony of the fame of his preaching Cfr. the deposition of Pierre Magnin, 1st Hearing art, 35; in R.. Devos *Saint François de Sales, par les témoins de sa vie...* pp 181-184.

¹³⁸Jane soon moved to the de Sales home in Thornes with Marie-Aimée, to "help her take charge," as Bernard's new wife, since Madame de Boisny had died less than three weeks earlier. Cfr. A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...* p.187-188.

¹³⁹As for example bringing letters from the nascent Visitation monestaries, Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXIV.

help is usually with those things that are closest to his heart, like the Florimontane Academy, the Visitation, and the mission to the Chablais. At key moments Favre is the one he turns to.

Francis for his part helps Favre by defending him against accusations of conflict of interest, advanced from within the court, as we are about to see. He also writes near the end of his life his brother Louis, trying to win support for his friend's desire that his son, René de la Valbonne, be appointed to succeed him as President, when Favre's health begins to deteriorate.¹⁴⁰ That spirit of mutual help in practical matters would of course also have its parallel in the spiritual realm, chiefly in praying for one another. Favre, like Jane de Chantal, is always in his prayers, especially in the mass.¹⁴¹ Moreover, their conversations must have also been about each other's interior life, as is the case in all Francis' friendships.

Francis defends Favre in problems

In every court there are sometimes accusations of corrupt ambition, and Antoine Favre was not spared such troubles. In 1596, Francis went to Turin to advance his pleas for financial support for the mission, but also to face a calumny spread at the court.¹⁴² Perhaps it was his own experience of being falsely accused in high places that prompted him to quickly come to the defense of his friend. Favre wielded a considerable influence for many years with the magnates of his country and was accused of a conflict of interests.¹⁴³ Francis takes up his pen to write the Duke in the fall of 1607 of his friends long-standing integrity. After thanking the Duke for his friendship and assuring him of his loyalty, he dares to say that this quarrel has worn on Monsieur Favre, because the Duke has let these rumors propagate without taking steps to declare his trust in Favre's character and competence!¹⁴⁴ We will see him again

¹⁴⁰Paul Milliet de Faverges and not René de la Valbonne was chosen despite those efforts. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* MDCLXIV.

¹⁴¹“Vous estes tous-jours present a mon ame, et principalement a l'autel.” *Oeuvres...*ltr. DCXLII.

¹⁴²Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. LXXII.

¹⁴³The nomination of his son René to the Genevan bench was apparently the cause. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XIII. p.324, n.3.

¹⁴⁴“Et je m'y plairois bien davantage, si ce n'estoit ces petites riottes (querelles) qui pullulent tous les jours entre les officiers de Monsieur, desquelz quelques uns se rendent plus aigres qu'ilz ne devroyent contre le bon monsieur Favre, duquel ilz espuisent les belles humeurs et l'aage. La faute vient de ce que Monsieur (le duc) leur permet indifferemment d'accuser ce bon

come to the Duke as an advocate for his brothers, and a third time to the side of his cousin M. de Charmoisy.

On another occasion Francis writes defending Favre's cause in a letter to Claude de Quoex. It seems that the prior of Talloirs had told noble lady they all knew, that Favre was the sole cause of a case going to court, and that his arguments were untenable. The news angered Favre, because he had lost the case, and the Bishop of Geneva intervened to make peace between his two friends. Francis expresses his "extreme" displeasure in the whole affair. Claude's indiscretion comes at an especially bad time, he explains, only making Favre's defeat more painful. "Our widower," he tells him, has already assured him that his friendship for Claude is still intact, and he adds he is confident that Claude too has no intention of withdrawing his friendship for Favre. "You can tell each other your reasons to your contentment, and I will give you both absolution."¹⁴⁵ No friendship is without its troubles, he concludes, but once those "little storms" are passed loves are renewed.¹⁴⁶

Theodore de Beza and the Protestants

The successor to John Calvin in Geneva, Theodore de Beza, was leaning toward converting to Catholicism near the end of his life. Francis recounts in a letter to Pope Clement VIII, that they have serious reason to hope that de Beza may return to the Catholic faith.¹⁴⁷ The conversion of one of the great pillars of Protestantism in Baroque Europe would have shaken the world. The Pope commissioned him to contact de Beza to that end. Francis met secretly to dialogue with the

personnage; et il faudroit leur faire connoistre qu'on est bien assure de luy, de sa suffisance (compétence) et fidelité, comme a la verité on le doit estre. Cela arresteroit toutes ces brouilleries, qui ne servent qu'a divertir ces espritz des meilleures pensees qu'ilz pourroyent faire au service de Jesus Christ et du public." *Oeuvres*.....ltr. CDXVI.

¹⁴⁵"Il m'a dit depuis que pour tout cela il ne laisseroit de vous cherir sincerement, et faire tous les offices que vous scauries desirer de luy. Je ne suis pas d'advis que vous monstries d'voir plus aucune defiance de son amitié, puisque il n'en a plus de la vostre. A nostre veue, vous vous direz tout bellement vos raysons l'un a l'autre, et je vous donneray l'absolution à tous deux." *Oeuvres*... ltr. CLVII.

¹⁴⁶"Il ni a point de si parfaite amitié que ne se trouble quelquefois par quelque petit nuage, lesquelz estans passés, *amoris redintegratio sunt* [Trent Act. III sc. III.23]." *Oeuvres*... ltr. CLVIII.

¹⁴⁷Cfr *Oeuvres*....ltr. XCIII.

famous Calvinist scholar in Geneva three times in 1597.¹⁴⁸ The mission was delicate and momentous. He had Antoine Favre accompany him on at least one of these visits.¹⁴⁹ He could rely on his moral support more than anything else in that situation, and for both of them the visit must have had an air of a commando raid. Their discussion raised the question of faith and works and the unity of the Church.¹⁵⁰ As they were leaving after failing to convince de Beza, Francis turned to Favre and remarked that one should never despair of God's mercy.¹⁵¹ In the end de Beza did not convert, and Francis expresses his frustration in his letter

¹⁴⁸ The first meeting was April 9, 1597, the second was July, 3 of the same year and the date of the third is uncertain. Phillip Schaff in his *History of the Christian Church* vol. (VIII, ch. 18, pp.392-393) reports that Francis de Sales offered de Beza a pension of 4,000 gold crowns, a sum equal to twice his personal wealth to convert, at which point de Beza rebuked him bidding him to depart. In fact, quitting Protestantism and Geneva would have cost de Beza all his belongings and his pension. It was rather to redress that sacrifice than to bribe him that he offered the money. Moreover, remember Francis came at de Beza's invitation. The great apostle of the Reformation died on Oct. 13, 1605.

¹⁴⁹ Rolland suggests Favre was with Francis and himself on the first and perhaps the third visit in his testimony, but that testimony differs from François Favre who contends it was only the second visit. Little is known about the third visit. Both E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...* t.1 p.301, and A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...* pp.83 and 86, believe Favre was there only for the second visit, and that his cousin Louis was there for the first tête à tête. Albeit one would think Rolland as a witness would have a more credible testimony, he neglects the fact the first interview lasted only 15 minutes, and says it lasted two hours. Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.114-118.

¹⁵⁰ The marquis de Lullin tells us what his friend Favre, who was waiting in the wings, reported to him about the tête à tête with de Beza "Il m'a assuré qu'après une longue conférence et dispute sur les plus importants articles de la foi, il (François de Sales) fit avouer à l'hérésiarque que l'Eglise romaine est la vraie et la Mère Eglise, que l'on peut se sauver en la foi et la doctrine qu'elle enseigne, et comme le serviteur de Dieu voulut le presser sur ce point et lui montrer qu'il est impossible qu'il y ait deux vraies Eglises, et que la Romaine, même selon son consentement, étant la vraie et Mère Eglise, leur Religion prétendue doit être une mauvaise Religion et une Eglise fausse et adultère. L'hérésiarque ne pouvant répondre fit plusieurs soupirs et lui dit qu'il demandait à Dieu qu'il plût de le remettre dans le bon chemin, s'il n'y était pas." Lullin, J. *Notice historico-topographique sur la Savoie.....* Chambéry, 1787, in-8°. p. 2, 15.

¹⁵¹ Cfr. R. Favre's account from his father, 2nd Hearing, art.13.

to Clement VIII, saying: "I found in him a heart of stone."¹⁵² The experience taught him the futility of dogmatic arguments to convert Protestants.

Their unity of mind was not complete on the way the two men considered the Protestants. Favre is much less understanding than his missionary friend. While Francis "feels much affection"¹⁵³ for them, Favre is more contumacious. He says he cannot make himself believe that a heretic could have anything good.¹⁵⁴ When the Senator Claude de Prez, one of the early converts of the Chablais, was in dialogue with Francis de Sales, he was moved by some verses of Favre's poetry, which later inspired his conversion. He sent some of his own verse praising Favre through Francis.¹⁵⁵ Favre waited until he converted to embrace him and gather him into his friendship.¹⁵⁶

The shared intellectual life

The President's support goes beyond comfort and refuge. Francis relies on Favre's advice also for a theological work he decided to write defending Catholicism, during the early years of the Chablais mission. Several years later the project will result in *The Controversies*. Every young writer is particularly sensitive about his first undertakings. He counts on Favre to approve his "battle plan and the tactics adopted."¹⁵⁷ It shows his complete confidence in his judgment, even when arguing theology. Conflict is the craft of lawyers, and it is reasonable to assume that if Favre was so respected, he must have been especially adroit at navigation in tense situations. His counsel would have been useful to refine the young author's arguments, and help him choose his battles. Indeed his friendship with Favre and other great jurists during his years at Padua honed his expertise for conciliation and negotiation that would

¹⁵²*Oeuvres...* XI, p.270.

¹⁵³*Oeuvres...* IX, p.162.

¹⁵⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXI, vol. 2, p.xxvi. and XI, p.408.

¹⁵⁵Cfr. *Oeuvres...* LX.

¹⁵⁶Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXI, vol. 2, p.xxvi. Favre's *codex* has a section on the different heresies a Prince should guard against in the beginning which the president asked Francis to write during these years in the Chablais.

¹⁵⁷"Ergo quod optas, priores mei in haereticos operis paginas videre, ego quoque summopere desidero, nec prius qua par est alacritat in hostium cuneos signa inferam quam tu consilium meum ac ordinem modumque certandi probaveris." *Oeuvres...* ltr. XLIV.

be one of the traits of his episcopacy.¹⁵⁸ Favre reciprocates by asking Francis to lend him a hand in writing his own work, *Codex Fabrianus*, and more intimately, to give his opinions on *Centurie première*, some poetry he dedicated to his dear friend from the house of Sales.¹⁵⁹ And when they have a little argument about who inspired whose ideas, Francis refuses to let Favre give him credit for his inspirations, wisely responding: “Indeed! Let us not hear again between us these words mine and yours, or may they only proliferate when you would like to call me yours, or yourself mine in all truth.”¹⁶⁰ If communication defines friendship, then the depth of friendship will be proportional to the fullness of its communication. Petty jealousies and self effacing flattery or anything else that may be detrimental to free and frank exchange between friends can creep into even virtuous friendships. Imagine how suffocating it would be to an intellectual life and friendship if the friends were covetous of each other’s ideas. One of the planes their friendship flourished upon was in their shared intellectual life, it was an orientation each had by nature, and something they had spent long years cultivating. They shared information and criticism, stimulating each other’s interests and expanding each other’s horizons.

The Florimontane Academy

Trent gave the Bishop the chief responsibility of carrying out its reforms, and Francis understood that reform to lie mainly in education. Just a few years after being consecrated Bishop, with his friend Favre and a few others, he founded The Florimontane Academy, as one of several means to badly needed intellectual nourishment for the people

¹⁵⁸Père A. Ravier concurs, Cfr. *Francis de Sales, Sage....*p.159. See also E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L’Homme....*t.2 pp.99-180, for a summary of the many instances of conflicts he was called upon to appease.

¹⁵⁹Cfr. *Centurie première de sonnets spirituels de l’Amour divin et de la Pénitence*. Chambéry, Claude Pomar, (1595). Apparently he anxiously awaited his critique. Francis seems to prefer a simpler style, but admits Favre’s poetry moves him nearly to tears. Cfr. *Oeuvres...ltr LIII. Codex Fabrianus* was written between 1606 and 1607.

¹⁶⁰“Vel meum ergo tuumque poenitus inter nos non audiatur, vel candidius tunc proferatur cum me tuum teque meum dicere volueris.” *Oeuvres...ltr. LIII*. He writes Jane de Chantal, “Croyes moy, j’ayme tout cela d’un amour tout entier, et ne m’est pas possible d’appréhender ‘le mien et le tien’ en ce qui nous regarde. Aussi, dit saint Chrisostome [Orat. in S. Philog. 1], ce sont les deux mots qui ont ruiné la charité au monde.” *Oeuvres...ltr. CCCXXVIII*.

of his diocese.¹⁶¹ It was a kind of popular university where anyone could come who wanted to discuss and learn about history, philosophy or morality.¹⁶² In the great cities of Europe Academies were being founded to discuss ideas, art, literature, and the Classics to promote culture.¹⁶³ Naturally he turned to Favre to help him. They were both humanists and sought to elevate others by education. What was unique about the Florimontane Academy was its emphasis from the beginning, to be a school of French, rather than Greek and Latin, as they commonly were, and above all a source of Catholic influence.¹⁶⁴ It was also meant to oppose John Calvin's renowned Academy of Geneva, a Mecca for young and eager disciples from all over Europe. When Calvin died in 1564, there were 1,200 students in the secondary colleges, and 300 in the superior college.¹⁶⁵

As a man of the world with a very rich culture of his own, Favre immediately appreciated the usefulness of such a forum.¹⁶⁶ Near the end of 1606, the same year Favre published his *Codex Fabrianus*, the two friends drew up the statutes of the Academy. Its theme was to be "morality, doctrine, spirit." Its purpose was to be: "The exercise of every virtue, the sovereign glory of God, service to the most serene

¹⁶¹He would have preferred a seminary, but his attempts to raise the needed resources were not able to bear fruit until after his lifetime. Cfr. R. Devos *Saint François de Sales, par les témoins de sa vie...* p.200. Ravier holds on the contrary that it reveals his intentions to create educators situated in the world rather than a compromise. Cfr. A. Ravier, préface in *Saint François de Sales, Oeuvres*. ...Collection Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, Paris 1969, préface, p.XLVIII.

¹⁶² Cfr. the testimony of André de Sauzée, 1st Hearing, art. 35; in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins...* pp.201-202.

¹⁶³The Academy des Valois in Paris, the Platonic Academy of Cosmos de Medeci in Florence and the Academy Aldine of Venice, with those of Rome, Padua and Naples are some in this current. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t.2 p.89.

¹⁶⁴Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...* t.2 p.89.

¹⁶⁵Cfr. Daniel-Rops, *l'Eglise de la Renaissance* Fayard, Paris 1955, pp.443-444. Who also remarks that no book was more widely read in the Sixteenth Century than Calvin's *Institutions*.

¹⁶⁶Favre also offered to give a course on jurisprudence in the university Fr. Chérubin was trying to establish at Thonon as an offensive against Calvinism. It was to be financed by the Catholic princes, known as "The Pope's League" or The Congregation of Our Lady of Compassion. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...* t.1 pp.426-433.

Princes, and public utility.”¹⁶⁷ They gave it the name Florimontane, Charles-August de Sales explains, “Because by it the flowers of science and literature would blossom on the mountains of Savoy.”¹⁶⁸ They proposed to study beauty and science, the agreeable and the useful. Invited guests would give lectures with regular teachers that were to be open to “all the good masters of wholesome arts.” Favre lent his house for their meetings, and his six children greeted the participants creating a cordial and friendly atmosphere.¹⁶⁹ Questions were encouraged, making it a real platform for discussion. Lessons ranged from philosophy and rhetoric to geometry and cosmography. All the academicians were to avoid strife and work together in a spirit of “a mutual and fraternal love.”¹⁷⁰ Francis de Sales sought with his friend the President Favre to make his Academy an ideal Christian community, where men would live an exemplary Christian life. It calls to mind Augustine’s retreat to Cassiciacum. Francis’ brother, Louis, his “uncle” the Baron Amédée de Villette, his friend Claude de Quoex, and René Favre, the President’s son,¹⁷¹ together with a number of other celebrated persons of Savoy and France, collaborated in the Florimontane Academy, under the patronage of the Duke of Nemours.¹⁷² Among these first participants was a friend of Favre, Honoré d’Ufré, who was just beginning his *Astrée*. Favre could later write in admiration of the Academy’s level of erudition with highest praises, which rapidly became celebrated in France and Italy.¹⁷³

It would probably be going too far to say the Academy was the fruit or infant of the friendship between Antoine Favre and Francis de Sales, the way the Visitation was the fruit of his relation with Jeanne de Chantal. It was a project they both saw as important stemming from a

¹⁶⁷Charles-Auguste de Sales, *Vie...*, p.109.

¹⁶⁸Charles-Auguste de Sales, *Vie...*, p.108.

¹⁶⁹Cfr. A. Ravier, *Francis de Sales, Sage...*p.156.

¹⁷⁰Cfr. the statues of the Academy *Oeuvres...*XXIV, pp.242-247.

¹⁷¹Another son Claude Favre de Vaugelas, was 20 at the time and would later become one of the founding members of the French Academy, and become known as “father of French grammar.” Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L’Homme...*, t.2, p.93. Francis never apparently developed anything more than cordial relations with him. Cfr. Mugnier, *Histoire...* p.14.

¹⁷²Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L’Homme...*t.2, p92 for a list of participants.

¹⁷³Cfr. for example a letter written to Schifordegher in 1609 in Mugnier, *Histoire et correspondance du premier Président Favre*, Paris, H. Champion, 1902-1903. II, p.283, ltr. 124.

Catholic vision, as Baroque Renaissance men, to share the culture and intellectual and spiritual life they had each cultivated in themselves. It was a way their benevolence could affect the people in their charge just as much as it was a kind of protection from the tide of Protestant ideas. It is also very important to note that the Academy was not only for intellectual development, but deemed a spirit of friendship essential to its overall vision. It was to be *a community*, where not only ideas could be communicated, but also a means to share themselves so that their hearts could be served as well. It is one of the recurring themes in Francis de Sales' world view—the integration of an intense intellectual life with a life of charity. Truth and love coalesce in the Salesian vision of the Christian life via friendship's communication, first with God and then with one another, leading us back to Him.

Redente Baranzano

One affair that shows Francis de Sales' character in friendship as much as his willingness to accept new ideas as part of a harmony in his vision of faith and reason, is his defense of Redente Baranzano. This young Capuchin scholar was severely reprimanded for defending the very controversial ideas of Copernicus and Galileo, that the earth moved around the sun.¹⁷⁴ Cardinal Bellarmin was among his detractors, because of what all considered as a grave threat to the authority of Scripture. Francis did not hesitate to sanction and support the young scientist, calling his new opinions in the science of physics, "This scholarly work of this scholarly author."¹⁷⁵ Remember that Galileo was put on trial for teaching the same doctrine during these years. It was no small thing for the Bishop of Geneva to publicly oppose Bellarmin and the Curia. It shows his confidence in his own understanding of both science and scripture, and his satisfaction with his ability to reconcile his faith with his science. Baranzano was a teacher at Thonon, and in this sense under his responsibility.¹⁷⁶ If he was so willing to risk his own

¹⁷⁴Baranzano writes in his *Uranoscopia* (1617) p.108 "Scripture speaks of things of nature according to our capacity and the judgment of men, and because men judge commonly that the sun moves and that the earth is immobile, it uses the same language."

¹⁷⁵"Novae opiniones physicae, eruditi viri opus eruditum." *Oeuvres*...XXIV, p.200.

¹⁷⁶Favre and Francis with a number of other illustrious persons attended Baranzano's doctoral thesis defense on all philosophy in August of 1615, and were impressed. It was only a few months after the Barnabites arrived in Savoy at the Doctor of love's fervent requests to open a collège. Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint*

reputation for one he respected who was not a friend, how much more so for those to whom he had sworn his service in Christian benevolence and to whom he trusted his intimacy?¹⁷⁷

The Diplomatic Missions to Paris

In 1602 and again in 1618, Francis de Sales went to Paris on diplomatic missions as the Savoy emissary to the Court of Henry IV and Louis XIII. On both of these occasions Antoine Favre accompanied him.¹⁷⁸ France and Savoy were often warring for bordering territories throughout the century, and Geneva deftly managed protective treaties with France guaranteeing its sovereignty from Savoy. After France invaded Savoy in 1600, in retaliation for Charles-Emmanuel's treachery (who came to Paris ostensibly to discuss the terms of the treaty of Vervins, but really intended to conspire against Henry IV), Savoy lost new territory to France.¹⁷⁹ Parts of those lands were within the diocese of Geneva, which caused Bishop de Granier to appeal directly to the King of France to obtain concessions for the Catholic Church there. In December of 1601 he sent Francis de Sales to Paris to negotiate as his delegate.¹⁸⁰

François de Sales, L'Homme... t.2, p.83.

¹⁷⁷In the introduction to the *Traité* Francis writes about these kinds of critics: "On traite maintefois les escrivains trop rudement; on precipite les sentences que l'on rend contre eux, et bien souvent avec plus d'impertinence qu'ilz n'ont pratiqué d'imprudence en se hastant de publier leurs escritz. La precipitation des jugemens met grandement en danger la conscience des juges et l'innocence des accusés: plusieurs escrivent sottement, et plusieurs censurent lourdement." *Oeuvres... IV, p.8.*

¹⁷⁸The same reason Favre went to Rome brought him to Paris. Anne d'Este had asked him to defend her interests in the complicated succession of Hercule d'Este, the Duke of Ferrara. Cfr. A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage... p.97.*

¹⁷⁹Cfr. Devos and Groperrin, *La Savoie de la Réforme à la Revolution française... pp.81-121*, for a history of Charles-Emmanuel and the numerous wars waged during his reign.

¹⁸⁰The treaty of Lyon (January 1601) ceded La Bresse, le Bugey, Valromey and Gex to France. Gex had been under Geneva's power since the beginning of Calvinism. Francis went to Paris trying to have all the confiscated goods of the Church restored to her. The King had given him just three churches. Geneva insisted the rest remain Protestant, England, the French Protestant Church, and Bern all supported Geneva. The question risked becoming an international incident. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales,*

The first visit to Paris with Favre, about a dozen years since his school days at Clermont, would catapult him into the highest echelons of French society. It was a unique time in history, H. Bremond tells us the city had “Saints, veritable saints, and in great numbers everywhere.”¹⁸¹ He would meet scores of new Philotheas and be recognized by even the most advanced members of a new and vibrant spiritual renaissance, then in full swing, as a master. “It uprooted him—once and for all—,” as Fr. Ravier remarks, “From any regional particularism and made him confront the great problems of the world and of the time.”¹⁸² During the nine months he was there he made many friends, especially among a small group of clergy and lay people from all over Europe deeply involved in the major spiritual movements of the Seventeenth Century. Francis visited the Acarie Circle, where almost daily he heard some of the most notable men and women of his times discuss and share their spirituality. There he learned of movements like that of Teresa of Avila (who had died twenty years earlier), Rhineland and Northern mysticism.¹⁸³ It would have a lasting influence on him and be the stimulus for shaping his own spirituality. In the words of Père Lajeunie, “Paris revealed him to himself.”¹⁸⁴ Favre may have been his guest in Paris during the ten months he lived there, at least he shared with him the new insights he was learning.

Albeit his diplomatic mission was doomed to fail, he would make many friends in Paris: Cardinal de Bérulle, Madame Acarie,¹⁸⁵ André

L'Homme... t.1 p.423-426; *Oeuvres.....*XII, 81-85, 89-94; XXII, pp.249-252, and R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.144. E.-J. Lajeunie shows that there was much more at stake, “The Pope’s League” has already secretly pledged the moneys and men to raze or divide Geneva, they only lacked Henry IV’s allegiance. See also A. Dofour, *La guerre de 1589-1593*, in *La seigneurie de Genève et la Maison de Savoie de 1559-1593* ed. L. Cramer, Geneva (1958), vol. IV.

¹⁸¹H. Bremond, *Le sentiment...*t.1 p.95.

¹⁸²A. Ravier, *Saint François de Sales, Sage...*p.107.

¹⁸³ Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.144-146.

¹⁸⁴“Paris l’a révélé à lui-même...il connaît maintenant sa mesure et sa vocation: il est fait pour enseigner...il possède l’art et la grâce de l’insinuer dans les coeurs.” E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L’homme...* t.2, p.211. He remained studious all his life, and cites, for example Theresa of Avila within a year of her works being published in France for the first time.

¹⁸⁵ We possess only two letters from Francis to Madame Acarie. Her husband was counsellor to the King and master of requests to the chamber of accounts. He writes about what would be later known as ‘the Acarie circle’; ten

Duval, Dom Eustache-de-Saint Paul, M. de Soulfour, Antoine de Revol, Asseline, Jean Goulu, Brétigny, Dom Beauconsin, Galleman and André de Sauzéa are some who would have lasting impact on the Church and French society in their age.¹⁸⁶ We will look more closely at this unique genre of friendship later. No doubt there were others, he was being accosted from all sides. He enjoyed tremendous success in Paris, largely due to his preaching, which only bolstered his already gleaming reputation as converter of the Chablais. He would speak to thousands in more than 100 sermons and gain acclaim for the way he moved his audience.¹⁸⁷ Favre could hardly hold back his excitement upon the unequivocal success of the improvised Lenten series his friend gave to the court in the Queen's chapel. He wrote Bishop de Granier, saying Paris considered him the best preacher France has had in a long time in such an important post.¹⁸⁸ After hearing him preach the Dame de Predreauville, a Huguenot of great influence, converted, astonishing the whole city of Paris.¹⁸⁹ The King was so pleased with him that he offered him a place in his realm with a much higher remuneration than what he would ever receive in Annecy. Francis kindly refused.¹⁹⁰ During this sojourn we can well imagine that the friends saw each other often, and

years after their meeting in Paris: "Je ressens tous-jours une tres particuliere consolation quand vous me faites le bien de m'envoyer de vos nouvelles et de m'assurer de votre sainte bienveillance. Si vous m'aves souhaité par dela, j'ay bien correspondu de mon costé, estimant qu'un voyage seroit grandement utile, non aux autres, mays a moi qui, par la conference que j'aurois avec tant de gens de bien, rafraichirois les resolutions et l'esprit que m'est necessaire en ma vocation." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXLVI. For more on Madame Acarie Cfr. Bruno de Jésus-Marie, *La belle Acarie, Bienheureuse Marie de l'Incarnation*, Desclée de Brouwer, (1942).

¹⁸⁶Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...* t.2 pp.192-198; 204-206, and R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...*, pp.143-150.

¹⁸⁷There are about 60 unpublished sermons discovered in the archives of Saint Germain de Près in Paris, which are debated to be by St. Francis de Sales and recorded by listeners during his visits to Paris. Cfr. Helen Bordes' doctoral thesis, Metz University, *Les sermons de Saint François de Sales*, available at the Sorbonne Library, Paris. She considers them authentic, Mackey and the Visitation sisters who edited the critical edition of his works did not.

¹⁸⁸Cfr. A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...* p.108.

¹⁸⁹Francis would explain, "Qui presche avec amour presche asses contre les heretiques, quoy qu'il ne die un seul mot de dispute contre eux." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXCVI.

¹⁹⁰ See below for the details of that offer p.303 ff.

how proud Favre must have been to see Francis recognized for qualities he had long admired in him.

Their second voyage to Paris was in sixteen years later in 1618, and this time his mission was to negotiate peace in Italy officially, but the real purpose was to secure the hand of King Louis XIII's sister, Christine, for Victor-Amédée.¹⁹¹ The matter was delicate because Christine had dreamt of marrying a King and was being asked to settle for a mere Prince. The Prince's brother, the 25 year old Cardinal Maurice, accompanied them. Their arrival in Paris was full of pageantry with large crowds gathered along the route to cheer and watch their team of white horses gallop into the city. Both friends were famous, one as a jurist the other as a theologian, and their friendship was itself celebrated and admired throughout the land.¹⁹² The court received them with enthusiasm. Henry IV's children remembered him as did all of Paris.

The agreement to the marriage looked for a moment to be on the verge of falling through, and for a while Favre thought that they had failed, but Francis assured him saying, "Just wait, God will do all."¹⁹³ The marriage was held that February. Francis said the Mass. He would later become spiritual director of the teen-age bride,¹⁹⁴ and when they named him Grand Chaplain of their court in Turin, he graciously accepted, but asked to send his brother, Jean-François, to fulfill his duties there. Francis had probably already established a friendship with the Prince.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹Francis and the Prince of Piedmont also shared a true friendship. Cfr. E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...* t.2 p.343. See also *Oeuvres...*XVIII, pp.296-310.

¹⁹²Favre would recall years later that "environment of glory" hearing the praises for himself and his friend as they passed the crowds gathered to meet them. "Voilà l'illustre Evêque de Genève, le plus grand théologien de nos jours! Voilà le président Favre qui a publié tant d'ouvrages, et qui est devenu comme le frère de François de Sales par le tendre affection et incomparable amitié qui les unit!" Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XVIII, p.308, n.1.

¹⁹³E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...* t.2 p.345.

¹⁹⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres...*ltrs...MDCXXIII; MDXCIX; MDCXXIV and MCDLXXXIV. See also T. Blanc, *Abrégé de l'histoire de la Royale Maison de Savoie*, Lyon, (1688), 3 vol.; Mugnier, F. *L'ambassade du Cardinal Maurice de Savoie à la Cour de France*, Chambéry, Ménard, (1894); and Dufournet, A., "Le mariage de Christine de France et de Victor Amédée, prince de Piémont" in *Saint François de Sales, Témoignages et Mélanges*. Académie Salésienne. Mémoires et documents, t. LXXX. (1968).

¹⁹⁵ Victor-Amédée made a surprise visit to the Bishop's house in Annecy

At least three times the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal de Gondî, offered Francis the post of coadjutor for his diocese, with the implicit right of succession. At the time Paris numbered one million. It would have made him a wealthy man. Antoine Favre advised him to accept, after all, he could do so much good there. "Would you want to change your wife," Francis responded, "for another, however rich she might be"? Favre timidly answered "No." "And how then could you wish that I change mine"?¹⁹⁶

Among the new friends Francis made on his second voyage to Paris were Vincent de Paul, and Angélique Arnauld, the mother superior of Port Royal, with her family.¹⁹⁷ The President de Herse and his wife, generous aids to St. Vincent de Paul, were also welcomed into his friendship that year in Paris.¹⁹⁸ He spent almost a year there, and was able to oversee Jane de Chantal's founding another monastery of the Visitation in the French capital. Soon a number of Philotheas would enter.¹⁹⁹

two years before after the revolt of the Duke of Nemours. He had a long conversation with Francis and his brothers Janus and Louis on the relationship between the Church and State. Francis writes of him in 1616 : "Je dois, mille et mill'actions de graces a la divine Providence qui nous a donné un homme tout plein de vertu et de benedictions pour dominer un jour entre nous." *Oeuvres...ltr. MCCXXIX.*

¹⁹⁶François Favre 2nd Hearing 11. (E.-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...* t.2 p.350). *Oeuvres...XVIII*, p.370 and *XIX*, p.39. He would later relinquish to accept if the Pope commanded him. Cfr. *Oeuvres... ltr. CDXLIX*, where he explains his refusal to Antoine des Hayes on his first visit in 1608, as discussed on page 303ff below.

¹⁹⁷He writes the Abesse Arnauld a "Tres chere salutation de la part de mon ame, qui vous voit incessamment et ayme tout uniquement la vostre." *Oeuvres...ltr MDXLVI*. See too, ltrs MDXLII; MDCXLVI and MDCLXXIV. For more on the Doctor of Love's relations with the mother of Port-Royal see also L. Cogent, *Angélique Arnauld et saint François de Sales*, Sulliver, 1951 and P. Christophe, "La Mère Angélique Arnauld et saint François de Sales" in *Rev. Sav. VIII*, 1955, pp. 243-250.

¹⁹⁸Cfr. *Oeuvres... ltr. MDCLXXV*.

¹⁹⁹Madame de Villeneuve and her sister Helen Lhuillier de Frouville being among them. He also met them both on this second mission to the French capital. The latter will govern the Paris monastery 14 years and send sisters to found monasteries in Dol, Rouen, Meaux, Le Mans, Bayonne, Saint-Denis and Chaillot, where she will spend 6 years as Mother Superior. Cfr. A. Ravier, *Lettres... pp.639-652*, and *Oeuvres...ltrs. MDVII; MDCLV; MDCXCV; MDCXCVI; MDCXCVII; MDCCCXV; MDCCCXXIX and MDCXCVII.*

Favre had his own temptations. One can't help but wonder if Francis' manifest loyalty to Savoy didn't sturdy him in his own resolve. Louis XIII wanted to recruit him to his service and made very appealing offers to engage the brilliant counselor. Not being able to make him accept the King enlisted his son de Vaugelas, already residing in Paris, with a salary of 2,000 livres.²⁰⁰

“I cannot believe that I might live after him”

Francis de Sales was a person who always lived with death. In 1617 when family and friends of both men were dying “almost without interruption” he reflected in his missive to Antoine Favre that they too must not hope so much in the consolations of this life, but “wait more sweetly those of the other life, in which our society will be inseparable.”²⁰¹ By then Francis had been suffering from headaches and intermittent fevers regularly, and since 1618 numbness in his legs prevented him from walking. In addition, kidney problems forced him to stop and rest for several days at a time. The court of Louis XIII was celebrating a recent military victory over the Protestants in southern France, and they wanted Francis there. Before leaving for Lyon on his last journey at the “express command” of the Duke of Savoy, he was feeling heavy and more tired than usual.²⁰² All his friends were alarmed, and urged him to ask to be excused because of his extreme fatigue. Francis sensed he was near death. He said good-bye to the Visitation sisters, and called for Huguine Perrin, his baker's daughter, and said to her, “Good-bye my daughter, we shall next see each other in Paradise.”²⁰³ It was Christmas time. He spent several weeks in Lyon, preaching hearing confessions, and receiving visitors. It was during this period that he saw Jane de Chantal for the last time. On Christmas eve he went to bless the cross of the Recollect Fathers in Lyon, and became ill during the ceremony. He went home with a very bad headache. He celebrated midnight mass for his beloved Visitation daughters, and at

²⁰⁰Cfr. *Dictionnaire des biographies françaises*, ... “Antoine Favre.”

²⁰¹“C'est presque sans intermission que nos amis se vont separant de nous tous les jours; et partant, il se faut resoudre de bonn'heure de n'esperer plus es consolations de cette vie, pour attendre plus doucement celles de l'autre vie, en laquelle nostre société sera inseparable.” *Oeuvres*... ltr. MCCCXIX. See too ltr. MCCCXX.

²⁰²Cfr. Trouncer, M. *The Gentleman Saint. St. François de Sales and His Times 1567-1622*. Hutchinson, London 1963, p.219.

²⁰³A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales*... p.247.

dawn went to hear the confession of the Prince of Piedmont and celebrate Mass for the family. He was busy with the court and the Visitation until nearly nightfall. The next day he gave his last conference to the Visitation and attended to several business matters. On Saturday December 27, the next morning, he told Francis Favre he felt his sight was failing but that he must go on and bless God "For we shall live as long as God pleases."²⁰⁴ By noon he had said his confession and celebrated Mass, when he met the Duke de Bellgarde and Lord Halincourt, governor of Lyon, unexpectedly outside the Church. He lingered in the cold fog to talk to them without anything covering his head. Francis then went to bid good-bye to the Prince of Piedmont, who was leaving for Annecy. By the time he got home he was not well. Rolland thought he looked exhausted and asked if he shouldn't wait to tomorrow to finish his letters. He had written two the third would go undone. To that Francis replied "you think perhaps I am ill?" He suddenly collapsed as he stood up from his writing table. His servants quickly put him to bed. It was two o'clock in the afternoon. They called for a doctor. An hour later Francis stiffened, he was having a stroke. They rubbed his head with linens until the doctor arrived four hours later. Francis remained lucid and asked for his rosary and the sacrament of the sick. By then it was midnight.

Wednesday, December 28, visitors came all day long to see him. The merging of the courts of Savoy and France during the holidays brought together some of Francis most powerful friends: the Duke de Bellegarde, des Hayes, and the recently converted Protestant Mashal Lesdiguières, who history would remember for the important peace treaty he concluded between Louis XIII and the Huguenots in the south. Most believed it was for the last time. The doctors applied a red hot poker to his temple three times, in a last ditch effort to save him. The pain brought tears to his eyes, but he endured it patiently, sighing the names Jesus and Mary. His friends gathered around his death bed and as he grew weaker, they began to sing the ritual litanies. When they came to the Holy Innocents, whose feast the Church was celebrating that very day, he died. He was 56 and had been Bishop of Geneva 20 years.²⁰⁵

When he heard the news his dear friend had died before him, Antoine Favre was stricken. He wrote the new Bishop, Jean-François de

²⁰⁴A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales...* p.251.

²⁰⁵Fr. Jean Fourier, who had been one of his spiritual directors happened to be in Lyon, and was probably the one with him when he died.

Sales, "I cannot believe that as long as I would live, Monsieur the Bishop could die, nor that I might live after him."²⁰⁶ He broke off his letter to Jean-François, unable to continue after those few lines. Francis had always seemed a giant to him, a saint, and the thought that he was gone was difficult to apprehend. At the funeral ceremony the Prince Victor-Amédée held for him in Chambéry, which most of the Senate attended, Antoine Favre wept "hot tears" openly.²⁰⁷ On January 11, he was with the entire population of Annecy, who walked several kilometers outside the city to meet the group bringing Francis' body to be buried in the Church of the Visitation. He gave a eulogy at the funeral full of emotion. Living without the intimacy he shared daily with one as dear as Francis had become to him, must have been very painful for a person like Antoine Favre. He would join Francis in that "inseparable society" thirteen months later.²⁰⁸

Favre's last testament reveals his life. He is tender with his children and his sure spirit of justice comes clearly through. After having filled the two highest posts available a citizen of his country, he was never rich. His interests lay elsewhere. His secretary, who accompanied him when he went to the Senate, had orders to give alms to every poor person they passed *en route*. He even sold some of his family silverware in times of penury, in order to give something to the poor.²⁰⁹ He was a man with a heart similar to his friend, perhaps because they were friends --- or perhaps it was the basis that permitted them to be friends. Is it surprising, if his younger and dear friend sustained him somehow in such a generous heart, that he would die so soon after him?

Conclusion

St. Augustine says a man is only known in friendship. The picture of Antoine Favre that emerges from the story of his friendship with Francis de Sales is of a sincere and faithful man. Besides being a celebrated jurist, he was a poet, with an artist's appreciation of beauty, and a little romantic. His discipline gave depth to that refined spirit.

²⁰⁶ "Je ne puis croire que tant je vivrai mgr l'évêque puisse mourir, ni que je vie après lui. ... Dieu nous console tous. Il ne m'est pas possible de vous écrire autre pour cette fois." F. Mugnier, *Histoire et correspondance du président Favre*, Champion, Paris, 1902-1903, 3 Vols., II, p.34.

²⁰⁷ Jean Passier, 1st Hearing, cited by A. Ravier, *Lettres...* p.43.

²⁰⁸ Antoine Favre died in Chambéry the 28 of February, 1624. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XI, p.18.

²⁰⁹ Cfr. *Dictionnaire des biographies françaises*, ... "Antoine Favre."

Favre was a man engaged in every aspect of the governance of Savoy. The military, the court and the Church were all home to him. He must have had an extraordinary energy and adaptability to manage each so competently. He had a hardiness, like a man with a vision, giving himself wholly to the things he loved, and it seems he did not hesitate to say how he felt. He was also an intellectual, not merely one well schooled, but one that kept on studying all his life. That knowledge and professional competence combined with his artistic appreciation for others as the image of God, to make him a skilled negotiator in conflict. But all of this is only the outside. Antoine Favre was also a father and a husband. When his wife Benedicte died, he remarried within four months. Perhaps it was for practical reasons, with his six children needing someone to care for them, or perhaps it shows his need for the intimacy and comfort someone as resonate with the suffering and beauty of the world around him depends upon for his energy.²¹⁰

The thing we notice about Favre in friendship with Francis is that he is nearly always there. He is like his right hand man, his practical advisor, his counselor and his encouragement. In an almost daily communication, these two remarkable friends give themselves to each other within the balance and boundaries of their duties to God, their families and others. They spent their vacations together. They could speak about everything together, and every time learn something new. They could contemplate each other's life and see the trace of their own life there as well. Indeed all the things Francis says about friendship, its secret communication, its gentle struggle, its refreshing recreation in innocent babbling, its virtue and its union, can be attributed to his friendship with President Antoine Favre. With him he was living all of that on a practically daily basis. His interior life in the presence of God was becoming externalized, actualized, and by that practice it was becoming more real, richer and stronger. We find in other letters terms of affection just as strong as those with Antoine Favre, the rapport he shared with his dear friend for almost 30 years was unique. Favre writes him very early in their friendship, "What, moreover, is more contrary to friendship than wanton disrespect?"²¹¹ The respect they gave each other

²¹⁰She was Philberte Martin de la Perouse, and was also widowed. Favre's first wife Benoîte died on May 18, 1606, he remarried September 29 the same year. She died January 18, 1624, just a few weeks before him. She was the "precious treasure of complete honesty and virtue and a firm column" of the Favre household. Cfr. Mugnier, *Histoire d'Antoine Favre*, chapt. XV and XXII, Paris 1902-1903.

²¹¹"Amicissimus mihi est, quisquis amici mei se amicum probat...Caetera

blessed both the recipient and the donor with a new dignity. It gave their friendship its overall tone.

Generosity was another of the main hallmarks of their friendship. They shared friendships with one another, and freely called upon one another when in need. Both could see serving the other as serving God, especially Favre, whose generosity might be understood as *not* calling upon his friend for the practical services Francis could rely upon him for, because he appreciated the Bishop's gift and grace to minister to others.²¹² Each received unique consolation from the other, someone who understood them the way God understands them, the way a man can only be understood in friendship. Isn't that what is unique about a friend's love, its understanding. It is somehow more deeply rooted in truth. In that sense being in the presence of a friend would be like being both in privacy and in the presence of God.

Their friendship was something each valued and worked to maintain. "That gentle struggle of friendship," they both so willingly exposed themselves to from the first letter openly declaring the desire to bond themselves in "perpetual obligation," was able to become something remarkable not only because each loved Christ, learning and Savoy, (how many others they knew did as well?); but because the Holy Spirit welded their souls together by some resemblance in them they recognized. By the spiritual education they had from an interior life they knew to love and esteem friendship for what it is worth. That same life of the Spirit was enhanced by the way they were able to share it with one another, to be more themselves when they were with each other. They relied on each other for judgments, consolation, encouragement, and practical needs. Was it a greater friendship than the one Francis enjoyed with the Baroness de Chantal? In one sense it was, because it shared more aspects of Francis' existence and reached earlier into his life. On the other hand their friendship may not have been as spiritual as his friendship with Jane, Favre was not a saint. He does not, if you will notice, write the President about his inner trials and frustrations as he does with Jane. Perhaps all these things were said as the two men walked together along the lake shore outside Annecy. We

taceo quae quotidie experiuntur, qui inter amicos ... ut neque amicitiae desertores videri velint, neque imporiores fieri ut amiciores videantur. Quid enim amicitiae tam contrarium quam improbitas?" *Oeuvres...* XI, p.378-379.

²¹²In letter CLXXXIV, Francis recommends Cardinal de Bérulle's friendship to Antoine de Revol, but cautions the need to leave him time for his many responsibilities.

will never know. Was Christ's friendship with Peter more than that with John? They were different friendships. Each had something different to offer, each shared an important part of Francis' life, and each helped him to become what he yearned to be.

Perhaps it is best to end this chapter on Favre and Francis's friendship with Jane's observation, she writes: [Favre] is a lord that you know, our Blessed Father [Francis] loved and honored like his eyes; he was his dear friend."²¹³

²¹³“[Favre] est un seigneur que vous savez que notre Bienheureux Père [Francis] aimait et honorait comme ses yeux; enfin c'était son cher ami.” Burns Sr. M. P. *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance*. ...II, p.230.

X

Friendship's Many Faces in All Dimensions of Life

St. Francis de Sales' life is full of friendships, and what better place to learn from him about our subject? We are all sustained by the ideas of the age we live in, which impart our assumptions and direction. The spirit of the Doctor of love was born in a time of turmoil and change. Ideas about society and authority, the new world, religion and science were all shifting and heaving. But among all these movements, there are a couple of major currents which orient his friendships; they are Humanism and Protestantism. His conception of sin and the human person, for example, will have direct consequences on his attitude in friendship. Before we begin to look through the prism of his life and into intimacy with the man, let us try and place him in his age, because against that background friendship with him will be brought into focus. For the spirit of a man's friendships reflects the spirit of the man.

Humanism and the Context of His Generation

"I am a man, no more no less"

St. Francis de Sales' entire life, his youth, education and episcopacy, is marked by an overriding optimism for human potential and our

relations with God. "It is the fundamental principle of his life, of his apostolate, and of his influence through the centuries."¹ That optimism has its roots in Christian Humanism. H. Bremond called him "the most perfect and exact expression" of devout Humanism of the Seventeenth Century.² The classic idea of Humanism is fundamental optimism about human nature with a culture cultivated in Greek, Latin and Hebrew --- the humanities. What devout Humanism adds to this is that a person with this literary education not be content with mere sentimentality, but reach out to that humanity, to become engaged and active by a love that seeks to improve.³ It is Christian because human perfection is defined in the terms laid down for us by Christ. The debate between humanity's beauty and its need for divinity is beyond our scope, but it is important to note that Francis de Sales takes a central place in the stream of ideas that shape the Seventeenth century.⁴ The brand of Humanism he

¹W. Marceau, *L'optimisme de Saint François de Sales*, P. Lethielleux, Paris 1973 p.22.

² H. Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France* t.1, "l'Humanisme dévot" (1580-1660). Cfr. for example p.104. He defines humanism as a tendency to glorify human nature, "l'Humanisme est essentiellement une tendance à la glorification de la nature humaine. Seule définition, me semble-t-il, qui convienne à tout défini, qui aille vraiment au fond des choses et qui nous permette de distinguer l'humaniste du simple lettré. Helléniste distingué, grand écrivain, Calvin nous humilie et nous accable, il désespère de nous: il n'est donc pas humaniste." And he specifies, "l'humanisme dévot ...exclut nécessairement cette faiblesse (de rompre la relation entre le sentiment et l'action)" pp.9-11 .

³ Bremond himself admits that "devout humanism" is an "être de raison". He has coined this particular kind of humanism, which apparently did not pose any difficulty for historians when it was published. The idea of humanism is very broad and spans many centuries. We have accepted this definition of Fr. Bremond because his work is a classic, however Jacques le Brun in the article "l'Humanisme Dévot," shows there are some ambiguities involved, including the only sense given "umanesimo" in the 17th Century French dictionaries was to be cultivated in the literature of Antiquity. But even replacing Bremond's "grandeur of man" with "sufficiency of man" for the basic meaning of humanism, as Le Brun wishes would require qualification, if we wish not to risk whitewashing the very pivotal theme of Christianity in the many forms of Humanism Europe has known since Charlemagne. Cfr. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, "Humanism" especially cols. 956-1033.

⁴Père Lajeunie, calls him the "Père de l'Eglise de France" and sketches his influence à travers la Visitation, Vincent de Paul, de Bérulle, Bossuet, Fénelon, Camus, Chardon, etc. Cfr. *Saint François de Sales, l'Homme, la Pensée, l'Action* Guy Victor, Paris, 1966, pp 413-486. Among those in agreement Cfr. F. Strowski, *Saint François de Sales, Introduction à l'Histoire du Sentiment*

espoused was indeed very engaged, as we shall see, in the improvement of himself and the world.⁵ His optimism and this activism will complement one another, and have a direct relationship with his extraordinary vision of friendship.

The hymn of Humanism: how beautiful mankind is!, spanned several centuries with many different nuances. The strain Henri Bremond credits to Francis de Sales issued from the Renaissance and was molded by the Catholic Reformation.⁶ Erasmus in Paris and Ignatius of Loyola in Alcalá, affirmed a distinctively Christian character to the study of the Classics and the Bible.⁷ Humanity is beautiful, the Christian Humanist believes, because it is endowed with so many noble qualities as the image of God, and because it has a natural tendency to fulfillment in its Creator.⁸ Redemption and not sin is the central doctrine of Christianity for St. Francis and the Christian Humanism of this age. It was the Catholic response to Protestant abasement of all human efforts and goodness.⁹ Yet this optimism is

Religieux en France au dix-septième siècle, Paris, 1928; J. Calvet, “La Littérature Religieuse de François de Sales à Fénelon”, in *Histoire de la Littérature Française*, éd, de Gigord, Paris, 1938, vol. 5.

⁵Père Lajeunie credits this activism to Louis de Granada “The just live the faith” by the impulse of their hearts. He apparently borrowed it from St. Thomas (II II, q. 82), Cajetan, and St. Augustin. “Nous sommes aux sources de l’esprit salésien, dans sa complexité et son dynamisme équilibré”. *Saint François de Sales...* vol. 2, pp.186-187.

⁶Cfr. Marceau, W. *L’optimisme de Saint François de Sales*, P. Lethielleux, Paris 1973 pp.175-277 for an excellent exposé of Salesian humanism and its applications for the spiritual life.

⁷Cfr. F. De Dainville s.j. *La naissance de l’humanisme moderne*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1940.

⁸ St. Francis exclaims: “Je gouterai, si je puis, cette immense bonté de mon Dieu...ceste adorable Majesté est bonne en elle mesme, ... la bonté mesme” and all creatures are good only by “participation” in that “aymable bonté”. Love then ascends to God through the beauty of created things. *Oeuvres...*XXII, pp.35-37. Already in the 6th Century St. Gregory the Great used the same arguments implicitly (*Moralia* 49, 74), which became explicit in the 9th Century with Alcuin’s *De animae ratione*, and were elaborated throughout the Middle Ages in the libraries of the flourishing monasteries. For a list of a good number of the many studies on Humanism and its trends see *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, “Humanism” cols. 956-1033.

⁹Calvin cries that without God man is “stupidity, misery, vanity, wickedness... rotten, a worm, garbage stinking of iniquity.” *Les Oeuvres complètes de Calvin, Joannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia, Corpus Reformatorum*, Brunswick-Berlin, 1863-1900, 59 vols.; III, 37, 41ff.. And

balanced by humanity's need for grace and its proclivity to become less rather than more.¹⁰ Wounded and weakened by original sin we may freely cooperate with grace in our own small way to attain the perfection Providence has always meant for us.¹¹ He believes, like Ignatius of Loyola and Augustine, that there is a natural proportion or a compatibility between God and the human person, which we yearn to fulfill before we even understand its origins.¹² "It is not possible that a man thinking attentively about God, not feel a certain rush of love which the secret inclination of our nature stirs in the bottom of our hearts."¹³ Even wounded by original sin and full of imperfections, finding it easier to choose selfish and immediate goods, there endures this inextinguishable inclination of love for God above all things, the

Luther says in his response to Erasmus' tract challenging his ideas entitled *Dialogue on Free Will*, "Free will? One alone exists, that of God. Man is impotent, vicious, associated either with evil or with grace." Luther's response is entitled: *The Slave Will*.

¹⁰"Il n'y a point de si bon naturel qui ne puisse estre rendu mauvais par les habitudes vicieuses; il n'y a point aussi de naturel si revesche qui, par la grace de Dieu premierement, puis par l'industrie et diligence, ne puisse estre dompté et surmonté." *Oeuvres...* III, p.68.

¹¹St. Irenaeus in the second century had already affirmed that God slowly leads us to perfection by degrees, forming us in His image. He reproaches those who would deny they must progress and are created passionate and human, blaming God for not having made them gods from the beginning. *Adversus Haereses*, 4, 38; 4, 11; 6, 36 et passim.

¹²"Comme est-ce que non ame pourroit estendre sa cogitation a cette infinité, si elle n'avoit quelque sorte de proportion avec elle? ... quand je sens que mon desir court apres ma cogitation sur cette mesme eternité, mon ayse prend un accroissement nompareil; car je sçay que nous ne desirons jamais d'un vray desir que les choses possibles. Mon desir donq m'assure que je puis avoir l'eternité: que me rest-il plus que d'esperer que je l'auray? Et cela m'est donne par la connoissance de l'infinie bonté de Celuy qui n'aurait pas crée une ame capable de penser et de tendre a l'eternité, s'il n'eust voulu luy donner les moyens d'y atteindre. " *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXLVII. See also, IV, pp.48-50 and IV, pp.74-79.

¹³"Or, bien que l'estoit de nostre nature humaine ne soit pas maintenant doué de la santé et droiture originelle, ... si est ce toutefois que la sainte inclination d'aymer Dieu sur touches choses est demeurée... et n'est pas possible qu'un homme pensant attentivement en Dieu, voire mesme par le seul discours naturel, ne ressent un certain eslan d'amour que la secrette inclination de nostre nature suscite au fond du coeur." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.78. See also the story Francis recounts of St. Pachomius as a soldier under Constance who immediately converted upon hearing the word of God. *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.130ff.

human heart still desires to love “true goodness.”¹⁴ Without God, however, this Humanism can only admit a lesser happiness in natural fulfillment for the human person. It relinquishes a dependence on the transcendent, beyond human grasp. Francis de Sales is defending this optimistic view of humanity when he argues for a natural desire in every person for God. “One has a great capacity to receive goodness, and the other a great abundance and great inclination to give it.”¹⁵ The glory of God is revealed in the fulfillment, the splendor, of the human person. The Humanist would say in concert with St. Irenaeus, “God most glorified is man fully alive.” Humanity is most beautiful when rejoined to its Creator, we ache for it, and it is one of the proofs of our dignity. And, in turn, through human beauty God is made most manifest. “Live joyfully near Him.”¹⁶ *Vive Jésus!*

“I am a man, no more no less”¹⁷ is not an apology; Francis would tell you there is nothing to be embarrassed about in human weakness. We are weak and we will fail; we depend upon our God for good acts.¹⁸ Go ahead and cry, don’t be surprised if you fall, forgive yourself your foolish mistakes; you are man and nothing more.¹⁹ But you are also nothing less! Strive little by little for perfection. Make small acts of

¹⁴“L’amour du vrai bien” and “l’inclination naturelle d’aymer Dieu sur toutes choses” are stirred also by reason which inspires us to love God, making him known as an “entreveüe” (V, p.237). Moreover, it is as essential to human nature as reason itself! “Nous ne pouvons pas estre vrayz hommes sans avoir inclination d’aymer Dieu plus que nous mesmes”. *Oeuvres... V*, p.203.

¹⁵“Mais, outre cette convenance de similitude, il y a une correspondance non pareille entre Dieu et l’homme pour leur reciproque perfection; non que Dieu puisse recevoir aucune perfection de l’homme, mais parce que, comme l’homme ne peut estre perfectionné que par la divine Bonté, aussi la divine Bonté ne peut bonnement si bien exercer sa perfection hors de soy qu’a l’endroit de nostre humanité: l’une a grand besoin et grande capacite de recevoir du bien, et l’autre a grande abondance et grande inclination pour en donner.” *Oeuvres... IV*, pp.74-76.

¹⁶“Et courage, chere Fille, Dieu nous est bon; que tout nous soit mauvais, que nous en doit-il chaloir? Vivés joyeux aupres de luy.” *Oeuvres... ltr. MMVII*.

¹⁷“Je suis tant homme que rien plus” *Oeuvres... ltr. CDXVIII*.

¹⁸“Nous ne devons pas nous inquieter... en nos infirmités, mais nous devons nous glorifier d’estre infirmes...Ces rebelions de l’appétit sensuel tant en l’ire qu’en la convoitise, sont laissees en nous pour nostre exercice, affin que nous pratiquions la vaillance spirituelle en leur resistant.” *Oeuvres... V*, p.132-133.

¹⁹“Eh quoi! n’avons-nous pas un coeur humain et un naturel sensible?” *Oeuvres... XIV*, p.264.

virtue and little by little you will gain that beauty God offers to you. You are created in His image and therefore capable of great things.²⁰ Rejoice!

That call to rejoice was made in a climate shaped by Protestant pessimism about human nature. Their siege to such exaltation was prepared a century before by many factors, but perhaps none more than the Occamists. Rejecting theology's pretension to be able to explain God and creation, they taught that human reason was only able to arrive at abstract "nominal" concepts and unable to grasp reality. What developed left "faith in flagrant contradiction with reason, the supernatural with nature: in a word, in religion, terror; in morality, rigorism; in philosophy, skepticism."²¹ Calvin and Luther had made that distance between humanity and God all the more redoubtable with their severity and pessimism.²² Original sin became the center of polemics with its implications for freedom, grace and predestination. The words of Bellarmin or St. Francis fall like a blanket of snow upon this

²⁰ "Pourquoy nous ayons-nous nous mesmes en charité? Certes, c'est parce que nous sommes l'image et semblance de Dieu. Et puisque tous les hommes ont cette mesme dignite, nous les ayons aussi comme nous mesmes, c'est a dire en qualite de tressaintes et vivantes images de la Divinité. Car c'est en cette qualité-la, Theotime, que nous appartenons a Dieu d'une si estroite alliance et d'une si aymable dependance, qu'il ne fait nulle difficulté de se dire nostre Pere et nous nommer ses enfans; (1 JN 3.1-2); c'est en cette qualité que nous sommes capables d'estre unis a sa divine essence par la jouissance de sa souveraine bonté et felicité; c'est en cette qualité que nous recevons sa grace et que nos espritz sont associés au sien tressaint, rendus, par maniere de dire, participans de sa divine nature (2Ptr 1.4): comme dit saint Leon (Sermo 12.1). Et c'est donq ainsy, que la mesme charité qui produit les actes de l'amour de Dieu, produit quant et quant ceux de l'amour du prochain. *Oeuvres...* V, p.204-205.

²¹H.Bremond, *Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux en France* t.1, "l'Humanisme Dévot," p.13.

²²This prayer by Théodore de Beza at the colloquia of Poissy resumes the spirit of the Reform. "Seigneur Dieu, Père éternel et tout-puissant, nous reconnaissons et confessons devant ta sainte majesté que nous sommes pauvres et misérables pécheurs, conçus et nait en iniquité et corruption, enclins à mal faire, inutile à tout bien, et que de notre vie nous transgressons sans fins et sans cesse tes saints commandemens... Toutefois, Seigneur, nous avons déplaisir en nous-même de t'avoir offensé et condamnons nous et nos vices en vraie repentance, désirant que ta grâce subviene à notre calamité. Veuille donc avoir pitié de nous." De La Place, *Commentaires de l'Estat de la religion et République sous les rois Henry et François seconds et Charles neufviesme*, édition Buchon, t. I, p.22

conflict. "Oh my dear sinners," replies Francis, echoing the eminent Jesuit apologist's belief that we must hate the sin but love the sinner.²³ Philip Neri, Robert Bellarmin, and Francis de Sales, all preached the joy of God's love at a time when reformers within the Catholic Church were brandishing their own kind of severity.²⁴

The example of friendship for Calvin

This same humble simplicity will have important repercussions for friendship. If St. Francis de Sales is the most human of saints, it is because of his understanding of human weakness and glory. "Nothing human is alien to me," the favorite humanist decree of Terence, given a Christian context by one like Francis de Sales, is all the more true, because both dimensions of the human being are understood.²⁵ Every person is both beautiful and imperfect. Understanding that makes friendships neither easily offended, nor burdensome, yet strong and faithful, correcting and yet patient. This simple and meek love he has lived in friendship with God will define his friendships with others, and enable him to reach out to them, sharing depths any other kind of love can only pretend to do.

For the friends of John Calvin, on the other hand, "all is not amicable in this friendship which ignores confidence and joviality. He quickly makes things tragic. He predicts all, he observes all, he takes account of all. His correspondents are not permitted the least negligence without attracting his admonishment."²⁶ He was extremely

²³ In Cardinal Bellarmin's words, "Odio habeamus non quidem homines sed haeresim sed vitia eorum", *De moribus Haereticorum*. See also *des sept paroles de N. S. sur la croix*, I, 1. Cfr. Marceau, W. *L'optimisme de Saint François de Sales*, P. Lethielleux, Paris 1973 who contends Bellarmin was the source of St. Francis' ideas on abandon, sanctification in one's particular state of life, the universal call to holiness, and confidence in God. pp.115-128.

²⁴ That same current would give rise to the Jansenism of Port-Royal shortly after Francis' death, which tried to deny any and all self love. For St. Francis there exists a legitimate self love, but it must be constantly checked and purified. Cfr. for example *Oeuvres...* IV pp.48-50.

²⁵ Francis in fact writes to Antoine Favre lamenting the situation in the Chablais citing Terence's famous maxim. "Verebar enim ne charissimae patriae miseriam corde tuo illo piissimo exceptam paulo durius, uti solemus qui nihil a nobis humani alienum putavimus (Terence, *Heaut.* act. I s.25) sustineres, videndo quam audiendo." *Oeuvres...* ltr. XLV.

²⁶ "Calvin a de bons amis, dont il peut demander beaucoup, sauf de le suivre jusqu'au bout, quand il deviendra fondateur d'Eglise. Les Danies, de

sensitive, giving an exaggerated importance to the least of lapses, upon which he was capable of hardening to such an extent that a third person was required to intervene.²⁷ And yet we find him capable of warm expressions of friendship.²⁸ His severity is no less with himself, but it is hard to understand how his intimacy could have been any more than sharing common cause with men of like mind. He seems to have believed, however that friendship was an important means to spiritual progress. "Live mindful of our friendship," he writes on old friend from his death bed, "of which, as it was useful to the Church of God, the

Connan, Du Chemin du Tillet...Tout n'est pas amical dans cette amitié qui ignore la confiance et la jovialité. Il prend vite les chose au tragique. Il prévoit tout, il observe tout, il tient compte de tout. Ses correspondants ne peuvent se permettre la moindre négligence sans s'attirer des semonces." André Favre-Dorsaz, *Calvin et Loyola, deux réformes* Editions Universitaires, Paris, Bruxelles, 1951. pp.69-70. Texts where Calvin talks of friendship are rare, but in his defense he says in his commentary on Ephesians 4:2, "le commencement d'entretenir l'amitié fraternelle, c'est l'humilité. ...et quiconque sera doué d'une telle modération et tempérance, pardonnera beaucoup de choses aux frères, et en supportera beaucoup...c'est la propre nature de la charité que d'être patience. Là donc où la charité régnera et aura vigueur, nous supporterons beaucoup de choses les uns des autres....Il nous faut donc vivre paisiblement, afin que l'amitié soit permanente entre nous." Jean Calvin *Commentaires sur le Nouveau Testament t. 6 Epître aux Ephésiens* pub. par la Société Calviniste de France, P. Marcel dir., Labor et Fides, Genève 1965 pp.186-187.

²⁷Cfr. André Favre-Dorsaz, *Calvin et Loyola, deux réformes* Editions Universitaires, Paris, Bruxelles, 1951. pp.69-71, who summarizes well the two different spirits of the epoch. "La conversion d'Ignace le fait progresser dans la bonté et l'amour des hommes. Celle de Calvin ne semble pas améliorer son caractère, durci encore par la forme d'un esprit essentiellement juridique." Calvin may have been a humanist in the larger sense of the term, well versed in the humanities, but the authors argument against Bremond's conclusion that he is not a humanist is hardly convincing because it remains intellectual and pessimistic for Calvin.

²⁸Calvin writes M. de Falais, "Je serais trop inhumain si je ne vous concédais d'user d'un tel et si bon moyen, puisque notre Seigneur vous l'a offert (résidence à Strassbourg) outre votre espérance. Non pas que je n'eusse désiré de vous voir, pour jouir de la consolation et joie que j'attendais de votre présence, et qu'il ne me fasse mal d'être privé d'un tel bien." I. 108. *Opera Calvini*. XI, 736 Cited by Jean-Daniel Benoit *Calvin directeur d'âmes, contribution à l'histoire de la piété réformée*, Oberlin, Strassbourg, 1944, p.93. The author admits Calvin had a "hypersensibilité," but assures us he had a high idea of the importance of friendship. Cfr. pp.276-278. See also his letter to Farel of May 2, 1564 which begins "Farewell my best and truest brother!".

fruits await us in heaven.”²⁹ He was reported to have friendships with numerous well known persons of his century, and his many volumes of correspondence is material for a doctoral dissertation to investigate Calvin’s idea of friendship.³⁰ Whichever picture is true of Calvin as the “hypersensitive” or the dear kind friend, friendship with John Calvin was subject to more eruptions and austerity than that with Francis de Sales. Perhaps the Reformer did view it with equal importance, but that remains to be proved in the light of such discrepancies recounted about his closeness.

For intimacy to grow, friendship must be a refuge of a truly humble and compassionate love, not accusatory. Francis, on the other hand, says “it is a great part of our perfection to put up with each other in our imperfections, for how can we better exercise the love of our neighbor if not in this support.”³¹ In friendship that philosophy would make him “by no means delicate.” Negligence, anger, laziness, and all other sorts of imperfections are things that the condition of our humanity is subject to, and if they are not done deliberately to ruin friendship, he says “it seems to me a friendship just a little strong should be able to put up with them.”³² The *joie de vivre* did not repulse St. Francis as it did

²⁹ Cfr. his letter to Farel of May 2, 1564. See also, Jean-Daniel Benoit *Calvin directeur d'ames, contribution a l'histoire de la piété réformée*, ...pp.276-277. “Fellowship” appears much more in his works than “friendship.” The term friendship does not appear in the index of his *Institutions* in neither the Library of Christian Classics edition, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1967; nor the Bibliothèque des Textes Philosophiques edition, Vrin, Paris 1963. And of all the volumes of his commentaries on the New Testament, the *only* text mentioned in their indices is the one cited from Ephesians above.

³⁰Philip Schaff calls Calvin’s short temper and begrudging tendencies “the shadows of his virtues,” contending that, to the contrary, he was an affectionate and kind man enjoying the faithful friendship of Farel, Viret, Beza, Bucer, Gryneus, Bullingers, Knox, Melancthon, Queen Marguerite and the Duchess of Renée. Cfr. *History of the Christian Church*, VIII, ch. 18, p.380.

³¹“C’est une grande partie de notre perfection de nous supporter les uns les autres en nos imperfections, car en quoi pouvons-nous exercer l’amour du prochain sinon en ce support?” *Oeuvres...* XVI, p.118

³²“Non certes, Monsieur, je ne suis nullement delicat, amant les ceremonies, les complimens; non, pas mesme les offences ne gastent rien avec moy, si elles ne sont faites et apposteés expres pour ruiner l’amitié (je parle de l’amitié, et non de la commune charité que rien ne doit ruiner); car celles qui proviennent de negligence, de foiblesse, d’inconsideration, voire mesme de quelque soudaine passion d’ire, de courroux et de haine, il me semble qu’un’amitié un peu forte les doit supporter, en consideration de nostr’humanite qui est sujette a ces accidens.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMLXXXVII.

Calvin. He counsels that Philothea condescend to attend balls or to participate in gaming, remaining detached interiorly. His spirit is much more supple, able to practice holiness in any circumstance because, he teaches, we are able to love purely in them all.³³ While Calvin withdrew to years of study into the wee hours of the night to write what would amount to some forty thousand pages, Francis de Sales was reaching out to hundreds in friendship and winning their hearts.³⁴

The Width and Breadth of Salesian Friendship

After just a few minutes of browsing through the eleven volumes of St. Francis de Sales' letters one quickly discovers that he was one of those rare individuals able to have an enormous number of friendships. In fact those 2,100 letters we possess are only a fraction of the copious number of missives he penned at a rate of approximately 20 per day.³⁵ Many have been lost over the nearly three hundred years between his death and the beginning of the critical edition of his works undertaken by the Visitation of Annecy. More importantly, those letters are only part of the story. He also had friendships with many people unable to read.³⁶ He would stop for anyone in the street who made a sign they wanted to speak to him, and as Michael Favre, his confessor, recounts he never turned away any person who wanted to see him in his office.³⁷

³³“Or sus, il nous faut supporter et tolerer cette vanité du monde; mais il ne faut aymer ni affectionner que la verité de nostre bon Dieu. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXXIX

³⁴ It may be argued that Calvin was writing to many spiritual directees, and that these constituted spiritual friendships. Not having studied the question, we can only say that skimming his letters, their tone is not as intimate and gentle as Francis de Sales.

³⁵François Favre, his valet says he wrote “between 20 and 25 letters per day”. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XI, p.xix.

³⁶ These are people he met above all in the confessional and in his pastoral duties, Cfr. A. Ravier, *Lettres...* pp.VII-X. See also *Oeuvres...* XIII, p.199-200.

³⁷“Il voulait aussi que ses serviteurs fussent courtois et affables à l'endroit de ceux qui le venaient visiter, qu'ils ne renvoyassent personne, sinon qu'il fût extrêmement occupé, et alors avec des paroles douces et obligeantes, afin que les visiterus attendissent en patience ou ne s'en retournassent malcontentes et ne perdissent la confiance de revenir une autre fois. Et quand c'était des personnes affligées ou de passage, il voulait qu'on l'avertît sur-le-champ sans les renvoyer ou les faire attendre.” Michel Favre, 1st Hearing, art. 48; in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.167. See also pp.157-158 and

It is not only the number of friendships then that is remarkable, but their expansive range as well. It is one of the signs of the man's genius that he was able to relate to so many different people in the most intimate way humanly possible. With Jane de Chantal and Antoine Favre his friendship went its farthest, but he also shared a friendship in varying degrees with numerous others. It is beyond the scope of this work to study all of them, but there are a number representing the dimensions of the Doctor of love's world of friendship. They fall into several different genera: his family, his spiritual directors, the court and nobles of his era, simple souls like Anne-Jacqueline Coste, with Protestants, women like Mme de Charmoisy, spiritual leaders like St. Vincent de Paul, and finally with the clergy in the ups and downs of the reformation of his diocese. Let us then begin with his home, where he first learned to love and be loved.

The de Sales Family

His family is one of the great mainstays of his life. Its intimacy is the archetype of his friendships. A sign of this is how freely he uses "sister" and "brother" for those friends dearest to him. The security of his family's love and faith gave him a foothold enabling him to turn outward and extend his hand to others. Their spirit in general is best portrayed by St. Francis of Assisi, the namesake of both his mother and father. It was no accident they named their first son Francis Bonaventure. Even his bedroom was named after the friar of poverty. Living as they did in the natural splendor of the Alps, the odes to creation for which St. Francis is famous struck an accord with their Savoyard genes, but it was above all his humble simplicity, his poverty of spirit, that they embraced, as would be revealed by their progeny.³⁸ We have very little information about Francis' relationship with his brothers and sisters. There are no letters between him and three of them: Gallois, Janus and Jeanne. The rest is sparse at best. Let us

229-230.

³⁸Every noble family of the epoch had a documented history called their *Livre de Raison*. Unfortunately, the French Revolution destroyed the de Sales Family version. The excerpts we have, thanks to Charles-Auguste de Sales family history *Pourpris historique* pp.434-435, show how the faith was a basic part of the family's every act, public and private. See also the contract of marriage between Gaspard and Nicoline de la Faverge in L.E. Piccard, *Saint François de Sales et sa Famille*, P. Lethielleux, Paris 1911, pp.81-87 and pp.113-129.

nonetheless attempt to glean what we can to form an idea of the relationships that formed him, his inner circle. It will provide important insights into intimacy with the Doctor of love.

His mother, Madame de Boisy ³⁹

Francis was the eldest of thirteen children. Five died in their infancy. Everyone in his family, except Monsieur de Boisy, who died too soon perhaps, chose Francis for their spiritual director. On one trip home to console her and the rest of the family after the death of his little sister Jeanne in 1607 he writes Jane de Chantal, "Yesterday, All Saints day, I was the grand confessor of the family."⁴⁰ With every member of his family he maintained a sincere spiritual friendship, but none of those friendships were as intimate as that with his mother. She was one of the most important influences in his life.

Madame de Boisy was a very frank yet humble person, known for her kindness to the poor. Neither their oozing sores, nor the rainy winter weather, made her hesitate to roll up her sleeves and do whatever was necessary to help them. That "extraordinary virtue" gained her the honor of the people throughout the region.⁴¹ Because she was much younger than her husband and often home alone while he was called away on various duties, she would bring Francis everywhere with her around the chateau and its domain.⁴² She was just fourteen

³⁹ Françoise de Sionnaz was promised at seven years old to François de Sales Sr., then 34, on the condition that he take as dowry the lordship of Boisy and its name. The marriage took place once the girl came of age. Such a wide difference in age was common among the gentry of Baroque Europe. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XII, p.244, n.1. Normally women married between 16 and 20, and if she was over 22, she was considered an old maid. Cfr. O. De la Brosse, *Saint François de Sales et les femmes mariées*, Cerf, Paris, 1967, pp.16-17.

⁴⁰"Hier, jour de la Toussaint, je fus le grand confesseur de la famille." *Oeuvres...* ltr.. CDXVIII. Or again on another visit, "Toute cette aymable famille vint a confesser a moy en nostre petite chappelle, mays avec tant de pieté que l'on eust dit qu'il y avoit un Jubilé d'annee sainte a gagner." *Oeuvres...* ltr.. CDXXV.

⁴¹ Trouchu's praise is typical of her biographers: "Bref, on agréé sans peine le concert d'unanimes louanges qui s'élève autour de 'cette femme d'une vertu extraordinaire'. Trochu, *Saint François de Sales...* t.1, p.38.

⁴²They shared the family chateau for about ten years with Louis, Mr. de Boisy's oldest brother, and his three children: Amé, Gaspard and François, the youngest being one year older than Francis. Cfr. F. Trochu, *La Maman de Saint François de Sales*, St. Paul, Paris, 1960. p.18 and p.35.

years older than Francis,⁴³ and that too no doubt played a role in facilitating their closeness. Those years together were short. Francis left for school at the age of six, and for the rest of his life he would only see her on visits.⁴⁴ “Always he had been my consolation,”⁴⁵ she would tell Jane de Chantal years later. From his mother he learned to pray and appreciate God in the peaks around them as much as in the chapel. She was the one to begin him on his way in the humble *douceur* that would become his trademark.⁴⁶ As a boy, Francis was heard saying more than once, “My God and my mother love me very much.”⁴⁷ As a young man we get one peek into how deeply he loved his mother, when he rushes to her side in the difficult birth of Jeanne. She was 42 and began to have racking pain. Fearing she might die from it, he dropped everything and hastened to her side. “For,” as he later explained to Favre, “my presence always affords her much consolation.”⁴⁸ To every one’s relief, the pains passed and she was able to give birth without further complications.

That intimacy and friendship between mother and son never suffered any breach, as it developed naturally into a kind of equality in his adult life. In fact, the relationship between Francis and his mother is interesting as an example, perhaps even as a paradigm, of how one learns the love of God through human love centered on Him. Francis would later remark, “Thanks to her goodness, I learned to love tenderly

⁴³Cfr. E-J. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, l’homme...* t.1, p.97.

⁴⁴La Roche was only three leagues from Thorns, and M. de Boisy often had business there giving him the opportunity to visit his son. Weekends were usually spent at home. Mother de Chaugy reports that when Francis was withdrawn from the Collège de La Roche to be sent to the capuchin Collège at Annecy after two years, most of the school accompanied him, and they wept, saying that the blessing of their town was being taken away. 2nd Hearing, t. IV, p.177.

⁴⁵F. Trochu, *La Maman ...* p.34. Mère Chaugy’s deposition.

⁴⁶Francis admits to have contemplated several years his mother’s correction when he was about twelve: “Notre Seigneur Dieu,” she said to him, “ne fut-il pas plus que tous doux et humble de coeur? Mon François, qui veut devenir son prêtre, ne sera-t-il pas, lui aussi, humble et doux?” F. Troughu, *La Maman...* p.80.

⁴⁷De Longueterre, *Vie..* p.8.

⁴⁸Francis writes in 1593: “Qua absolutus cura, audio charissimam matrem, anno 42 aetatis suae, decimum tertium propediem parituram filium, acutioribus torsionibus ac adeo non levi mortis suspicione vexari. Quare missis omnibus ad eam mea enim praesentia plurimum recreari solet, propero, nec primum rediit quin melius per Dei gratiam.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.XII.

from my youth.”⁴⁹ From her death bed, his mother looked at him and gathered him into her arms, softly saying, “This one is my son and my father.”⁵⁰ Even while he was her spiritual director and “father” he continued to learn from her good example. The love and good example the mother gave the son were returned in a new form that was able, in turn, to nourish her by a kind of spiritual symbiosis. That reciprocity is what enables us to call their relationship a true friendship. She secretly sent him money in the Chablais when his father stubbornly refused to help. He often goes home to visit “my good mother,” during his episcopate, and relies on her to help him welcome the widow de Chantal and confides her with the baroness’ children when she is in need. We can imagine the many ways this mother was a constant support to him, but unfortunately we have practically no record of their correspondence. From the little we do possess we can winnow his filial piety for her as well as the explicit faith that bound them so closely which he first suckled from her milk, and that only grew stronger throughout his life.⁵¹ He writes Jane from Sales early in his episcopate telling her he is “filled with a tender and incomparable consolation near my good mother.”⁵² Going home was an escape for him, where he could rest like nowhere else.

When she melancholically refuses to have some shoes made for herself because she thought she would not be living much longer and it would be a waste to use them, he writes to correct her. He tells her that

⁴⁹“Il ne m’est pas avis que j’osasse crier ni tesmoigner du mescontentement sous les coups de cette main paternelle, qu’en verité, grace a sa Bonté, j’ay appris d’aymer tendrement des ma jeunesse.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXXI.

⁵⁰“A mon arrivee, toute aveugle et tout’endormie qu’ell’estoit, elle me caressa fort et dit: ‘Cet (sic) mon filz et mon pere cettuyci;’ et me baissa en m’acolant de son bras, et me baysa la main avant toutes choses...elle rendit l’ame a Nostre Seigneur, doucement, paysiblement et avec une contenance et beauté plus grande que peut estre elle n’avoit jamais eü, demeurant une des plus belles mortes que j’aye jamais vue.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXXI.

⁵¹We possess only two letters from Francis to his mother. The first he writes her from the Chablais in haste at the moment when she is helping him behind his father’s back. He writes, “Tenez-vous joyeuse en Notre-Seigneur, ma bonne Mere, et sachez s’il vous plaît que votre pauvre fils se porte bien, par la divine misericorde, et se prepare de vous aller voir le plus tot et le plus longuement qu’il lui sera possible, car je suis tout a vous. Je le dois et vous le savez que je suis votre fils,” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCVI.

⁵²“Ma Fille, je ne vous puis cacher que je suis de present a vostre Sales, comblé d’une tendre et incomparable consolation aupres de ma bonne mere.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXV.

it is not a serious fault, but that he wishes her to little by little put away such thoughts, “which are entirely useless,” and that she must “live freely, leaving to the Providence of Our Lord whatever it pleases him to do with us.”⁵³ Four months later, she suffered a stroke and soon afterwards on March 1, 1610, she died with her son at her side. With great difficulty he gave her the last blessing, closed her eyes and gently gave her “the last kiss of peace”.⁵⁴ He then wept as he had not done in a long time. Her death, he confessed to Jane, was a blow to him and although he wanted to cry out from the sharpness of his pain, there remained a tranquil feeling in all of it because, like David, he tells her: “*I will keep silent, oh Lord, and open not my mouth, for it is you who have done this.*”⁵⁵

⁵³ The following is from the second letter to his mother, written in November of 1609: “Si mon frere m’eut aussi bien sceu dire en quel estat estoit vostre esprit, ma consolation eüt esté plus grande; mais il ne m’a sceu dire, sinon que parfois vous esties asses joyeuse et parfois triste, et que vous n’avies pas voulu que l’on vous fit des souliers, estimant que vous ne vivrés pas asses pour les user. Or, en tout cela, il n’y a pas grand mal; mais je desir pourtant bien que, petit a petit, vous vous desfacies et desengagies de ces petites pensees, lesquelles sont entirement inutiles et infructüeuses, et outre cela, elles tiennent la place d’autres cogitations meilleurs et agreables a Nostre Seigneur. Il faut un petit plus mettre vostre esprit au large et a l’ayse avec Nostre Seigneur, et ne le point charger de ces menües affections ou pensees, et vivre librement, laissant a la providence de Nostre Seigneur ce quil luy plaira faire de vous.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLVI.

⁵⁴ “Le premier de mars, elle rendit l’ame a Nostre Seigneur, doucement, paysiblement et avec une contenance et beauté plus grande que peut estre elle n’avoit jamais eü, demeurant une des belles mortes que j’aye jamais veu... J’eü le courage de luy donner la derniere benediction, luy fermer les yeux et la bouche et luy donner le dernier bayser de paix a l’instant de son trespas. Apres quoy, le coeur m’enfla fort et pleuray sur cette bonne mere plus que je n’avois fait des que je suis d’Eglise, mais ce fut sans amertume spirituelle, graces a Dieu.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXXI.

⁵⁵ “Et pour moy, je confesse, ma Fille, que j’ay eü un grand ressentiment de cette separation (car c’est la confession que je doÿ faire de ma foiblesse, apres que j’ay fait celle de la bonté divine); mais neanmoins, ma Fille, ça esté un ressentiment tranquille, quoy que vif, car j’ay dit comme David: Je me tais, ô Seigneur, et n’ouvre point ma bouche, parce que c’est vous [qui] l’avés fait. [Ps 136:2] Sans doute, si ce n’eut esté cela, j’eusse crié hola! sous ce coup.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXXI.

His father, Monsieur Francis de Boisy

Monsieur de Boisy and Francis did have some strained moments that made communication difficult, especially when that conflict was over something both saw as critical, like the mission to the Chablais, or the future of the house of Sales. But it is only testimony to the glory of friendship's love that it is strong enough to overcome conflicts, the more violent the conflict the more splendid the victory. Near the end of his life he would comment, "How we should do things for our mothers and fathers, and how too we should tolerate lovingly their excess, their zeal and their ardor, even what I might call the importunity of their love!"⁵⁶ Stories of conflict with his father give us an image of a cantankerous and stubborn man dictating his will to his son, but in spite of it all he eventually won his father's support. All those protests were motivated by his fears for his son's future and safety. When Francis was a boy, his father would sometimes take him to the doorway of their home and point out the poor waiting for some food, barefooted and in a pitiful state saying, "See my son, if it would have pleased God, we could be like these poor people; we must have compassion for them." Then he would cordially invite them to come have a glass of wine with him.⁵⁷ Even though there was a large generation gap between them (45 years), his relationship with his father was generally good. "Father", he told him when he was asking for his permission to become a priest, "I will serve you until the last breath of my life."⁵⁸ The only letter known to his father is the one he writes from the Chablais after Roland fled because of the assassination attempt in 1595. He tells his father, "If Roland was your son as well as he is but your valet, he would not have had the cowardice to recoil for such a small shock." He begs him to understand that his refusal to come home as his father has commanded is not out of disobedience, but perseverance in a combat that is the price of an eternal glory.⁵⁹

⁵⁶In the last year of his life Francis writes, "Qu'il faut faire des choses pour les peres et meres, et comme il faut supporter amoureusement l'exces, le zele et l'ardeur, a peu que je dis encore l'importunit  de leur amour!" *Oeuvres... ltr.* MDCCLXXVIII.

⁵⁷Trochu, *Saint Franois de Sales...* t.1 p.55. See too, F. Bouvier, 1st Hearing and Jean Amaury-Simon, Hearing de Paris.

⁵⁸Charles-Auguste recounts: "Mon pere, repartit Franois, je vous serviray jusques au dernier souffle de ma vie; je promets toutes sortes de services a mes freres." *Histoire...* t.1, liv.1, p.57.

⁵⁹The letter is short enough to cite in its entirety: "Monsieur mon tres honor  Pere, Si Roland estoit vostre filz aussi bien qu'il n'est que vostre valet, il n'auroit pas eu la co ardise de reculer pour un si petit choc que celui ou il

In 1601 Francis learned from his fellow priest and friend Aimé Bouvard that his father had “very gently rendered his spirit to God,” just as he was stepping up to the pulpit to give his Lenten sermon. After preaching with perfect composure, he jolted the congregation with these words, “Coming to you I learned of the death of the person to whom I am most obliged in this world: my father is dead. I ask two things of you: one that you excuse me for a day or two so that I may render him the last duties; the other is that you will please pray to God for the repose of his soul.”⁶⁰ They noticed he was weeping.

Monsieur de Boisy had been ill for several months, and because he was now eighty years old the family was very concerned. He gathered his children who were then at Sales to his death bed and told them that Francis would now be their father. It was a new responsibility added to his duties as coadjutor. At the time his eldest brother Gallois was married and living as a country gentleman on one of the family estates. Louis was twenty-three and studying in Italy.⁶¹ Jean-François was twenty-two and well on his way to the ecclesial career his father had prepared for him. Bernard and Janus were still in school, and his sister Gasparde had married Melchior de Cornillon six years earlier. Jeanne, whom he had baptized as a newly ordained priest, was still just a child seven years old. They agreed that Mme de Boisy would be taken care

s'est trouvé et n'en feroit pas le bruit d'une grande bataille. Nul ne peut douter de la mauvaise volonté de nos adversaires; mays aussi vous faict on tort quand on doute de nostre courage. Par la grace de Dieu, nous sçavons que celuy qui perseverera sera sauvé, [Mt. 10, 22; 24, 13] et que l'on ne donnera la couronne qu'a celuy qui aura legitimement combattu, [II Tim 2, 5] et que les momens de nos combatz et de nos tribulations operent le prix d'une gloire eternelle. [II Co 4, 17] Je vous supplie donq, mon Pere, de ne point attribuer ma perseverance a la desobeysance, et de me regarder tousjours comme vostre filz le plus respectueux,” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XLVI. “Monsieur mon tres honoré Pere, Si Roland estoit vostre filz aussi bien qu'il n'est que vostre valet, il n'auroit pas eu la couïardise de reculer pour un si petit choc que celuy ou il s'est trouvé et n'en feroit pas le bruit d'une grande bataille. Nul ne peut douter de la mauvaise volonté de nos adversaires; mays aussi vous faict on tort quand on doute de nostre courage. Par la grace de Dieu, nous sçavons que celuy qui perseverera sera sauvé, [Mt. 10, 22; 24, 13] et que l'on ne donnera la couronne qu'a celuy qui aura legitimement combattu, [II Tim 2, 5] et que les momens de nos combatz et de nos tribulations operent le prix d'une gloire eternelle. [II Co 4, 17] Je vous supplie donq, mon Pere, de ne point attribuer ma perseverance a la desobeysance, et de me regarder tousjours comme vostre filz le plus respectueux,” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XLVI.

⁶⁰A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage and Saint...*p.104-105.

⁶¹P. Buffier *La vie du comte Louis de Sales*, Limoges, Barbou 1857, p.42.

of by both Francis and Louis and continue to live in the château at Sales.

Gallois

There was an age gap of nine years between Francis and his next sibling, Gallois. He was often ill and apparently did not have the gifts of intelligence and facility relating to people that his brother Francis enjoyed.⁶² Gallois was in Padua studying in one of its colleges with his elder brother, and witnessed his doctoral defense with Monsieur Déage in 1591.⁶³ They traveled in Italy together before Francis left for home,⁶⁴ and afterwards Gallois remained in Padua to pursue his own studies.⁶⁵ Francis confided him to his friends there before leaving.⁶⁶ He too chose a different vocation than that planned by Monsieur de Boisy, but his devotion was as fervid as the rest of his family. Good judgment helped him to find a wife of equally esteemed qualities, who earned the highest respect of the Bishop of Geneva.⁶⁷ In a letter to Jane de Chantal shortly after Gallois' death, Francis refers to him as "My very dear brother." Gallois called for his brother and Bishop to make his last confession, and died in Francis' arms after a long illness that slowly wasted him. He was thirty-eight. Francis tells Jane of his admirable patience in such suffering, and adds "We can call him the Job of our family."⁶⁸ Gallois

⁶²Cfr. Ravier, *Lettres...* p.58.

⁶³Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXII, p.93, n.4, See also A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...* p.35.

⁶⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXII, p.94.

⁶⁵It seems Déage remained in Padua after Francis returned home as Gallois' guardian, *Oeuvres...* ltr.. CCCXXXV.

⁶⁶He writes his friends in Padua referring to Gallois: "Mon Frere me ressemble asses, je croy, pour demeurer tous-jours des vostres." *Oeuvres...* ltr. VI.

⁶⁷Francis remarks of Jane de Chuyt, his sister in-law: "Une mere que je puis nommer sainte, et damoysele de bon lieu". *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCC.V. Louis is credited for having brought the best out of his sister in-law's naturally contentious spirit. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XV, p.263, n.4.

⁶⁸(There are serious doubts that the letter was in fact addressed to Jane). "Nous venons de rendre ici les derniers devoirs a feu mon tres cher frere de Boisy; il est trespassé depuis peu entre mes bras... c'est une chose estonnant que les maux qu'il a souffert en tout son corps, et l'espace de plusieurs mois, estant contraint de demeurer dans une mesme posture corporelle, mais avec une pieté et une patience si remarquables, que nous le pouvons nommer le Job de nostre famille." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMLXXX bis. Gallois died in July of 1614.

left behind a wife and several children, one of whom, Françoise-Marie, entered the Visitation in 1616.⁶⁹

Louis

Louis de Sales, baron of Thuille, was the brother to whom Francis felt the closest.⁷⁰ He was ten years younger and shared Francis' impassioned faith in God. His only biographer tells us he was known throughout his life for his humility and his kindness to the poor.⁷¹

The de Sales family was not without its infighting, especially over the inheritance of the family estates. Since Francis, the eldest, relinquished his rights of inheritance, M. de Boisy left the youngest, Bernard, with first choice, which was bound to cause problems since it was not the normal manner of handling such matters. Bernard chose his parents house, causing his elder brothers and sister to protest. Claude-Philiberte, Louis' wife, was most upset and even captious. Louis was the one the family chose to manage the estate and family affairs after M. de Boisy's death, rather than Gallois who was older. With his wife pressing him to contest the will, choosing him to execute the will proved a wise choice by the family, and a delicate task for Louis.⁷² In the end whether it be due to Francis, as his biographers contend, or Louis, as his biographer would have it, the family's peace prevailed over these objections.⁷³ On March 9, 1609 Claude-Philiberte died in childbirth. Shortly after Bernard's tragic death in 1617, Louis had his turn as baron de Thorens.

There are practically no letters between Francis and Louis left to us except some regarding business of the family estates, or similar services.⁷⁴ In one letter, unique in its kind, he cautions his brother to prudently test the offers of friendship from the local procurator, "Either this man sincerely wishes our friendship, and we should not refuse him,

⁶⁹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XI, p.12, n.1, and XV, p.263, n.3.

⁷⁰Francis' cousin, the canon regular, was named Louis de Sales, as was his uncle, leaving us with three in the family.

⁷¹P. Buffier, *La vie du comte Louis de Sales*, Limoges, Barbou 1857, p.214. See too L.-E., Piccard, *Saint François de Sales et sa famille*. Paris, Lethielleux, 1910, pp.245-254.

⁷² Cfr. P. Buffier, *La vie...*, p.49-50.

⁷³Compare: Trochu, *S. François de Sales*, t.2, pp.318-319, with Louis' biographer, P. Buffier, *La vie...*, p.49-50.

⁷⁴Cfr. For example *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXXV, where Francis is trying to secure a place for a cousin as page for the Savoyard court at his brother's request. And Francis doesn't hesitate to ask his brother to use his influence to help Favre get his son René named as his successor. Cfr. MDCLXIV.

or he only wants it in appearance, and as such we should give it, and so in little time the snow will melt in the sun and the filth will be discovered.”⁷⁵ It is an essential text for our understanding of the importance of testing a person’s sincerity before consigning ourselves to their friendship. That kind of counsel is a window into understanding how the two must have worked together for the family’s benefit. After Antoine Favre took his seat as president of the Senate of Savoy in 1610, requiring him to leave the Florimontane Academy, Louis was the one to pick up the ball. It continued to hold conferences for another two years.⁷⁶ This was the moment Francis was launching the Visitation, leaving him little time for the Academy. Despite Louis’ efforts, without Favre or the Bishop the Academy fizzled out. Louis went on to have an important place in the court of Savoy.⁷⁷ He was himself an “intimate friend” of Antoine Favre.⁷⁸ The fact Favre, Francis and their collaborators chose Louis shows how much he was a part of the idea of the Academy, and is a little trace left the historian revealing the way his family cooperated with Francis in his life as Bishop. Louis was ambassador to Switzerland for two years, and was reputed as a skilled diplomat.⁷⁹ One of his sons, Charles-Auguste, would succeed Francis as Bishop of Geneva and become his first biographer.⁸⁰ Louis died a natural death at 75.⁸¹

Jean-François

There are just as few letters between Francis and his third brother Jean-François. He would be the one to follow him into the priesthood and be chosen to succeed him as Bishop of Geneva immediately after his death. The letters we have treat business matters regarding his responsibilities as coadjutor and are hardly elucidating. When Christine de France and Victor Amédée honored Francis by appointing him chaplain to the court of Turin, he asked to send his brother Jean-

⁷⁵“Ou ce bon homme veut a bon escient nostre amitié, et nous ne la luy devons pas refuser; ou il la veut seulement apparemment, et telle il la luy faudra donner, et, en peu de temps, au soleil la neige se fondra et l’ordure sera decouverte.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CL.

⁷⁶Cfr. Trochu, *Saint François de Sales...* t.2, p.239-240.

⁷⁷Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XII, p.95, n. 1.

⁷⁸P. Buffier *La vie...*, p.24.

⁷⁹P. Buffier *La vie...*, p.40.

⁸⁰Louis wanted to marry Marie-Jacqueline Favre, the president’s daughter after his first wife Claudine-Philberte de Pingon-Cusy died in 1609, but she opted for religious life with the Visitation instead. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXI, p.95.

⁸¹P. Buffier *La vie...*, p.214.

François in his stead. It shows his trust in both his judgment and integrity, which was all the more confirmed by his selection as his coadjutor and eventual successor. Jean-François returned to Annecy once he was named coadjutor, after a year's absence. It was a biting December night when he arrived. Francis sent a group of young priests to meet him several miles outside the city. He remained at the Perrière city gate, patiently watching for the parade of torches advancing. When they reached him, he embraced Jean-François on his knees full of joy and gave him his benediction.⁸² From what we know of the man by now, it would be hard to believe nepotism would motivate his choice of his brother as his successor. They must have worked closely together in the daily affairs of the diocese during the last years of Francis' life.

Bernard

Bernard de Sales was Francis' youngest brother, and he was especially attached to him. He was seventeen years younger, which would have made him just ten when Francis came back to Savoy from Padua. Little Bernard must have been thrilled to have his big brother home. Through Bernard's marriage to Jane de Chantal's daughter Marie-Aimée, years later, the houses of Jane and Francis would be joined to the delight of all.⁸³ Bernard was twenty-four, and Marie-Aimée was just nine when the fiançaille was agreed upon (Mme de Boisy was engaged at seven). They would have to wait two years before the marriage took place. It was a marriage clearly to the advantage of the de Sales family, which caused some to murmur. Once married, the couple were manifestly very happy. They both shared a profound love of God and looked to Francis for guidance in cultivating a sincere Christian life. Francis held both of them in high esteem.⁸⁴ He called Marie-Aimée "My dear sister in-law that I always find more lovable and desirous to become brave and devote."⁸⁵ He invited

⁸²Cfr. Trochu, *Saint François de Sales...* t. 2, p.665.

⁸³Francis writes Jane, "N'est pas nostre bon Dieu qui ouvre le chemin au mariage de nos jeunes gens? Cette facilité de messieurs vos plus proches, d'ou peut elle provenir que de la Providence celeste? De deça, ma Fille, je le confesse, mon esprit y est, je ne dis pas porté, mais lié et collé; ma mere ne pense qu'a cela, toute la fraternité y conspire." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXI.

⁸⁴Albert de Genève, who claimed a close friendship with Bernard recounts that on one occasion Bernard interrupted his brother in an ecstasy of prayer, which Francis openly explained to his brother, trusting he would respect his confidence. 2nd Hearing, Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.179-180.

⁸⁵"Ma petite seur que je trouve tous-jours plus aymable et desireuse de

Bernard, like Jean-François and the others, into his friendship with Jane de Chantal, and they too shared a friendship. On one occasion he even becomes irritated because Bernard failed to write Jane de Chantal.⁸⁶

In May of his thirty-fifth year, Bernard was called to war as colonel for the Duke of Nemours, overseeing 1,200 men. On the first day he arrived with his army in Piedmont, he was stricken with the plague and died the same day!⁸⁷ His other brother Janus was at Bernard's side when he died.⁸⁸ Fr. Guérin, a Barnabite friend of Francis attended the dying Bernard and reported to him that Bernard received the sacraments with great emotion in his agony.⁸⁹ Francis was deeply shaken; he wrote mother de Brécharde, "Alas! How happy he is! but it is impossible that I not weep over him. You would not believe how accomplished he was, how much he rendered himself lovable to everyone."⁹⁰ The shock for his young wife, pregnant with their fourth child, was too great. Francis and Jane had hoped the child would lift her out of her extreme suffering,⁹¹ but four months later she went into labor

devenir brave et devote." *Oeuvres...* ltr. ML.

⁸⁶Francis writes Jane in 1608: [Bernard] "S'est blessé au doigt, mais de tout le reste il se porte bien. Je ne le veux point excuser, mais accuser dequoy il ne vous escrit pas. Il me traittoit comme cela quand il estoit a Paris, et puy, une foys pour toutes il m'escrivit que c'estoient des trop foibles preuves d'affection que d'escire. O vrayement, je le gourmanday bien. Il failloit dire cela; mais ne laysses pas de l'aymer, car certes, il est bon enfant." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXXVI.

⁸⁷ Cfr. Ravier, *Lettres...* p.61.

⁸⁸ Cfr. Francis' letter to Gasparde offering his consolation in the sorrow of Bernard's death. *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCXVI.

⁸⁹Juste Guérin was head of the barnabite secondary school in Annecy that Francis worked to install. They were immediate friends, since 1613, and Guérin, who would eventually succeed him as Bishop (in 1639), was also an enthusiastic supporter of the Visitation (Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XVII, p.171, n.1). He helped minister to the nacent congregation. Francis writes him on one occasion, "Il n'est nul besoin de serment pour me faire croire la verité de vostre sincere, cordiale, intime et invariable amitié envers moy; car je la croy, je la sçai, je la voy, je la sens, je la touche, et il faudroit que mon ame fust inanimee et mon coeur insensible s'il en doutoit." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDXLII. See Dom Maurice Arpaud's *Vie de monseigneur D. Juste Guérin*. for more on their friendship.

⁹⁰"Helas! qu'il est heureux! ce me semble, mais il est pourtant impossible que je ne pleure sur luy. Vous ne sçauries croire combien il estoit accomply, combien il s'estoit rendu aymable a chacun." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCXV.

⁹¹ He writes the baron Amédée de Villette, "Ma pauvre chere Seur tesmoigne entre ses pleurs et regretz, la plus aymable, constante et religieuse pieté qu'il est possible de dire: en quoy elle nous contente extremement, pour le

prematurely and the baby died only hours after being born. Marie-Aimée survived her tiny son just two days. In her last hours she asked to be received into the Visitation. They put the veil on her head, and she pronounced her vows just hours before she died. She had been little Bernard's wife, and Francis had watched her grow up. She was also his dear friend Jane's daughter, which made her doubly loved, because she was so loved by those dear to him. But his affection for Marie-Aimée was more than due to his love for these, he had his own relationship with her, as is revealed by what he says in a letter to Mme Montfort a few days after her death: "This dear soul having lived so much among us, that she rendered all perfectly hers, but me especially."⁹² The death of his mother and father, his sister Jeanne and Bernard all moved Francis deeply, but none seem to be as bitter as this one. It came on the heels of Bernard's tragic death and with the death of their baby. It also hurt Jane deeply, sending shock waves throughout his entire family and inner circle.

Janus

Francis' next brother was Janus, who had a lustrous military career as a knight of the order of Saint-Jean of Jerusalem. There are no letters between them extant, which makes it very difficult to say anything about their friendship. He was born in 1588, the year Francis began studies in Padua, and there were 19 years between them. Janus lived for some time in Malta, as a knight of the Order of Malta. He shared the same reverence for the faith as his brothers.⁹³ Francis defends him from accusations of complicity against the Duke of Nemours on at least two

desir que nous avons qu'elle conserve l'enfant que nous croyons, par bonnes conjectures, avoir esté laissé en ses flancs par le defunt, comme pour quelque sorte d'allegement a ses freres." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCXVII.

⁹²"Nous n'avions encor achevé nos plaintes pour la perte que nous avons faite en Piemont, que voyci la seconde arrivee, laquelle, je vous assure, nous est infiniment sensible, cette chere ame ayant tellement vescu parmi nous, qu'elle nous avoit rendus tous parfaitement siens, mais moy plus particulierement, qu'elle regardoit avec un amour et honneur filial; et puis, le contrecoup recue par l'affliction de sa digne mere donne surcroist a nostre desplaisir. Mais, pourtant, l'imitation de cette defunte, nous embrassons, aymons et adorons la volonte de Dieu, avec toute sousmission de tout nostre coeur ... [je vous assure que] jamais je n'ay veu un trespas si saint." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCL.

⁹³As is shown, for example, in his attendance with Louis at the Grand Pardons de Anncy, the city's most solemn pilgrimage held every seven years. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XV, p.401.

occasions.⁹⁴ He became governor of the citadel of Nice and backed the foundation of the Visitation in that city. Jane de Chantal calls him “my very dear and beloved brother.”⁹⁵ Charles-Auguste de Sales tells us he accompanied the Doctor of love as far as Seyssel in November of 1622, “watering the way incessantly with his tears.”⁹⁶ Sharing similar loves in such a way leads us to believe that the two did enjoy a friendship as intimate as any other of Francis’ closest.

Gasparde

With his sister Gasparde there is a much richer correspondence. His role as both brother and spiritual director in her life come through clearly in these missives. She had several children with her husband, the Lord of Meyrens. In the trials and tragedies of her life, her brother was an immense support. After Marie-Aimée’s death he writes Gasparde reflecting on the sense of life. “Let us love each other well,” he tells her, “my dear sister, and let us hold firm together to this Savior of our souls, in whom alone we can have our happiness. I am completely full of hope that Our Lord will be more and more faithfully served, obeyed and honored by you, which is the greatest good I could wish for you.”⁹⁷

Sometimes it may seem that the intimacy of his family disappears in the same tone and language of intimacy with others, but in effect isn’t this really a sign of how true his friendship and affection were for those whom he treated as if they were his own? The intimate tone of his letters to Gasparde is familiar in all sorts of letters to Philothea and

⁹⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr.. DCCCLXII, and MLI. Janus was later cleared of the charges. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XIV, p.26; 31; and 317. Louis and even Francis himself were also implicated by the allegations, Cfr. XV, p.327 n.3 See also ltr.. MLIII, where Francis refers to “mes frères” in the affair.

⁹⁵Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XV, p.362, n.3.

⁹⁶Francis himself, Janus, all Francis’ entourage and his other brother Jean-François all knew his voyage to Lyon would cost him his life. Jean-François threw himself at his feet and tightly embraced his thighs only able to sigh and weep as he pleaded with him not to go. When Janus finally had to leave the party his sorrow was so great that the hearts of the entire retinue were broken to see it. Cfr. Charles-Auguste de Sales, *Histoire...* liv. X.

⁹⁷“Aymons-nous bien, chere Seur, et nous tenons bien ensemblement a ce Sauveur de nos ames, en qui seul nous pouvons avoir nostre bonheur. Je suis tout plein d’esperance que Nostre Seigneur sera de plus en plus fidelement servi, obei et honoré de vous, qui est le plus grand bien que je vous puisse souhaitter... Je l’en supplie de tout mon coeur, comme pour ma Seur bienaymee et ma Fille tres chere, a laquelle je suis tout dedié.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXXX.

friends. He even tells Gasparde on one occasion that he loves her more than she could ever understand, and this is principally because of the sincere desire to love God he witnessed in her.⁹⁸ She is a great consolation for him, and her visits delighted him.⁹⁹ He, in turn, has his own consolations to offer her in her trials. In fact, one of the most succinct and beautiful texts on the spiritual life is in one of his letters to his sister. “You see, my very dear sister,” he writes her, “I desire either to die or to love God; either love or death, for life without this love is utterly worse than death. How could we want to better prove our fidelity than among troubles? Alas, my very dear daughter, my sister, solitude has its assaults, the world has its ordeals; everywhere one must have courage, because the help of heaven is ready for those who have confidence in God, and who with humility and gentleness implore his paternal assistance.”¹⁰⁰

With Gasparde, as with Bernard and no doubt the rest of his siblings, Francis considered their spouses also his own intimates. It all was part of his conception of love’s embracing the world of the one with whom we share friendship. He always sends them greetings and prayers, asking for news.

Jeanne

The last of Francis de Sale’s brothers and sisters, Jeanne, died at fourteen, too young that any letters be exchanged between them. Francis baptized her, but she was apparently a kind of *enfant terrible*. Jeanne de Sales was a change of life baby and more than ten years

⁹⁸“Ouy, ma chere, Fille, ma Seur, que je vous ayme et plus que vous ne sçauries croire; mais principalement des que j’ay vue en vostre ame ce digne et honorable desir de vouloir aymer Nostre Seigneur avec toute fidelité et sincerité; a quoy je vous conjure de perserverer constamment, et de m’aymer tous-jours bien entierement, puisque je suis, d’un coeur tout entier et fidelle,” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXXXVII.

⁹⁹He writes her with the news of their mother’s death, in 1610: “Or sus, ma chere Seur, ma Fille, aymés moy tous-jours bien, car je suis plus vostre que jamais. Et pleust a Dieu que vous peussies venir faire la sainte Semaine avec nous! Je m’en sentirois fort consolé.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXVII.

¹⁰⁰“Voyes vous ma tres chere Fille, je desire ou de mourir ou d’aymer Dieu; ou la mort ou l’amour, car la vie qui est sans cet amour est tout a fait pire que la mort... Comme voulons-nous mieux tesmoigner nostre fidelité qu’entre les contrarietés? Helas, ma tres chere Fille, ma Seur, la solitude a ses assautz, le monde a ses tracas; partout il faut avoir bon courage, puisque partout le secours du Ciel est prest a ceux qui ont confiance en Dieu, et qui, avec humilité et douceur, implorent sa paternelle assistance.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXIV.

younger than her next sibling. Her revolt was probably only part of being a teenager in a house practically alone. We have one letter where Francis writes Claude de Crépy requesting the convent Puits d'Orbe take his sister, and suffer the inconvenience of "a useless and sullen girl and servant"¹⁰¹ She apparently didn't find that lifestyle suitable, because in 1604 Madame Brûlart, one of Francis' Philothea, offered to take Jeanne to live with her.¹⁰² Madame de Boisny, however, thought the life in the country more suited to a young girl. It was finally Jane de Chantal who took Jeanne to live with her in Burgundy. The youngest of the family died there October 8, 1607, causing all, especially Jane de Chantal, great sorrow.

Problems and strife

That acerbic comment Francis writes of Jeanne is one of the most severe one will ever find Francis de Sales say of anyone (perhaps it was true). One cannot help wondering if he wasn't most severe with his family. There is something about family that gets under our skin faster and makes our blood boil quicker than anyone else. It is hard to believe he would "really scold" anyone outside his family for not writing.¹⁰³ He remarks to Jane that families are ordinarily discordant.¹⁰⁴ Psychologists might say it is because our intolerance with ourselves is so wrapped up with how we regard the ones closest to us, but whatever the reason, it is somehow encouraging to find the same struggle in the Doctor of love's life. Francis' real feelings about his youngest sister appear in a letter to Jane de Chantal just after losing her to a fever. "Alas, my daughter, I am a man no less, no more. My heart is stricken more than I would have ever thought. How I loved earnestly that little girl."¹⁰⁵ In truth, he thought she had extraordinary promise.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹"Une inutile et maussade fille et servante." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCLXXXI.

¹⁰² Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XIII, p.216. Madame Brûlart was the sister of Rose Bougois, the abbess. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XII, p.267 n.1. Francis writes her "Je vous ay tres intimement gravee en mon ame." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIII. They too met in Dijon during his Lenten series of 1604. She was wife of one of the presidents of Parliament and one of his best examples of a person seeking union with God in the press of the world where her state in life obliged her.

¹⁰³"O vraiment, je le gourmanday bien. Il failloit dire cela; mais ne laysses pas de l'aymer, car certes, il est bon enfant." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXXVI.

¹⁰⁴"Vous auries du playsir de voir un si estroit accord parmi des choses qui sont pour l'ordinaire si discordantes: belle mere, belle fille, belle seur, freres et beau freres." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXV. It is impossible to know from the context if he means families in general of his own family

¹⁰⁵"Helas, ma Fille, je suis tant homme que rien plus. Mon coeur s'est

Anger and douceur, or gentleness

In light of these episodes of anger and irritation with his family, we should perhaps at this juncture stop and consider the man's character. That famous calm *douceur*, or sweet gentleness, by which he won the Chablais was not just an innate temperament. He was naturally quick to anger, as he once told Favre's son, Claude de Vaugelas, but he always tried to correct his anger when it boiled "like water in a pot over the fire."¹⁰⁷ His face would often redden with anger before contradictions, and disorder irritated him. At times when he was most angered he would swallow, rest a moment without speaking and then softly smile and speak calmly. Even near the end of his life he was still obliged to struggle against the rush of his choleric spirit.¹⁰⁸ In 1619 in Paris he admitted to a friend, "I should have never been so angry wittingly, I was forced to grab my anger by the collar."¹⁰⁹ He confessed at about the same time to Monsieur de Ronis: "I have made a pact with my tongue to never say a word when I am angry."¹¹⁰ That famous *douceur*, as he once told Antoine Favre, was something acquired by long and difficult interior struggles.¹¹¹ What is remarkable about St. Francis de Sales is not that he had to struggle with his rushes of anger before insolence, slight, negligence and other injustices, but rather how rarely that temper did show itself. He was able to say to his friend Claude de Quoex in 1617, "I am a miserable man, subject to passions; but by God's grace since I have been shepherd, I have never said a passionate word out of

attendri plus que je n'eusse jamais pensé; mais la verité est que le desplaysir de ma mere et le vostre y ont beaucoup contribué...combien j'aymois cordialement cette petite fille." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXVIII.

¹⁰⁶"J'estois son pere spirituel et me promettois bien d'en faire un jour quelque chose de bon." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXVIII.

¹⁰⁷1st Paris Hearing, 29.

¹⁰⁸When the doctors discovered gall stones while performing his autopsy, they concluded it was due to "the great violence the holy Bishop did himself in repressing his movements of anger"(!). Cfr. Charles-Auguste de Sales, *Histoire...* II, 259.

¹⁰⁹Angélique Lhuillier, 1st Paris Hearing, 32.

¹¹⁰Fr. de Ronis, 1st Hearing, 31.

¹¹¹ "Il estoit naturellement doux et debonnaire mais pourtant il m'avoue luy mesme quil ne l'estoit pas tant par inclination naturelle comme il estoit par habitude ayant travaillé pour acquerir cette vertu longues anees." 1st Hearing, 32. Saint -Beuve tells us that experience taught Francis that the *douceur* of heart and even temper are virtues rarer than chastity. Cfr. *Port-Royal*, Texte présenté et annoté par Maxime Leroy; Bibliothèque de la Pléaïde, Paris, Gaillmard 1953, 3 Vols; Vol. I, p.269.

anger to my lambs.”¹¹² As he explained once to the sisters of the Visitation when he was talking about correcting one another in his *Entretiens*, it is impossible to prevent the first rushes of anger, and no matter how many reasons one might have to react angrily, “you must not listen to even one, but draw near to God” in a peaceful and sweet humility.¹¹³

The explanation of that gentleness is deeply rooted in Salesian spirituality as the extension of humility. “He who knows himself,” he explains in his *Entretiens*, “does not anger when he is esteemed or treated for what he is, in as much as he has received this light that frees him from his blindness.”¹¹⁴ By a gift of grace we do not vainly seek to stand on our tiptoes, trying to be more than we are, but say: ‘I am a man, no more no less.’ It opens our eyes to our lowliness and in turn to the mercy of God’s love. The humble man is not easily offended because his thirst for respect is not easily tread upon. The greater one’s pride the more he expects respect from others. Francis teaches that a sign of false humility is seen by how vigorous and arrogantly one reacts when spoken against in even the slightest way.¹¹⁵ Humility’s place in friendship is then pivotal, as we have seen in contrast to the classical model of friendship. It saves it from pride’s frequent outrages at thousands of real and perceived trespasses. Friendship rooted in Christ’s cross is not oversensitive, as the Doctor of love understood it,

¹¹²“Je suis un chetif homme, sujet a passion; mais, par la grace de Dieu, depuis que je suis berger, je ne dis jamais parole passionnee de cholere a mes brebis.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCX.

¹¹³“D’empescher que le sentiment de colere ne s’esmeuve en nous et que le sang ne nous monte au visage, jamais cela ne sera;... car pendant le trouble il ne faut dire ni faire aucune chose, sinon demeurer fermes et resolu de ne consentir point à nostre passion, pour raison que nous eussions de le faire; car jamais nous ne manquerions de raisons en ce temps-là: ... mais il n’en faut pas escouter une seule, pour bonne qu’elle puisse sembler, ains se tenir proche de Dieu.” *Oeuvres...* VI, pp.144-146. He gives examples of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Pachomius.

¹¹⁴“C’est c’est une grande grace quand Dieu nous donne sa lumiere pour connoistre nostre misere, et c’est un signe de la conversion interieure. Cely qui se connoist bien soyemesme ne se fache point si on le tient ou qu’on le traite pour ce qu’il est, d’autant qu’il a reçu cette lumiere qui l’a rendu quitte de son aveuglement.” *Oeuvres...* VI, pp.237-238. Or in a letter to Mrs. Brûlart, “Si le monde nous mesprise, res-jouissons nous, car il a rayson, puisque nous reconnoissons bien que nous sommes mesprisables; s’il nous estime, mesprisons son estime et son jugement, car il est aveugle. Enquerés vous peu de ce que le monde pense.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.. CCCXXXI.

¹¹⁵Cfr. *Oeuvres...* III, p.161.

its humility instead renders it “frank and godly free.”¹¹⁶ Love that is based on gratitude for Christ’s sacrifice and willing to carry its own cross in obedience like the Lord’s, isn’t prey to such worries.

We might say that the Salesian Christian attitude of ‘friendship towards the world’ is simply that *douceur* or gentleness, a way of being that was his trademark. Citing the New Testament, Francis puts it this way, “*learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart*; humility perfects us with respect to God and gentleness (*douceur*) with respect to our neighbor.”¹¹⁷ As we shall attempt to develop in the last part of this work, that attitude is one of the keys to explaining how the man was able to have so many friendships with such a range of people. In spite of his tempests with his family he would later write, “Experience teaches us clearly [that] there is nowhere a truer nor stronger friendship than that which is between brothers.”¹¹⁸

A Friend to Princes and Paupers

Antoine des Hayes, “mon parfait ami” ¹¹⁹

Francis’ father was page to his godfather the vice-count François de Luxembourg-Martigues and lived many years in the Luxembourg palace, now the French equivalent of the house of Lords in Paris.¹²⁰ The de Sales family rubbed elbows with the French court, so it is no surprise to find Francis at home there. He belonged to their social class, spoke their language and naturally claimed their respect. One

¹¹⁶ In 1605 he writes Rose Bourgeoise: “Je ne desire rien tant que de vous voir avec un esprit tout plein de charité, laquelle est toute franche et saintement libre. Et pourquoy dis je ceci? Parce qu’il me semble que vous avez quelque apprehension de m’offenser. Je ne suis nullement tendre et douillet en cet endroit, et particulièrement avec les ames l’amitié desquelles est enracinée sur le mont de Calvaire avec la Croix de Nostre Seigneur.” *Oeuvres... ltr. CCLXXX.*

¹¹⁷ “*Apprenes de moy, ’dit il, que je suis doux et humble de coeur, l’humilité nous perfectionne envers Dieu, et la douceur envers le prochain.*” *Oeuvres... III, p.161.*

¹¹⁸ “Ce que l’expérience nous enseigne clairement car n’est-il pas vray qu’il n’y a point de plus vraye amitié ni de plus forte que celle qui est entre les freres?” *Oeuvres...VI, p.54.*

¹¹⁹ In a letter to Jane de Chantal he recounts how Cardinal Retz, Archbishop of Paris and others of the court proposed he become his coadjutor. He sought the advice of des Hayes, “mon parfait ami”, Vincent de Paul, de Bérulle and André Duval. *Oeuvres... ltr. MDLX.*

¹²⁰ Cfr. *Oeuvres... XI, p117, n.1.*

friendship among the members of the court of Henry IV was Antoine des Hayes, the one Francis calls his “arch-intimate.”¹²¹ Monsieur des Hayes was secretary of commandments of the Duke of Nemours, providing the Bishop of Geneva many occasions to have recourse to his services, and make his acquaintance in the normal course of their responsibilities.¹²² They became friends sometime after 1600,¹²³ because des Hayes had heard of his “rare virtue and qualities as a preacher,” and wanted to meet him. On a trip to consult with the Duke of Savoy, he stopped in Annecy to hear the famous Francis de Sales preach, after which he admits, “I had a great desire to know him, having heard him spoken of with admiration.”¹²⁴ He brought several letters from Paris for him and a treatise by de Bérulle. Antoine des Hayes was one of the most powerful men in the Duchy of Savoy and he retained considerable influence over the King of France as well.¹²⁵ He was instantly conquered by Francis’ gentle and tranquil spirit, and admits: “I couldn’t quit his company and withdrew from him with regret.”¹²⁶ He was twelve years younger than the Bishop of Geneva.¹²⁷ That initial

¹²¹ The term “arch-intimate” was not coined by Francis but by M. Santeuil, yet he accepts it. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXLII.

¹²² Cfr. for example, *Oeuvres...* ltr.. CXCIII.

¹²³ At about the same time Jane de Chantal was overseeing the baking of so much bread to save the poor from starvation during that winter’s famine, that she and her husband had an industrial size oven built, while the servants nervously watched the stocks of grain dwindle. Cfr. Coüannier, p.151.

¹²⁴ Antoine des Hayes, 1st Hearing: “Je dis que la renommée ayant publié les vertus et rares qualités du Serviteur de Dieu François de Sales, en plusieurs lieux de ce royaume et particulièrement en cette ville de Paris, j’eus grand désir de le connaître, en ayant oui parler avec admiration.” R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie*, p.143.

¹²⁵ In 1608 Francis rejoices with the Bishop of Montpellier in “our grand friend’s” promotion by the King, commenting that des Hayes’ qualities will take him far. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr.. CDLVI.

¹²⁶ Antoine des Hayes continues in his deposition at the 1st Hearing: “En l’année 1600, m’en allant trouver Monsieur le Duc de Savoie...Et je me souviens que je trouvai la conversation du Serviteur de Dieu si attrayante, en raison des grandes vertus qui étaient en lui et de la douceur et tranquillité de son esprit, que je ne pouvais quitter sa compagnie et je me retirai d’auprès de lui avec regret”. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie*, p.143.

¹²⁷ Besides his duties in the courts of France and Savoy, des Hayes was made governor of Montargis in 1605, where he worked to introduce the Jesuits and Barnabites for the education of the city’s youth. Antoine des Hayes was apparently also involved with Claude de Charmoisy in bringing Cardinal de

admiration was never disappointed. Francis never refers to him as his 'brother,' nor does he include his wife in his friendship, which was unusual, even though she was an ardent Christian.¹²⁸ This is probably due to the respect he believed due one in such a position. Yet in spite of that marked formality, des Hayes remains someone he cherishes with "a tender and respectful love, as much as any one of the world."¹²⁹ Two kinds of dialogue characterized their correspondence, which are sometimes intermingled: first, what Francis calls "my news of state,"¹³⁰ and second, his own personal news.¹³¹

Friendship between Antoine des Hayes and Francis de Sales was apparently something many admired, including King Henry IV. He once remarked to des Hayes "Monsieur de Genève and you are great friends, I would like to be the third in this friendship!"¹³² The gregarious King, like most of Paris, was won over by this "rare bird on earth," as Henry later called Francis. Des Hayes was Francis' closest friend in the royal court, and their friendship would not wane for over 22 years until Francis' death. Albeit the King was impressed by Francis' gifts,¹³³ Antoine des Hayes probably had a role in Henry IV's

Bérulle and Francis together for the foundation of the Oratory in France Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXI p.193. He died May 30, 1637 at approximately 58. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XII, p.252. and Bibliothèque Nationale, *Dossiers bleus*, vol. 352; *Inventaire sommaire des Archives de Montargis*.

¹²⁸Marie Chapelle was a widow with two children (12 and 10 years old) when des Hayes married her in 1597. She apparently never became one of Francis' directees, though he always greets her in his missives to Antoine, and sends her a copy of the *Devout Life*. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XIV, p.185, n.2.

¹²⁹"Je m'arreste de tres bon coeur icy, et prens, en eschange de la satisfaction que j'auroid de vous voir, l'ayse que j'ay a penser en vous, a parler de vous avec ceux qui vous honnorent, et sur tout a vous cherir d'un amour tendre et respectueux, autant qu'homme du monde." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXLII.

¹³⁰"Voyla mes nouvelles d'Estat." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLVII. See also: CDXLIX; CXCIII; CCX; and CDXVI.

¹³¹As for example *Oeuvres...* ltr.. DLVIII; CDL; DCXVI, and DLXXIX. The two kinds of dialogue are sometimes interwoven as in DXLIII.

¹³²"Monsieur de Genève et vous, êtes grands amis, je veux être le troisième en cette amitié." Michel Favre, 1st Hearing, Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.295.

¹³³During his first diplomatic mission to Paris in 1602, Francis was accused of conspiring with Biron in treason against Henry IV, a charge made credible by the involvement of the Duke of Savoy. When he went to deny the charges, the King assured him he had the highest confidence in him and that he was welcome to live in his kingdom as freely as his home. Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.146-148.

offer to Francis to become Archbishop of Paris.¹³⁴ One of the few letters we have to des Hayes explains to the King through his diplomatic friend, in May of 1608, why he cannot accept that offer. His letter to forsake the nomination unfurls his typical supple and indirect style. He does not give a firm refusal, but says if the King really desires it, he will “examine with God,” his vocation, and if the Pope and King’s wills are in accord he will leave the satisfaction of being in his own land among his own for the greater “glory of God and the good of the Church.”¹³⁵ Just as he did with his first letter to Jane de Chantal, Francis encloses a second letter to des Hayes “in order,” as he tells him, “to speak to you more freely.” He defers his refusal and its wording to his ultimate judgment: “For in this I really need your guidance,” he concedes.¹³⁶ It was a delicate matter balancing loyalties between the Duke of Savoy and the King of France, two powerful rulers who were often competing --- sometimes even at war. Antoine des Hayes was the ideal advisor, because he was a trusted counselor to both. That letter reveals better his inner thoughts and relationship with Antoine des Hayes, “For,” as Francis avows, “I should tell you almost all, you who have my heart in your hand.”¹³⁷ He closes hoping not to seem ungrateful with a relatively brief expression of affection when

¹³⁴ At least this was what Francis thought, he writes des Hayes embarrassed: “Je ne doute point que vostre amitié en mon endroit n’aye beaucoup contribué pour amplifier et aggrandir l’estime que le Roy fait de moy, de laquelle sans mentir, je suis honteux, et en cas que je deusse paroistre a sa veüe, je serois bien en peyne de soustenir cett’opinion.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDL.. Monsieur des Hayes, however, states the King had said publicly that he knew no one with a more perfect faith and morals than Francis de Sales. Cfr. des Hayes’ account in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.149-150.

¹³⁵“Si donques Sa Majesté vous dit son intention particuliere, j’examineray avec Dieu et en sa presence mes forces; et si je les sens aucunement assortissantes au service qu’elle desirera, et que Sa Sainteté me le commande... je me rendray tout prest ... quand je verray se joindre les volontés du Pape et du Roy. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXLIX.

¹³⁶“Je jette cette feuil’ a part affin de vous y parler avec plus de liberté et vous en laisser aussi pour monstrier ma lettre, sil y escheoit. Vous verres donq, sil vous plait, la lettre que j’escris au Roy, et, sil vous semble a propos, vous la luy donneres, ou si vous juges autrement, vous pourres en parler a Sa Majesté vous mesme a vostre gré, car en ceci j’ay grandement besoin de vostre conduite.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDL.

¹³⁷“Car il faut un peu tout dire avec vous qui aves mon coeur en main”. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDL.

compared to letters with either his family, Jane de Chantal or Favre.¹³⁸ However, remember, as subject of the Duke of Savoy, it was impossible for him to accept Henry's offer without risking being accused of treason.¹³⁹ The above exchange is in the background of the delicate response to the King where he was forced to speak warily. The following year des Hayes would privately tell the King how poor Francis was as Bishop of a rocky and sparsely populated diocese, trying to get an income more 'worthy of his dignity.'¹⁴⁰ Henry offered him 1,000 écus per year, but Francis graciously refused to accept it, tactfully asking the King to keep an account for him with the treasurer.¹⁴¹

Antoine des Hayes is a helpful friend in the court of Savoy too, especially when calumny and suspicion surround Francis after he passes through Geneva openly. Henry IV had ordered him to go to Gex to receive three parishes, but the Rhône was swollen and impassable. Only the bridge of Geneva that formed the backbone of the city in those days was still open. How could he visit enemy territory without disguise if he was not somehow conniving with the Genevans? By either reckless naiveté or complete and childlike confidence in God's protection (he refers to it as "a certain imprudent hardiness"!), he presented himself to the city gatekeeper as Monsieur the Bishop of the diocese, who permitted him to enter only because he didn't

¹³⁸“Nostre Seigneur vous conserve et aggrandisse en ses saintes benedictions, et me fasse la grace de ne point paroistr' [apparaître] ingrat de tant de faveurs que je reçois de vous, ains de temoigner par effet que je suis de coeur tout entier, Vostre serviteur plus humble et tres fidele.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDL.

¹³⁹Since the death of Henri III Charles-Emmanuel was a pretender to the throne of France. He was in complicity with the League of France against Henri IV and from 1589-1592 was at war in a bid to annex Provence. In the end Henry decided to “bring him to his knees” and invaded Savoy. The treaty of Lyon January 17, 1601 forced him to cede to France la Bresse, le Valromey, le Bugy and le pays de Gex. Cfr. Ravier, préface to *Saint François de Sales, Oeuvres*. Textes présentés et annotés par A. Ravier avec la collaboration de R. Devos. Collection Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, Paris 1969.

¹⁴⁰When there were no wars to interrupt trade, or their devastation to repair, the region prospered economically. Since the end of the 15th century the alpine routes had a practical monopoly on spices. Large wagons with 5 to 12 mule teams carried silks and other lucrative products from Italy and the east to Geneva and Chambery, which were important trading centers. Cfr. Devos and Groperrin, *La Savoie de la Réforme à la Révolution française...* chapter 1.

¹⁴¹Michel Favre testifies to the fact in the 1st Hearing, art. 27.

understand.¹⁴² He traversed the city in full cassock passing over the Rhône bridge, which was lined at the time on both sides with boutiques and homes, without being recognized. He was even obliged to stay in the city for an hour and wait for the day's sermon to be finished before the city gates would be reopened. When the Genevans later learned that the great opponent of Calvinism has openly passed through their city without reproach or punishment, they were indignant. When he later heard of it he sighed, remarking that he hadn't tricked or finessed anyone.¹⁴³ Because of it he got himself into serious problems with the Duke, requiring him to write his friend des Hayes to intervene in his defense. He was able to convince the Duke of Francis' innocence, but the suspicious sovereign remained susceptible to later accusations of intrigue by his Bishop of Geneva.

These suspicions, first that he might accept Henry IV's offer, and later with the Genevans were strong enough for the Duke to make Francis wait 16 years before permitting him to return to Paris. Neither Rome nor the skill of Antoine des Hayes prevailed upon the Duke to let Francis go back to preach the Lent of 1612. In a letter asking again for his friend's help in securing that permission, Francis speaks about their friendship. He must have felt indebted to Monsieur des Hayes for the help he provided in such serious and delicate situations. "I think that you will never doubt," he writes him in 1612, "my affection for the accomplishment of your will and desires, for the excellent friendship with which you honor me has arrived to such a point of perfection that it is exempt of all mistrust and doubt."¹⁴⁴ Asking for another favor when every other avenue has been exhausted he can only pledge his own service to des Hayes. It is an example we rarely find of a friendship where Francis finds himself more the recipient than the bestower of benefits. One even feels his embarrassment in asking for something again, but this was something he passionately wanted to do. Whatever des Hayes thinks best, Francis tells him he will do with all his heart.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴²Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLVIII.

¹⁴³Cfr. Coüannier, pp.215-217.

¹⁴⁴"Je pense que vous ne douterés jamais de mon affection a l'accomplissement de vos volontés et desirs, car l'excellente amitié delaquelle vous m'honorés est arrivee jusques a ce point de perfection, qu'ell'est exempte de toute desfiance et de tout doute." *Oeuvres...* ltr.. DCCCX. Those efforts failed, and again in 1617 des Hayes was trying to get permission from the Duke to let Francis preach Lent in Paris, but that too failed. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XVIII, p.106, n. 1.

¹⁴⁵"Il faut confesser la verité, j'ay une extreme passion en cette occurrence, et ne sçai bonnement me resoudre sinon a ce point, que tout ce que vous me

They trade big and little services, and Francis tells him he wishes to hide nothing, especially from him.¹⁴⁶ He was equally happy to receive letters from Antoine des Hayes, which were always, as he tells him, “Full of the marks of this great and strong love that you hold for me and which I am reciprocally cherishing.”¹⁴⁷ He doesn’t neglect to tell his friend that their friendship “honors and consoles him so much”.¹⁴⁸

Henry IV’s assassination put des Hayes’ position and fortune in jeopardy. He wrote his ally the Bishop of Geneva disclosing his worries. Francis was quick to console his friend in that frightening time. Your true fortune is in the eternity of your virtue and Providence, he tells him, but still he hopes his prosperity will return with new vigor after this period of uncertainty.¹⁴⁹ The episode shows that Francis’ friendship for des Hayes was not dependent upon his power or wealth. He was more impressed with his qualities as a man serving Christ. In fact, Francis once voiced how much he esteemed des Hayes above these things, saying: “I see nothing as grand among all the grandeurs of Paris which seems small to me in comparison to his benevolence.”¹⁵⁰

direz je le feray de tres bon coeur, quoy qu’il en doive arriver; et de plus, que si jamais je vays a Paris faire le Careme, ce ne sera que pour vostre seul consideration, soit que vous ayes la charge de l’eglise ou que vous ne l’ayes pas.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCX.

¹⁴⁶“Monsieur, [c’est a vous a qui] je voudrois estre tous-jours tout ouvert.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLVIII.

¹⁴⁷“J’ay treuvé a mon retour la lettre que vous avies pris la peyne de m’escire par le bon monsieur de Soufour... lettre, comme toutes les autres, pleyne des marques de ce grand et fort amour que vous me portés, et duquel je suis reciproquement amoureux de toute l’estendue de mon coeur, et autant glorieux qu’homme du mond a que vous le scuessiez departir.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLVIII.

¹⁴⁸“Je ne me puis assouvir du playsir que je reçois de l’assurance de vostre amitié... je vous supplie de me continuer ce bien que j’estime tant, et qui m’honore et console si fort.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXVI.

¹⁴⁹“Faites tous-jours vivre courageusement vos vertus qui, aussi bien, sont immortelles, et je me prometez ce contentement de voir qu’un peu d’interruption que la perte de ce grand Roy fait a vostre bonheur, ne servira que de reprise d’haleine a vostre fortune; car en fin, c’est Dieu qui manie les resnes du cours de nostre vie, et nous n’avons point de autre fortune que sa providence, laquelle sera tous-jours specialement sur vous quand vostre amour sera special en son endroit.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXVI.

¹⁵⁰He writes to Msgr. Fenouillet, Bishop of Montpellier, “Mais usons doucement et toutefois, si vous me croyes, un peu avinement de la presence du grand amy, que j’estime si grand pour moy, que je ne voy rien de si grand parmi toutes les grandeurs de Paris qui ne me semble petit en comparayson de

Antoine des Hayes and his wife Marie Chapelle only had one son, Louis. What the Bishop wasn't able to give the father in affairs of State, he made up for by taking responsibility for Louis' education. The boy had been a page in Paris at the court of Louis XIII. Bright eyed and full of energy, he had little discipline and didn't even know how to read. Louis worried his parents. They decided to send him to the Barnabite college in Annecy under their gifted friend's supervision. Francis recognized that too many strictures would be excessively onerous for the boy.¹⁵¹ He took an immediate liking to him and soon confessed to the youngster's father that he had grown "as precious as my eyes."¹⁵² He perceived that Louis' greatest fault was to be able to easily charm others, and was in turn easily influenced. But the boy had a good heart, and when he got himself into trouble with the Barnabite fathers, Francis intervened as peacemaker. "Our son," he reports to his friend, took care to behave himself "for love of me."¹⁵³ It was natural for him, as we have seen more than once, to embrace his friends' loved ones as his own so unconditionally. That ardent desire to not displease the Bishop helped Louis go on to successfully complete his studies. He returned to Paris in 1617.¹⁵⁴

We do not have letters of Francis giving Antoine des Hayes spiritual direction, as is common in so many other letters, especially women of the court. His expressions of affection are relatively moderated. Their friendship had all the mutual respect and benevolence we would expect to find there. How much more can a man trust and respect another than to confide him with his only son? In sum, they both used what they had to the benefit of each other within all the limits of their obligations. That certain formality we sense is more in tune with the idea of respect for one's parents and superiors so important at the time and so wholly

sa bienveillance." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCLI.

¹⁵¹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. MLXX and MLXIV.

¹⁵²"En somme, sachés, je vous supplie, Monsieur, que cet enfant m'est cher come mes yeux, et que de son costé, il paternise excellement a m'aymer." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCI.

¹⁵³"La racine de son mal est dans une certaine grace qu'il a de gagner les espritz et tirer les coeurs a soy, lesquelz par apres les tirent a eux et luy donnent telles impressions qu'ilz veulent. ... Je l'ay encor plus souvent reprimandé; en quoy il m'a extremement obligé, par le sentiment quil a temoigne d'estre marry de me desplaire, si que, en fin, pour l'amour de moy, il commence fort a se bien ranger." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCI.

¹⁵⁴Louis went on to have a successful diplomatic career, but sided with those hostile to Richelieu, and in 1632 the Cardinal had him beheaded despite his aged father's pleas. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XVI, p.340, n.5.

embraced by Francis as part of his world view. Although this friendship lacks the intimate warmth and freedom that we witness in his inner circle, its depth of sincerity is no less. This is best manifested by a letter Francis writes des Hayes with news of his mother's death. In his grief he can turn affectionately to his friend and say how it relieves him to be able to recount his reflections on it all, even if it is only by letter, "to a heart so gentle," he tells him, "so gracious, so dear, so precious and so much a friend as yours is for me by your goodness, in which I call upon you always to firmly continue."¹⁵⁵

Putting all these fragments together, we come up with a portrait of another lifelong friendship. It seems to never have suffered misunderstandings, and to have been marked by a certain formality that couldn't help introducing an element of distance. He does not seem to have the same friendship with the family, at least not Mrs. des Hayes, as we would expect. Nor does this friendship speak of God as much as others we have seen. Yet Francis was also a kind of spiritual director for des Hayes, which was, as he later admitted, a great help to him in the rush of his endless daily affairs at the court.¹⁵⁶ Their common faith is no doubt the foundation for their 'arch-intimacy', but most of their letters concern business matters.¹⁵⁷ Antoine des Hayes is not above delivering some of Francis' letters for him, and we can guess he was successful in his interventions with the Duke and King, first because Francis continues to call upon him, and second by their favorable

¹⁵⁵“Voyez vous, Monsieur, je m’allege a vous dire cecy, car c’est grand cas comme c’est une heureuse et souefve (suave) rencontre a un coeur aucunement (quelque peu) blessé de pouvoir se communiquer, quoy que par lettres seulement, a un coeur si doux, si gratieux, si cher, si pretieux et tant amy comme le vostre m’est par vostre bonté, en laquelle je vous conjure tous-jours de me continuer fermement, avec assurance que je suis sans fin ni reserve,” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXIX.

¹⁵⁶“Je me ressouviens que, lui représentant le peu de devoir que je rendais à Dieu, étant distrait par les occupations ordinaires de la Cour, il m’a dit plusieurs fois de ne pas laisser de bien espérer, et le plus souvent que je pourrais, de penser à Dieu et d’élever mon coeur à lui... en courant la poste et en toutes autres actions, qu’en agissant ainsi et en gardant les comandements de Dieu, je devais avoir espérance de mon salut.” Antoine des Hayes, 1st Hearing, Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.289.

¹⁵⁷“During the hearings for Francis’ beatification, des Hayes recounts a story of seeing people begging who had taken pains to appear more miserable to stir the sympathies of would-be alms givers. When he commented that money shouldn’t be given to them, Francis corrected him, saying that if they were driven to do that one should have all the more pity for them. Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.225.

outcome. They freely came to one another's aid in big things and little things. Any distance should be understood in light of both men's understanding of society as members of the Baroque gentry. It provided a clear model of "majors" and "minors" rooted in the theology of the early Middle Ages, which defined the respect a sovereign owes his people and conversely the respect those subject to his authority as instituted by God, owe him.¹⁵⁸ Antoine des Hayes was able to express his love for his friend one last time at his death bed in terms that were do doubt far from that formality of the extant business letters.¹⁵⁹

Duke de Bellegarde

Roger de Saint-Lary, Duke de Bellegarde, governor of Burgundy, Bresse, Gex, and Bugey, was one of Henry III's and later Henry IV's most trusted generals. These were among the richest and most powerful territories of Europe. The Duke's friendship with Henri IV was not apparently strained by their rivalry for the favor of the ladies of the court.¹⁶⁰ The King sent him to Florence to escort back to France his future Queen, Marie de Medicis. Ten years later she would make him protector of her son Louis XIII, after her husband's assassination (1610). He met Francis in August of 1603, when he went to the region to negotiate the Church's property and worship rights in the region newly surrendered to France. Bellegarde was governor of Burgundy including the newly acquired territories, and the question lay ultimately in his hands.¹⁶¹

Francis preached Sunday's high mass in Belley on the flames of heaven and hell. The Duke, his wife, and several other dignitaries were

¹⁵⁸ An excellent exposé of medieval society is found in *A History of Private Life. Revelations of the Medieval World*. ed. G. Duby and P. Ariès, translated by A. Goldhammer. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988.

¹⁵⁹ Although Roland does not name him in his account, des Hayes must have been among numerous persons to come to see him on his death bed that day in Lyon from the court. Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.303. 1st Hearing.

¹⁶⁰ On one occasion Henry came calling on one of his mistresses, surprising the Duke de Bellegarde, who hid under the bed. The King had something to eat with her, and when he was finished rolled a jar of jam under the table saying "everyone has to live". Cfr. *Biographie Universelle*, ed. Michaud, Delgrave 1870-1873 Paris. 45 vols. col. 558.

¹⁶¹ It wouldn't be until 1611 that the Duke would decide to grant Francis and the Church full worship rights in the former Genevian lands. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XV, 57, n. 2.

all touched.¹⁶² He told Francis it was the best impromptu sermon he had ever heard. But it wasn't until ten years later that we can speak of a friendship. As Grand Stable Master of France, the Duke de Bellegarde was the one responsible for all the money spent on horses and equipment. It was he who decided who might enter the Academy where the nobility learned the art of war. He held the keys to who would enter into the elite of French society.¹⁶³ Many doubted the conversion of one so involved in the intrigues and romances of the court could endure. In 1613, at 50, he placed himself under Francis' spiritual direction.¹⁶⁴ It was just after a long and violent quarrel with Concini that left both the Duke of Luz and his son murdered.¹⁶⁵ Perhaps the intrigues of power wearied him. One of the first things he did was to ask the Doctor of love for a method to examine his conscience. Francis composed *Mémorial pour bien faire la confession* at his request.¹⁶⁶ Michael Favre tells us that he took Francis for his spiritual father and wrote numerous letters to him full of expressions of "honor, love and respect in recommending his soul to him."¹⁶⁷ He would become, "The one among all men who is my most dear Theotimus."¹⁶⁸

Nowhere do we find Francis more bothered by intimacy in his letters than with "Monsieur le Grand" as he called him. The Duke asked him

¹⁶²Both Trochu (*Saint François de Sales...II*, pp.59-60) and the *Année sainte*, (VIII, p.224-225) contend that the Duke and most of his entourage converted that evening. Lajeunie (I, p.454) and *Oeuvres...* (XV, p.293, n.1.) contend he was only moved and did not convert until he made what Francis refers to as his "Easter" in 1613. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMVI. Ravier, (*Lettres...* p.576) holds that two of the Duke's entourage converted that day. François Favre, attests that the Bishop of Geneva was poisoned by hateful protestants in the region. Rolland is more reserved. See Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...* idem for a discussion of the event.

¹⁶³Cfr. *Dictionnaire François*, Pierre Richelet, Vincent Miège, Genève, 1693, p.354.

¹⁶⁴Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.351, n.28.

¹⁶⁵He came out of the affair with the renewed confidence of Marie de Medeci, but would eventually be implicated in the intrigues of the Duke d'Orleans' bid to usurp his brother Louis XIII and be forced by Richelieu to sell his post. He died in 1646 at 84 heirless. Cfr. *Biographie Universelle*, ed. Michaud, Delgrave 1870-1873 Paris. 45 vols. col.'s. 558-559.

¹⁶⁶Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXVI, pp.244-266.

¹⁶⁷Michel Favre, 1st Hearing, art. 51, Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.297.

¹⁶⁸He writes the Duke in 1616, "Vous estes celuy entre tous les hommes, qui estes mon plus cher Théotime." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCXXXI.

to put away the formalities of etiquette and call him his son. Francis acquiesces, commenting: "Although in truth it would be a rare thing to see the disproportion of so miserable a son with such a distinguished child."¹⁶⁹ He ends up compromising and calling him "Monsieur my very dear son."¹⁷⁰ In spite of that embarrassment, the letters contain all the display of affection we have learned to expect. He tells him the union of their hearts is God's doing, and pledges a love purified by fidelity, respect and strength. Its "fertility in every consolation" will be by His blessing so that their hearts "one by the other and one in the other" put away the cares of the world and love only eternal things.¹⁷¹ He often encourages the Duke to reaffirm his resolutions and speaks of eternity, that he might consider his situation and power rightly by keeping his own death in mind, advising him to persevere in the love of God "among these vain vanities of the court."¹⁷²

In all his correspondence with his spiritual friends, Francis insisted on a service to the poor. The more highly the person was placed in society the more he emphasized it. He expected their generosity to be indulgent, and even go as far as pardon if the case merited mercy. On at least two occasions Francis asks the Duke de Bellegarde to pardon persons pursued by the law "more by misfortune than malice."¹⁷³ The

¹⁶⁹"Et ma petitesse s'esleve bien aussi jusques la que de le vouloir faire et penser que je le puis, sans faire tort a ce que vous estes, bien qu'a la verité ce sera chose rare de voir la disproportion d'un si chetif pere avec un enfant si revelé." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMLXXXII. See also ltr. CMVI and ltr. CMXCII.

¹⁷⁰Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltrs: MCCXXXI and MCDXLVI for example.

¹⁷¹"Il est vray, Monsieur, je veux des-ormais cherir Vostre Grandeur si fortement, fidelement et respectueusement, que le meslange de la force, de la fidelité et du respect fasse le plus absolu amour et honneur qui vous puisse jamais estre rendu par homme quelcomque que vous ayes provoqué; en sorte que le tiltre de Pere dont il vous plaist me gratifier, ne soit ni trop haut, ni trop puissant, ni trop doux pour signifier la passion avec laquelle j'y correspondray. Dieu par apres, la consideration duquel a donné naissance a cette si grande liayson, la benera de sa sainte grace, affin qu'elle soit fertile en toute consolation pour l'un et l'autre des coeurs qui, ensemblement, l'un par l'autre et l'un en l'autre, ne respirent emmi cette vie mortelle que d'aymer et benir l'éternité de l'immortelle en laquelle vit et regne la vie hors de laquelle tout est mort." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMXXXVI.

¹⁷² He writes in 1614: "Que d'ayse, mon cher Filz, quand on me dit que vous estes le seigneur au grand coeur, qui, emmi ces vaines vanités de la cour, demeurés ferme en la resolution que ce coeur a prise de contenter celuy de Dieu!" *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMLXXXII.

¹⁷³"Dieu vous a mis au lieu et au grade auquel il vous a eslevé par vos merites, affin que vous soyes, pour l'amour de luy, le refuge commun des

Duke survived the Bishop of Geneva 24 years, himself ultimately a victim of the machinations of power.

Anne-Jacqueline Coste

Most of Francis de Sales' letters are to the greater and lesser nobility of his generation. They were the most influential, especially in France, in the Seventeenth century. He was one of them and communication was natural. But he also had a great number of friendships with simple and illiterate folk, which are lost because there is no written record of their exchanges.¹⁷⁴ One example is a shepherd girl who was one of the founders of the Visitation: Anne-Jacqueline Coste.

In 1596, Francis de Sales was beginning to win some converts in the Chablais to the consternation of the local Calvinist ministers. They called for a public debate. He agreed. But when the day came they balked, and continued to avoid later attempts to meet their requirements. Seeing this, one of the most prominent Protestant nobles, Baron d'Avully judge of Thonon, abjured. It was a culmination of many hours of almost daily discussion with the Doctor of love. The conversion of such an important person was a major victory for the young missionary. In Geneva one of the leading ministers, Antoine de la Faye, wrote the baron promising that he would "show more clearly than noon, in the presence of the provost de Sales, how vain" Catholic doctrine was. Calumny began to spread against the new convert. The baron awaited the promised refutation for a long time, and seeing nothing was forthcoming from Geneva, he went there himself, only to receive an evasive reply. Finally Francis and he decided to go to Geneva together with several leaders of Thonon, both to defend his friend's reputation and his convictions.¹⁷⁵

affligés, mais particulièrement de ceux qui tombent en adversité plus par malheur que par malice." *Oeuvres...* ltr.. MDCCCLXXVIII.

¹⁷⁴Vincent de Paul testified to this saying, "Il était indispensable, se prêter, un temps si long, à toutes personnes, de si humbles conditions qu'elles fussent sans épargner aucune peine et jusqu'à ce qu'il leur eût donné pleine satisfaction, tant il estimait la paix de l'âme... faisant en peu de temps un tel progrès dans les choses spirituelles, que, par un heureux changement de dispositions, elles en venaient à haïr ce qu'elles avaient aimé et à aimer ce qu'elles avaient haï." 1st Hearing, art. 27, 28. Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.263-264. Pernelle Boutey is another example.

¹⁷⁵Francis and baron d'Avully would remain friends for the rest of their lives. He would always be pleased to render any service the baron asked him, notably to celebrate the marriages of his daughters. Cfr. Ravier, *Lettres...* p.80-

At this time Geneva was a strict theocracy. They passed a law that the first to propose a change in religion for the city be put to death. Reminiscent of the Inquisition, the ministers meticulously checked the beliefs of every inhabitant. If someone converted, all his goods were confiscated by the state and the person was beaten publicly. Laws were passed against every kind of indulgence from dinners to funerals. If a family hired a Catholic nanny, the woman was expelled and the father of the house fined. Like other places under such draconian laws, Geneva experienced a certain period of détente in 1596, allowing Francis to publicly debate his religion. He met with de la Faye at one of the city's squares,¹⁷⁶ and a crowd quickly gathered. La Faye was 56, Francis 29.¹⁷⁷ The debate was apparently tenacious, and Francis's arguments were good enough to eventually make de la Faye angry, which led the Baron to intervene, bitterly regretting having been misled by the Calvinist ministers for so long.¹⁷⁸ It was enough to end their discussion.

In that crowd was Anne-Jacqueline Coste, a poor shepherd girl from the Savoyard mountains, who had come to Geneva to take a job as a maid in a hotel. Her employers had tried to persuade her to convert, but she was too reverent a Catholic. They found her too honest and hard working to be willing to send her away over it. She listened intently to the young Francis give proofs for her faith, and prayed for him in her heart while she watched. His tranquillity and audacity in such a hostile situation won her affection instantly. Once the debate was finished, Francis left Geneva with his companions without speaking to the young servant girl, but he had left a lasting impression on her. She prayed she might see him again.¹⁷⁹

That chance came in 1597 when Francis came to Geneva to meet with Theodore de Beza. Of all the hotels in Geneva, Francis and his party chose to lodge at the "Inn of the French Ecu," the very hotel that employed Anne-Jacqueline. She couldn't believe her eyes. She led Francis to his room, and once she was alone with him, she confessed

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¹⁷⁶Ironically, it was the Place Molard, the address of a hotel his family owned before Geneva's revolution. Cfr. Trochu, *Saint François de Sales...* t.1, p.425.

¹⁷⁷Cfr. Trouncer, M. *The Gentleman Saint...* p.97.

¹⁷⁸His daughter would go on to enter religious life years later. Francis writes him to let her go, "Voilà une douce et non sanglante immolation de vostre fille que Dieu desire de vous; en cela connoistra-il combien vous l'aymes." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXII.

¹⁷⁹Cfr. Trochu, *Saint François de Sales...* t.1, p.427-428.

how she had prayed to see him. She opened her heart to him and told him of her life. She was 37, she wanted to leave Geneva and live somewhere that she could practice her faith, but the owners of the hotel liked her and permitted her to go to mass outside Geneva on Sundays. She explained to him how she and a group of other Catholics met secretly to sustain their religious life. She had a heart with the kind of vigor that Francis immediately took to in a person. Her openness and ardor must have moved him. She asked for the sacrament of confession, and he obliged. Then to her surprise, he took a locket from his neck containing the Eucharist. She fell to her knees and he gave her communion right in the heart of Geneva.¹⁸⁰ Francis advised her to remain in Geneva for now. They would see each other again.

In the ensuing months the whole Chablais converted and the Duke of Savoy prepared to take Geneva by surprise attack. The plan was to enter the city by scaling the walls with ladders in the night with a group of commandos, who would then open the city gates for the army to rush in. But the Genevans sounded the alarm in time and fought back the invading soldiers. The whole city rejoiced, taking it as a proof of God's protection. The soldiers captured who had not surrendered were hung and their decapitated heads were set along the wall where the escalade had taken place. Anne-Jacqueline Coste hid a group of Savoyard soldiers in the wine cellar of the hotel, and fed them for several days. She made disguises for them all from bed sheets and whatever she could find, and one by one they were eventually able to slip out of the city to safety.¹⁸¹

Francis and Anne-Jacqueline Coste would not see each other again until 1605. He was preaching in his Annecy cathedral when he spotted her among the congregation. She didn't expect him to recognize her, so she was surprised when he looked at her and touched the pendant around his neck where he carried the Eucharist for the infirm during the sermon. He found her after mass and they talked for some time. Anne-Jacqueline told him of how she had cared for her mistress at the hotel through a long illness, which slowly killed her. The woman was so touched by her kindness and respect that she converted. She told Anne-Jacqueline that she was her closest friend. After her death, the master of the hotel began to woo her, offering her a considerable advancement in her condition. But Anne-Jacqueline could not marry her friend's

¹⁸⁰Cfr. M. Henry-Coüannier, *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés...* p.84-85.

¹⁸¹Cfr. M. Henry-Coüannier, *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés...* p.111-112. The "Escalade de Genève" took place in 1602.

widower, and more importantly, she longed to live in Annecy, where she could openly practice her faith and regularly receive the sacraments.¹⁸²

Hard headed and simple, she was as different from the Doctor of love as a person might be, yet they shared a common love of God. He writes of her to Jane as, “A peasant by birth, very noble of heart and desire.”¹⁸³ There are no letters between them because she was unable to read or write. But Francis respected her sincere love of God enough to include her among the founders of the Visitation. Every project is most vulnerable in its beginning, and his choice of those first four was well measured. They had to be models if it were to succeed. He writes of his respect for Anne-Jacqueline, “A soul so good in the crudeness of her birth, that, in her condition I have never seen one like her.”¹⁸⁴ Francis looked for the Holy Spirit working in people he met, and saw his encounter and communication with them in function of that living holiness within. When Anne-Jacqueline Coste told him she wanted to give her life to serve the religious order he wanted to establish, he was astonished, and asked her how she knew about a project which he had been so careful to keep secret. “From no one,” she answered, “but I’m telling you what I think.”¹⁸⁵ For Francis it was a clear sign of God’s spirit working in her and approval for his plans. He told Jane the experience gave him great consolation, and he resolved to “encourage and sustain” little Anne-Jacqueline as much as he possibly could in that vocation, judging her “as pious and studious as it is required to serve our little beginning.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸²Cfr. M. Henry-Coüannier, *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés...* p.138-139.

¹⁸³“Une paisanne de naissance tres noble de coeur et de desir” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLXXVIII.

¹⁸⁴“Nous l’enfermasemes (Jane de Chantal) le jour de la tres sainte Trinité, avec deux compaignes et la servante (J. Coste) que je vous fis voir, qui est une ame si bonne dans la rusticité de sa naissance, que, dans sa condition, je n’en ay point veu de telle.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCLXXVI.

¹⁸⁵ Francis writes Jane de Chantal in 1608: “Il faut que je vous dise que Dimanche dernier je fus tres consolé. Une paisanne de naissance tres noble de coeur et de desir, me pria, apres l’avoir confessee, de la faire servir les Religieuses que je voulais établir. Je m’enquis d’ou elle sçavoit une nouvelle encor toute cachee en Dieu. ‘De personne,’ me dit elle, ‘mais je vous dis ce que je pense.’ O Dieu, dis-je en moy mesme, ayes vous donques revelé vostre secret a cette pauvre servante?” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLXXVIII.

¹⁸⁶“He continues,”Son discours me consola beaucoup, et j’iray, tant qu’il me sera possible, encourageant et soustenant cette fille, la croyant autant pieuse

St. Augustine teaches that there is always some respect in which another is superior to us, and therefore we can learn something from everyone we meet.¹⁸⁷ This was the lesson Francis had learned well, and what gave him such respect for Anne-Jacqueline Coste and others like her. As Francis once wrote after observing exemplary lives in the hinterlands of his diocese: “Alas, my dear Daughter, let us say with St. Augustine: ‘What should we do? the ignorant and the crude rise, they rise up in front of us, they make heaven rejoice; and we squat in our negligence’.”¹⁸⁸ Her plain talk and unaffected honesty gave her a humble and naive sincerity and practical wisdom. It was the kind of attitude that he so often advised his directees to assume. He could not share great ideas or controversy with Anne-Jacqueline Coste, but he could marvel at qualities like her obedient childlike trust, humility and stubborn tenacity in the work she was given. In fact, on one occasion her ardor becomes a little exaggerated, and Francis had to tell her not to go the winter without shoes as a sacrifice for God. Francis recounts his response to that kind of asceticism to Jane in a text often cited to capture his spirituality: “I would desire that the daughters of our congregation have their feet well covered, but their heart well uncovered, and be really stripped of terrestrial affections; that they have the head well covered and the mind uncovered, by a perfect simplicity and stripping away of their own will.”¹⁸⁹ He told all of this to Anne-Jacqueline and she immediately obeyed her friend and spiritual father. Mademoiselle Coste for her part, was not interested in erudition; those things were too difficult for her. What she admired from the beginning in the Bishop of Geneva was the way he was. Her feminine intuition

et studieuse qu’il est requis pour servir en nostre petit commencement.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLXXVIII.

¹⁸⁷*De diversis quaestionibus* 83, q.71.

¹⁸⁸“Helas, ma chere fille, disons avec saint Augustin (*Confessions* 1, 8, c. 8) Que faysons-nous? Les ignorans et les grossiers se levent, et se levant devant nous, ilz ravissent les cieus; et nous croupissons dans nostre negligence!” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLX.

¹⁸⁹“Vostre Anne Jacquielne me contente tous-jours plus. La dernière fois qu’elle se confessa, elle me demanda licence, pour se preparer et accoustumer, dit elle, a estre religieuse, de jeusner les Advens au pain et a l’eau, et d’aller nudz pieds tout l’hiver. O ma fille, il vous faut dire ce que je lui repondis, car je l’estime aussi bon pour la maistresse que pour la servante: que je desirois que les filles de nostre congregation eussent les pieds bien chaussés, mais le coeur bien deschaussé et bien nud des affections terrestres; qu’elles eussent la teste bien couverte et l’esprit bien decouvert, par une parfaite simplicité et despoillement de la propre volonté.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXI.

saw he was someone she could trust. She was able to recognize in Francis someone in whom that same Spirit she had come to know by her interior life dwelt and radiated. She in turn communicated in this friendship an enthusiasm that gave her Bishop renewed verve. She saw serving him as a way of serving Christ, and he no doubt felt the same.¹⁹⁰ Fifteen years after meeting in that day in Geneva, Anne-Jacqueline Coste joined the Visitation to serve Jane and the others at the very beginning of their little experimental congregation.

“The heart of my people is almost entirely mine now.”

Friendship with Anne-Jacqueline Coste is an example of a whole genre. In the early Seventeenth century most people were illiterate. If the surviving letters represent the tip of the iceberg of his correspondences, what percentage do they represent of the people he was able to have some kind of friendship with? Even if we try answering that question by beginning with a strict definition of friendship in order to separate friendliness and friendships (if it were possible to know as much as we would need about each relationship to do so) we would find an enormous number. Why so many? People confided in him because he listened to them and understood them. Our picture is not the benevolent saint condescending out of charity to love by giving advice and pats on the head, but someone who knew himself how to see in even the simplest people something that edified him. After just a few years as Bishop, he writes Jane one of his most self effacing letters from the wilderness of his diocese, divulging, “The heart of my people is almost entirely mine now.”¹⁹¹ He saw something in them that they had not seen themselves and by valuing it gave them a sense of their dignity. He knew how to communicate with a whole range of humanity, to engage people. It was his genius.

¹⁹⁰ He writes Jane of her while still waiting for practical arrangements to be made before opening the Gallery: “Cette bonne servante pretendue me demande souvent quand Madame viendra. Voyez vous, ma Fille, vostre venue luy est bien a coeur, parce qu’elle espere de servir bien Dieu en vostre personne et en celle des filles et femmes qui seront si heureuses que de vous suivre en la petite, mais sainte et aymable retraite que nous meditons.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXVI

¹⁹¹“Le coeur de mon peuple est presque tout mien maintenant.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXVIII.

Spiritual Directors and Lights of the Renaissance

In the introduction of *The Devout Life*, Francis advises Philothea to find a friend to be a guide on his journey of devotion. These two roles; friend and guide, blend into one for the Doctor of love to such an extent that they are like mass and gravity, a top and a bottom; one cannot exist without the other, because each implies the other. This idea we will develop in detail in the last part of this thesis. It is the crux of our study. If friendship is important for salvation, then all friendship will be a kind of spiritual direction. As we have seen in his friendships up to now, that thinking governed his life as director and friend. But how did he receive the same direction? Was he friends with his own directors?

Jean Déage

Jean Déage was Francis' tutor and guardian in his years away at school in Annecy, Paris and Padua.¹⁹² Before he knew to read, before he could even find his way home, Déage was chosen as a primary author in the young noble's education. "A learned and principled but harsh man," he was the most exemplary guardian that the parents of Francis and his cousins could find for the boys. Déage would remain an important figure throughout his life.¹⁹³ He was never officially Francis' spiritual director, since Charles-Auguste tells us that Francis chose himself a spiritual director while at Clermont.¹⁹⁴ Yet this relationship has all the elements of spiritual director, father and friend, as we are about to see. It is also especially interesting because some contend that Déage was never a friend, but rather a "bitter," murmuring, irascible man who knew perhaps better to command than anything else.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹²There are no extant letters between them, which makes our speculation about their friendship tenuous.

¹⁹³Coüannier, describes him as "homme docte et intègre mais revêche" p.15 and "aigre" p.21. *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés*. In the words of Antoine Bouvard he was "a venerable churchman and reputed man of goodness," 1st Hearing, Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXII, p.93, n.3. Francis' cousins, Louis, Gaspard and Aimé de Sales were also confided to Fr. Déage's tutelage, and accompanied Francis to study in Paris. Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.49

¹⁹⁴This was near the end of his stay there in his late teens. Charles-Auguste de Sales, *Histoire...* t.1 liv. 1, p.10.

¹⁹⁵Bremond calls him "The bitter Déage" and says he is rude. Bremond, *Histoire...* I, 85, n.2. Couannier repeats the caricature recounting a story of Déage's reprimanding Francis for not standing up to his critics. Cfr. Henry-Coüannier, *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés*, p.137.

For the first six years, Déage's role was much less important, since the boys often saw their parents and were living with family friends rather than in the school dormitory.¹⁹⁶ Trust had developed on all sides by 1578 when Déage and the boys left for Paris.¹⁹⁷ Although Francis had a rare enthusiasm for his course work, life in Paris was not all study. He was a welcome guest in the Luxembourg palace, where his father had served, as well as the home of his cousin Charles de Chaumont, Seigneur de Charmois. He had access to "the high seas of the world,"¹⁹⁸ and he was duly aware that the young ladies found him handsome. It all must have been rather overwhelming for a twelve year old boy from the country to come to the universe of the Parisian court. Déage supported him in the unavoidable heady temptations to power and pleasure. At one stage he even gave him permission to wear a hair shirt under his elegant clothes, as a tactic to keep himself from being carried away by that pomp and high society.¹⁹⁹ Monsieur de Boisy had strictly commanded Déage to teach his son the exercises of nobility, namely: fencing, horsemanship and dance.²⁰⁰ But Francis was drawn to theology, and in 1584, at the age of 17, he asked his tutor to permit him to add theology to his regular course load. Déage was impressed by how assiduously the boy took to those extra studies and by how humble and docile the youngster was.²⁰¹ He studied with a practically inhuman fervor. He was often in a Church somewhere praying, and was so interested in the decision of Ange de Joyeuse to quit his vast wealth and position of power in government to join the Capuchins in 1587, that his

¹⁹⁶In La Roche they lived with Dumas, the schoolmaster and a long time family friend. They all went to study at the Capuchin Collège in Annecy three years later, where they stayed until 1576. Cfr. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...* p.20-21.

¹⁹⁷This date is disputed, Cfr. Ravier *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...* p.22

¹⁹⁸ Francis writes Celse-Bénigne at a similar watershed in his life in 1610: "En fin donq vous alles faire voyle et prendre la haute mer du monde en la cour." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXXXVII.

¹⁹⁹Cfr. A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...* p.29.

²⁰⁰Cfr. Charles-Auguste de Sales, *Histoire...* t.1, p.10.

²⁰¹Déage allowed him to join him in his courses at the Sorbonne after he finished his daily lectures at Clermont, and Francis would recopy his tutor's notes in the evening after doing his own homework, foregoing recreation with his classmates and even meals! At the end of his studies he was declared perfect in philosophy and one of the top students at the university. Numerous testimonies of Francis' extraordinary application for his studies and for holiness during these years are given by people so struck by it that they recall even conversations more than thirty years later. Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.49-56.

tutor feared he was likely to do the same.²⁰² He took the extraordinary care (for a teen-ager) to go to mass and confession every week, and he even tried to coax his classmates to join him.²⁰³ His behavior was flawless. Déage himself, in fact, recounts that in the thirty years he was with Francis only on one occasion did he anger him, and that was when he insisted that his tutor pardon one of his companions who he was about to punish. Déage slapped him in front of several others and commanded him to leave, which the boy did calmly.²⁰⁴

At this stage, we cannot consider their relationship a friendship. They are too unequal, yet Déage was a kind of spiritual guide. They did not have real intimacy, which is best shown in the fact that the young Francis never consulted Déage during his famous crisis. When one looks at some of these friendships, especially those that span several decades and the whole gamut of life's passages, it is important to realize that friendships are fluid. They grow and adapt to life's changes, grafting them to its own inner dynamism. Jean Déage slapped an adolescent, and was not consulted when the eighteen year old Francis was suffering the most severe crisis of his life, over a matter that was his expertise! If they were friends at that stage, it was not much of a friendship if Francis couldn't turn to him in his confusion. To relinquish that one who was once your inferior has become your superior, is one of the most difficult things to do. Monsieur Déage was chosen because he was responsible; he no doubt took that responsibility seriously. It isn't hard to imagine him holding on to it a little too long, patronizing first the adolescent, and later the doctor. Or perhaps the explanation is simply that it was too personal, and that a nature as sensitive as the young Francis de Sales just didn't want to speak about his innermost troubles. Both of these factors come into play to understand why Francis did not confide such an important trial to his tutor and father figure. It would be wrong to say it wasn't much of a friendship because he did not share his crisis. Friendship admits many degrees. Nonetheless, it is likely that at 19 Francis was still considered a child by Déage, rightly or wrongly. Their relationship was changing, and if he was not a friend in the proper sense, he would soon become one.

²⁰²Cfr. The testimony of Jean Pasquelet de Moyron, 1st Hearing, in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.53-54.

²⁰³Cfr. *Oeuvres...*XXII, p.11, n.1.

²⁰⁴Cfr. M. Favre's deposition in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.54-55. Déage later repented for it.

The picture of the “bitter” Déage makes it hard to imagine him as a friend. Déage himself even admits he is “impetuous and of a choleric temperament,”²⁰⁵ but those qualities, and even outbursts, would not exclude friendship necessarily. François de Blonay tells us that Francis loved Déage like he loved no other.²⁰⁶ That “bitter” man was “so loved and cherished by the blessed prelate, his disciple and his master, that he held him as his grand advisor, even in his studies.”²⁰⁷ He was a man from the backwoods, a mountaineer, with rugged ways, and a big heart. His contemporaries would say one would never imagine him an able philosopher by his appearance.²⁰⁸ Déage was like a mule that had been tamed by his prayer life, but his irascible spirit endured and he kicked sometimes! But that side of him is perhaps a bit exaggerated by Bremond and Coüannier.²⁰⁹ He also permitted Francis to study theology against Monsieur de Boisy’s will, sharing his notes with him and letting him come to his courses with him. We can only imagine what the stern Monsieur de Boisy would have done if he learned Déage was ‘indulging’ his son’s ‘fantasies’ to become a priest. It was a big risk. True, Francis did not turn to him in his crisis, but Déage gathered all his notes from those six weeks. He did not pry, and yet he and those close to Francis couldn’t have missed a difference in him. It would be extraordinary for a 18 year old to have that kind of easy communication with an authority figure.²¹⁰ Francis didn’t tell anyone at all about his anguish.²¹¹

²⁰⁵Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L’homme...* t.1, p.122.

²⁰⁶Annecy Hearing, art. 2.

²⁰⁷Antoine Bouvard, 1st Hearing, art. 1.

²⁰⁸“Je m’assure,” writes the humanist Étienne Nouvellet from Paris to his old compatriots back in Annecy, “que si vous l’aviez vu en besogne, vous jugeriez à vue d’œil, qu’il ne se mêle pas d’aucun métier en philosophant.” Manuscript letter, Archives municipale d’Annecy, inventaire n. 106.

²⁰⁹Coüannier thinks it was probably Déage who criticized Francis for staying an extra day in Burgundy after Bernard’s marriage in Monthelon to entertain some Protestants asking about the faith. He thought he had enough persons needing care in his own basket and shouldn’t be worrying about those of others. Cfr. *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés*. p.222.

²¹⁰One of his resolutions for a perfect life his first year in Padua reveals his idea of proper respect for his superiors. “Si la nécessité me force de converser avec les grands, c’est alors que je me tiendray soigneusement sur mes gardes: car il faut estre avec eux comme avec le feu; c’est à dire qu’il est bien bon de s’en approcher par fois, mais il ne faut pas aussi que ce soit de trop près...avec beaucoup de modestie, meslée neantmoins d’une honneste liberté.” Charles-Auguste, *Histoire...* t.1, p.31.

²¹¹It wasn’t until many years later that Jeanne de Creil and Jane de Chantal

Usually severe and irascible people are not the kind to listen, and this more than anything argues against Monsieur Déage. The exchange and intimacy between them would therefore naturally suffer. But even if we grant this, Déage deserves more credit. He wouldn't have won the undying loyalty and confidence of Francis de Sales if he had been an ogre.²¹² Monsieur de Boisny was intelligent enough to understand his choice and the task. He wanted someone with the right combination of qualities, severe and yet understanding, all the better if that balance leaned toward the severe.²¹³ It would insure that his boy and nephews would not run circles around their tutor. And when one considers the achievement of his charges, Monsieur Déage was the perfect choice.

Their stay in the Latin Quarter lasted about ten years. In 1588 he received the license and then the master of arts, and was now ready to begin law. Monsieur Déage was weary of the unrest in Paris over Henry III. The country was on the verge of a civil war split between Huguenots and the Catholic League.²¹⁴ He wrote Monsieur de Boisny, who commanded them to leave Paris. It was time to go to Padua, home of the greatest school of law in baroque Europe.²¹⁵ Even though Francis was such an ardent student, he was able to make several friends among his fellow classmates. He seems to have had a natural sincerity that

learned from him about the crisis. It isn't even sure that Déage and his classmates were aware of his inner turmoil. Cfr. Their depositions in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.57-59.

²¹²One example of that confidence was when Francis named Déage as one of eight priests, "animated by the spirit of the Oratory" to found a collège in Thonon. It was a project particularly dear to him. Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, l'Homme...* t.1, p.389 and 397. See also *Oeuvres...* XII, p.46.

²¹³Déage tried to mitigate his seriousness. The day Francis exclaimed his desire to study theology is an example. Déage saw him melancholic while all Paris celebrated carnival, he suggested he join the revelry, and Francis retorted, "Turn my eyes away from seeing vanity. Lord make me see!" Déage asked, "What do you wish to see?" he answered: "Sacred Theology! She will teach me what God wants of my soul". Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t.1, p.132. Charles-Auguste, tells us Déage (with Possevino's nod) approved his amazingly stringent rules of conduct later in Padua, which he listed in detail on several pages of paper. Cfr. *Histoire...* t.1, pp.18-31.

²¹⁴In 1598 the Edict of Nantes ended the wars of religion, which ravaged France and most of Europe during the 16th century.

²¹⁵"The Day of Barricades" (May 1588) was probably not the only reason to leave. It would be important for him to know Savoy to take M. de Boisny's place as head of the family. Besides Paris did not possess a true law school, but only "doctoral schools", which were more like little institutes in dilapidated buildings. Cfr. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...* p.34-35.

drew others to him even then. Four young French nobles decided to accompany him as far as Lyon and couldn't separate themselves from him without tears, "so great was the love that each held for him".²¹⁶ They stopped for a sojourn with the family that summer before embarking for Italy.

In Padua the two became closer. Since there are no letters, the best evidence of this comes from Francis' reaction when he thinks he is dying a few years later in Padua. Déage had always been a bit severe with his charges, maybe he was too much so. The doctors believed one of the main causes for Francis' nearly fatal fever in 1591 was too ascetic a lifestyle. It made Déage swallow hard.²¹⁷ When they told him Francis would probably die from it, he withdrew to "weep very bitterly."²¹⁸ In the following weeks his suffering brought more tears to "the bitter" Déage's eyes, as well as Francis' companions who came to his bedside. Francis' affection for his tutor is revealed by his response to the question Déage was compelled to ask him about his wishes for his burial.²¹⁹ He said, "Oh! my dear master, I leave all that to your charity, and pray you to have as much care for me when I will be dead as you have had during my life."²²⁰ He was apparently both dear and appreciated. Still there is no solid proof that they freely communicated or were one soul. This friendship was probably more colored by appreciation and such things, and not as deep as many others.

Déage was able to find the time among those responsibilities to himself study theology and receive his doctorate a few days after Francis in Padua. They shared acquaintances there and perhaps even friendships.²²¹ He confided in Déage Antoine Favre's offer for

²¹⁶"Quatre jeunes gentilhommes se donnerent l'honneur de l'accompagner expressément jusques à Lyon, et ne se separent point de luy sans larmes: tant estoit grand l'amour que chacun luy portoit." Charles-Auguste de Sales, *Histoire...* t.1, l.1,p.15. Their identities remains a mystery to historians.

²¹⁷ Cfr. Charles-Auguste, *Histoire...* t.1, liv.1, p.36. He tells us that at one point he abused his body with long fasts, vigils of prayer and even self flagellation!

²¹⁸Charles-Auguste, *Histoire...* t.1, liv.1, p.37.

²¹⁹When Déage protested against his desire to give his body to science after his death Francis begged him "suffer me this my good master, at least after my death my body can be good for something, since I've always been useles during my life." Pierre-Antoine de Castagnery, 2nd Hearing, Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.64-65.

²²⁰Charles-Auguste, *Histoire...* t.1, liv.1, p.37.

²²¹See for example a letter from Francis to one of his professors where he includes greetings from Déage. *Oeuvres...* ltr.. I.

friendship.²²² He must have had confidence in his judgment. They had probably talked many times about his vocation. After his trip to Chambéry at the time he was becoming a member of the Savoyard bar, he and Mr. Déage were riding in the woods of Sionnaz on their way back to La Thuille, when Francis' horse fell. His sword was separated from its scabbard by the jolt, and fell to the ground over it forming a cross. He took it as a sign God wished him to become a priest, and divulged his thoughts to Déage on the way home.²²³

Once Francis was provost, Déage was one of those completely behind him in his daring program to reconquer Geneva, and formed a "natural" bond with Jean Portier and François de Chissé and the other enthusiastic close friends among the clergy.²²⁴ Déage was upset when people criticized his former pupil in his first months as Bishop. They found him too gentle, too accommodating for simple people and didn't like the way he sometimes clowned around in his catechism with the children. He went to him, accusing him of swallowing his dignity because he would not respond to their murmuring. But Francis overlooked it all as empty talk, excited by the human need to criticize.²²⁵ Later, Francis would name Déage as assistant to his vicar general Jean Favre, for dealing with problems among his priests.²²⁶ What was good enough for the goose was good enough for the gander.

He must have been like a member of the de Sales family, especially in those latter years. He was no doubt welcome in the homes of Francis' brothers and sisters as much as the homes of his cousins, Louis, Gaspard and Aimé. Déage was often at Francis' table during his years as Bishop. He was named a canon of St. Peter's of Geneva in 1591, the same year he and his disciple graduated from the University

²²²He was aware of Antoine Favre's offer for friendship, for example. Cfr. Rolland's deposition at the 1st Hearing in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.69.

²²³Historians are skeptical about the authenticity of this story, first recounted by Louis de Sales. Cfr. A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...* p.50. See also Charles-Auguste de Sales, who contends it happened three times! *Histoire...* t.1, liv.1, p.53. Charles-Auguste's reliability as a historian is sometimes questionable. He has been shown at least once to invent stories and even dialogues. Cfr. Lajeunie, who, for example, shows his account of a trip to Rome after finishing in Padua to be fiction. *Saint François de Sales, l'Homme...* t.1, p.179-181.

²²⁴Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, l'Homme...* t.1, p.201.

²²⁵Cfr. Cotiannier, *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés*, p.137.

²²⁶Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, l'Homme...* t.2, p.40.

of Padua.²²⁷ He was with Francis and Favre on the first diplomatic mission to Paris, and we can well imagine him visiting the luminaries gathered at Madame Acarie's home with his former student and friend.²²⁸ We can easily picture Favre, Francis, Rolland and Déage dining with Madame de Charmoisy and her husband during their stay in Paris in 1602. Later, Dr. Déage was one of the founding members of Francis' pet project, the Florimontane Academy.²²⁹

Jean Déage slapped the adolescent Francis once before a group of people, and he may have even murmured a few scoldings now and then to him as Bishop, but that picture of the man and his relationship with Francis de Sales is incomplete. Francis hand-picked him to join with Favre and Roland his servant when he traveled on his first diplomatic mission to Paris. He asked for his advice and he entrusted himself totally to his charity. Déage was like a father figure, and much closer in age than Monsieur de Boisy. He was never officially his spiritual director, and yet when Possevino came on the scene in that role, he had no corrections for the formation Francis had received until then. Monsieur Déage was one of the principal architects of that formation. Despite his rough and irascible exterior, Jean Déage remained one of Francis' intimates and counselors until his death in 1610, because observing him daily for over thirty years he had learned there was much more than this to the man.²³⁰ At his funeral Francis quietly wept when they began saying the Our Father, and paused for a while unable to go on. He later explained to Michael Favre that he had suddenly remembered it was Déage who had taught him the prayer.²³¹

Anthony Possevino

Anthony Possevino was in his mid-fifties when Francis and Monsieur Déage came to Padua. He was first made famous by his preaching in Savoy and France, and was one of the leading lights among the Jesuits of his time. His rare skill in negotiations had won him the complete confidence of Pope Gregory XIII, who sent him to mediate in numerous diplomatic missions, covering most of Europe. He

²²⁷Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XI, p.2, n.1. Coüannier contends that it was Francis that had named Déage canon. *Saint François de Sales et ses amitiés*, p.137.

²²⁸Cfr. A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...* p.106.

²²⁹Cfr. Trochu, *Saint François de Sales...* t.2, p.238.

²³⁰Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.325, n.23.

²³¹Cfr. J.-P. Camus, *L'esprit du Bienheureux François de Sales*, 1640, V, section 22.

secured a peace treaty between Poland and Russia in 1582, and converted the King of Sweden among many others. He had returned to Padua the year before to begin working on his chef d'oeuvre, *Bibliotheca Selecta*, which was later published at the Pope's expense.²³² His reputation as a gifted spiritual director was spreading throughout the city when Francis arrived there. He sought Fr. Possevino out and soon revealed his whole interior life: his crisis in Paris, his study of theology, and his aspirations to serve God in the future. Possevino encouraged him to continue "to think about the things of God." He was immediately able to discern Francis' character and told him: "Your spirit is not for the business of the bar, and your eyes are not made for its dust." And yet, seeing this clearly, he advised him to "Work seriously at law. That is the present will of God for you."²³³ He sensed the mystery of the Spirit working within. We get a better understanding of their relationship when we see the same kind of subtlety exercised by Francis later in life as spiritual director of so many. His own inclinations and faith harmonized completely with such docility. Both had learned to love God's will, not because they understood how all would fit together, not because they saw the rewards, but because they believed He would not fail those who earnestly sought Him, because of who He is. "If I live or if I die," he writes in the *Traité*, "I am too happy to know that my God is so rich in every good, and that his goodness is so infinite, and his infinity so good."²³⁴

Possevino was generous to Francis giving him abundant "favors and friendship"²³⁵ and granted him free access to his "intimate exchange,"²³⁶

²³²Its purpose was to distinguish between sacred and profane sources of classic literature so as to best serve the Christian orator. Possevino was one of the major representatives of the humanist orator or what is called "the second ciceronian renaissance". Cfr. M. Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence*, (1ed. 1980) Albin Michel, Paris 1994, pp.180-184.

²³³Charles-Auguste recounts Possevino's words 'Vous faites bien, mon fils, continuez de penser aux choses divines et d'estudier en theologie; car la divine Providence vous reserve l'evesché de Geneve. Croyez-moi, vostre esprit n'est pas au tracas du barreau, et vos yeux ne sont pas faicts à sa poussiere; la voye du siecle est trop glissante, il est dangereux de s'y perdre.' *Histoire...* t.1, liv.1, p.17-18.

²³⁴"Que je meure ou que je vive, je suis trop heureux de sçavoir que mon Dieu est si riche en tous biens, que sa bonté est si infinie et son infinité si bonne." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.256.

²³⁵Francis thanks him at the end of his studies for : "Les faveurs et l'amitié que j'ay receu di abondamment de vous a Padoüe, desquelles je nourris tousjours une fraische et vive memoire." *Oeuvres...* ltr.XLI.

winning the young man's heart for the rest of his life. He thought it good that Francis frequent his classmates and that he befriend his compatriots.²³⁷

Possevino organized a more intensive theology curriculum for Francis with Gesualdi.²³⁸ He studied Scripture and the texts of the great masters: Augustine, Jerome, Bernard, the Capadocians, Cyprian, Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas. Francis' gifts soon became clear to him; he told him he would be the next Bishop of Geneva.²³⁹ Francis carried a small and recently published book on the spiritual life: *Spiritual Combat* by Lorenzo Scoupoli.²⁴⁰ He also decided to draw up a strict and meticulous code of conduct for himself and his relations with others, which both Possevino and Déage approved.

As a man of enormous culture, and a famous preacher, Possevino offered Francis a certain sensitivity to the problems of the times. He exemplified the Renaissance's ideal of the orator as the summit of the *arbor scientiarum*, and sought to use the Classics with the Fathers as sources for the art of persuading in the name of the Church.²⁴¹ This man

²³⁶He writes Possevino in 1605, "Era in Padua un giovane gentilhuomo Savoiano, nominato il signor de Sales, il quale voi favorivate singolarmente et gli davate molto libero accesso, non solamente al Sacramento di Penitenza, ma naco alla vostra conversatione." (frequent communion was not universally accepted at the time) *Oeuvres...* ltr.CCCXIV.

²³⁷Among these were, François Alexandre Vernaz and Jean-Guillaume Marmet, future lawyers; Jean-Baptist de Valence future counsellor to the Duke and Senator, Louis de Lalé future ambassador, Antoine Mérindol, Louis XIII's doctor and Hector Milliet de Chasles to whom Francis "revealed like a brother of friendship all the secrets of his heart", and who would succeed Favre as president of Savoy's senate. With all of them he made an express profession to help one another live virtuously. Cfr. Trochu, *Saint François de Sales...t.1*, p.153.

²³⁸ Charles-Auguste tells us he also enjoyed a "holy friendship" with Gesualdi. *Histoire...* t.1, liv. 1, p.35.

²³⁹François Favre testifies Possevino said: "Vous faites bien mon fils, continuez de penser aux choses divines et d'étudier en théologie car la divine Providence vous réserve le soin de l'évêché de Genève." 2nd Hearing, Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.60.

²⁴⁰He read and reread it throughout his life and it was one of the fundamental books he recommended to his Philothea. "Ouy, ma Fille, le Combat spirituel est un grand livre. Il y a quinze ans que je le porte en ma pochette et ne le lis jamais qu'il ne me profite. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXX. He writes Mme Brûlart, "Lises et relises le Combat Spirituel: ce doit estre vostre cher livre, il est clair et tout praticable". *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXIX..

²⁴¹Cfr. M. Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence*, (1ed. 1980) Albin Michel, Paris

had acquired a rare knowledge of the world and the politico-religious problems of the century. His disciple probably acquired from him, as Fr. Lajeunie remarks, his “universal sense of Catholicism,” so rare for his times.²⁴² Francis studied how he preached, his observations, his mannerisms and his spirituality. For an intelligence like his to find such a rich and stimulating source was a rare privilege, and he drank eagerly.²⁴³ All these things would be of immense use to him in the trials of the Chablais, where he would write his former spiritual director to tell him that he very often remembered him when he had to preach there.²⁴⁴ He imitated his former master’s style from the pulpit, as in other ways no doubt.²⁴⁵ He cited him in his first opus, *Les Controverses*.²⁴⁶ Possevino was a Baroque Renaissance man in the true Humanist tradition. His influence over Francis is probably much greater than commonly believed. If Augustine was Francis’ favorite source for his thoughts, Possevino was his mentor for his cultivated

1994, pp.1-3.

²⁴²“Humaniste, éducateur, missionnaire, diplomate, professeur, directeur spirituel, cet homme d’une erudition prodigieuse, était ouvert à tout: par ses missions diplomatiques en Pologne, en Moscovie, en Allemagne, au Danemark, en France, il avait acquis une rare connaissance du monde politique et du monde religieux; il dut ouvrir son disciple à ce sens de l’universel, du *Catholicisme* qui nous frappe chez M. de Geneve.” Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L’Homme...* t. 1 p.150.

²⁴³ One important watershed at which Possevino probably helped his young protégé was an “intellectual crisis” he battled in Padua. Francis was greatly troubled by the problem of grace and human effort. He could not accept the explanation of Augustine, and that portrayed of St. Thomas that if all needed God’s grace for salvation damnation was His will and the glory of his justice. How could God will sin? It caused an intellectual crisis because reason and experience seemed to contradict the faith of the Church. He reconciled the insufficiency of “sufficient grace” by means of God’s respect for free will, adopting a fundamental optimism for both God’s mercy and the human person’s goodness. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXII, pp.51-63. See also Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L’Homme...* t.1, pp.151-156 for an explanation of how this “break” with the church was not really a break at all.

²⁴⁴He writes Possevino in 1594 from the Chablais, “j’ay presché icy et ailleurs parmi le diocèse la parole de Dieu; en quoy je m’accuseroy bien fort de temerité si l’obeissance ne m’en avoit osté le scrupule. C’est ce que j’ay fait et je fays encore le mieux que je sçay, vous portant bien souvent avec moy en imagination en chaire.” *Oeuvres...* ltr XLI.

²⁴⁵In 1617 just five years before his death he would still be citing his former spiritual director in his sermons. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* VIII, p.321.

²⁴⁶*Oeuvres...* I, p.97; 199.

manner and finesse. He would continue to keep Possevino *au courant* of the affairs of his diocese 12 years later, as he explains on one such occasion: "To honor you in my soul with a very special love and respect."²⁴⁷

After Francis left Padua that respect was nourished by Possevino's praises in his letters. He writes Favre on one occasion from the Chablais filled with excitement after reading his former master's *Poësi et Pictura*. "The image of Possevino is so natural in this charming work," he writes Favre, "that his words paint his spirit and its originality is unmistakable." It is as if the spirit of the man moves him and enthuses him. He continues, "He is no less present to me by this writing than you are to me in reality."²⁴⁸ He confesses that the image of Possevino only makes him want all the more to be truly in the man's presence, but the Chablais is ripening for its imminent harvest. Favre didn't know Possevino, yet Francis feels free to tell him how much he appreciates his friendship. With his friend Antoine Favre he celebrates Possevino's benevolence, and his existence in the same breath as he celebrates Favre's very own. "Only the memory of one of you separately is ordinarily enough to delight my entire soul."²⁴⁹ Reminiscent of Aristotle's "I rejoice that you exist", the memory alone of these kinds of friendships is a consolation and source of strength.

He relies on his advice in controversial situations, like negotiations for a conference in Geneva.²⁵⁰ But most importantly, he will always

²⁴⁷"Mio Reverendo Padre...La Providenza divina vi ha conservato in sanità insino al presente, ma parmimente mi ha conservato nella vostra benevolenza. La quale io tengo per una ventura ben cara et pretiosa per me, il quale reciprocamente continuo in honoravi nella mia anima con un rispetto et amore tutto particolare." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLIX. In the same letter he recounts the story of his entering Geneva as "Monsieur Bishop", and sends him a copy of his newly published *The Devout Life*. Possevino sent him a copy of his *Moscovia* Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XIII, p.107, n.2.

²⁴⁸"Epistola per se scribentis quaedam effigies manualis est; at in selecto illo libello *de Poësi et Pictura*, tam genuina est Possevini effigies, ut non in messem alienam miserit manum qui tam eleganter et graphice seipsum repraesentarit et pinxerit; ac nihilo fere minus se libello mihi praesentem exhibeat quam ipsissima praesentia tibi." *Oeuvres...* ltr. XLIX.

²⁴⁹"Dicamne, mi Frater, quanta animi voluptate tuas litteras et clarissimi viri Antonii Possevini nudius tertius exeperim? Et cum alterius seorsim recordatio sola animum omnem delectare posset et soleret, quid quaeso non recordatio solum, sed utriusque erga me tantum benevolentiae pignus effecerit?" *Oeuvres...* ltr. XLIX.

²⁵⁰ Cfr. *Oeuvres...*XXIII, pp.65-66. See also Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...* t.1, pp.517-519.

give Fr. Possevino a privileged place in his life considering it his duty, as he writes him one day in profound appreciation for all he has received, “To submit to your censure all my affairs, just as I formerly submitted my very soul, and it is something which I will be proud of all my life.”²⁵¹ Like so many of the Doctor of love’s friendships, they were lifelong engagements, even more than ten years later as a Bishop, Possevino’s relationship as friend and spiritual director was still very much alive, if not made even richer by time.

This picture of Francis and his friendships as a youth risks being too porcelain and pious. He was not winning friends only because he was honest and sensitive. He displayed on several occasions remarkable courage. A group of three students once ambushed him with swords drawn, thinking such a pious fellow would run away cowering, but he fought so deftly, that it was they that fled! The same group later tried to discredit him by luring him into an apartment where one of the professors was supposed to be. A prostitute was there posing as the awaited professor’s wife. While they waited the “friends” slipped out one by one to look on from the outside. When the woman took his hand, Francis immediately stood up, scolded her, and left! Francis was so angry with the classmates that he gave them a tongue lashing and refused to see them for a long time afterwards.²⁵² These two incidents gave him a reputation for virtue through the whole city. “He diffused around himself an atmosphere of sterling worth” as Père Ravier puts it, “and he established some beautiful and solid friendships among his Paduan comrades.”²⁵³ Possevino’s friendship had a more formative effect than the others, that is perhaps one of the differences friendship with a spiritual director has, but it is more likely that it was simply because he had much to teach the young and eager noble, and of

²⁵¹ He writes Possevino in 1605: “Se io havessi guidarlo degno de’ vostri occhi, ma per rendere il debito mio et sottomettere alla vostra censura le cose mie, come già sotomisi la mia propria anima; di che sarò glorioso in tutta la vita mia.” *Oeuvres...litr.. CCCXIV*. See also the same will to defer to Possevino’s judgment from the Chablais where his book is of great help arguing in a place “ou chacun sçait ses *Institutions* par coeur.” *Oeuvres... ltr. LXII*.

²⁵² The story is recounted in the beatification hearings by Anne-Philberte de Rochette, widow of one of the three. In the end Francis won his admiration. 1st Hearing. Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.61-63. Charles-Auguste includes the version that Francis spat in the woman’s face, calling her a whore, which is absent in this testimony. Cfr. *Histoire...* t.1, liv.1, p.33.

²⁵³ Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales Sage and Saint...*p.40.

course, Francis himself found something in Possevino's style that resonated with his own way.

Normally there is an inherent inequality in friendship with a spiritual director. He is guide because he is superior. But in more advanced forms it is not so simple. The best teachers learn from their students. By mingling friendship and spiritual direction, Francis was giving to his teacher at least two of Christian friendship's requirements (as Augustine explained it), namely love and prayer. But even more important is the fact that two can become friends and spiritual directors for one another, recognizing each other's superiority in different respects. It is what most consider the optimal spiritual director, because a friend knows us best and his corrections are both gentle and most suited to our needs. Francis evidently loved his director. It was a relationship he maintained throughout his life. He modeled himself after him, which is one of the traits of love, it makes us like the thing we love. That same docility would later be one of the things he admired most in his directees. He had a free and open exchange with Possevino, but we have no solid evidence that Possevino relied on his protégé in any way. I would guess he respected Francis and confided in him, but to say their relationship was a model for his later relationships with Jane, Favre or the likes of Vincent de Paul is doubtful. Francis grew to be greater than his master; he had his own gift which had its particular impact on the way he lived his friendships. His influence on his contemporaries would easily eclipse that of his mentor.

Vincent de Paul

Another whole realm of friendships Francis de Sales enjoyed and cultivated was with the spiritual leaders of his generation; Madame Acarie,²⁵⁴ Jean Suffren (the King's confessor), Cardinal de Bérulle,²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴Cfr. A. Duval, *La vie admirable de Soeur Marie de l'Incarnation*, Paris, 5th ed. 1625; and Bruno de Jésus Marie (le P.O.C.D.), *La Belle Acarie*, Desclée De Brouwer, 1943. See also H. Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux*, t.II and IV.

²⁵⁵ Just three years before Francis' first visit to Paris, the newly ordained Pierre de Bérulle was named the King's chaplain and was reputed as an excellent confessor. Francis quickly became attached, calling the future reformer of the French clergy, and superior of the Carmelites of France: "Un homme a qui Dieu a beaucoup donné, et qu'il est impossible d'approcher sans beaucoup profiter [...] il est tout tel que je sçaurois desirer d'estre moy mesme. Je n'ay gueres vue d'esprit qui me revienne comme celuy la, ains je n'en ay point vue ni rencontré...Il faut s'en prevaloir avec autant de confiance que de nul autre." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXXIV. Francis later supported him in his

St. Vincent de Paul, Sr. Angélique Arnauld the maitresse of Port Royal,²⁵⁶ and others. All of them avow his method of spiritual direction had a profound influence upon them.²⁵⁷ Many of them were forged in the Acarie Circle, during his ten month visit in 1602. Francis was eager to know the newest contributions to spirituality of his times and quickly assimilated them into his own interior experience. Vincent de Paul traveled in the same sphere and was equally enthused by the new currents of spirituality. He also knew Duval and Cardinal de Bérullewell. It was only natural that the two men's lives would one day intersect.

He was still a simple priest in December of 1618 when Msgr. de Bérulle introduced him to the Bishop of Geneva.²⁵⁸ He was 38 tall and slouched slightly. He wore heavy boots and an old mended cassock. Francis only had four more years to live; Vincent de Paul would survive him another forty-two. As a young priest he was captured by some Turkish mariners while traveling off the coast of Marseilles and sold into slavery in Tunis. After two years he was released because he sang the Psalms with such emotion that one of the Sultan's wives intervened on his behalf. In 1609 he arrived in Paris bringing messages for Henri IV from his ambassadors in Rome. There he began his friendship with Cardinal de Bérulle who was accused the following

founding of the French Oratory, and even invited him to do the same in his diocese. Cfr. *Oeuvres*...XII, p.155-156. Francis writes him the day after being consecrated Bishop, showing the depths of their intimacy: "Je vous dis par ce que je vous veux rendre conte de mon esprit comme vous me faites du vostre" *Oeuvres*... ltr. CLXXI. Twenty years later after de Bérulle was a little too severe in one of his writings, Francis reprimands him fraternally, revealing the trust and frankness they had attained. Cfr. *Oeuvres*... ltr. MCMXLVII. Pierre de Bérulle confessed great admiration for Francis' peace and faith, for "véritablement il avoit l'esprit de Dieu". See also J. Züberlein, *Les relations de saint François de Sales et du cardinal de Bérulle*, Erlangen, 1956 for more on their friendship.

²⁵⁶There has been much written on the mother superior of Port-Royal; for her friendship with Francis see: Sainte Beuve, *Port-Royal ...* and P. R. le Plus, *Angélique Arnauld, Ses relations avec saint François de Sales in Etudes*, 20 février 1910, t. CXXII; J. Berliet, *Les amis oubliés de Port-Royal: saint François de Sales et la Mère Angélique, sainte Jeanne de Chantal et Saint-Cyran*, Paris et Grenoble, E. Vallier 1914; L. Cognet, *Angélique Arnauld et saint François de Sales*, Sulliver 1951 and recently, Perle Bugnion-Secretan, *La Mère Angélique Arnauld. 1591-1661 D'après ses écrits. Abbessse et réformatrice de Port-Royal*. Paris, Cerf, 1991.

²⁵⁷Cfr. *Introduction Générale* to his works, *Oeuvres*... I, p.lv.

²⁵⁸Cfr. Trouncer, M. *The Gentleman Saint*. ... p.227.

year of stealing from Judge de Sore, one of his friends. The accusation caused quite a stir in Paris, but Vincent stood loyally by de Bérulle for six years, refusing to believe he was guilty. Francis, like most of France, knew all this about Vincent de Paul. He was reputed for his zealous charitable works for the poor and in hospitals. It was particularly the humility of this “chaplain of the galley slaves” of the French Navy that won the famous Bishop’s affection.²⁵⁹ The two were from different classes. Vincent de Paul was of peasant stock, earthy and frank. He was a foreigner in the world of the court and diplomacy. But the two were very much alike in passionate temperament and ardor for the reformation of the Church. He rushed to hear Francis preach at Saint-André-des-Arts, because he considered him “the Gospel speaking.” They met sometime shortly thereafter and we can gather that Vincent was almost immediately, as he puts it, “honored with his intimacy.”²⁶⁰ As a man of common sense, Vincent de Paul would have been more touched by the way Francis de Sales was than by his discourses. Indeed, he says as much, “Oh how good you are Lord, how good you are, because your creature, Monsignor Francis de Sales is so good!”²⁶¹ If intimacy with the Bishop of Geneva lifted him to consider the goodness of God, it must have surely brought him closer to God. They had frequent and intense discussions where he revealed his projects to the Doctor of love, who supported them whole-heartedly. Vincent de Paul joined Henry IV, des Hayes and the Cardinal de Retz in their effort later that year to get Francis to accept Paris as his new diocese, hoping to have his aid in winning back England to Catholicism.²⁶² If you will recall, even Favre wondered if it wouldn’t be

²⁵⁹In 1613 Vincent de Paul left his parish to take charge of the education of the three sons of Phillipe-Emmanuel de Gondi, count de Joigny and general of the galleys. One of whom would become Cardinal de Retz Archbishop of Paris. His liason with one of the most important families in France aided his charitable works immensely. It brought him into contact with the criminals condemned to slave in the king’s ships, who lived in the most inhuman conditions imaginable. He launched a movement on their behalf and constructed a place for their care in Paris. Cfr. “Vincent de Paul article in *Dictionnaire des biographies françaises*. XIII col. 542-555.

²⁶⁰Vincent de Paul, Paris hearing ad art. 27, (1626). Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XIX, p.155, n.2; and A. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales Sage and Saint...* pp.227-228.

²⁶¹*Saint Vincent de Paul, Correspondance...* XIII, p.78. In the same vein he comments “J’ai eu le bonheur de communiquer avec feu Monseigneur de Genève plusieurs fois pendant sa vie. Il avait une si grande bonté que celle de Dieu se voyait sensiblement au travers de la sienne.” Idem. III, p.493.

²⁶²Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales...* t.2, p.176. See also, *Oeuvres...*

the best way to serve the Church. But Francis did not want to leave his native soil. He replied to their appeals, "I am a Savoyard by birth and obligations."²⁶³

Vincent de Paul founded the Daughters of Charity in 1617, and would become an ardent apostle of reform of the French clergy. He avoided the opposition that had forced the Visitation to remain cloistered by keeping his community as "lay people living religiously."²⁶⁴ With them the Salesian spirit of the religious life could take on a more outwardly active and worldly form. He, unlike his mentor, would bring spiritual direction down to a more equal level. The friend or guide for his Daughters of Charity would be another sister with whom they could share their confidence, rather than an appointed priest. We know he quickly won Francis' complete faith, because he left the direction of his child, the newly founded Visitation of Paris, in his hands. After Francis' death Vincent de Paul remained spiritual director of the Visitation until his death in 1660.²⁶⁵

Francis must have sensed a natural resonance with this man similar to that he immediately felt with Jane de Chantal. Here we have two of the outstanding saints of their generation. What better material could there be for a spiritual friendship? Somehow both were able to perceive and communicate their rare depth of spirituality. Vincent de Paul would later confess at Francis' beatification hearing in 1628: "I felt such an admiration for him that I believed him the man who best imitated the Son of God on earth."²⁶⁶ Any barriers their births may have imposed, especially in the strongly hierarchical Seventeenth Century, were easily overtaken by their common spiritual intensity. Vincent must have been thinking of Francis de Sales when he wrote, "gentle persons seem to be

ltr. MDLX.

²⁶³"Je suis savoyard en toutes façons et de naissance et d'obligations." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCLXXXVIII.

²⁶⁴Cfr. *Saint Vincent de Paul, Correspondance...* V, p.406; VII, p.49; VIII, p.237 and X, pp.651; 658; 661. His solution to the polemics Francis faced in founding the Visitation was to make the parish their center, instead of a monastery.

²⁶⁵Vincent de Paul had a famous friendship with Louise de Marillac much like Francis de Sales' friendship with Jane.

²⁶⁶"En repassant dans mon esprit toutes les paroles du serviteur de Dieu, j'en éprouvai une telle admiration que j'étais porté le croire l'homme qui a imité le mieux la vie mortelle du fils de Dieu." Paris Hearing. the entire testimony of Vincent de Paul is reproduced in, A. Dodin, *François de Sales Vincent de Paul, les deux amis*. O.E.I.L., Paris, 1984, pp.99-120.

offering you their heart and to be asking for yours.”²⁶⁷ André Dodin in his work *François de Sales Vincent de Paul les deux amis*, shows how heavily influenced Vincent de Paul’s theology was by the Doctor of love.²⁶⁸ He adopted his principles of action and even his vocabulary.²⁶⁹ Throughout the entire span of his life’s works, one finds him citing “our blessed father,” as he would come to call Francis.²⁷⁰ Yet he remained somewhat more pessimistic about human nature.²⁷¹ It is hard to know if Francis was also influenced by Vincent de Paul. His friendship was certainly a consolation to him. His books were already written, his ideas mature. He was someone in whose presence Francis could rest, as he rested in God’s presence. One can trace the signs of Salesian spirituality in Vincent de Paul’s writing, and we can imagine that he too received from Francis the same consolation. Francis probably admired this rough and simple man who spoke plainly with the common sense country folk seem to so often possess. He was a man of action with the kind of heart that embraced the filthiest and most intimidating person it might encounter in the bowels of a prison ship or the streets of Paris. When two saints become friends it is hard to imagine a more profound communication or a stronger bond of friendship.

²⁶⁷“Les personnes douces semblent vous offrir leur coeur et vous demander le vôtre.” *Saint Vincent de Paul, Correspondance*,... XII, p.189.

²⁶⁸Cfr. A. Dodin, *François de Sales Vincent de Paul, les deux amis*. O.E.I.L., Paris, 1984, pp.15-80. The title of this book should really be: *The Influence of St. Francis de Sales on Vincent de Paul*, because it says little about their friendship per se, unless one would wish to argue that their communication is evident in the effects of their intimacy.

²⁶⁹As, for example, his letters to Louise de Marillac, "Ma chère fille" (I, p.39) "Mon coeur n'est point mon coeur, ains le vôtre en celui de Notre-Seigneur." *Saint Vincent de Paul, Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents, Tables*, textes établi par Pierre Coste, Paris, Gabalda, 1920-1925, 14 volumes. I, p.169.

²⁷⁰Cfr. *Saint Vincent de Paul, Correspondance*, ... XI, pp.151-153.

²⁷¹"Nous ne sommes que des vers de terre, que de mille mauvaises pensées." *Saint Vincent de Paul, Correspondance*,... XIII, p.36. This was part of the reaction against the humanists of the times, and probably a result of Protestant influence. Authors like de Bérulle, Senault, Vincent de Rouen underscored the misery of human nature that Port-Royal was incubating.

An Uncommon Way with Women

Women, Christianity and the Renaissance: "Men have a soul just as good as woman's" ²⁷²

It is often repeated that Francis de Sales was one of the first to propose a legitimate spirituality for persons in the world, for lay people.²⁷³ If that is true, the corner stone of that originality was his vision for women and their particular way to be and live Christianly. Saint-Beuve describes him as a "poet, with tender and melodious nature, the kind to whom it is proper to please the feminine sex."²⁷⁴ His stature as a spiritual master comes to light here more than anywhere. St. Ignatius of Loyola begged the Pope to disband the small group of women Jesuits he admitted in the beginning, saying that directing just three devotees gave him more trouble than the entire company.²⁷⁵ St. Francis de Sales excelled in directing women. He saw it as something seriously lacking in his age, and once remarked: "We must aid the feminine sex, which is slighted, since few want to contribute to help them live religiously."²⁷⁶ His contribution is only really apparent when

²⁷²"C'est l'ame qui aspire a la devotion que j'appelle *Philothée*, et les hommes ont une ame aussi bien que les femmes." *Oeuvres...IV*, p.12.

²⁷³J.-P. Camus writes, "Notre bienheureux Père a été le premier qui a rompu cette glace... tirant la dévotion, s'il faut ainsy dire, des déserts et des cloîtres pour la rendre maniable, traitable à l'usage de chacun... de dresser les gens du monde à une dévotion conforme à leur vie." J.-P. Camus, *Acheminement à la dévotion civile*, Rouen, 1630 p.113-114. Francis had to suffer the criticism and wrath of certain groups for that nouveauté. His *Introduction to the Devout Life* was burned in solemnity after an inquisition judgment. Cfr. Gournay, (la demoiselle de), *Ses avis ou les presens*, edited in 1634. Francis himself attributes high importance to the works of Louis de Granada, (*Oeuvres...XII*, p.189) who was condemned by Cano of the Spanish Inquisition for 1) pretending that contemplation and perfection is for everyone; 2) that perfection could be in every state of life without vows of poverty, chastity and obedience; and 3) because it smelled illuminist. Charles Borromeo esteemed Granada's work and was able to persuade his uncle the Pope to approve the thesis of Granada. Cfr. *Saint François de Sales, Oeuvres...préface*, pp.XLII-XLIII.

²⁷⁴"C'est le propre et l'effet de ces natures tendres et mélodieuses, de plaie singulièrement aux personnes du sexe". Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal* t.I p.271

²⁷⁵Cfr. L. Prunel, *La Renaissance catholique en France au XVIIème siecle*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1921. p.106-107.

²⁷⁶"He! plût à Dieu! Quoi qu'il en soit, il faut aider le sexe féminin, lequel on méprise, car peu veulent contribuer à les aider à vivre religieusement." Jean-

set against the background of the Renaissance and the way he was able to harmonize two ancient and conflicting conceptions of women, as demon temptress or as incarnated beauty and salvation of man.²⁷⁷ He gave them a worth uncommon for the Renaissance,²⁷⁸ arguing on the authority of the Apostles' collaboration and respect for women in the early Church, and by the Fathers.²⁷⁹ In one important text he cites St. Basil the Great, explaining both man and woman were created in the image of God. "Since this divine image is honored in one and the other sex, then equal is also in both the virtue that makes its force known by good works."²⁸⁰ He was astute enough to see that the more a woman is feminine, the more she is holy, harmonizing her natural gifts as mother as well as in society. His support of his contemporary, Marie le Jars de

François de Blonay, 1st Hearing, art.43. in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.201.

²⁷⁷Those trends can be traced to the 13th century, where Guillaume de Lorris' famous *The Novel of the Rose*, exalted woman. Jean de Meun wrote a second version in response and demolished the sentimentality of de Lorris, concluding that women were only good for the propagation of humanity. The debate went on through the centuries. In 1618, Ferville published *La méchanceté des femmes*, to which Bernier published a rebuke entitled: *Apologie contre le livre intitulé "Alphabet de la méchanceté des femmes", par laquelle l'on voit l'excellence de leurs vertus et perfections*. Paris, 1618. etc.

²⁷⁸Erasmus writes in his *In Praise of Folly*: "A woman is an impertinent creature, a foolish animal granted: but she has something that gives joy, that even charms and the foolishness of her habitual modesty is made to temper, to soften the sad gravity of the masculine character... A woman is always woman; that is crazy, no matter what mask she might wear." However in another work *Colloquia abbatissae et eurdissae*, Erasmus has a crass and ignorant abbot dialogue with a woman representing common sense who warns women will take over if he is not careful. His respect for abuses in the clergy was even less than that for women. See also E. Telle, *Erasmus de Rotterdam et le septième sacrement*, Librairie Dres, Geneva, 1954, for the important role woman played in the Reform and the changing views of Christian marriage, women and holiness in the 17th century.

²⁷⁹Cfr. XXV, p.294.

²⁸⁰Citing Gn 1:27, he writes : "Le femme donq, non moins que l'homme, a la faveur d'avoir esté faite a l'image de Dieu; honneur pareil et l'un et l'autre des sexes; leurs vertus sont esgales; a l'un et a l'autre est proposée une recompense pareille et, si'ilz peschent, une damnation semblable. Je ne voudrois pas que la femme die: je suis infirme et d'imbecille condition. Cette infirmité est de la chair, mais la vertu ferme et puissante a establi son siege en l'ame. Or puisque cette divine image est honoree en l'un et l'autre sexes, que pareille aussi soit en tous deux la vertu qui face paraistre sa force par les bonnes *Oeuvres*." [cites St. Basil hom.10 in Gn.] *Oeuvres*...XXV, pp.291-292.

Gournay, an intellectual, poet and one of the first champions of equality between men and women is an example of his rare respect for women in his age.²⁸¹ “A hen is a chicken,” he says later, “that is an animal without courage nor any generosity while it is not a mother, but once she becomes one she has the heart of a lion”²⁸² In effect, he believes a woman superior to man in her combat for chastity,²⁸³ her devotion,²⁸⁴ her submission²⁸⁵ and the tenderness of her love.²⁸⁶ On the other hand he found women more inclined to vanity,²⁸⁷ complaining,²⁸⁸ scruples,²⁸⁹ and insecurity.²⁹⁰ Francis’ idea suggests a complex interplay of equality and difference, where certain strengths have concomitant weaknesses in each and yet complement each other. Simply put, holiness has a resplendence in our sexuality as well as in our individual way of being. “All true lovers,” he will write, “are equal in that which concerns giving their heart to God, and with all their strength, but they are unequal in what they give, each diversly and in different ways.”²⁹¹

²⁸¹She taught herself Greek and Latin and at 22 went to Paris to study under Montaigne, who was so impressed with her that he dedicated his second book of *Essais* to her, calling her “l’une des meilleurs parties de mon propre être.” Her life was full of controversy and recriminations, yet many celebrities of the century came to her defence. Cfr. Th Schueller, *La Femme...* pp.219-231 for more. One cannot help but wonder if St. Francis de Sales was not well aware of this attitude and influenced by Montaigne in this regard, who he refers to in the *Controversies*. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* I, p.182 and p.186.

²⁸²“La poule est une poule, c’est a dire un animal sans courage ni generosité quelconque, tandis qu’elle n’est pas mere; mais quand elle l’est devenue elle a un coeur de lion, ...toujours elle va roulant sa veüe de toutes pars...il n’y a ennemi aux yeux duquel elle ne se jette pour la defense de sa chere couvée, pour laquelle elle a un souci continuel.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.216-217.

²⁸³Cfr. *Oeuvres...* VIII, p.368.

²⁸⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XVII, p.356.

²⁸⁵Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XII, p.50 and p.173.

²⁸⁶“L’amour des meres est tousjours plus tendre envers les enfans que celuy des peres, pour ce, a mon avis, qu’il leur couste plus.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCX.

²⁸⁷Cfr. *Oeuvres...* III, p.199; VIII, p.385; IX, p.256; X p.26 and p.68; XII, p.361; XX, p.194.

²⁸⁸Cfr. *Oeuvres...* X, p.90; XIII, p.75; XIX, p.222.

²⁸⁹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XII, p.287.

²⁹⁰Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XX, p.194; XVII, p.222. He also thought them inept for pronouncing Latin and long voyages! Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XIII, p.303 and XVII, p.242.

²⁹¹“Tous les vrais amans sont egaux en ce que tous donnent tout leur coeur a Dieu, et de toute leur force, mais ilz sont inegaux en ce qu’ilz le donnent tous diversement et avec des differentes façons.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.174-175.

One of the ways he saw womanhood fitting into a Christian life is in their attitude toward beauty. "What do you expect," he once wrote Jane, "girls should be a bit pretty."²⁹² He was probably very influenced by Madame Acarie, who chose him as her confessor during his first stay in Paris as a young man. She would entertain and wear makeup like other women of her standing, because it pleased her husband and was part of her vocation as a married woman. She was all the while one of the most influential mystics of her generation and entered the Carmelites shortly after her husband's death. Francis would later comment that it is one of a woman's virtues to radiate, provided it was not vain, for: "It is no longer an honor to be beautiful when one looks at oneself."²⁹³ But above all, a woman's beauty radiates by her goodness. "Beauty is without effect, useless and dead if clarity and splendor do not animate it and render it effective."²⁹⁴ Later he explains that exterior clarity is always the effect of an interior probity.²⁹⁵ It is what he calls "true grace" or "poise," which is "like the soul and the life of beauty."²⁹⁶ "Virtue," he explains, "is so beautiful, so gracious, so noble, so generous, so attractive, so powerful, it is she that renders man interiorly and even exteriorly beautiful."²⁹⁷ True beauty has its source, then, in the interior life of human goodness, which permeates a person's way of being, giving a comeliness even to their physical appearance.²⁹⁸ Nothing is more attractive than goodness, and this kind

²⁹²"Que voulez-vous? il faut bien que les filles soient un peu jolies." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLXI

²⁹³"Ce n'est plus honneur d'estre beau quand on s'en regarde." *Oeuvres...* III, p.143. Cfr. V, p.274. Tertullian and numerous contemporaries of Francis criticized women who perfumed and adorned themselves, his approval of these things in moderation was in direct opposition to those currents of austerity. Cfr. Th. Schueller, *La femme et le saint...* pp.71-90, for a detailed exposé on the debate and Francis de Sales' response.

²⁹⁴"La beauté est sans effect, inutile et morte si la clarté et splendeur ne l'avivent et luy donnent efficace." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.24.

²⁹⁵"La netteté extérieure représente toujours en quelque sorte l'honnesteté intérieure." *Oeuvres...* III, p.226.

²⁹⁶"La grace, c'est comme l'ame et la vie de la beauté... [La grace, c'est] outre la convenance des parties parfaites qui fait la beauté, adjouste la convenance des mouvemens, gestes et actions." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.24-25.

²⁹⁷"La vertu, est si belle, si gracieuse, si noble, si genereuse, si attrayante, si puissante, c'est elle qui rend l'homme interieurement et mesme exterieurement beau." *Oeuvres...* XXII, p.34.

²⁹⁸"Le principal ornement, parent et embellissement de la personne depend de l'honnesteté et bonne grace et bienséance de son maintien et mouvement." *Oeuvres...* XXIV, p.89. See also, IV, pp.23-25. For a

of goodness is always accompanied by happiness, which is itself a magnet.²⁹⁹ Vivacity, amiability, consolation, are all qualities in which he felt women excelled, but that womanly gift to radiate was never more enhanced than by the clarity of an interior goodness, which made her femininity all the more attractive.³⁰⁰

He was never in love with a woman in the way that inspires poets. At Paris and Padua he lived by his “extreme resolutions to be a perfect saint,”³⁰¹ which left him alone with his books and companions. Yet he had a burning passionate temperament, and his works are full of sexual images of lover and beloved.³⁰² It would be naive to think that a man so affectionate and devoted to people in such a vigorous way did not have the same needs every healthy male has for touch and the erotic love that rightly belongs to a man and woman committed to each other for life.³⁰³

development of Francis’ sources regarding the philosophy of beauty, one of the favorite themes of the Baroque Renaissance. See Th. Schueller, *La femme et le saint...* pp.55-70, and W. Marceau, *L’Optimisme...* pp.84-86.

²⁹⁹ Indeed the theme of love in Salesian teaching follows from this principle. “Le bien empoigne, saisit et lie le coeur par la complaisance, mays par l’amour, il le tire, conduit et amene a soy...l’amour donques a parler distinctement et precisement n’est autre chose que le mouvement, escoulement et avancement du coeur envers le bien.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.42-43.

³⁰⁰ Aristotle’s famous “beauty is the resplendence of a form” comes to mind in Francis’ exposé.

³⁰¹ Longuetterre, *La vie de très illustre Messire François de Sales*, Lyon, 1624.; p.36.

³⁰² Henri Lemaire, who collected over 30,000 images from the Doctor of Love’s works, shrinks from the sexual images of the *Canticle of Canticles*, saying he retained only a very small number because they are “far from our present taste”. (An example of a text he finds too libidinous: “Dieu, ‘nous fait tetter les sacrees (mammelles) de sa suavité.’”) *Oeuvres...* V, p.293. Cfr. *Les Images chez St. François de Sales* Paris, Nizet, 1962; p.29 and 57. He agrees such images are important and includes figures like breasts, and fertility, but omits from his work the caresses in marriage of the saints Francis speaks of in *Oeuvres...* III p.270.

³⁰³ Th. Schueller sketches the outlines of a Freudian analysis of Francis in the following way. His graphic images of a baby suckling at his mother’s breasts is motivated by a suppressed and frustrated nostalgia for the woman who nursed him, which has unconsciously become an obsession because of some traumatic experience in his infancy. He argues on the contrary that Francis is not at all obsessed but “a man of exceptional moral health capable of integrating his phantasms in a sexuality that is not afraid of its proper images and which exorcises itself by the very use of speech. The written tenderness is his way of reinvesting by sublimation his desire for his mother.” (!) *La Femme et le Saint, la femme et ses problèmes d’après saint François de Sales*, Editions

He was a person with a tremendous love for people; like Augustine, his sensitive, aesthetic nature was extroverted. He needed people, to engage in loving and being loved. His whole being heaved and surged toward love's absolute. Indeed it was probably one of the things about his nature that caused him the most suffering. Even when that love is turned toward God, its proper object, and thereby those He loves, the heart aches to be united with Him, and laments the afflictions of sin in such splendid creatures. Such a heart sighs, Oh! how beautiful. Oh, how sad! "There are no souls in the world," Francis once told Jane de Chantal, "who cherish more cordially, tenderly, more lovingly than I; for it pleased God to make my heart that way."³⁰⁴ We know how much Augustine struggled with his desire for the consolation of a mate. It tainted his theological outlook, leaving it sometimes overtly pessimistic. One who loves so strongly also has a strong need for love, for touch and for sharing intimacy that bears fruit in its offspring. Those normal human desires are enlarged when the heart is itself enlarged. He describes it as "a war we feel every day."³⁰⁵ In a sermon he laments how deplorable it is that two such great friends as the flesh and spirit be at war. "The flesh is my dear half, my sister, my dear companion, born with me, suckled with me and still she wages such a cruel war."³⁰⁶ His understanding of the body was much more optimistic than many of his contemporaries. Charity requires it, he argued, in as much as we need our body to accomplish good works, for it is part of our person and the resurrected body will participate in eternal

Ouvrières, Paris, 1970, p.17

³⁰⁴"Il n'y a point d'ames au monde, comme je pense, qui cherissent plus cordialement, tendrement et, pour le dire tout a la bonne foy, plus amoureuement que moy; car il a pleu a Dieu de faire mon coeur ainsy." *Oeuvres...* ltr.MDCCCLXVII.

³⁰⁵"Combien de fois tremblons nous de crainte entre les hazards ausquelz nostre volonté nous porte et nous fait demeurer? combien de fois haïssons nous les voluptés esuelles nostre appetit sensuel se plait, ayman les biens spirituelz esquelz il se desplait? En cela consiste la guerre que nous sentons tous les jours entre l'esprit et la chair." *Oeuvres...* IV p.35-37.

³⁰⁶"Et vrayment, c'est pitié que ceste guerre; car estant entre de si grans amis comme l'esprit et la chair, y a il rien de plus deplorable... Que feray je? dict l'ame combattante. Ceste chair est ma chere moitié, c'est ma soeur, c'est ma chere compagne, nee avec moy, nourrie avec moy, et toutefois elle me faict une si cruelle guerre. Comme ma seur, je la dois suivre; comme adversaire, je la dois fuir. Helas, mon Dieu, si je la caresse, elle me tue; si je la tourmente, je me sens de l'affliction. Si je ne l'ayme, je suis mal; si je l'ayme, c'est pis." *Oeuvres...* sermon VII, p.159-160.

happiness with us. "Indeed," he continues, "the Christian must love his body as a living image of the body of the incarnate Savior."³⁰⁷ Thus, in spite of its warring and the tendencies to bring him away from purity, he did not wholly reject his humanity, his flesh and passions, for they too have a proper place. Francis was keenly tempted to accept the advances of different young women during the loneliness of his Chablais mission.³⁰⁸ He resolved to always have another ecclesiastic with him as a witness for every private meeting he held with women. He confessed to Jane de Chantal that "he was often fiercely tempted by various persons."³⁰⁹

One of the things Francis de Sales was criticized for during his life was his friendships with women.³¹⁰ When one of his contemporaries asked what it was he said to them to make so many women run after him to confess their sins and ask his advice, he is said to have replied that he said nothing at all, but only listened to them, and that it is no small thing to listen. Talking about their innermost lives could easily, and probably did, cause some to fall in love with him. A tender intimacy is the natural place for love, and we can well imagine the spontaneous tendencies of a person who has no one else who understands them so deeply. The single most ravaging effect of modern "free" sex is that it robs people of friendship and intimacy because they can never get close without falling into the snares of intimate relations without love. The more they thirst, the less they are able to drink,

³⁰⁷"La charité nous oblige d'aymer nos cors convenablement, en tant qu'ilz sont requis aux bonnes *Oeuvres*, qu'ilz sont une partie de nostre personne et qu'ilz seront participans de la felicité eternelle. Certes, le Chresiten doit aymer son cors comme une image vivante de celuy du Sauveur incarné, comme issu de mesme tige avec iceluy." *Oeuvres...* XIII, p.192.

³⁰⁸As for example Mlle René de la Rive de Genève, Cfr. L.-E. Piccard, *La mission de Saint François de Sales en Chablais*, Librairie, P. Pellissier, Thonon-les-Bains, 1932; p.296. See also *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLXI, where he admits that in the Chablais he was frequently tempted, and thanks God that he did not suffer a lapse like the Jesuit Boucard.

³⁰⁹In her testimony at the beatification hearing Jane says: "[Sa chastité] n'a pas été une vertu sans épreuve; car, comme plusieurs assurent, il a été souvent tenté, et rudement, par diverses personnes." Cfr. *L'Ame de Saint François de Sales, révélée par Ste. Jeanne-Françoise de Chantal*, J. Abry, Annecy, 1922; p.88. Francis believed to recount the lives of saints hiding their faults does a great disservice to all. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* X, p.345-346.

³¹⁰Cfr. O. de la Brosse et H. Caffarel, Introductions to: *Saint François de Sales les femmes mariées*. choix et présentation des textes par M. Georges-Thomas. Cerf, Paris, 1967, for a more expanded treatment of the Doctor of Love's guidelines for women in their marriages and affairs.

because as their loneliness increases they are less and less able to respect others. The fear of not being loved becomes more important than to love.³¹¹ Their love becomes controlling and voluptuous, rapaciously trying to sate its craving. It is what the Doctor of love calls an “animal love” which “by the union that it makes with the thing loved destroys it in finishing it, leaving it greatly disgusted and sad.”³¹²

He worked tenaciously to make his love pure and to smelt every carnal impulse from his mind. He had to, otherwise he would never have been able to have affected so many people. Ironically, the more people he had such an understanding with, the more he was able to retain an objectivity that enabled him to be all the more generous and unselfish. The need factor was eclipsed by the appreciation of these men and women as children of God, and the desire to comfort them as only one so rich in love is capable. That virtue or strength was the single most important factor rendering his friendships true and noble.

Sensuality had a proper, even exemplary place in human perfection in his teaching.³¹³ “Perfection,” Francis explains, “does not consist in the absence but in the ordering of the passions.”³¹⁴ This is because in Classic Christian teaching, “The sensitive powers are or should be the servants of the mind.”³¹⁵ But that acceptance was guarded, because the

³¹¹Francis talks about this insecurity as the basis of jealousy, “En la jalousie humaine nous craignons que la chose aymee ne soit possedee par quelqu’autre; mais le zele que nous avons envers Dieu fait que, au contraire, nous redoutons sur toutes choses que nous ne soyons pas asses entierement possedés par iceluy.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.430.

³¹²“L’amour animal par l’union qu’il fait a la chose aymée la détruit en la terminant, demeure grandement desgousté de telle union... et triste.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.61.

³¹³Génébrand, Archbishop of Aix, was teaching the same in Paris and Francis admits his course on the *Canticle of Canticles* (where he drew from sources like Origen and the Talmud) had an important influence on him. Cfr. Longuetterre, *La vie de très illustre Messire François de Sales*, Lyon, 1624, p.437. St. Bernard had already used its sensual images to mirror the love of God several centuries before.

³¹⁴“Ce n’est donques pas dans l’absence mais dans le réglement des passions que consiste la perfection; les passions sont au coeur ce que les cordes sont a une harpe: il faut qu’elles soient ajustées affin que nous puissions dire: Je vous louerai sur la harpe.” *Oeuvres...* Sermons VIII, p.355. See too the chapters of the *Traité*, IV, pp.28-34, where Francis develops the idea.

³¹⁵“Cordial” or “intellectual” love is the love of friendship, Cfr. *Oeuvres...* III, p.195-6 for example, as opposed to “cardinal” or “physical” love. “L’amour intellectuel et cordial est ou doit estre le maistre de nostre ame. Les puissances de la partie sensitive sont ou doivent estre les servantes de l’esprit.” *Oeuvres...*

great force of passionate sensuality could carry one away from an honest and true love, weakening it in the process. "Love is a delicate flame,"³¹⁶ not a raging storm, he says, perhaps best summarizing his theory of the proper place of passion. He criticizes those of his generation who contend that brutal love of passion is stronger because of its violence, or more solid because of its harshness, or bigger because it is more ferocious. It may be often born of love or accompany it, but it is neither love nor part of it, but are its "excrements and superfluities."³¹⁷ Excrements! well, he does think passion has a place in human love, which he develops in detail in the *Traité*.³¹⁸ Like a rainbow, "sacred love touches our passions and removes their terrestrial intent, giving them a celestial one."³¹⁹ Its place must always follow a noble spiritual love, which is difficult enough to maintain against the many ways that human love can go wrong. "In the measure that the soul converts itself to such crude and sensual unions, she diverts herself from the delicate, intellectual and cordial union," which he contends is

IV, p.55-59. All of which is of course, classic Christian doctrine on the passions. Cfr. Francis' explanation of the Christian tradition of right love as the "service of the passions to justice and virtue". *Oeuvres... IV*, p.33.

³¹⁶"L'Amour est comme le feu, duquel plus la matiere est delicate, aussi les flammes en sont plus claires et belles, ... le plus le sujet de l'amour est relevé et spirituel, plus ses actions sont vives, subsistantes et permanentes." *Oeuvres... IV*, p.61.

³¹⁷"La sensibilité naist bien souvent parmi l'amour et autour de l'amour mais, neanmoins, n'est ni l'amour ni partie de l'amour, ains sont des excremens et superfluytés d'iceluy." *Oeuvres... IV*, p.55. They risk distracting one from true and virtuous love, and dissipating it. In this context he speaks of two ecstasies: the angelic and the bestial. Cfr. *Oeuvres... IV*, p.57.

³¹⁸"L'Amour se peut bien treuver es unions des puissances sensuelles meslees avec les unions des puissances intellectuelles, mais non jamais si excellemment comme il fait lhors que les seulz espritz et courages, separees de toutes affections corporelles, jointz ensemble, font l'amour pur et spirituel." *Oeuvres... IV*, p.60. This introduces the whole spirituality of "pure love", which would become a terrible polemic in the French church giving rise to Port Royal and Jansenism, whose claims such texts of Francis de Sales support their cause are spurious. See too Sermon LII, *Oeuvres... X*, pp.145-163.

³¹⁹"Ainsy donq le divin amour supplante et assujettit les affections et passions, les destournant de la fin a laquelle l'amour propre les veut porter et les contournant a sa pretention spirituelle. Et comme l'arc-en-ciel touchant l'aspalatus lui oste son odeur et lui en donne une plus excellente, aussi l'amour sacré touchant nos passions leur oste leur fin terrestre et leur en donne une celeste." *Oeuvres... IV*, pp.312-313.

“more vivacious, more energetic and more solid.”³²⁰ In the case of marriage, he explains that the key is that one not be devoted to sensuality when it is used properly, being for “The reciprocal and legitimate satisfaction of the participants of a holy marriage,” open to having children.³²¹ Love is a delicate flame because it is constant and resolute, it burns with passion, but it is stronger, more consistent and stable, when it is united to right reason.³²² Therefore, as Francis summarizes in one of his sermons, “It is not in the absence but in the rectification of the passions that our perfection consists; the passions are to the heart what the strings are to a harp.”³²³

In his writings he often uses the image of lover and beloved, as well as the child at his mother’s breast. Both these images of women, as mother and as beloved enjoyed a natural suitable role in their particular perfection. In many places, especially in the *Traité*, he uses the image of a suckling child to illustrate the sensual pleasure of receiving God’s love. “If you pay attention to little children united and joined to the teats of their mothers, you will see that from time to time they embrace

³²⁰“A mesure que l’ame se convertit a telles unions grossieres et sensibles, elle se divertit de l’union delicate, intellectuelle et cordiale...l’amour se peut bien trouver es unions des puissances sensuelles meslees avec les unions des puissances intellectuelles, mais non jamais si excellemment comme il fait lhors que les seulz espriz et courages, separés de toutes affections corporelles, jointz ensemble, font l’amour pur et spirituel; car l’odeur des affections ainsy meslees, est non seulement plus suave et meilleure, mays plus vive, plus active et plus solide.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.59-60. And again: “Ne saurait-on mieux ruiner l’amour que de l’abaisser aux unions viles et terrestres.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.61.

³²¹“La reciproque et legitime satisfaction des parties au saint mariage...toute de mesme comme si c’estoit avec esperance de la production des enfans encore que pour quelque occasion on n’eust pas telle esperance” *Oeuvres...* III, p.274-275. This was by the way one of the rare voices giving such legitimacy to sexual passion of his generation.

³²²This is not of course something new, Francis is only repeating in his own language the classic Christian teaching on virtue and right love. He shows this by citing St. Gregory in the same passage: “Il y a cette difference,” comme dit saint Gregoire, “entre les playsirs spirituelz et les corporelz: que les corporelz donnent du desir avant qu’on les ayt, et du desgoust quand on les a; mais les spirituelz, au contraire, donnent du desgoust avant qu’on les ayt, et du playlsir quand on les a.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.61.

³²³“Ce n’est donques pas dans l’absence mais dans le reglement des passions que consiste la perfection; les passions sont au coeur ce que les cordes sont a une harpe: il faut qu’elles soient adjustees affin que nous puissions dire: Je vous loueray sur la harpe.” *Oeuvres...*(Sermons) VIII, p.355.

and squeeze by the small rushes of pleasure nursing gives them.”³²⁴ He defends such images because of their purity. In fact, pleasure is an integral part of true human happiness, even in the most spiritual activities. The “sweet emotion of heart” one experiences when one thinks of God is the natural pleasure he argues from to show the human need for God.³²⁵ It all goes against the grain of a very ridged taboo current of Jansenism in his contemporary Church, and fits into his global vision of exceptional moral health and a sexuality that is neither embarrassed nor polluted by a mystical and natural analogy.

Women and Salesian spirituality

He is one of the great advocates of women in the history of the Church.³²⁶ He founded the first congregation exclusively for women, and he tells us his two most famous works: the *Traité* and *The Introduction to the Devout Life*, were inspired by women. In 1605, while preaching at La Roche-sur-Foron, he met a “holy village woman” named Pernette Boutey, a widow whose love of God was so evident it moved him. In both her home and in her work at the market she lived harmoniously. She was a grand ally to the poor and sometimes spent two hours in prayer per day.³²⁷ He thought she was a saint and asked her to pray for him. They became friends immediately, and later when he heard of her death he had to wipe the tears from his eyes several times

³²⁴“Voyés donq ce beau petit enfant auquel sa mere assise presente son sein: il se jette de force entre les bras d’icelle, ramassant et pliant tout son petit cors dans ce giron sur cette poitrine amiable et voyés reciproquement sa mere, comme, le recevant, elle le serre et par maniere de dire le colle a son sein et le baysant joint sa bouche a la sienne... Et si vous prenes garde aux petitz enfans unis et jointz aux tetins de leurs meres, vous verres que, de tems en tems, ilz se pressent et serrent par des petitz eslans que le plaisir de tetter leur donne; ainsy, en l’orayson, le coeur uni a son Dieu.” *Oeuvres...* V, pp.6-8.

³²⁵“Si tost que l’homme pense un peu attentivement a la Divinité, il sent une certaine douce emotion de coeur qui tesmoigne que Dieu est Dieu du coeur humain; et jamais nostre entendement n’a tant de plaisir.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.74. See too, Papeix, M.-C., “Premières recherches sur les notions de plaisir et de bonheur chez François de Sales,” in *L’Univers salesien*. .. pp.223-239.

³²⁶The first lines of his preface to Rules for the Visitation, Francis writes, “Quiconque a tant soit peu de connoissance de la discipline de l’Eglise ne peut ignorer que des son commencement il y eut tres grande quantité de filles et femmes consacrees au service de Dieu par le voeu de la sainte continence... En somme tout l’Antiquité rend temoignage a cette verité”. *Oeuvres...* XXV, p.3.

³²⁷Cfr. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales, Sage...* p.153-154.

to the amazement of those with him.³²⁸ Her life was an inspiration, causing him to reflect on her example. “There is something—I don’t know what—good in this little tale of a married woman who was, thank God, one of my great friends, and she often recommended me to God.”³²⁹ He later divulged to Jane that she was one of his inspirations for the *Traité*.³³⁰

He created an entirely new genre of spiritual literature with his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, which was a reworking of numerous letters of spiritual counsel sent mainly to his cousin’s wife, Louise de Chastel, Dame de Charmoisy.³³¹ They were original not only in their appreciation of men and women’s particular struggles in the interior life, but also in a spirituality of daily living.³³² One sign of the work’s

³²⁸ *Oeuvres...* XIII, p.200, n.1.

³²⁹ “Il y a je ne sçai quoy de bon en cette petite histoire d’une femme mariee, et qui estoit, de sa grace, de mes grandes amies et m’avoit souvent recommandé a Dieu.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLVIII. See also ltr. CCCLX.

³³⁰ “Je n’ay encor sceu revoir la Vie de nostre bonne vilageoise pour la mettre au net; mais affin que vous sachiez tout ce que je fay, quand je puis avoir quelque quart d’heur de relay, j’ecris une vie admirable d’une sainte delaquelle vous n’aves encor point oüy parler (i.e. la sainte Charité ou la *Traité de l’Amour de Dieu*), et...je pourray y joindre celle de nostre vilageoise en quelque petit coin; car elle la sera deux fois, pour moins, aussi grande que la grande Vie de la Mere Therese.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXXXV. Francis actually began the *Traité* before *The Devout Life*.

³³¹ Francis was not, of course, the first to write spiritual letters to women, he was familiar with those from both Jerome and Augustine. He recommends Jerome to Jane and comments he will “furnish you with all the friends you need” (especially the letters to Fara and Sabina) and that he has “nothing to add”. Jerome’s influence is second only to Augustine’s in Francis’ many letters of spiritual direction. Cfr V. Mellinghoff-Bourgerie, “L’influence de saint Jérôme et saint Jean d’Avila sur François de Sales épistolier” in *L’Unidivers salésien...* pp.13-35.

³³² In fact there was already a strong current of spiritual literature for common people. A century earlier, Gerson had inclined spirituality in this sense with his *ABC’s of Simple Folk*, and the *Doctrinal for Simple People*. Charles BorromeoXE “Borromeo, St. Charles” , Philip Neri, Laurent Scupoli, and Louis de Granada are contributors. It was essentially pastoral, reconciling the condition of the active life of people in the world with the exigencies of Christian perfection. But none of these approached the cordial almost confidential warmth and pragmatism of the *Introduction*, which synthesized Scripture, the Rhino-Flanders, Humanism, and devotio moderna. In the words of A. Ravier, “C’est en fait à une reprise totale, fondamentale de la vie spirituelle que nous assistons. La dévotion salésienne est à la fois la chose la plus commune et la plus originale.” Cfr. Ravier’s introduction to the

originality is the “scornful censure” it received in some circles shortly after appearing. To some it was blasphemy to contend that dancing and such past times were morally indifferent.³³³ Centuries later, Vatican II would develop this spirituality of daily living into what is known today as “The universal call to holiness.” There were more than 40 editions during his lifetime and the work made him famous throughout Europe among both Protestants and Catholics.³³⁴ He depicted what was, in effect, the proto-type of the philosophy of the *honnête homme* of the Seventeenth century.³³⁵ It has had a lasting influence through nearly four centuries to our day.³³⁶ Its immediate adoption by the Church and its profit to such a wide range of people are signs of its unique value. He was able to treat a subject already treated hundreds of times in a refreshingly new way. His emphasis on interior mortification, his idea of virtues never heard of before, like gentle kindness (*douceur*), good conversation, love of our bodies, and that we must also practice that gentle kindness on ourselves, even loving our imperfections, are examples of that new way of seeing old things. These inspirations and the chapters on desires, the just and reasonable spirit, on conversations, past times, friendships, and that one should love his abjection, are all couched within one dominant idea: the theme of prayer in all. As Dom Mackey puts it, by an “interior retreat” the active life is “animated, fertilized and supernaturalized” by the contemplative life. It means “That in the midst of the exterior affairs and occupations, the eye of the

Introduction to the Devout Life in Saint François de Sales, Oeuvres... pp.2-15. See too Cfr. M. Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence*, (1ed. 1980) Albin Michel, Paris 1994, pp.135-161.

³³³Francis recounts these troubles in his preface to the *Traité*.

³³⁴Albert de Genève recounts that copies circulated in England, Germany, Flanders and Spain, but also “dans le corps de garde des soldats, dans le barreau des avocats, dans les tribunaux des juges, dans les bureau des finances, dans les boutiques des marchands et dans les cabanes des bergers.” 2nd Hearing, art. 30; in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp..260-261.

³³⁵Cfr. M. Magendie, *La politesse mondaine et les théories de l'honnêteté en France au XVIIe siècle, de 1600 à 1660*. Paris, 1926.

³³⁶Jean Calvet, (“La Littérature Religieuse. de François de Sales à Fénelon” in *Histoire de la Littérature Française*, éd. de Gigord, Paris, 1938, considered Francis de Sales as a kind of synthesis of his social and political context. He calls his spirit of devout Humanism “religious classicism,” where the dawn of reason and profane life, the private religion of conscience and the scrupulous austerity of what would later become Jansenism were institutionalised in the Catholic Church as a way to unity in reaction to the conflict and chaos in Europe since Luther initiated the Reformation.

soul be constantly fixed on God; that ordinary recreations not trouble a kind of mental solitude which should constitute its habitual state.”³³⁷

For the Doctor of love, true contemplation does not require a monastery and its rule. Just as a person in love thinks always of his beloved and is full of affection, so too the lover of God “breathes and aspires” for Him, and this to such a point that “everything in the world speaks to them of their love; everything provokes good thoughts, from which strength, surges and aspirations in God are born.”³³⁸ Without this “spiritual retreat,” one cannot live the contemplative life, and even the active life’s “work becomes difficulty and rest becomes idleness.”³³⁹ As Francis summarizes in a letter to the first lady of Burgundy, Mme Brûlart, who was a Philothea bound to remain in the active life in virtue of her husband’s responsibilities, “Mix gently the duty of Martha with that of Mary.”³⁴⁰ If one is always able to fix his regard upon eternity and walk in the presence of God, his beloved, it matters little what activity or state in life they choose.³⁴¹

³³⁷“C’est toujours par la vie contemplative que doit être animée, fécondée, surnaturalisée la vie active. Ainsi faut-il, qu’au milieu des affaires et occupations extérieurs, l’oeil de l’âme soit constamment fixé sur Dieu (Cfr. par ex. III, pp.171 & 255); que les récréations ordinaires ne troublent point une sorte de solitude mentale qui doit constituer son élément habituel (Cfr. par ex. III, p.224). Dom Mackey, preface in *Oeuvres...* III, pp.xl-xli.

³³⁸“Toutes choses les invitent, et n’y a creature qui ne leur annonce la louange de leur Bienaimé; et, comme dit saint Augustin apres saint Antoine, [In. Ps. 26] tout ce qui est au monde leur parle d’un langage meut mais fort intelligible en faveur de leur amour; toutes choses les provoquent a des bonnes pensees, desquelles par apres naissent force saillies et aspirations en Dieu.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.96.

³³⁹“Or, en cet exercice de la retrait spirituelle et des oraysons jaculatoires gist la grande oeuvre de la devotion: il peut suppleer au defaut de toutes les autres oraysons, mais le manquement d’iceluy ne peut presque point estre réparé par aucun autre moyen. Sans iceluy, on ne peut pas bien faire la vie contemplative, et ne sçaurait-on que mal faire la vie active; sans iceluy, le repos n’est qu’oysiveté, et le travail, qu’embarrasement.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.100.

³⁴⁰“Mesles doucement l’office de Marthe a celuy de Marie” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIII. This was written five years before the *Introduction à la vie dévote*.

³⁴¹In the following century this will degenerate into an attitude of complete indifference, even to evil, which will be known as the error of Quietism. Francis de Sales is sometimes blamed for Quietism, but its interpretation of “refuse nothing, ask for nothing” does not take into account his many warnings of the perils of sin, and sensual friendships for example, where he is clearly saying one must refuse evil or even to flirt with ambiguous people.

The term “devotion” already existed, but he gave it a new meaning, and this best characterizes the originality of this “poor little book.” It shapes the love of God into a kind of joyful fervor with a childlike freedom of mind. “Charity and devotion,” Francis himself explains, “are no more different from one another than the flame is from the fire, in as much as charity being a spiritual fire, when it is strongly inflamed, is called devotion. Devotion adds nothing to the fire of charity, if not the flame that renders charity prompt, active and diligent, not only in observing God’s commandments, but in executing celestial inspirations and counsels.”³⁴² He then goes farther, asserting against popular belief, that one needn’t be in a monastery apart from the world to attain this perfection of charity. It is flexible and can be adapted to every state and situation of life. It is not spoiled by the state of life, but superior; it “decorates and embellishes it.” Nor, he adds, does devotion spoil a legitimate ‘secular’ vocation; it rather improves it. This affirmation of a holiness for the layman equal to the monk may seem obvious to any reader acquainted with spirituality today, but at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century it was extremely audacious.³⁴³ He defended a rigorous interior spirit of chastity, poverty and obedience equal to the religious.³⁴⁴ Later, in the third part of *The Devout Life*, this original perspective of holiness in the world will have weighty consequences for friendship. Friendship will not merely be an accoutrement to a life of excellence, savoring the virtue and grace one enjoys in another. It will have a crucial importance for those making their way in the world along “rugged and slippery paths”. With a humble and childlike simplicity he made the love of God a kind of practical morality that adapted to everyone ‘as they are, and befitting their state in life’.³⁴⁵ It

³⁴²“En fin, la Charité et la devotion ne sont non plus differentes l’une de l’autre que la flamme l’est du feu, d’autant que la charité estant un feu spirituel, quand elle est fort enflammee elle s’appelle devotion: si que la devotion n’adjoute rien au feu de la charité, sinon la flamme qui rend la charité prompte, active et diligente, non seulement a l’observation des commandemens de Dieu, mais a l’exercice des conseilz et inspirations celestes.” *Oeuvres... III*, p.16.

³⁴³Fr. Ravier concurs, Cfr. *Saint François de Sales. Oeuvres... p.37 n.3.*

³⁴⁴Cfr. Chapters xi and xvii of the third part of *The Devout Life*.

³⁴⁵One of the most succinct texts explaining this spirituality of the state of life is in a letter to Madame Brûlart: “Dieu veut que vous le servies ainsy comme vous estes, et par les exercices convenables a cet estat et par les actions qui en dependent; et en suite de cette persuasion, il faut que vous vous rendies tendrement amoureuse de vostre estat et des exercices d’iceluy pour l’amour de Celuy qui le veut ainsy.” He goes on to tell her this is absolutely essential and

had at one and the same time a refreshing patience with ourselves and a rigorous interior unselfishness. Practice your virtue, he would say, “not fastidiously, but frankly, naively, with freedom and good faith, *grosso modo*.”³⁴⁶ A violent diligence ruins the heart, he believed, and is only another face of pride. He preferred a hidden heroism, a resolute consistency in what he termed a “gentle diligence,” balanced by complete confidence in God’s care.³⁴⁷ ‘Love is a gentle flame’ that burns constant and firm without pretensions.

This interior retreat allowed him to reconcile entertainment like games, theater, balls and banquets, which were generally deemed not for those serious about holiness. As long as they were not regarded as an end in themselves, but as a kind of condescending to the common practices of good company, one could freely do all of them. If one’s heart was gathered in the love of God and all its desires, then no worldly obligation could conflict with Christian life. He warns they can be dangerous, “cooling charity and awakening in the soul a thousand kinds of bad affections; which is why they should be employed with caution.”³⁴⁸ He suggests considering the suffering in hospitals, the streets, and one’s own eventual moaning before death while others dance, to keep one’s heart from being swept away by them all. His vision of perfection was deliberately inconspicuous. It melded into the circumstances of its legitimate state in life and yet remained interiorly impregnable. Saint-Beuve, one of the finest ever to apprehend the spirit of St. Francis de Sales, resumes best the essence of his expansive equilibrium: “I don’t admire at all the excess of a virtue, if I don’t see the excess of the contrary virtue at the same time. One doesn’t show grandeur by reaching an extreme, but indeed in touching both at once

all else is selfishness! *Oeuvres...* ltr.. CDLXII.

³⁴⁶“Il ne faut point trop pointiller en l’exercice des vertus; mais il y faut aller rondement, franchement, naïvement, à la vieille française, avec liberté, à la bonne foi, *grosso modo*.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXVIII.

³⁴⁷“Ne vous confiés pas de pouvoir reuscir en vos affaires par vostre industrie, ains seulement par l’assistance de Dieu; et partant, reposez vous en son soin, croyant qu’il fera ce qui sera le mieux pour vous, porvue que, de vostre costé, vous usies d’une douce diligence. Je dis douce dilignece, parce que les diligences violentes gastent le coeur et les affaires, et ne sont pas diligences, mais empressemens et troubles.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLV.

³⁴⁸“O Philothee, ces impertinentes recreations sont ordinairement dangereuses: elles dissipent l’esprit de devotion, allanguissent les forces, refroidissent la charité et reseillent en l’ame mille sortes de mauvaies affections; c’est pourquoy il en faut user avec une grande prudence.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.251.

and filling all between the two.”³⁴⁹ Even though Francis himself never uses the term “*between the two*”, it crystallizes his strength and his genius --- a firm gentleness. In him one finds qualities that are normally mutually exclusive. “The summit of virtue,” Francis tells us, is “to correct immoderation moderately.”³⁵⁰ He thinks it a sign of perfection almost impossible to attain. To be at the same time rigorous and childlike with freedom of mind, to be gentle and accepting, yet constantly at war, to never relent in a complete application to perfection and yet to live virtue ‘*grosso modo*’, to live in the world as a hermit; these are some of the faces of Salesian spirituality’s ingenuity. Sainte-Beuve describes him, “This soul was not a dove of gentleness, no, it was an eagle of gentleness.”³⁵¹ André Ravier comments that it isn’t his “*between the two*” that we should be speaking about, but his profound existential inspiration rooted in a human judgment that permitted a natural charity—a symbiosis between mystical and human love.³⁵² Francis himself calls the peaceful, gentle and even tempered spirit, “Which greets pleasantly at whatever hour or time it might be,” the Spirit of God.³⁵³

The most fascinating thing about the *Mona Lisa* is her smile---it is so subtle it disappears. Francis de Sales’ originality, his concept of devotion is equally subtle. It makes it hard to draw solid lines of

³⁴⁹ The text is a citation from Pascal’s *Pensées*. “Je n’admire point l’excès d’une vertu... si je ne vois en même temps l’excès de la vertu opposé, comme en Epaminodas qui avait l’extrême valeur et l’extrême bénignité... On ne montre pas sa grandeur pour être à une extrémité, mais bien en touchant les deux à la fois et remplissant tout l’entre-deux.” Sainte-Beuve, *Port Royal*, t.1, p.286.

³⁵⁰“Or voicy le haut point de la vertu: de corriger l’immoderation modérément. Il est presque impossible d’atteindre a ce signe de perfection.” *Oeuvres... ltr. DCCXXII*.

³⁵¹“Cette âme n’était pas une *Colombe* de douceur; non, c’était une *Aigle* de douceur qui s’envolait et vous emportait avec elle. Et puis, tout à côté de cet essor violent dans le calme azur.” Sainte-Beuve *Port Royal... t.1* p.287.

³⁵²“Ce n’est pas d’entre-deux ou d’alliance qu’il faut parler. C’est d’inspiration profonde, existentielle, de son ‘judgement humain’ par ‘sa charité’ ou encore de insertion réciproque, de symbiose, employons le mot salésien, d’inhésion. Ravier attributes this quality to his crisis at the end of 1591. *Saint François de Sales, Oeuvres... préface*, p.xxxvi.

³⁵³“C’est une inestimable perfection que d’avoir une humeur douce, esgale et qui face bon rencontre a quelqu’heure et a quelque temps que ce soit. L’esprit de paix et de tranquillité, suavité et d’egalité, c’est l’esprit de Dieu et d’edification que je vous souhaite de tout mon coeur, et qu’il demeure a jamais avec vous.” *Oeuvres... XXVI*, p.355.

comparison. After all, he himself says his work contains nothing new. The *Introduction* is above all practical, and that is because Francis did not set out to write a treatise, but was simply responding to questions of people, like Madame de Charmoisy, living “in the hurry of the world.”³⁵⁴ History would have forgotten the good wife of his cousin, the courtesan of the Duke of Nemours if it hadn’t been for this little book. Let’s look behind its pages into his relationship with the woman as an example of friendship with a married woman and courtesan.

*Madame de Charmoisy “All yours, without conditions or reservations”*³⁵⁵

In 1600 one of his cousins, Claude de Vidomme, Seigneur de Charmoisy, wed Louise de Chastel, a lady and courtesan of the duchess de Guise. She was fourteen, pretty, intelligent and loved the life of the court. He brought her from Paris to the seclusion of his properties in Savoy, which probably was a stark contrast for the young woman. The bridegroom was soon after appointed Grand Horsemaster of the Genevans, making him in charge of all concerning the forests and hunting for the realm. He was about the same age as Francis de Sales, and had been friends with Favre and Francis since before 1591.³⁵⁶ The Duke of Nemours often called him back to Paris, obliging him to leave her alone, which caused her friends to worry she would succumb to melancholia in so much solitude.³⁵⁷ It seems that during Francis’ stay in Paris in 1602, both Favre and Francis saw her daily.³⁵⁸ Her home may have even been a gathering place for them. The Bishop of Geneva and the young Norman bride had the normal relationship of cousins until 1607 when she was touched by one of his Lenten sermons in Annecy. He writes Jane de Chantal, “I just found in our sacred nets a fish I have desired for four years. I recommend her to your prayers. It is a lady, but

³⁵⁴He writes des Hayes, about the revised edition: “J’ay adjousté beaucoup de petites chosettes, selon les desirs que plusieurs dignes juges m’ont tesmoigné d’en avoir, et tous-jours regardant les gens qui vivent en la presse du monde.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXLII.

³⁵⁵“Tout vostre, sans condition ni reserve.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDLXXXV. To Mme de Charmoisy.

³⁵⁶Cfr. J. Vuÿ, *La Philothée de Saint François de Sales, vie de Madame de Charmoisy*, Paris, Bruxelles et Genève. Victor Palmé 1878, 2 vols, pp.19 &49.

³⁵⁷Cfr. J. Vuÿ, *La Philothée...* p.35. See also P. Arcollière, “Note sur la Philothée de saint François de Sales et son fils,” *Sav. litter.* III-IV, (1907-1908), pp.190-196.

³⁵⁸J. Vuÿ *La Philothée...* p.82.

all golden and infinitely fit to serve her Saviour.”³⁵⁹ Francis called upon his friend, Jean Fourier, to help in her spiritual direction once they agreed to correspond. He was a Jesuit and rector of the secondary school at Chambéry at the time,³⁶⁰ which is where she normally resided. Sending his counsels by letter was nothing new, but since Lady de Charmoisy was a novice, he had to treat things in more detail and from the beginning. After some time, she found herself in possession of a veritable treasure of spiritual insights and counsels, which after the insistence of Fr. Fourier and others, Francis agreed to “enlarge” and have published as the *Introduction to The Devout Life*.³⁶¹ It appeared in December of 1608.

Very much like Jeanne de Chantal, Madame de Charmoisy was practical and organized. She was someone who was known to be able to keep a secret and was equally discrete in her decorum.³⁶² He confessed privately to her once that he had a unique affection for her, which he told her he believed came from God, which “only tends to God and for God.”³⁶³ She had a fragile constitution but was a person of

³⁵⁹“Je viens de treuver dans nos sacrés filetz un poisson que j’avois désiré, il y a quatre ans, ... C’est une dame, mais toute d’or, et infiniment propre a servir son Sauveur; que si elle continue, elle le fera avec fruit.” *Oeuvres...* CCCXCI. J. Vuÿ contends that she was moved by a sermon in 1604, just before Francis left for Dijon, but hesitated for three years before finally putting herself under the Bishop of Geneva’s guidance. J. Vuÿ, *La Philothee* ... p.83. Dom Mackey contends it wasn’t until 1607 that she was moved for the first time. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* III, xii-xiii.

³⁶⁰Fr. Fourier was the Jesuit superior in Thonon and Francis’ own spiritual director. After a grave illness in 1608 he writes Francis giving us a glimpse of their friendship: “Et s’il est vray qu’au besoin on fait preuve asseuree de l’amitié, je puis dire qu’a cette occasion je suis grandement obligé... en premiere instance a vous, Monseigneur, qui, de grace speciale, m’avez offert ce que la raison ne me permettoit esperer ou desiere: vostre presence et vous mesme. Je conserveray, Dieu aydant, au secret de mon coeur se (sic) present riche et precieux.” *Oeuvres...* XIII, p.413. Francis called upon him for spiritual direction and it was he who was also in Lyon to receive his friend and Bishop’s last breath Cfr. XII, p.156, n.1.

³⁶¹Cfr. Mme de Charmoisy’s testimony in *Oeuvres...* III, p.xiv. Once he saw the great popularity of the work, he added to it taking letters from others, like Jane de Chantal, Madame Brûlart, Madame de la Fléchère and incorporating them into the second edition.

³⁶²Cfr. Vuÿ *La Philothée* ... p.80.

³⁶³“Et pourquoi n’aurai-je pas cette affection particulière, car Notre Seigneur n’amaît-il pas mieux Madeleine et saint Jean que les autres? Il m’est donc permis d’avoir cette affection pour vous, qui ne tend pourtant qu’à Dieu et

remarkable poise and dignity. Francis once said she is a person “with a heart of pure gold.”³⁶⁴ There is little correspondence between them surviving, but we can well imagine Francis staying with his cousins when he went to Chambéry to preach. On one occasion in 1608, he writes Jane that he is going to visit his cousin’s wife who has fallen ill, confessing a “Very great desire to serve her soul,” and that he is frustrated to see her so seldom and rarely in private.³⁶⁵ Madame de Charmoisy, for her part, writes him on one occasion, “I am more yours than my own.”³⁶⁶ As with many others, Jane de Chantal was also included in this friendship, and Francis is quick to tell her of Mme de Charmoisy’s affection for her and thereby support a friendship between his two friends.³⁶⁷ Later she would enjoy the rare privilege of being able to freely enter and leave the newly founded monastery of the Visitation in Annecy.³⁶⁸ She was probably helpful in carrying messages or procuring things from town and other practical needs.

Francis was friends with the whole de Charmoisy family. Their first son Henri, at the age of 10, was openly affectionate with him giving him “a thousand caresses,” which was for Francis “the signs of a hereditary benevolence that he will hold for me in the future, being the son of a father and mother to whom I belong inviolably.”³⁶⁹ We have letters to all of them. Naturally, as cousin Madame de Charmoisy was intimate with the whole de Sales family. Proof of her good terms with them is that she was godmother to Louis-Charles de Sales.³⁷⁰ Claude de Charmoisy belonged to one of the rare families of the Chablais that remained faithful to Catholicism. They were one of the most eminent

pour Dieu, ne regardant votre âme que des yeux de la mienne que est tout à Dieu.” R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.260. Testimony of Mme de Charmoisy 1st Hearing, art.44.

³⁶⁴“C’est un coeur tout d’or.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLXXXVI.

³⁶⁵“J’excepte nostre chere Mme de Charmoysi, qui est au lit d’un catherre qui est tombé sur les yeux. demain je l’iray voir, car en voyla un bon sujet... J’ay un’envie tres grande de bien servir son ame,.. c’est un coeur bien net et propre; je suis mari de la voir si peu souvent en particulier.. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXX.

³⁶⁶“Je suis plus votre que mienne” Vuÿ *La Philothée ...* p.279.

³⁶⁷“Elle temoigne de vous cherir passionement”. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXX.

³⁶⁸Cfr. Vuÿ, *La Philothée...* p.160-161.

³⁶⁹“Hier vostre brave Henri me fit l’honneur de me venir faire mille caresses ceans et me donner les signes de l’hereditaire bienveüillance quil me portera a l’advenir, comme estant filz de pere et mere a qui je suis inviolablement.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CXCIV.

³⁷⁰ Cfr. J. Vuÿ *La Philothée ...* p.316.

families of Savoy, and Francis used them as a *point d'appui* for his mission in the Chablais. He was often welcomed at their manor in Marclaz during those difficult times, and it was no doubt a refuge for him.

Claude eventually became advisor for the Duke of Nemours, chef of artillery and ambassador to the Swiss for the Duke of Savoy.³⁷¹ Francis refers to him as his “great friend,” and does not shy from asking him to communicate messages to his correspondents.³⁷² In July of 1609, after 15 years of service to the Duke of Nemours, he was accused of being too loyal to the Duke of Savoy and independent. He was banished from the court in disgrace.³⁷³ In his ordeal with the court, Claude de Charmois went to his friend Francis to pour out his heart and frustrations, discussing for “three long hours” every aspect of the painful affair and no doubt feeling lost and confused; he resolved to confide himself to the advice of his friends, especially Francis and Antoine des Hayes.³⁷⁴ In those tribulations, the Bishop of Geneva remained loyal to his cousin. This probably explains Francis’ choice to agree to preach Lent in Chambéry in the spring of 1612; it would have given him a chance to be with his friends and console them in their tragedy and exile. He risked his own reputation, voyaging and writing several letters to vigorously defend him against “these little lies, not only because we owe it to him because of his merit,” he explains in one letter to a friend in the court in 1613, “but to hold in a little fear the malefactors.”³⁷⁵

A year later the husband of Philothea was, as Francis writes des Hayes, “Joyful in his country house, loving so much his retirement that he wouldn’t let anyone discuss taking him away from it.”³⁷⁶ Madame de

³⁷¹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XII, p.216, n.1. See also A. Ravier, *Lettres...* p.422-433.

³⁷²Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDXLIX.

³⁷³Hearing the news Francis writes telling him that he has always been a sworn enemy of the world of the court, and how he looks forward with his wife, to “l’honneur que nous aurons de vous posséder avec plus de loisir et tirer les fruitz agreables de vostre conversation et de l’amitié que vous portes a celui qui vous cherit, respecte et honnore d’un coeur tres fidelle.” *Oeuvres...* ltr DXXXIX.

³⁷⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXLII.

³⁷⁵ “Ces petitz mensonges sont bons pour donner connoissance de plus grans. Il nous faut donq tous bien employer pour maintenir le parent innocent, non seulement parce que nous le devons a son merite, mais pour tenir en quelque crainte les meschans par la resistance qu’ilz verront leur estre faite.” *Oeuvres...* MMXXXI and see: XV, p.360, n.1.

³⁷⁶ “Nostre monsieur de Charmoysi, ce pendant, est tout joyeux en sa

Charmoisy gave birth to a second son, Jean-François that year and Francis was asked to be his godfather. Since the de Charmoisys were forbidden to enter Annecy by the Duke, Francis went to their home in 1614 for the baptism. The child died less than a year later, and Francis was the one to break the news to his cousin. He wrote their mutual friend des Hayes, "I believe it hurt him, for having withdrawn his heart from the court, he had invested it in his wife, his children and his friends."³⁷⁷ By the end of 1616, during the war between the Duke of Nemours and the Duke of Savoy, Claude de Charmoisy was promoted to the post of master of artillery for the Prince of Piedmont back in the high seas of the world and far from his peaceful retreat in the country.³⁷⁸ He was getting ready to accompany Francis, Favre and the Cardinal on the diplomatic mission to Paris in 1618, when he suddenly fell ill and died. In his grief, Francis writes Madame de Charmoisy, "my mind cannot cease to think of you, my very dear cousin, my daughter."³⁷⁹ And yet he confesses he doesn't know what to say because it is such a shock. Like always, he beseeches her to "cast our affections in eternity," and accept it as God's Providence. He encourages her to confide herself to God's eternal love, and as he has throughout their friendship, prays for her every day.³⁸⁰

After her husband's death, he would send her on missions of charity to sinners, instructing her to say nothing the first or even the second

mayson des chams et tesmoigne d'aymer tant sa retraite quil ne veut point qu'on traite de l'en retirer." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLVIII. His misfortunes with the Duke weren't over. In the winter of 1613 he was put under house arrest following an ambush of M. Berthelot, the one largely responsible for his demise and then secretary of the Duke of Nemours. Francis and his brothers were also accused of complicity in the affair, unleashing a long process of letters and testimonies that eventually cleared all of them. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XV, p.327, n.3. and DCCCLXII.

³⁷⁷"Nostre Monsieur de Charmoysi est a Chambéry, il y a quelques jours, ou je luy ay envoyé la nouvelle de la perte de son second filz, mon filleul. Je croy quil la ressentira, car ayant retiré son coeur de la cour, il l'avoit mis en sa femme, ses enfants et ses amis." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCC.

³⁷⁸Cfr. *Oeuvres...* MCCXLI and MCCLXXXV.

³⁷⁹"Mon esprit ne peut cesser de penser en vous, ma tres chere Cousine, ma Fille, et ne voudroit faire autre chose que de vous parler en la façon qu'il peut, et ne sçait neanmoins que vous dire, estant come le vostre, encore tout estonné. ...le divin Epoux de nos ames veut que nous regardions tous nos evenemens dans le sien de sa celeste Providence et que nous jettions nos affections en l'eternité, ou nous nous reunirons tous pour ne jamais plus estre séparés." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDLXXXV.

³⁸⁰Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXL and CDXXXIX.

time, as a way to gain their hearts. She would send them to him once they were no longer defensive, where they ordinarily repented and started a new life after witnessing his particular love for them.³⁸¹ He used this woman of the world to do what he was prevented from letting his sisters of the Visitation do in the world. It is a good example of how they were both able to do something through their friendship that neither could have accomplished alone. Francis was equally eager to aid her. He deliberately declares his willingness to be of service to her, with “great fidelity all my life”³⁸² and pledges his benevolence as something sacred as we saw with Jane de Chantal. He tells her “the confidence you have in me binds me indissolubly,”³⁸³ showing how much he honored a person’s secret troubles. He accepts money from her which she knew he would distribute secretly to those who needed it most.³⁸⁴

He talked to her enthusiastically about Jane and quickly introduces them, after telling each about the other’s excellent qualities.³⁸⁵ Then, after helping put the two in contact he calls upon one to help the other live virtuously.³⁸⁶ Jane and Madame de Charmoisy apparently became fast friends, because by 1608, Francis could write Jane that his cousin was asking constantly when Jane would come visit her, and insisting that it be for the whole year!³⁸⁷ He even defers to Jane’s opinion in the direction of Madame de Charmoisy, saying: “I don’t want to do anything without your knowledge.”³⁸⁸ She was close friends with Jeanne de Chantal, and one of the few in whom Francis confided his

³⁸¹ See M de Charmoisy’s testimony, 1st Hearing, art. 27. in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.229.

³⁸²“Ne laissez pas, je vous supplie, Madame ma chere Cousine, de me croire fort fidelle en tout ce qui regardera vostre service, car je le seray toute ma vie autant que nul homme du monde.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCL.

³⁸³“Ne doutés nullement que je n’observe avec toute fidelité le secret auquel, outre la loy commune, la confiance que vous prenés en moy me lie indissolublement.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCL.

³⁸⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCL.

³⁸⁵Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXCVI.

³⁸⁶ He tells Jane, for example about some difficulties Madame de Charmoisy is having in her spiritual life so she might lend some support for her. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr.. CDXXXVI.

³⁸⁷Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr.. CDXXXII. Did she know Jane was unhappy with her elder father-in law at Monthelon?

³⁸⁸“Je vous veux envoyer un exercice que j’ay dressé et fait pratiquer a madame de Charmoysi, car je voudrois que je ne fisse rien sans que vous le sceussies.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXXII.

inspiration for the Visitation.³⁸⁹ She remained “a sister confidante” of the Visitation after the Bishop of Geneva’s death, no doubt helping the community in many little ways and lending Jane and the others consolation and counsel from time to time, but she never took the habit. She preferred to retire to the monastery of d’Aulps, where she frequently made spiritual retreats.³⁹⁰

Despite the distance between them, Francis avows her presence is inseparable and often turns his mind’s eye to consider her.³⁹¹ As we can well imagine, he supported her when her husband was banished from the court. He writes to console her again when her husband is put under house arrest in 1613, vowing to use all his heart in pressing every influence he has to deliver him from the scandal, because he cherishes her as his true daughter,” and as he spells out to her, “all that belongs to you, for the love of the Lord to whom you belong.”³⁹² When her husband died, Francis was on his second diplomatic visit to Paris. He wrote the duchess of Nemours, Anne de Lorraine, asking her to use her influence with the Duke to secure support for the widow de Charmoisy and her son Henri out of justice for the false accusations he suffered in the Duke’s court.³⁹³ In the last letter we possess from Francis, written early in 1622, he assures her he will do the most he can for her son, and gently tells her that she is not taking good enough care of her health. He offers that correction, when no one else will dare say it, because he tells her she is his cousin, daughter and very dear one.³⁹⁴ Francis was not one

³⁸⁹Cfr. the testimony of Henri de Vidomne de Charmoisy, in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.273-274. 2nd Hearing, art. 31. Jane writes her condolences after her husband’s death, calling her, “ma pauvre très chère soeur” and “ma vraie très chère amie”. She refers to Francis as “notre très cher et très bon père” and is consoled by the knowledge that he will soon be with her in this grief. Cfr. Sr. M. P. Burns *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, correspondance...* vol 1, ltr 217.

³⁹⁰Cfr. J. Vuÿ, *La Philothée...* p.30.

³⁹¹“A mesure que je m’esloigne de vous selon l’exterieur, mon esprit retourne plus frequemment ses yeux de costé du vostre, d’avec lequel il est inseparable.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLXXIV.

³⁹²“Ayés bon courage, ja chere Fille...je m’employeray de tout ma coueur, affin d’ayder vostre mary, envers tous ceux que je croy avoir du credit pour le faire deliverer et que je sçauray vouloir faire quelque chose a ma contemplation; et des-ja j’ay commencé ce bon office des avant hier vous cherrisant comme ma vraie fille et tout ce qui vous appartient, pour l’amour de Nostre Seigneur a qui vous appartenes.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCLXIII.

³⁹³Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCXXXVII.

³⁹⁴“Je ferai tout ce que je pourrai pour le bien de ce cher fils (Henri de Charmoisy) et le contentement de ma très chère fille, sa mère, laquelle pourtant

to talk; his own health was in danger because of the pace he was leading. A few months later on his trip to Lyon and Savoy court his body would succumb. She was in Chambéry with her son for a legal matter that had harassed the family for 15 years (and would continue for many more) when the news came that her friend and spiritual guide Francis de Sales had died.³⁹⁵

Friendship between a priest and a married woman can cause suspicions, especially on the husband's part. But this friendship did not fall into that muddle because it was entirely open. There was nothing exchanged between them that he would not also wish for her husband. In a sense since he was friends with both of them, he entered into the friendship of their marriage, and thus with the entire family. For both of them, he wished that same life in the Spirit he shared and promoted in every friendship. One can only wonder how their relationship as husband and wife was changed by friendship with the Doctor of love. Every evidence we have points to his friendship as a support to them and their marriage. He rendered her a spiritual service as her director, and we can believe she too was a consolation for him. She, like many others, gave him money that he used to secretly help the needy.³⁹⁶ Madame de Charmois's hidden efforts for the poor especially increased in her latter life as a widow. Her friendship with Francis de Sales and his entourage of friends had evidently played a large role in bringing out what he had seen in her and prayed for many years, someone 'all golden and infinitely fit to serve her Savior.' She and Dom Juste Guérin were principal motors in the movement to canonize their mutual friend after his death.³⁹⁷

il faut que j'avertisse d'avoir soin de sa santé; ...pour la conserver et que vous n'épargnez pas autant qu'il est nécessaire votre force et complexion...Mais ce qui est l'importance, c'est qu'on me dit qu'on n'ose pas vous le dire. Et moi, je suis très bien résolu de vous le dire, et d'autres choses et tout, puisque vous êtes ma cousine et fille très chère." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCCXCVII.

³⁹⁵J. Vuý, *La Philothée...* p.282.

³⁹⁶The diocese was greatly impoverished without the revenues of Geneva, since the city's revolution in 1534. In recent times high taxes, because Savoy was frequently at war, and the general economic depression of the region further exacerbated that poverty. Cfr. Kleinman, *Saint François...* p.89-90.

³⁹⁷Cfr. J. Vuý, *La Philothée...* p.159.

In the Context of His Charge as Bishop*The priests and religious of his diocese in the asperity of the reform*

In 1597, when he was still in the Chablais, Francis wrote to the Papal Nuncio of Turin, “I will never cease to press, even to scream by the innards of Christ for the reform of the monasteries that are sowers of scandals in this province.”³⁹⁸ Trent called for massive reforms within the Church. Some were already begun by his predecessors, Bishops de Granier and Guistiniani. Francis de Sales made those reforms one of his top priorities, despite the frictions they would cause. He was literally working to that end up to his last breath.³⁹⁹ Throughout his episcopate, the monasteries gave him more difficulty than his own priests. One would expect hostilities in such a difficult context, but what is revealing for our study is the way that friendship held and even grew despite his strictly imposed belt tightening. We can speak of the Bishop of Geneva’s relationship with his priests as a kind of friendship. The testimony of their friendship cannot be better said than in Francis’ own words. He writes he has a particular duty to serve them who, “By a quite rare example are but one heart and one soul with me in the care of this diocese.”⁴⁰⁰ Their common interest to serve God’s people was the basis for that unity, which was communicated and manifested by their states in life. If that were enough, however, we would expect to find friendship binding every diocese, which is not the case. As Bishop, Francis de Sales reached out to his fellow priests in an uncommon personal way. They were always welcome at his table and often arrived unannounced. Francis would frequently play backgammon or chess with them after dinner, but he didn’t like any other games.⁴⁰¹ He took care of them and he inspired them by his zeal to serve the people. Seeing him accept the repentant Jesuit Boucard, for example, whose

³⁹⁸“Con incolcar, anzi gridar *nelle viscere di Christo* [Phil.1:8] che si faccia o la riformatione o la mutatione delle badie d’Aux et Abondanza et delle altre ancora di qua che sonno seminarii de scandali.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XCII. In 1614 he wrote a detailed summary of the state of affairs in the monasteries of his diocese, all except the Carthusians and Mendicants were in his words: “a blasphemy”. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXIII, pp.383-388.

³⁹⁹ Cfr. Rolland’s testimony, 1st hearing, art. 43, in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* p.199.

⁴⁰⁰“Par un asses rare exemple, ne sont qu’un coeur et qu’un’ame [Act. 4:23] avec moy au soin de ce diocæse.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDLXVII.

⁴⁰¹Cfr. Trouncer, M. *The Gentleman Saint. St. François de Sales and His Times 1567-1622*. Hutchinson, London 1963, p.152.

behavior had scandalized the world, when no other Bishop would trust him, must have impacted his own priests in a special way. Boucard was a former professor at Clermont, who had been carried away by lust and even publicly apostatized. He repented and lapsed again. A second time he came to repent at the feet of the Bishop of Geneva, because none other would accept him. He lived the final years of his life in Annecy where he remained reconciled with the Church.⁴⁰² Perhaps Boucard knew Francis from his journeys to Paris, or even from his school days there. What is remarkable is that he would come to Francis de Sales, when he had nowhere else to turn. His priests knew him well enough to discern that such compassion was not by some weakness. They must have also appreciated that he would be equally kind to them, no matter how low they might go.

On one occasion in 1620, he crossed the dangerous mountain passes in December to be at the bedside of one of his sub-deacons who called for him. He had been visiting the abbey of Sixt just two weeks before where the same commendatory abbot,⁴⁰³ a cantankerous old man, had been stubbornly contesting the Bishop's authority over the monastery, despite documents showing its submission since 1161.⁴⁰⁴ The fact that the man who had been in conflict with Francis would call for him at his death bed reveals something about a mutual endearment between these two antagonists that was larger than their differences. It is one of the signs of the affection his priests held for their Bishop when even one at odds with him calls upon his kindness.

All his priests, however, were not of one heart with him. One of the few ruptured relationships in his life was with Dennis de Granier, one of his priests and nephew of his former friend and Bishop Claude. The young man's defection to the Church of England stung him bitterly. He had taken pains on his behalf, and at one stage even asked Antoine des Hayes to intervene to get the restless young man a post in Paris.⁴⁰⁵ He confesses never having something bother him more. It was too much

⁴⁰² Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XIV, p.37, n.2.

⁴⁰³ One of the compromises reached between Rome and the King of France in the frequent disputes over jurisdiction, and hence, revenues from Church properties, allowed the King to name the abbot, who usually didn't even live on the premises. This was often the source of wealth for the commendatory abbot, who didn't have to be a priest. It was also an important way for the King to consolidate his power, because these positions were not part of one's heritage, but normally reverted back to the crown when the holder died.

⁴⁰⁴ Cfr. Charles-Auguste, *Vie...* p.320. See also: Rannaud, *Histoire de Sixt, abbaye, paroisse, commune*, Annecy, Abry 1916.

⁴⁰⁵ Cfr. A. Ravier, *Lettres...* p.606.

for the man who had given as much for the conversion of the Chablais, and who had even dreamed of going to England with the same purpose. It upset him for months prompting him to angrily write his brother much later, “that miserable person was never any more than vanity.”⁴⁰⁶

Another notable example of the Doctor of love’s friendships among his clergy is that with the de Quoex brothers. Their story of friendship is interesting because they are torn between friendship and the reform of the Benedictine monastery of Talloires, where Claude-Louis-Nicolas was prior.⁴⁰⁷ The family had an interest in the monastery because their properties were in the region. Philip de Quoex was one of Francis’ diocesan priests. He made him his confessor and relied on him for spiritual services for his Visitation sisters at Annecy. Claude, the third brother, was not a priest, but shared an equal part in their intimacy. He was a renowned lawyer and counselor to the Duke of Nemours. Francis and Favre asked Claude to be among the first members of the Florimontane Academy.⁴⁰⁸

Francis campaigned to restore the old observances at Talloires; the monks retorted he had no authority over them. At one point, things became especially heated when the civil authorities in Chambéry brought the matter to court. The Bishop of Geneva writes his friend, Claude-Louis-Nicolas, who had taken sides with his fellow monks, “All my displeasure in this affair is in not being able to fully accommodate your desire.”⁴⁰⁹ He assures him that his own interests are

⁴⁰⁶Writing to his brother, Jean-François de Sales, he says he would have sincerely wanted to make him his protégé and friend, but “Ce miserable ne fut jamais que vanité.” (Francis says the same thing about himself, see note 164 of the above chapter on his friendship with Jane). He still hopes for his return and asks his brother to keep in contact with him and express his invitation. *Oeuvres... ltr.. MDCCXXVIII*. See also ltrs. MDCLVIII; MDCCXXVII and a letter on the same subject to Jane de Chantal, MDCCXXIX. Denis de Granier did return to Catholicism with the aid of the Visitation of Paris. He was named a member of the Academie Française in 1635, but lost it in 1646 because of some indelicacy. Cfr. Trochu, *Saint François de Sales... t.II*, p.664.

⁴⁰⁷As part of Trent’s mandate for every Bishop to take responsibility for the reform, Francis worked for the reform of several monasteries in his diocese, and the clergy. It was in fact his occupation until practically his last breath. Cfr. R. Devos *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie... pp.193-211*. Both his predecessors had worked for the same reforms in vain. He managed a brief respite from Talloires long history of quarrels which continued until the French revolution gave it the coup de grâce.

⁴⁰⁸Cfr. *Oeuvres... XII*, p.84, n.1.

⁴⁰⁹“Tout le desplaysir que j’ai en ceci, c’est de ne vous pouvoir pas asses plaire et m’accommoder a vostre desir” *Oeuvres... ltr CMXXXVII*.

not his motives in his action with any man, and especially not with his friends. How could they be when his friends for their part, “Consider me no less their dear and true friend when I am of a different opinion than them, St. Peter and Paul were without diminishing their indissoluble charity.”⁴¹⁰ He puts the storm of difficulties in perspective, summing it all up in a simple phrase: “Our friendship is not founded on the Reform” and he prays him to not turn against him.⁴¹¹ One example of how that friendship was founded on a deeper common interest was in their mutual efforts to aid the poor in the region.⁴¹² Francis, too, had his angry outbursts during the ups and downs of the long drawn out efforts to reform Talloires and other monasteries in his diocese. But when one of the de Quoex brothers writes after hearing he was upset with him to humbly ask about it, he laughs it off and apologizes.⁴¹³ Throughout those troubles, his friendship with all the brothers remained intact. In 1618 Philip died, and Francis wrote to console Claude, telling him to come see him and his other friends in Annecy “and we will convert your tears into joy,” for the happiness Philip now enjoys.⁴¹⁴ One year after the Doctor of love’s death, Claude left Talloires to become a hermit in the very same grotto overlooking the lake of Annecy that Francis had chosen for his own retirement and hermitage. They had visited the site together one day and Francis told him of his plans with

⁴¹⁰“Non certes, je ne pense pas que ni mon sentiment, ni mes opinions, ni mes interetz doivent servir de regle a pas un homme du monde, et particulierement a mes amis; trop obligé que je leur seray si, reciproquement, ilz ne m’estiment rien moins leur affectionné et veritable amy quand je seray d’autre opinion qu’eux... Saint Pierre et saint Paul en eurent... sans diminution de leur indissoluble charité.” *Oeuvres... ltr.CMXXXVII.*

⁴¹¹“Nostre amitié n’est pas fondée sur la reformation ni des unes ni des autres: c’est pourquoy je vous supplie de me bien conserver la vostre au travers de toute cette negociation, comme, de mon coté, je suis invariable en celle que par tant de respectz je vous dois. Je sçay qu’un autre moins discret et charitable que vous pourroit beaucoup dire de choses de moi entre les poursuites, comme il a esté fait a Chamberi.” *Oeuvres... ltr.CMXXXVII.*

⁴¹²Cfr. the testimony of Dom Claude de Quoex, 1st Hearing, art. 27, in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.222-223.

⁴¹³“Je vous assure que j’ay ri, mais sçavez vous, de bien bon coeur, quand j’ay veu, sur la fin de vostre lettre, que l’on vous avoit dit que je m’estois mis en grande cholere, et avois dit tout ce que vous me marques.” *Oeuvres... ltr. MCCCX.*

⁴¹⁴“Mais venes nous voir, et souvent, et nous convertirons les pleurs en joie (Ps. 30:12), nous souvenant par ensemble de celle de laquelle nostre bon frere jouit.” *Oeuvres... ltr.MCCCXCVIII.*

an unforgettable enthusiasm. He finished his days there living as his Bishop and friend had longed to do.

In general his relations with the priests of his diocese were very good. He believed priests merited a special respect “Due to their office and sacramental character.”⁴¹⁵ He was able to institute a number of reforms in the monasteries, but not all those he wished. He had the priests themselves read a catechetical text to the people at every Sunday mass, which was also a subtle way to educate his priests.⁴¹⁶ His visits to every parish in his diocese were in accord with the reforms of Trent, but no one would have expected him to go into the far reaches of the most remote and covering the largest area of any diocese in Europe. It would take 5 months to accomplish.⁴¹⁷ That kind of rigor naturally had an effect on the priests in his charge. Like everyone else, in the words of François Favre who accompanied him, they were “astonished and consoled” to see his indefatigable ardor to reconcile differences, correct his priests, administer the sacraments and care for every need of the people.⁴¹⁸ His door was open to them anytime, and he took great pains to be just in the distribution of benefices, subjecting his close friend and noble, Monsieur Fenouillet the Bishop of Montpellier to the same examination as any priest.⁴¹⁹ He came to their aid in legal troubles or scandals, taking responsibility for their debts.⁴²⁰ The kind of openness and familiarity he had with his presbytery is uncommon for a Bishop. That respectful attitude, together with his humility and fairness, was his secret to any successful reform of the clergy in his diocese, especially concerning what he considered the most pernicious of all, those

⁴¹⁵“Il ne faut pas que nous perdions le respect de leur qualité et caractère. Je voy que par tout on les regarde selon leur extraction et condition temporelle; mais je ne le puis souffrir sans mal de coeur.” *Oeuvres..* ltr. MMLXV.

⁴¹⁶ Cfr. *Réglement du catéchisme pour le diocèse . Oeuvres... XXIII*, pp.276-278. He also held annual synods that all attended which was a kind of retreat and had the task of outlining the rules for priests to live by in his diocese. Cfr. R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie...* pp.204-205. See also, *Oeuvres... XXIII*, pp.261-419.

⁴¹⁷Cfr. Charles-Auguste de Sales, *Histoire... VI*, pp.340-343 and 375-379.

⁴¹⁸*Oeuvres... XXIII*, p.314, n.1.

⁴¹⁹Cfr. The testimony of Claude Favre de Vaugelas, Paris Hearing, art. 28; in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie....* p.206.

⁴²⁰Cfr. The testimony of Michel Favre, 1st Hearing, art. 28; and of Michel Charbonne. 1st Hearing art. 47, in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins de sa vie....* pp.210-211.

searching riches by serving the Church.⁴²¹ His own love of poverty did more to reform them in this regard than anything else ever could. Since his days in the Chablais, he had been acting to help relieve the financial situation of his fellow priests. He lamented to Favre the conditions of their “living a precarious life from one day to the next.”⁴²² He writes to a noble once on behalf of their needs, “For the aid of the canons of my Church, I will not fail to beg you to be favorable to all of us, so that they be aided and I consoled to see them assisted and delivered from poverty.”⁴²³ He gave monthly salaries to several poorer ones, took the relatives of another into his charge, sold silver candle holders from his chapel to sustain another, and even gave his vestments away to one of them.⁴²⁴ The simplicity of his life was manifestly for love of his flock, which must have inspired his priests to live the same way.

Protestants

Can we really speak of Francis de Sale’s friendship with Protestants? There are no records of any true friendship and intimacy between them. The age of the Thirty Years War, the St. Bartholomew Day massacre and the Edict of Nantes was not the age of ecumenism. If we can fault Francis de Sales’ way of living friendship, it would be in his apparent complete lack of intimacy with Protestants. He doesn’t even have a friendly rapport with them. He is respectful and even cordial when he meets them, but there is a conspicuous absence of any enduring relationships. It is a deliberate decision, as he advises Jane citing Augustine, “Be simple and gracious with heretics. Speak to them like a dove, having compassion for their distress. Be prudent like a serpent, soon slipping out of their company when you meet them.”⁴²⁵

⁴²¹He considered this with his friend Vincent de Paul as the great plague of the French clergy. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXIII, p.399.

⁴²²*Oeuvres...*ltr. LII. See G. Pochat, *François de Sales et la Pauvreté*, Editions S.O.S, Paris, 1988, pp.33-41, for more on the poverty of the clergy of the diocese of Geneva in the 17th century, and Francis’ efforts to help them.

⁴²³“Pour le secours des Chanoynes de mon Eglise, je ne laisseray pas de vous supplier de nous estre favorable à tous, affin que les uns soyent aidés, et moy consolé de les voir un peu assistés et délivrés de pauvreté.” *Oeuvres...* MCDLXXVI.

⁴²⁴Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales...* t.2, p.29-32, for a more detailed account based on the testimony of witnesses.

⁴²⁵“[S. Augustine lettre 264;10] Soyez avec les heretiques simple et gracieuse comme une colombe a leur parler, ayant compassion de leurs malheurs; soyez prudente comme le serpent [Mt. 10.16] a bientôt vous glisser hors de leur compagnie aux rencontres, aux occasions et encore par maniere de

He writes to his Protestant adversaries in the introduction to his *Controversies*, “I address these [arguments for the Catholic faith, which clearly show that all who remain separated from the Catholic faith are at fault] to you with a sincere heart.”⁴²⁶ To some this may sound patronizing, but it sums up well his attitude to Protestants. He had no doubt they were in error, yet he sought to persuade them with an earnest love. Arguments were useful, but as he tells a Protestant with whom he is in dialogue: “What could we write that hasn’t been repeated a hundred times?”⁴²⁷ He relied more on prayers and love. Indeed, it is astonishing how many people converted throughout his life after only hearing him preach. Francis would himself remark, “he who preaches with love preaches effectively enough against heretics, even though he not say one sole word of dispute against them.”⁴²⁸ Although he clearly saw the authors of schism as inexcusable,⁴²⁹ and even blasphemers of all that is sacred⁴³⁰ who “should be decried as much as possible,”⁴³¹ their followers were less reprehensible. Indeed, he would give his life for their conversion.⁴³²

quelque rare visite.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCIV.

⁴²⁶“J’ay doncq mis icy quelques principales raysons de la foy catholique, qui monstrent clairement que tous ceux sont en faute qui demeurent separés de l’Eglise Catholique, Apostolique et Romaine. Or je vous les adresse et présente de bon coeur.” *Oeuvres...* I, pp.4-5.

⁴²⁷“Que pourrions nous escrire qui n’ait esté repeté cent fois?” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXIX. In this same letter he encourages the man to read the Bible and the Fathers as a proof of his arguments for the sacrament of confession’s legitimacy. Although he felt it unwise to let common people read the Bible, that means the uneducated who were prone to give it only a superficial and piecemeal reading, and therefore who were apt to reach misunderstandings. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* II, p.181-182.

⁴²⁸“Qui presche avec amour presche asses contre les heretiques, quoy qu’il ne die un seul mot de dispute contre eux.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXCVI.

⁴²⁹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* I, p.23.

⁴³⁰Cfr. *Oeuvres...* II, 171; Vii, 109. In XXIII pp.72-208 he gives a lengthy and scathing reproach to authors of the Protestant schisms.

⁴³¹He tells Philothea in this context when blaming vice to spare as much as possible the person in whom it is found. Then he continues: “J’excepte entre tous, les ennemies declarés de Dieu et de son Eglise; car ceux-là, il faut descrier tant qu’on peut, comme sont les sectes des heretiques et schismatiques et les chefz d’icelles: c’est charité de crier au loup quand il est entre les brebis, voyre où qu’il soit.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.243.

⁴³²“Je voudrais donner ma peau pour le vetir, mon sang pour oindre ses plaies et ma vie temporelle pour l’oter de l’eternelle mort.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCLIV.

Jean-Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley was an admirer of Francis de Sales and prolific author, especially of novels inspiring a virtuous life.⁴³³ He was consecrated Bishop in 1609 at a young age and immediately sought the support of his neighbor and fellow Bishop, Francis. They immediately became friends and Camus was a frequent visitor.⁴³⁴ Over the years he took copious notes of his conversations and observations of the Bishop of Geneva with the intention of using them in his writings. After Francis' death, he wrote an extremely popular work entitled: *The Spirit of the Blessed François de Sales*, which was basically a synthesis of these notes. He considered his most edifying talent his ability to inspire conversion within and without the Church. Camus reports Francis would always begin by listening to the Protestants he met with a respect and attention that inspired the same in return. Bossuet found the same quality remarkable and used it as the theme of his eulogy sermon for Francis, saying that he had the wisdom to speak to their hearts rather than their reason.⁴³⁵ It was in fact a dominant theme of his canonization.⁴³⁶

Such an attitude was remarkable in the context of the times. Favre's frame of mind was more common. While he couldn't make himself believe that there could be anything good in a heretic, his friend Francis "feels great affection" for them.⁴³⁷ Protestants were anathema. As Francis argued as a young priest from his fortifications at Allinges, the Protestant religions are founded upon the authority of men and not that of Christ. Their belief that the Church has erred, that the Lord would set her adrift in the open seas with no guidance is tantamount to saying

⁴³³For more on Camus and his friendship with Francis de Sales see: A. Garreau, *Jean-Pierre Camus*, Le Cèdre, 1968 and F. Boulas, *Un ami de saint François de Sales, Camus*, Lyon, Vitte et Lutrin, 1879.

⁴³⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltrs, MMXLVIII; MMXLIX; and MML for examples of their rapport.

⁴³⁵Cfr. Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Oeuvres Complètes*, édition F. Lachat, Paris, 1862-1866. XII, 73-74. The sermon was given in 1662 during his canonization hearings. He was canonized a saint in 1665. Louis XIV hardened against the Huguenots and in 1655 with the tacit approval of Christine de Savoy and Charles-Emmanuel II, massacred numerous Vaudois.

⁴³⁶The principal advocate of the second hearing was Henri de Maupas du Tour, Bishop of de Puy, who wrote a biography underlining this and other aspects of Francis' merit. Cfr. *La vie du Vénérable serviteur de Dieu François de Sales, Evêque et Prince de Genève, Fondateur des Religieuses de la Visitation de Sainte-Marie* Paris, 1657.

⁴³⁷Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XI p.162-163.

Christ lacked foresight.⁴³⁸ “Outside the Church, no salvation” the maxim of St. Cyprian, one of Francis’ favorite Fathers, was the dominant theme for centuries in the Church’s relations with schismatics. As he puts it, “To separate one’s self from the Church is to separate one’s self from God.”⁴³⁹

Growing up just a day’s journey from the largest enclave of Protestantism in Europe, “at the very front of the battle,”⁴⁴⁰ in a land that still claimed Geneva, oriented his entire life. His studies of predestination as a young student in Paris were much more than intellectual curiosity. He witnessed first hand the fighting in the streets on the “Day of barricades” in 1588 and the quarrels over the three Henri’s. It gave him ample cause for reflection on the political consequences of religious division. His law notes in Padua reflect an extremely severe position towards Protestants in 1591. There he advocates military and juridical force against them. Fourteen years later, his introduction to Favre’s *Code fabrien* shows he still had not softened. Even in his many pressing affairs as Bishop, the open wound of his fractured diocese was always on his mind. “Alas!” he writes one day after reconciling with Claude de Quœx in their quarrel over monastic reform, “Sir, my dear friend, I sometimes have tears in my eyes, when I consider my Babylonian Calvinist Geneva: *Our heritage has passed to strangers*, I can do no more than cry over her ruins.”⁴⁴¹ Its burden probably made him more conciliatory, helping put conflicts with friends in a different light.

The Catholic Reformation idea that Protestants are destined for hell, because to reject Christ’s daughter, the Church, is to reject him, makes friendship with Protestants akin to friendship with sinners. Protestantism was a “spiritual plague,” a contagion.⁴⁴² Now, we have

⁴³⁸Cfr. *Oeuvres...*, I, p.27 and p.73.

⁴³⁹“Se separer de l’Eglise, c’est se separer de Dieu. Laisser l’Eglise, o Dieu, quelle frenesie!” *Oeuvres...* MDCCXXIX.

⁴⁴⁰ On one occasion as Bishop he writes the Pope, “Hic enim, Pater Beatissime, in ipsa certaminis acie constituti, inimicorum vires cominus experimur, quorum ingenium est ex moribus nostrorum depravatis Ecclesiae illibatam doctrinam carpere ac infirmas populi mentes dejicere.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXV.

⁴⁴¹“Helas! Monsieur mon cher ami, j’ai quelquefois les larmes auz yueuz, quand je considere ma babylonique geneve calviniste: *Notre heritage a passe a des etrangers* [Lam. 5.2]; *le sanctuaire est en derision* [Ez 22.8], la maison de Dieu en confusion; et qu’en dirai-je? Je ne puis bonnement autre chose que pleurer sur ses ruines.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCX

⁴⁴²Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCXVIII.

already seen that true friendship in his mind, as in the minds of every Christian thinker on the subject, could only be centered on God. For Francis de Sales, like every Catholic of his age, God was to be found in the true Church. By definition, if Francis began a friendship with a Protestant, he would do so with the intention of bringing them back to a full communion with God in his Church. Furthermore, without that center, friendship would remain more potential than actual. It is not like today, where the common interest of Christian values brings Protestants and Catholics together in an indifferent or even hostile world. Seventeenth Century Europe was still at war over these issues, each side regarding the other as the insidious fraud. They were opposed antithetically on a cardinal life principle. Just as East and West during the cold war, the existence of each threatened the existence of the other. Protestantism was a “desolation, not only present but future” that brought death to the Genevans and so many others.⁴⁴³ It is hard to imagine something more opposed to the joyful and childlike spirit of Salesian Catholicism than the kind of asceticism for which John Calvin and Protestant pessimism in general were known.⁴⁴⁴

Nevertheless, even if we might exaggerate and contend the Protestants were his “enemies” (which I do not think feasible), the impossibility of friendship with them does not render loving them as Christ commands impossible. That was how he reached so many of them. He writes Jane in 1608, lamenting the loss of so many souls because of heresy, that Christ, who loves them more than both of them, permits it because, by some mystery his greater glory requires it. “We must regret their loss, and sigh for them as David for his son Absalon hung and lost.”⁴⁴⁵ The lack of friendship with Protestants is perhaps a

⁴⁴³“Questi sono i miei pensieri, già che essendo qui appresso tanti heretici et tante Republiche heretiche, non posso impedir l’animo mio di pensar spesso et compatir a tanta desolantione, non solo presente, ma futura.” *Oeuvres...* XXII, p.309. Until the end of his life he would be saddened by Geneva’s separation from the Catholic faith. One of his most ardent desires remained to quit all to work for her conversion. Cfr the testimonies of Claude de Monthoux; Angelique Arnaud and Michel Bouvard in Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L’Homme...* t.2, p.166-167.

⁴⁴⁴ Francis sums up his difference in a sermon: “O! isti praedicatores nolunt vos ullum gaudium excipere, nolunt vos vesci, nolunt vos ridere, nolunt vos ullam curam rerum habere; volunt vos tota die esse in ecclesiis, volunt vos semper jejunare. Ah! proditor generis humani, non hoc dicimus, sed: De omni gaudio comedere, sed de gaudio peccatorum ne comedas (Gen. 3:2-3).” *Oeuvres...* VIII, p.82.

⁴⁴⁵“Ma Fille, accoisons nous en la perte de ces ames, car Jesus Christ a qui

good reference point when we consider the difference between charity and friendship. He helped a number of Genevans financially, who were without property or work, even taking some into his own home for years, because they were forced to depart from the city once they converted.⁴⁴⁶

A party to forced conversions ?

One of the most scathing reproaches against Francis de Sales heard from Geneva was that he approved the forced conversion of the Chablais. This view is supported by the fact that he was in favor of the exile of those who did not wish to freely convert, the interdiction of Protestant preaching or meeting, and the forced attendance at his sermons in Thonon.⁴⁴⁷ One historian even goes so far to accuse him of having called for troops that devastated the region in 1589-1590.⁴⁴⁸ No proof substantiates the last allegation, but he did approve of the others, which seems coercive and hardly praiseworthy.⁴⁴⁹ Posing the question of his friendship with Protestants seems ridiculous when we see him

elles estoient plus cheres, ne les laisseroit pas aller apres leur sens, si sa plus grande gloire ne le requeroit. Il est vray que nous les devons regretter, et souspirer pour elles comme David sur son Absalon pendu et perdu." *Oeuvres... CDXCVI.*

⁴⁴⁶Marc de la Rüe and his wife, Jean de Monthouz (who stayed in Francis' home for 2 years), Salomon Gal, Isaïe de Villaz, Jacques Cusin (who would convert back to Protestantism) are a few. Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...t.2*, p.173-175.

⁴⁴⁷Ruth Kleinman explains the political tensions and summarizes the different arguments in favor of this position. See, *Saint François de Sales et les protestants*, (translation from the English) éditions du Chalet Lyon, 1967, pp.120-144. Fr. Lajeunie criticizes her thesis that Francis de Sales was a party to political pressure forcing the Chablais' conversion. He finds her account one sided and wholly lacking any mention of similar intolerances in Geneva and the mentality of the times. Cfr. *Saint François de Sales... t.2*. pp.175-176. Ravier does not agree with the details, but agrees by and large with her thesis. Cfr. preface to *Saint François de Sales, Oeuvres... p.lxxviii*, n. 1.

⁴⁴⁸Cfr. Gaberel, *Histoire de l'Eglise de Genève... vol. II* pp.605-607. On the contrary, on one occasion, in 1598, Francis writes a cousin a member of the government, asking him to come to assure the people of Thonon who were fearful when the Spanish army passed through. They were still Protestant at the time. Cfr *Oeuvres... XI*, p.353.

⁴⁴⁹Troops in the area were part of its defense and as was normal for the times, they moved from one part of their realm to another for provisions. As R. Kleinman contends, there is no proof of any such devastation. Cfr. *Saint François de Sales et les protestants... p.142.*

writing the Duke, sanctioning their forced departure and the confiscation of the goods they cannot sell in the time allowed. This would be alarming enough, but if he forced the inhabitants of the Chablais to convert, even the semblance of friendship with the people would be absurd. Political reasons are part of the equation explaining the Chablais' conversion, but that is not the whole story. We must address briefly the apparent contradiction of the gentle apostle converting through friendship and prayer, versus the politically calculating missionary with a sword.

In 1614 Francis was conversing with a young Huguenot on his way home from the consecration of Msgr. Hildebrand Jost, Bishop and Prince of Sion. He was struck by his companion's remorse that Catholic priests were not permitted to preach in Protestant lands. The young man observed that heresy was passing under the authority of the State and that even in France many towns were entirely Protestant, concluding that they have no hope of conversion. Francis later avowed that his words "penetrated so much my heart that I was never able to remove them from my mind."⁴⁵⁰ After one year of reflection, he wrote his plan in response to this problem, *The Memorial for the Conversion of Heretics and their Reunion with the Church*.⁴⁵¹ He submits that the Pope take the initiative with all the Catholic Princes and republics "Not by exterior arms, but by interior arms," and propose union to the heretics. Division was weakening each State's resistance to Turkish aggrandizement. If they all proposed conversion simultaneously, with clear and sound arguments, he believed the Protestants likely to accept. He advised calling a council in each country for the Catholics and Protestants to come together, not to dispute who was right, but to discuss how they might live in one household in a community of Christianity. But the hour is not yet ripe for such an undertaking.

Matured by a lifetime of opposition to Protestantism, meriting one of the times' most astonishing success stories in their conversion, Francis' immediate experience both as victim and witness to brutality convinced him that violence is futile to achieve conversion. Even taking into account the severity of his youth, the *Memorial* shows he refused to recommend physical violence as a tool for conversion. But he was willing to accept conscription into the Duke's army as a means to conversion, as well as fines, confiscation of books and banishment.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰"Queste parole entrorno nello cuor mio et mai è stato possibile de cavarle del mio pensiero." *Oeuvres...* XXII, p.304.

⁴⁵¹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXII, pp.302-310.

⁴⁵²"As a youth he writes in his course notes that the "insane" Protestants

The times were no stranger to such methods. The Reform rent Europe with violent emotions for more than a century. Tolerance was still unknown in most of the world. Even in Geneva, ‘The defender of freedom of conscience’ Catholics did not have free speech, nor the right to practice their faith, let alone proselytize.⁴⁵³ Fear of corporal punishment from Geneva was one of the first obstacles Francis encountered in converting the Chablais.⁴⁵⁴ On the other hand, he was clearly in favor of Charles-Emmanuel’s edict after the mass conversions in 1601, commanding the inhabitants to practice Catholicism or to leave the region and sell their possessions.⁴⁵⁵ Already in 1596 he wrote the Duke, regarding government appointments in the region, “One should prefer Catholics in all things.”⁴⁵⁶ Catholics were placed in key government posts, ending the Calvinist monopoly of the town government in the early stages of the mission. Still, the region remained by and large Protestant due as much to the uncertain political climate as to the conviction of the inhabitants.

Francis won over many because of his moderating influence on the secular powers. In the fall of 1598, when the Duke came to Thonon for the forty hours celebration, he passed with his army by the walls of Geneva to flaunt his power. There were none left in the land to

that don’t convert should be punished (*Oeuvres...* XXII. p.77), but those immature thoughts should not be given much serious attention. In December of 1595 Francis suggests conscription “pourveu qu’elle fut dressée religieusement, avec quelques institutions chrestiennes, ne seroit pas un moyen inutile d’attirer les courages a la religion.” He also condoned forcing all to attend mass and feasts, the outlawing of heretical books, and obliging all children to attend Catholic catechism. By modern standards all of these would be considered violations of human rights. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXII, pp.154-178.

⁴⁵³ The famous “Edict fondamental” of Geneva promulgated in 1589, conforming to a law dating from 1539, “très expressement” forbid it. Cfr. *Ordonnance de la Cité de Genève, sus la Réformation, l’Estat, et Police d’icelle, revenues par nos Tres honorés Seigneurs le XVII de Decembre mil cinq cens huictante huict, et publiées le premier de Janvier, 1589*, Geneva, Le Preux, 1589: XIV, 222, n.1. In spite of the public intolerance, there was a certain measure of private tolerance in both Geneva and Savoy. In 1603 there were about 100 declared Protestants in Chablais. Cfr. Francis’ letter to Clement VIII, *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCIV. Geneva at the same time had a large number of Catholics, especially domestic helpers, and permitted priests to enter on the condition they did not proselytize. Cfr. *Saint François de Sales...* t.2 p.172.

⁴⁵⁴In several letters he complains of it as an obstacle to conversion between 1594 and 1595. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. XCIII, for example.

⁴⁵⁵Cfr. His letter to Charles-Emmanuel, *Oeuvres...* XXII, p.174.

⁴⁵⁶Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXI, p..226.

challenge his armies. He wanted to punish the Huguenots of Thonon who, in the conflict of 1589, had opened the city gates to the Genevan army. Guy Joly, Seigneur de Vallon and the entire city council begged Francis to intervene in their favor. He beseeched the Duke on his knees and obtained their pardon. That act won many hearts, among them the minister, Monsieur Joly, who would abjure the following year.⁴⁵⁷ The political climate had changed enough to allow the Duke to openly support the mission. On October 4 he invoked a counsel to decide if the Protestant ministers should remain. Among the participants were the Duke, the deputies of Thonon, representatives from Bern and Francis de Sales. The Duke proposed that he would allow three ministers to remain if Bern would agree to allow Lausanne and Bern three Catholic priests.⁴⁵⁸ They refused. Most feared war. The debate was heated, especially between Francis and the Bernese delegates. He argued for the minister's expulsion and attempted to show this did not violate the Treaty of Nyon. The Duke was won over by his arguments and the minority opinion when Francis stood up and exclaimed: "Indeed, Monsignor, to leave the ministers in this land is to lose your properties and paradise!"⁴⁵⁹ The next day Francis presented the Duke with his outline for the changes required. The Duke went farther, banning Protestant worship and proselytizing.

Around the twelfth of October, the Duke called for a meeting of the city council, the nobility, and the bourgeois. After a brief exhortation he commanded those who preferred him and "our religion" to step to his right, and those who prefer Calvin and heresy to his left. Francis tried to gently persuade those remaining on the left to change their minds and a few did. The Duke gave the rest three days to leave. Three of the exiles, Deprez and de Brotty, and Joly returned eventually to embrace Catholicism with Francis' help.⁴⁶⁰ He obtained safe passage for the ten families or so, who decided to leave. He was able to obtain

⁴⁵⁷Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t.1 p.345. The same Joly was one of the Protestant leaders who was exiled by the Duke.

⁴⁵⁸The *Interim of Augsburg*, permitting plurality of worship and freedom of conscience had been promulgated for more than a year already. Francis had been campaigning for its employment in Gex and Gaillard to permit Catholic priests and worship in the region. Cfr. Ravier, *Saint François de Sales, Oeuvres...* préface, p.lxiv et passim.

⁴⁵⁹Roland (1st Hearing art. 28) and de Quoex (2nd Hearing art. 13), who were present corroborate.

⁴⁶⁰Cfr. Lajeunie, *Saint François de Sales, L'Homme...*t.1 p.351-352.

more time from the Duke for the others to let themselves be instructed.⁴⁶¹

At first Francis expected the eventual conversion of the recalcitrant Protestants still in the population. But after three years without results, he too believed time had come for more draconian measures, so that “Many by this means, will avoid banishment from Paradise by not risking that from their fatherland.”⁴⁶² He writes the Duke that these people pose a danger for the State, following Protestantism more as a political party than a religion.⁴⁶³ He refers to them as “ignorant people of no importance.”⁴⁶⁴ For one as ambitious as Charles-Emmanuel, this must have been alarming. With the extra time, Francis was able to persuade all but about twenty people to convert. They were exiled. All but three or four would eventually return.

From the beginning, the conversion of the Chablais entailed political intentions. As a nobleman and a lawyer, Francis’ beliefs were clear. A Christian State could only have one form. Its hierarchical structure was by divine right, and its Prince was himself subject to God.⁴⁶⁵ He was a man of the old order, and everything he believed in, family, country, faith and justice belonged to that order’s obedience. How many times had Europe seen the conversion of the entire nation with its King? Russia, the Celts, the Visgoths, even the Roman Empire with Constantine. There was no need to explain to these people ‘one nation, one God, one law.’ It was as obvious to them as the value of democracy is for us today. There was no State in Europe where Protestants and Catholics freely mixed. It is important to remember that at the time immediately after Trent, the wars of religion, and St. Bartholomew’s day massacre, to allow the cohabitation of Protestants in Savoy would

⁴⁶¹Cfr. Trochu, *Saint François de Sales*...t.1, pp.575-576.

⁴⁶²“Plusieurs, par ce moyen, esviteront le bannissement du Paradis pour ne point encourir celui de leur patrie.” *Oeuvres*... CXLIV.

⁴⁶³*Oeuvres*.. XXII, p.78.

⁴⁶⁴*Oeuvres*.... XXII, p.78.

⁴⁶⁵Francis’ world view espoused the classic social hierarchy as ordained by God, where each register of society had its responsibility to those above and below. Family, fellow citizens and Prince each demanded a different kind of respect, and in turn each had its responsibility to those in its charge. “Mais il y a des biens dont nous jouissons d’une jouissance de dependance, participation et sujettion, ...puisque ce n’est pas la qualité de pasteur, ni de prince, ni de pere, ni de mere, qui nous les fait aymer, ains parce qu’ils sont telz en nostre endroit et a nostre regard; mays cette convoitise est un amour de respect, de reverence, d’honneur; car nous aymons, par exemple, nos peres non parce qu’ils sont nostres, mays parce que nous sommes a eux.” *Oeuvres*... IV p.144.

mean segregation and conflict. France was just tiring of civil war over religion. Henri IV took the throne as a King with whom both sides could identify. He was raised a Protestant, but converted to Catholicism. One of his first acts was to promulgate the Edict of Nantes proposing that each side live and let live after some forty years of strife. It was revolutionary for Europe.⁴⁶⁶

Francis cooperated with the Duke of Savoy's forceful expulsion of Protestants in a land where they had first come as invaders themselves expelling the priests of the area. The Duke's hesitations to immediately impose force or to even financially support the mission to the Chablais was more for fear of the Protestant armies than respect for their consciences. Hadn't he immediately imposed Catholicism on the conquered territories of Saluces?⁴⁶⁷ Francis intervened to gain the people time and tried every means to persuade them. He helped them secure transport for themselves and their affairs, and he advocated welcoming back any who returned after changing their minds. But we must admit that he may have even been willing to use any means necessary for the higher good of eternal life and conversion of the region. The arm of the State was an integral part of that order he envisioned, though he was never a simple instrument of his political sovereign. There was often some kind of friction over the rights of the Church and, as we have seen, he was accused of intrigue more than once. As Ruth Kleinman summarizes, "If Francis de Sales was no more than a gentle missionary, he would never have been up to its difficult situation."⁴⁶⁸ Throughout his career as Bishop, he would have his place in the political cadre, because in Seventeenth century Europe men of the Church were also men of State.

He realized that the two groups could not always remain in conflict and that the future of Europe required the conception of some kind of *modus vivendi*. Violence had gained nothing. His firmness as both a jurist and as a dogmatician was not being compromised, but his position "rich in future views"⁴⁶⁹ passionately sought unity. No doubt

⁴⁶⁶There were numerous edicts of tolerance in France beginning as early as 1563 with the edicts of Amboise, and Poitiers (1577), what was new with the edict of Nantes (1598) was the King's firm desire to enforce it. All previous attempts had failed. Cfr. J. Lecler, *Histoire de la tolérance au siècle de la Réforme*, (1ed. 1955) Albin Michel, Paris, 1994, pp. 499-529.

⁴⁶⁷Cfr. E. Ricotti, *Storia della Monarchia Piemontese*, Barbera, Florence, 1861-1869, 4 vol. IV, pp.365-357.

⁴⁶⁸R. Kleinman, *Saint François de Sales et les Protestants...* p.144.

⁴⁶⁹ Cfr. A. Ravier's preface in *Saint François de Sales. Oeuvres...* pp.lvi-lxxix.

he was being pragmatic, but Francis respected the Protestant as a person. It was the same spirit that won him their hearts and conversions in such great numbers. Nonetheless, it is doubtful that respect went as far as allowing their beliefs as legitimate. The union he hoped for was conversion. Religious freedom and ecumenism was still too far beyond the horizon in his century.

Conclusions about Friendship from His Life

Little by little, with a phrase here, a counsel there, a witness' account, a friend's testimony, we have dot by dot been constructing an image of the man and the way he lived friendship. Now let us step back and try to depict what friendship with Francis de Sales was like, all the while respecting that, despite many common traits, friendship with each person is unique.

Aristotle observes that friendship seems to consist more in loving than in being loved.⁴⁷⁰ This is one of the great secrets of Salesian friendship. The mere fact that he was always eager to communicate with his friends shows how his heart was continuously reaching out to be in their presence. We hear little of him spending his time in pursuits in gentlemanly leisure. Writing some 20 letters per day in addition to the affairs of running his diocese makes it difficult to imagine him with the time to go for a walk, or read for pleasure, or go fishing at some secluded chalet. Granted, he was a superb rower, and perhaps, therefore, he did much of it or some of the other sporting activities that were part of normal living in the mountains.⁴⁷¹ Nevertheless, friendship was the priority of his life. It was his principal pastime, his recreation and his duty. To put it most succinctly, friendship for this man was loving Christianly, the expression of his virtue and the sharing of his interior life. His idea and life of friendship was more concerned with giving generously than counting what he had received. We never find him scolding anyone for not giving him something he felt he deserved.

His friendships were normally founded on an explicit mutual desire to live the Christian way of life, as two souls "That cleave together

⁴⁷⁰*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 1159a 26-30.

⁴⁷¹In October of 1618 when Francis was traveling with Cardinal Maurice of Savoy on a diplomatic mission to secure the marriage of Christine de France, Louis XIII's daughter, and the Cardinal's brother, Prince Victor Amédée Emanuel, they had a rowing competition. The 52 year old Bishop proved a 25 year old Cardinal's equal! Cfr. Ravier, *Saint Francis de Sales...* p.221.

through that charity which is shed in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us.”⁴⁷² He and his friends openly pledged to support one another in that common life’s purpose. He frequently encouraged his friends in their shared resolutions to live as Christ’s disciples. If that kind of friendship was at least implicitly possible, he could patiently try to cultivate it. Outside the universe of this mutual affection for Christian virtue there was nothing for him, and especially no friendship. As he puts it in a letter to Jane: “Vive Jésus! It is in Him, by Him and for Him that I am without end, without reserve and uniquely yours.”⁴⁷³

He often tells his friends how grateful he is for their friendship and openly acknowledges his esteem and affection for them. It is an affection always within the perspective of God’s love, appreciating what grace has become in them and what it may become. He is immediately drawn to many persons, which he himself sees as part of God’s plan for his life. His friendship is lifelong and embraces the entire family and worries of his friends. Their children are like his own, and he eagerly acts on behalf of their education when invited to do so. He cannot refuse the legitimate requests of his friends no matter how busy he is, and he is not afraid to ask for services in return. He accepts gifts and regrets his state in life and that his poverty doesn’t permit him to give more gifts to them. He defends them when they are accused of wrongdoing, and seeks material help for those in need. He turns to them in times of trouble for their advice and their comfort. He is vulnerable and humble with them, suffering correction and feeling free to correct them. However, even when he thinks something is good for a friend, he refuses to nag or insist but always respects their freedom to choose. He prays for them daily, and asks their prayers in return. He looks forward to playful babblings with them, and resting in their company from the stresses of his responsibilities and the scandals of the world. He arranges business trips, like his Lenten mission preaching, to be with them when he can. To his more intimates, he divulges of his innermost trials and asks for encouragement. They cooperate in some common work together, like helping the poor, the mission to the Chablais, the creation of the Florimontane Academy, the founding of the Visitation, the Oratory, and other projects. He calls on friends to

⁴⁷²“Vera amicitia, quia non est vera, nisi cum cum tu agglutinas inter haerentes sibi caritate diffusa in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum, qui datus est nobis.” *Confessions* IV, 7.

⁴⁷³“Vive Jesus! C’est en luy, par luy et pour luy que je suis sans fin, sans reserve et uniquement vostre. “ *Oeuvres... ltr.* CDXXIX.

help other friends, and introduces them to one another inviting them to share in their intimacy and affection. He even asks his friends to ask their friends to pray for him. In troubles and conflict he is a friend who quickly forgives because, whatever disagreements they may have, their friendship is based on Christ. His very affection for them is somehow within his love of God. And conversely, the comforts and encouragement he receives from them make him call their friendship a “blessing,” or a “corporal grace” given by God. They both believe their heart is one in two bodies. He tells his friends he has a great respect for their confidence, and honors it. He copies their agreeable qualities and always senses they are present in his heart. Yet he thinks this is no replacement for the communication of real physical presence, which somehow cultivates friendship. He is at once a kind of spiritual guide and friend, because there is no separation for him from his spiritual life and his daily living.

Ruptured friendships were rare. We can only wonder about friendships of his youth, since we have no account of any difficulties during that period of our author’s life. Dennis de Granier’s defection to the Church of England was a complete break. He was not an intimate, but was someone to whom he tried to be a friend. Francis felt betrayed no doubt, but this was not really a ruptured friendship. They were not intimately sharing themselves. Another broken friendship was with Madame Elisabeth-Arnault des Gouffiers, who was one of Francis’ Philothea. In spite of her contacts with Jane and the Visitation she caused them many trials and eventually broke off all contact with her ‘friends’. She was apparently imperious, and stubborn. She took it upon herself to begin the foundations of the Visitation in Lyon, Paris and Moulins without concerting her efforts with Francis or Jane!⁴⁷⁴ In the summer of 1616 Francis and Jane received the news of another monastery founded as a *fait accompli* from Msgr. de Marquemont, the local Bishop. Madame des Gouffiers was financing everything, including the operating costs. The only thing lacking was nuns to fill the convent! They decided not to embarrass her and scrambled to find a way to start still another monastery. They sent Mother de Brécharde and a few sisters from Annecy. Within a few months things became especially strained between her, “the superior”, and Mother de Brécharde, “the foundatrice.” Francis wrote both in an effort to make peace. “Both of you must carry and tolerate one another for the love of the Savior.”⁴⁷⁵ But Mother de Brécharde soon was too ill to leave her bed

⁴⁷⁴Cfr. Ravier, *Lettres...* pp.591-606.

⁴⁷⁵His letter to Mother Brécharde reads, “Souffrés, ne vous de pités point,

and Madame des Gouffiers thought Jane should come to replace her! Francis responded with a letter, by his standards very severe, after praising her zeal, he tells her: "I impose silence on your spirit, my very dear daughter." He then is careful to assure her that this is without any ill feelings, but part of patiently letting Providence to accommodate the many needs of the rapidly expanding Visitation.⁴⁷⁶

His momentary altercation with Mr. Foras wasn't really a ruptured friendship, but only a caveat. Was Francis serious when he threatened to withdraw his friendship from him if he pursued the couple forging defamatory letters? I think not. There are too many examples of him reaching out to and doing good for people trying to harm him. If he could break friendship over the incident, it means he could not pardon Foras, which is inconsistent with his entire life. It was a threat in a heated discussion, meant to forcefully stop a public scandal from getting any larger, and meant to mercifully allow the perpetrators an opening to reconciliation. In effect, there are no known cases of Francis de Sales entering into friendship and intimacy with a person who betrayed him, or with whom he later discovered he must "unsew" his friendship because their companionship was morally harmful. There are conflicts and disagreements, sometimes lasting for several days, but never vehement enough to threaten the existence of friendship between the parties. We know, for example, of the suspicions Jane's brother André voiced, accusing Francis of taking advantage of his niece Marie-Aimée after she died leaving her inheritance to the house of de Sales.⁴⁷⁷ We don't know if their friendship was able to surmount that breach of confidence during the remaining four years of Francis' life, but his expressions of hurt show that, for his part, Francis still considered André a friend. He was called upon on many occasions to be a peacemaker, but apparently never was himself in a degenerating situation beyond his own control.

The existence of so many friendships, and the virtual absence of any broken friendships leads to the conclusion that his friendships were

adoucisses tout, regardes que c'est la besoigne de Dieu a laquelle cette dame s'employe selon son sentiment, et vous selon le vostre et que toutes deux vous (vous) devez entreporter et entresupporter pour l'amour du Sauveur ... Croyes moy, il faut semer en travail, en perplexité, en angoisse, pour recueillir en joye, en consolation, en bonheur, et la sainte confiance en Dieu adoucit tout, impetre tout et établit tout." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCXXXVI.

⁴⁷⁶"Mays j'impose silence a vostre esprit, ma tres chere Fille, et ne veux pas quil die, non pas mesme, s'il se peut, qu'il pense que ces advis luy soyent donnés avec aucun desgoust." *Oeuvres..* ltr. MCCLXXX.

⁴⁷⁷Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCLXXXVII.

indeed stable. Perhaps he was lucky to never have been betrayed, or perhaps he was skilled at reading the human heart. Even granting this in his adult life, he must have experienced some disappointments in his youth. We cannot know, since his biographers never looked for it. His warnings about the danger of friendship and his advice to his brother to wait and see if the neighbor offering friendship is true and sincere, belie his awareness of the many ways friendship could go wrong. Did he learn it from personal experience or by watching others? Probably both.

Another unusual thing about Salesian friendships was their number and range. There are too many friends to recount: Madame de Souffour and her family,⁴⁷⁸ the de Blonay family,⁴⁷⁹ Madame de la Fléchère,⁴⁸⁰ fellow Bishops like, Msgr. Frémyot, Msgr. de Revol, Msgr. Camus and Msgr. Fenouillet, etc.⁴⁸¹ Could he really have had so many friends? The mixture of roles of spiritual guide and friend tend to blur the definition of friendship. He communicated with a great number of people about the spiritual life, but was there a mutual benevolence and communication? What did he really receive from Madame de Charmois, Anne-Jacqueline Coste, or Pernelle Boutey? He himself avows they encouraged him and even inspired him. It is important to keep in mind that whatever inequality his education and nobility may have represented, simple souls could have been his equal in what is most important--their love. Its communication is on a different level than the communication of ideas, and thus harder to define. It is more immediate and more profound.

It is difficult to admit any human being could really have so many friends. The ancients all agree that true friendship is rare and can only be had with a few. Granted, something could have been exchanged between the Doctor of love and all these persons, the amount and depth of communication surely varied widely. There are different degrees of friendship in his life. From friendly relations, like his clergy and the

⁴⁷⁸Cfr. R. Rousseau, *Mademoiselle de Souffour et l'évêque de Genève*, in *Vie Spirituelle*, n^o. 392, février 1954, et Bibliothèque Nationale, Pièces originales, vol. 2720.

⁴⁷⁹Cfr. L. E. Piccard, *Saint François de Sales et Claude de Blonay*, (1612) Congr. Soc. Savoie XII (1892) pp.139-166.

⁴⁸⁰Cfr. Mère F.-M. Chaugy, *Vies de huit vénérables veuves*, Annecy, Jacques Clerc, 1659.

⁴⁸¹There is even a famous text where he includes Richelieu, "J'appris a connoistre tout plein de Praelatz, et tout particulierement, M. l'Evesque de Lussion qui me jura toute amitié et me dit qu'en fin il se rangeroit a mon parti, pour ne penser plus qu'a Dieu et au salut des ames." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDLX.

people, to his inner circle, which included his family, Jeanne de Chantal, and Favre (Angélique Arnauld?). His limits as a human being forbid close friendship's engagement with more than a few. As one proceeds outward from that inner circle to the limits of the world of the people he knew, one moves from true friendship to relationships analogous to friendship. He was able to say "my people are almost wholly mine now," because love was returned for love. Even though it might be mutual and communicated that love was not intimate enough to really be called friendship, as we shall bring to light in the last part of this thesis.

It is an insight with his many lifelong friendships into how loyal a friend he was. It was the same for his diocese; that "miserable boat,"⁴⁸² was dear to him. "My poor wife moves me to compassion."⁴⁸³ No matter how poor and ravaged she was, he remained loyal to her. Despite this devotion to friendship and loving Christianly, he considers friendship's obligations secondary to his duties and responsibilities as Bishop. Friendship was often an aid to this, and may even often be within its boundaries, but it also limited his friendships in some way. The limits within morality are evident, but this is more like a choice between goods, not so much conflicting goods, as ranking them. He saw his life as a service, that service was naturally also to his friends, perhaps more intensely, and certainly different because it was mutual. As Bishop, and for that matter, as a priest his life was consecrated to serving the Church. For this reason, friendship with the man would have been difficult. He was always busy with so many other people and their needs. His friendship was intense, but his friends had to be able to share him too. Because they believed in his work and his gifts, his friends were probably glad to do so. Their respect for him was reciprocated to a very fine degree, as we learn from a letter where he chooses to cancel a voyage rather than inconvenience his friends.⁴⁸⁴ Even though one might argue this was simply the French discretion⁴⁸⁵ one would expect from any gentleman and noble, it stems from a values system well articulated and resolved in his mind. This shows, perhaps,

⁴⁸²He writes Possevino: "Si che io mi vidi vescoco di Ginevra in un momento, caricato della condotta di questa miserabile barca, tutta fracassata et dentro aperta." *Oeuvres...* CCCXXVIII.

⁴⁸³"Ma pauvre femme me fait compassion." *Oeuvres...* CCCXXVIII.

⁴⁸⁴"Plustost que d'incommoder mes amis en chose non necessaire, je romprois le voyage tout a fait." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCLXI.

⁴⁸⁵Discretion is the way he translates temperance, when he lists the four cardinal virtues, Cfr. *Oeuvres...*III, p.202.

that to say his friendships were secondary to his vocation is too strong. They were integrated into that vocation. The obligations to his priesthood and the obligations to his friendships were not opposed. Their bonds were not contrary to any other bond, but somehow reinforced each other. One might even argue that vocation was most intensely realized in friendship. It may seem he was spread thinly with so many intimates and pressing duties as Bishop, but if he was still able to share friendship with as many isn't this too an argument for the unity of their hearts and minds? If his friends regretted his absence or the paucity of time he was able to accord, they never complained. Indeed, even with so many duties and other friends waiting to hear from him, he was still more faithful in his correspondence than many with much less to do.

We can see from the man's life that he was himself a person who felt things strongly and loved powerfully. He was attracted to people of the same cloth. For all the benefits and consolations he received in friendship, what enabled him to extend to so many was a heart already sane and full of love itself. St. Bernard remarks that "Love is rich of itself. Its fruit is its activity."⁴⁸⁶ With Francis de Sales, the Doctor of love, his activity was his tireless "inter-est," his being-to-being attraction and engagement with other people. He told Jane once, "It pleased God to make my heart that way."⁴⁸⁷ Friendship was somehow the natural term of his heart's generosity. Yet that activity touched him, deepening his love and improving it, and likewise, friendship with him excited a desire for excellence in his friends, proving a means of their transformation.

If friendship consists more in loving than being loved, it demands a person with a love sufficient in itself, and yet remains, nonetheless, vulnerable and needing to share. But these are questions for later. Let us now turn to Francis' own explanation of friendship in his letters and works to determine why he was this kind of a friend. His theory of friendship is the counterpart to his life of friendship.

⁴⁸⁶ *Sermon* 83.

⁴⁸⁷ "Il n'y a point d'ames au monde, comme je pense, qui cherissent plus cordialement, tendrement et, pour le dire tout a la bonne foy, plus amoureuxment que moy; car il a pleu a Dieu de faire mon coeur ainsy." *Oeuvres...* ltr.MDCCCLXVII.

XI

Spiritual Friendship: “One by the other, one in the other”

The importance of friendship, the most dangerous of loves

Is friendship important for the moral life in Salesian thought? We have already witnessed its central place in his biography, but does he ever articulate its value? If there is one succinct and practical work that lays out Francis de Sale’s view of Christian life, it is unquestionably *The Introduction to the Devout Life*. One sign of friendship’s importance will be its place in his overall view represented in this practical composition.

The entire work is consecrated to the labor of purifying one’s heart and affections. He makes prayer’s role indispensable in this evolution. Opening one’s heart to the divine, together with our resolutions, allows the soul to participate successively in divine grace, evolving toward what the Doctor of love calls perfection where the soul resembles its Creator, loving what He loves for its own sake, as He loves it. That discussion on praying, in a constant inner retreat amidst every state and situation of life, leads to instructions on the practice of virtue. Thus, he brings together the two grand axes of Catholicism: grace and our own efforts in the process of a soul’s advancement toward what the Fathers of the Church called divinization. Friendship has an important place in

his schema, falling under instructions on the study of virtue beside chastity, humility, poverty of spirit and obedience.

After treating the various ways the passions of the heart are led toward or away from God, he turns to love “King of all the movements of the heart,” because “it turns all things toward itself and causes us to be like what we love.”¹ He draws a conclusion, bringing his discourse to friendship for the first time with this startling affirmation: “Hence Philothea, you must be on your guard against having any evil love, for thus you would soon become completely evil yourself. Friendship is the most dangerous of loves, since other kinds may be had without intercommunication, but friendship is completely based on this, and we can hardly have such communication with a person without participating in his qualities.”² The potential for communicating another’s qualities and its causes will come into focus of our study later. For now it is enough to show that friendship is important because it somehow molds a person.

Francis does not stop at merely implying friendship is important; he says it is *necessary* for persons walking along the “rough and slippery passages” of life among the worldly, to form an alliance of holy friendship and “hold on to one another”. To live in a religious community is like walking on the plains, and there one need not hold the hand of another, however, life in the world is full of difficulties. There friendship is indispensable, he says, “to assure and help one another among the many wretched passages they must cross.”³ “For,”

¹“L’amour tient le premier rang entre les passions de l’ame: c’est le roy de tous les mouvemens du coeur, il convertit tout le reste a soy et nous rend telz que ce qu’il ayme (*Hosea*).” *Oeuvres...III*, p.194. Compare this with Bonaventure’s comments: “The effect of love is first among all the passions, and the root of all the others, as in many places St. Augustine proves, above all in bk XIV of *The City of God*. It is the most noble passion of all, because it has the most generosity. For it is the gift by which all other gifts are given us and in this consist all the happiness of intellectual beings. For this there is nothing in creatures more delicious than mutual love, and without love one finds no pleasure. For this reason the Philosopher says that friendship is either happiness itself, or has happiness as its fruit.” *In I Sent.* d.10, a.1, q.2. Francis is reiterating classic Christian doctrine as he advances his argument.

²“Prenez donc bien garde, ma Philothee, de n’en point avoir de mauvais, car tout aussi tost vous seriez toute mauvaise. Or l’amitié est le plus dangereux amour de tous, parce que les autres amours peuvent estre sans communication, mais l’amitié estant totalemente fondee sur icelle, on ne peut presque l’avoir avec une personne sans participer a ses qualitez.” *Oeuvres...III*, pp.194-195.

³“Et comme ceux qui cheminent en la plaine n’ont pas besoin de se prester la main, mais ceux qui sont es chemins scabreux et glissans s’entretiennent l’un

he explains, “by this way they love each other, they help each other and they carry one another to the good.”⁴ He goes on to lament that in the world all do not aspire to the same kind of life, nor do all have the same kind of spirit, leaving us to understand that the greatest dangers are in the snares and wiles of the worldly. He therefore thinks it indispensable to separate from them and forge friendships with those of like aspirations.⁵

If the one great advantage and great danger of life in the world is friendship, friendship is truly the fulcrum of his spirituality. Francis de Sales’ great contribution to the way we interpret lay Christian living, as we have already seen, was to bring all the rigors of perfect Christian existence into any state of life in the world. Friendship is one of the great pillars his new vista is built upon. It is the key to his ingenuity. Both are new, and both complement one another. This is why he refers to friendship in one text as a virtue.⁶ Like every virtue, he saw friendship as a human activity requiring effort and skill first in judgment, but also in mastering one’s passions. He defies both Jane and Favre to be better at this “craft of friendship.”⁷ What he calls the

l’autre pour cheminer plus seurement, ainsy ceux qui sont es Religions n’ont pas besoin des amitiés particulieres, mais ceux qui sont au monde en ont necessité pour s’asseurer et secourir les uns les autres, parmi tant de mauvais passages qu’il leur faut franchir.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.204.

⁴“Mais quant a ceux qui sont entre les mondains et qui embrassent la vraie vertu, il leur est necessaire de s’allier les uns aux autres par une sainte et sacree amitié; car par le moyen d’icelle ilz s’animent, ilz s’aydent, ilz s’entreportent au bien.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.204.

⁵“Au monde, tous ne conspirent pas a mesme fin, tous n’ont pas le mesme esprit; il faut donq sans doute se tirer a part et fare des amitiés selon nostre pretention.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.202.

⁶“Mais quand en particulier nous aymons ardemment d’estre aymes, le zeile, ou bien l’ardeur de cet amour, devient jalousie; d’autant que l’amitié humanie, quoy qu’elle soit vertu, si est ce qu’elle a cette imperfection, a rayon de nostre imbecillité, qu’estant departie a plusieurs, la part d’un chacun en est moindre.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.12. He credits St. Thomas with the notion that friendship is a virtue: “Et saint Thomas, comme tous les bons philosophes, confesse que l’amitié est une vertu (II II Qu. 23, art. III, ad I.)” *Oeuvres...* III, p.203.

⁷“Je me contenteray de ne cesser point de vous cherir autant comme ma fille, que vous le cheries comme vostre filz; et si, je vous desfie de faire mieux que moy ce mestier.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCXCV to Jane de Chantal. To Favre he writes as a young man in his first letter accepting his friendship: “Quare cum jam per litteras ac obsignato veluti rescripto feverentem jam et suapte natura pugnacissimum hoc in genere certandi militem provocaveris.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.

“passion of friendship,”⁸ that is the rush of affection and natural desire everyone has to participate in friendship’s loving and being loved, has two sides, two possibilities, one a pitfall, the other a highway. “Indeed, these two divine words are two great columns to assure Christian life. The first is from the book of *Wisdom: Who fears God will have likewise a good friendship*; the other is from St. James: *Friendship with this world is enmity with God*.⁹ Somewhere between friendship with the world and the fear of God, lies the delicate balance of blameless friendship and Christian perfection in the world. Friendship has a supporting role in the Salesian innovation to live perfectly among the slippery paths and turmoils of a world that does not belong to God. Just how Francis understands that role will also be part of our ensuing investigation.

The place of friendship in the *Introduction to the Devout Life* shows that Francis de Sales considers friendship fundamental in the progress toward perfection, among things within our human power to that end.¹⁰ One might argue, moreover, that since the entire process is one of purifying the loves and attachments of the human heart, that its place is somehow universal, since it applies to many loves usually admiring several qualities in a person. At the same time, friends aid one another in the pursuit of some good outside themselves, often making it possible for them to enjoy it more, not only by sharing it, but even in obtaining it. If friendship is the most dangerous of loves, it is because it also has the potential to reap the most benefit.

That trend is confirmed in his letters explicitly, as for example when he writes Jane’s only son, Celse-Bénigne, as he embarks upon his adult life, offering this counsel on how to live “Christianly” and virtuously: He tells him to openly declare his commitment to Christian virtue with some friends, that they may not be pulled down by those “miserable

IX.

⁸“Et comme m’eussies vous peu tant aymer si vous n’eussies eu le sentiment de l’invariable nature de mon ame en cette passion d’amitié?” *Oeuvres...* ltr.MCCCLXXXVII.

⁹“En fin, ces deux divines parolles sont deux grandes colonnes pour bien assurer la vie chrestienne. L’une est du Sage (Eccl 6.17): *Qui craint Dieu aura pareillement une bonne amitié*; l’autre est de saint Jacques (James 4.4) *L’amitié de ce monde est ennemi de Dieu*.” *Oeuvres...*III, p.213

¹⁰ In contrast to the Protestants, who since Luther wholly rejected any notion of habitual states or divinisation possible, because human wretchedness is too deep, this treatise on human efforts to progress in virtue is all the more accentuated. It is nothing new to Catholicism, but that great polemic made it all the more necessary to explain and develop the idea.

souls who attack others, to reduce them to following in their train.”¹¹ He thinks it is impossible to overestimate the importance of such an open commitment. “For it is infinitely beneficial to you to make known early such as you want to always be; and in that, you must not compromise.”¹² In the next breath he advises Celse-Bénigne that it will also be “infinitely beneficial” to him to make some friends of the same intention, so that they may both “carry and strengthen one another.” Francis explains, “For it is something very true that commerce with those who have their souls well trained serves us infinitely to well train or keep well trained our own.”¹³

Friendship holds a deciding place in Christian growth for Francis de Sales. In the words of André Ravier, “For Francis de Sales, mystical life is daily life with its foreseen and unforeseen events, its sufferings and joys, its friendships and its separations, its worries and its consolations, a natural life but *drenched* (to use Francis’ own words), completely penetrated, by and in the will of God. It is a form of martyrdom very agreeable to God.”¹⁴ The humanity of his conception of holiness was his salient contribution to our modern view. If the love of God, grace, works in human ways, in daily life, then where can it be

¹¹“Je voudrays que d’abord, en devis et maintien et en conversation, vous fussies profession ouverte et expresse de vouloir vivre vertueusement, judicieusement, constamment et chrestienement... si vous ne tesmoignes pas avec perseverance une volonté esgale et inviolable, vous exposeres vos resolutions aux desseins et attaques de plusieurs miserables ames qui attaquent les autres ou les reduire a leur train.” *Oeuvres... ltr. DCXXXVII.*

¹²“Or, il importe infiniment de se faire connoistre de bonne heure tel qu’on veut estre tous-jours; et en cela, il ne faut pas marchander.” *Oeuvres... ltr. DCXXXVII.*

¹³ “Il vous importera aussi infiniment de faire quelques amis de mesme intention, avec lesquelz vous puissies vous entreporter et fortifier; car c’est une chose vraye que le commerce de ceux qui ont l’ame bien dressee, nous sert infiniment a bien dresser ou a bien tenir dressee la nostre.” *Oeuvres... ltr. DCXXXVII.* He gives similar advice to Présidente Brûlart for her daughter Françoise in ltr. DLXXXVIII.

¹⁴“Pour François de Sales, la vie mystique, c’est la vie, la vie quotidienne, la vie avec ses événements prévus et ses événements imprévisibles, ses souffrances et ses joies, ses amitiés et ses séparations, ses soucis et ses consolations, la vie naturelle mais toute pénétrée, ‘détremepée’ pour reprendre son mot, par et dans la volonté de Dieu, : c’est là à ses yeux, une forme, encore très agréable à Dieu, du martyre.” A. Ravier, préface to *Saint François de Sales, Oeuvres... Collection Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, Paris 1969, pp.LXXXI-LXXXII.*

more human than in human love's most far reaching and profound engagement—friendship?

The great benefit and risk of friendship lies in what it communicates. It is such a basic part of daily life that its importance can hardly be over estimated. We are social creatures, and everything we do has therefore a social dimension. He was keenly aware that mysteriously perfect friends participate in one another's very personality and really become "one sole heart from two,"¹⁵ or as the ancients loved to repeat: "two bodies in one soul."¹⁶ Relationships somehow determine what we are, and the most influential are those pertaining to whom our love reaches to embrace in the most intimate engagement of the soul. That enigma of this particular way human beings grow and develop qua human, in the very fonts of our personality, is the crux of our remaining work.

All love is not friendship

If we become like the things we love, emulating them and admiring their every aspect, then how much more so when that love is able to share and communicate itself mutually. Love beholds from afar, but friendship interacts, it gives and takes. Friendship differs from love, Francis therefore goes on to illustrate, practically borrowing Aristotle's words, because it is always mutual.¹⁷ What's more, it is not enough that it be mutual, but the individuals must openly express their feelings to have friendship and not simply love. But still, mutually expressed admiration will not be able to become friendship until they are able to establish "private and familiar communication together."¹⁸ That kind of communication takes time, although sometimes, as we have noticed in Francis' life, friendship can begin almost immediately. These are very

¹⁵ "Un seul coeur de deux". *Oeuvres...* Itr. DCI. Recall that in the Salesian psychology the very seat of our personality is the heart. See for example the *Traité*, bk 1, ch. X *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.54-62. See supra, p.79ff.

¹⁶ Francis cites Gregory, but the expression was already classic when Augustine used it in his *Confessions*. "Saint Gregoire Nazianzene se vante cent fois de l'amitié noppareille qu'il eut avec le grand saint Basile, et la décrit en cette sorte (Orat. 43.20) 'Il sembloit qu'en l'un et l'autre de nous, il n'y eust q'une seul ame portant deux cors'." *Oeuvres...* III, p.203.

¹⁷ Aristotle concludes in the *Nicomachean Ethics* "To be friends, then, they must be mutually recognized as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other." VIII, 2, 1156a.

¹⁸ "Or, la mutuelle correspondance consiste en trois pointz: car il faut que les amis s'entr'ayment, sachant qu'ilz s'entr'ayment et qu'ilz ayent communication, privaute et familiarite ensemble." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.71

rare, so much so that one might even consider them a special grace. Nonetheless, even those require time to progress in familiarity and share one another's happiness as well as sadness. In the measure they communicate themselves by, as the ancients would say, eating many bushels of salt together,¹⁹ their friendship deepens. And because affection alone is not a basis for friendship's confidence, he also believed, as we have seen that a certain caution was prudent in the beginning. Give your friendship apparently at first, he would counsel, and in time you will know if you can truly give it.²⁰ Thus Francis cautions, "All love is not friendship," there must be some kind of communication accompanying this reciprocal love.²¹ Indeed, in his mind communication is the "fundament" of what defines the very essence of friendship's character. "According to the different kinds of communication," the Doctor of love teaches, "friendships also differ, and communications differ according to the variety of goods exchanged."²² As Aelred of Rievaulx put it "There can be love without friendship, but friendship without love is impossible."²³

In order to know the Salesian concept of friendship, therefore, we must consider the different aspects of this exchange. First in what it is not, and then in the end communication tends toward union, which will reveal something about the nature of love that enables friendship to communicate so profoundly. Once we have explored the limits of communication, we will then move to consider what the Doctor of love

¹⁹ "Multos modios salis simul edendos esse, ut amicitiae munus expletum sit." §67, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ed. Combès, p.43. Aristotle cites the same proverb in *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 81156b 27.

²⁰ "Ou ce bon homme veut a bon escient nostre amitié, et nous ne la luy devons pas refuser; ou il la veut seulement apparemment, et tell il la luy faudra donner, et, en peu de tems, au soleil la neige se fendra et l'ordure sera decouverte." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CL.

²¹ "Tout amour n'est pas amitié; car 1) on peut aymer sans estre ayme, et lhors il y a de l'amour, mais non pas de l'amitié, d'autant que l'amitié est un amour mutuel, et s'il n'est pas mutuel, ce n'est pas amitié. 2) Et ne suffit pas qu'il soit mutuel, mais il faut que les parties qui s'entr'ayment sachent leur reciproque affection, car si elles l'ignorent elles auront de l'amour, mais non pas de l'amitié. 3) Il faut avec cela qu'il y ayt entre elles quelque sorte de communication qui soit le fondement de l'amitié." *Oeuvres...* III, p.195.

²² "Selon la diversité des communications l'amitié est aussi diverse, et les communications sont differentes selon la difference des biens qu'on s'entrecommunique: si ce sont des biens faux et vains, l'amitié est fause et vaine, si ce sont des vrayes biens, l'amitié est vraye; et plus excellens seront les biens, plus excellente sera l'amitié." *Oeuvres...* III, p.195.

²³ *De Spirituali Amicitia* III, § 2.

attributes as the causes of communication's healthy functioning. Next we will come to the effects of communication, and then we will look at two forms of friendship, marriage and spiritual direction. And finally, we will bring together arguments to show that friendship is a means for salvation.

Perfect Friendship

False Friendships

Perhaps the best place to begin to explain the Salesian idea of friendship is with what it is not. In a lengthy passage of *The Devout Life*, he warns Philothea about false friendships, that often begin on spiritual terms, especially between young persons of opposite sex. If one isn't very careful, these friendships mix with frivolous loves, then sensual love, and can end in a spiritual attachment to base things. At different occasions in his writings he calls it, "bad," "mundane," "sensual," "vain" or "frivolous" friendship. He uses the image of the fox that steals into the vineyard, or the fly in the ointment that ruins our resolutions.²⁴ Since these are not guided by reason or directed to goodness, but rather "founded on the communication of sensual pleasures," he explains, they are unworthy of the name friendship and passing. "They melt like the snow in the sun."²⁵ He likens it to a certain kind of honey that causes insanity, because like an opiate, unnoticeably, harmful effects easily slip under its good guise.²⁶ Such friendships are

²⁴Cfr. *Oeuvres...Itr.* DIV to Jane de Chantal.

²⁵"L'amitié fondée sur la communication des plaisirs sensuels est tout grossière, et indigne du nom d'amitié, comme aussi celle qui est fondée sur des vertus frivoles et vaines, parce que ces vertus dépendent aussi des sens. ... Ce sont ordinairement les amitiés des jeunes gens ... amitiés dignes de l'âge des amans qui n'ont encore aucune vertu qu'en bourse ni nul jugement qu'en bouton; aussi telles amitiés ne sont que passagères et fondent comme la neige au soleil." *Oeuvres... III*, p.196.

²⁶"Voyez donc le grand avertissement, ma Philothée. Le miel d'Heraclee qui est si veneneux, rassemble à l'autre qui est si salutaire: il y a grand danger de prendre l'un pour l'autre ou de les prendre meslés, car la bonté de l'un n'empêcherait pas la nuisance de l'autre. Il faut être sur sa garde pour n'être point trompé en ces amitiés, notamment quand elles se contractent entre personnes de divers sexe, sous quel prétexte que ce soit, car bien souvent Satan donne le change à ceux qui aiment. On commence par l'amour vertueux, mais si on n'est fort sage l'amour frivole se meslera, puis l'amour sensuel, puis l'amour spirituel si on n'est fort sur sa garde." *Oeuvres... III*, p.206.

marked by affected flattery and passionate cajoling. They praise sensual qualities, like physical beauty, skills like dancing and poise, rather than virtue.²⁷ “Its fruits are: distraction of the heart, clouding of the mind, disgust of the soul, and dissipation of one’s interior faculties.”²⁸ Mundane friendship causes one to lose oneself in stares, inordinate sighs and caresses. It complains that it is not loved enough and searches kisses and other uncivil favors. It is manipulative, deploring the light and preferring to remain hidden, “foretelling a ruin of forthrightness.”²⁹ Indeed, he uses the word false friendship interchangeable with impudent love.³⁰

“True friendship of charity,” he tells Jane, “is plain-dealing, frank, open, without pride, without subtle refinement, wholly simple, in no way jealous in no way affected.”³¹ Whereas true friendship is frank, honest and loyal, false friendship frequently turns sour, demanding things that are illicit, and when refused is full of insults, calumny, sadness, confusion and jealousy.³² “It has no more right to the title of

²⁷“L’amitié mondaine produit ordinairement un grand amas de paroles emmiellees, une cajolerie de petitz motz passionnes et de louanges tirees de la beauté, de la grace et des qualites sensuelles; mais l’amitié sacree a un langage simple et franc, ne peut louer que la vertu et grace de Dieu, unique fondement sur lequel elle subsiste.” *Ouvres...* III, p.207.

²⁸“Les fruitz sont: distraction de coeur, obscurcissement d’esprit, degoustement d’ame, dissipation des facultes interieurs. Oh! Dieu vous defende de ces accidens.” *Ouvres...* ltr. DIV.

²⁹“La fausse amitié provoque un tournoyement d’esprit qui fait chanceler la personne en la chastete et devotion, la portant a des regards affectes, mignards et immoderes, a des caresses sensuelles, a des souspirs desordonnes, a des petites plaintes de n’estre pas aymee, a des petites, mais recherchees, mais attrayantes contenance, galanterie, poursuite des baysers, et autres privautes et faveurs inciviles, presages certains et indubitables d’une prochaine ruine de l’honnesteté.” *Ouvres...* III, p.207.

³⁰“Que je suis consolé de la guerison de ce bon personnage, atteint ci-devant d’amour indiscret ou faulses amitiés.” *Ouvres...* ltr. CCCLXXXV.

³¹“La vraye amitié de charité est ronde, franche, ouverte, sans fierté, sans finesse, toute simple, point jalouse, point affectee.” *Ouvres...* ltr. DIV.

³²“En fin le miel d’Heraclee donne une grande amertume en la bouche: ainsy les fausses amitiés se convertissent et terminent en paroles et demandes charnelles et puantes, ou, en cas de refus, a des injures, calomnies, impostures, tristesses, confusions et jalousies qui aboutissent bien souvent en abrutissement et forcenerie; mais la chaste amitié est tous-jours egalemt honneste, civile et amiable, et jamais ne se convertit qu’en une plus parfaite et pure union d’espritz, image vive de l’amitié bienheureuse que l’on exerce au Ciel.” *Ouvres...* III, p.206.

friendship among men than that of asses and horses for like effects.”³³ Sensual friendships, he remarks, are most often found between the young, who are fascinated by the way someone speaks, their hair, the way they dress or laugh and sing. They have no idea about true qualities worthy of admiration, for “Charlatans hold as most virtuous among themselves those who are the biggest buffoons.”³⁴

For the most part he seems to be warning young women of flatterers, which he calls “fickle loves,”³⁵ because they have no intention of marriage and are only vainly playing, soon degenerating into impurity under various excuses. These friendships he remarks, usually spring from the vulnerability every person has because of our need to love and be loved. A healthy and natural God-given need strong enough to expel us from the cocoon of selfishness also leaves us vulnerable to making it an end of life. Francis explains to his *débutante* that usually, rather than examining the person’s character, this kind of love is concerned only with satisfying its tastes and instincts. We might call the same thing infatuation, because it is in love with the idea of being in love, and hardly motivated by benevolence. Once entangled they have great difficulty extracting themselves. Apart from these persons unwittingly duped he includes the Casanova, those who try to “capture blind hearts by love” for the glory of it.³⁶ They too are beguiled but for other

³³“La communication des voluptés charnelles est une mutuelle propension et amorce brutale, laquelle ne peut non plus porter le nom d’amitié entre les hommes que celles des asnes et chevaux pour semblables effets.” *Oeuvres... III*, p.194.

³⁴“Oyes parler la plupart des filles, des femmes et des jeunes gens, ilz ne se feindront nullement de dire: un tel gentilhomme est fort vertueux, il a beaucoup de perfections, car il danse bien, il joue bien a toutes sortes de jeux, il s’habille bien, il chante bien, il cajole bien, il a bonne mine; et les charlatans tiennent pour les plus vertueux d’entre eux ceux qui sont les plus grans bouffons.” *Oeuvres... III*, p.196.

³⁵The English translation most available in the United States by Fr. J. Ryan translates “amourettes” as “fond loves” this doesn’t adequately grasp the idea. Cfr *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Image Books, Doubleday, New York, 1972. We prefer a translation recently done in India, “flirtations or fickle loves,” which we use here. Cfr *Introduction to the Devout Life* translated by Frs. A. Nazareth, A. Mookenthottam, and A. Kolencherry, S.F.S. Publications, Fransalian Institute of Spirituality, Malleswaram, Bangalore 560 055, 1990.

³⁶“Quand ces amitiés folastres se pratiquent entre gens de divers sexe, et sans pretention du mariage, elles s’appellent amourettes, car n’estans que certains avortons, ou plustost fantomes d’amitié,... Et bien que ces sottes amours vont ordinairement fondre et s’abîmer en des charnalites et lascivetes fort vilaines...Les uns n’ont d’autre dessein que d’assouvir leurs coeurs a

reasons. He warns such friendships are always vain, evil and foolish and don't even bring pleasure, except for "eagerly hoping without knowing what they want or seek."³⁷ Our heart is weak and easily pulled into such relationships. The person who thinks he will only taste a little manipulating love at will is risking both soul and honor. "You want to play with it," he admonishes, "but it will itch and cruelly bite you."³⁸

The Doctor of love is developing here what Aristotle named friendships of pleasure. The chief thing they communicate is some delight that ultimately has its source in selfish gratification. Whether the person is famous and brings the friend renown, beautiful, strong, or makes one laugh, all these things exchanged remain on a sensual level, and are therefore only as lasting as the pleasures exchanged. They encompass more than flirtatious relationships between the opposite sexes, any ulterior motive might pertain to them. They are all a kind of friendship with the world, which he reminds Jane is enmity with God. They leave the soul numb and are full of vanities.³⁹ Francis goes a bit further than Aristotle, applying them to the interior Christian life,

donner et recevoir de l'amour...Les autres se laissent aller a cela par vanite, leur estant advis que ce ne soit pas peu de gloire de prendre et lier les coeurs par amour." *Oeuvres...III*, p.197-198. The idea of platonic friendship, to which Francis alludes here, was in vogue in 16th century France; Marguerite de Navarre, Marsile Ficin, Le Fevre de la Boderie, and Honoré d'Urfé, all treated it. Cfr. R. Murphy, *Saint François de Sales et la civilité chrétienne*, Nizet, Paris 1964, pp. 157-159 for more.

³⁷"Ces amitiés sont toutes mauvaises, folles et vaines: mauvaises, d'autant qu'elles aboutissent et se terminent enfin au peché de la chair, et qu'elles desrobent l'amour et par consequent le coeur a Dieu, a la femme et au mari, a qui il estoit deu; folles, parce qu'elles n'ont ni fondement ni rayson; vaines, parce qu'elles ne rendent aucun proffit, ni honneur, ni contentement. Au contraire elles perdent le tems, embarassent l'honneur, sans donner aucun plaisir que celui d'un empressement de pretendre et esperer, sans sçavoir ce qu'on veut ni qu'on pretend." *Oeuvres... III*, pp.199.

³⁸"J'en veux bien prendre, me dira quelqu'un, mais non pas fort avant. Helas! vous vous trompés, ce feu d'amour est plus actif et penetrant qu'il ne vous semble; vous cuyderes n'en recevoir qu'une estincelle, et vous seres tout estonné de voir qu'en un moment il aura saisy tout vostre coeur...o folz et insensés, cuydes-vous charmer l'amour pour le pouvoir manier a vostre gré? Vous vous voules joïer avec luy, il vous piquera et mordra malheureusement". *Oeuvres...III*, p.200-201.

³⁹"Ayes memoire de l'advis de saint Jacques: *L'amitié du monde est ennemie de Dieu*. [4.4]. Gardes vous de recevoir ou nourrir aucune amitié mondaine, sous quel pretexte que ce soit; ceci est un point d'importance." *Oeuvres... ltr. DIV*.

warning they are more harmful than mere side-tracks. For he believes, as classic Catholic teaching espouses, everything a person does leaves a mark on them. That the heart is trained little by little to love what it loves. Just as a man learns to play the piano by playing the piano, he learns justice by being just, or conversely he learns vice by doing vicious things. Francis de Sales extrapolates this maxim to the intimate exchange of friendship: we become like the persons we communicate with in mutual love. As he puts it in his Christian manifesto to Jane's only son, "once affection has taken its course, it drags judgment like a slave to very impertinent choices."⁴⁰ Judgment is colored by these affections because a person's whole orientation is affected. Their being or character is inseparable from their freely chosen acts. He suggests we are not merely learning a skill, but participating in the qualities of another person, sharing ourselves, opening our hearts and thus feeding a side of our personality. He calls it "*sympathie*" a feeling of compatibility sharing the same passions, and spurring us to imitate these qualities in the person one loves.⁴¹ "We commonly say," he summarizes, "that the goods of the thing loved belong more to he who loves them, than to he who possesses them."⁴² Traditional theology would say, the lover becomes connatural with the beloved. The word 'affect' is commonly used in English synonymously for 'to influence,' showing the relation between affection and sway on a person. Life is a constant being and becoming, and everything we do shapes our spiritual and intimate self in some way, but perhaps nothing more so than friendship. This explains why he takes it so seriously in the formation of one's heart.

"A friend is an enemy," he cautions, "when he wants to lead us to sin, and merits the forfeit of friendship when he wants to lose and damn a friend."⁴³ He warns Philothea to break off any such friendships and to

⁴⁰"Car, quand une fois l'affection a pris sa course, elle traîne le jugement comme un esclave, a des choix fort impertinents et dignes du repentir qui les suit par apres bien tost.." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXXXVII.

⁴¹"La sympathie est une certaine participation que nous avons aux passions de ceux que nous ayons; et cet amour d'imitation fait que nous attirons en nous les vertus ou les vices que nous voyons en eux." *Oeuvres...* IX, p.374.

⁴²"La passion de l'amour est la premiere et la plus fort que soit en l'ame; de là vient que l'amour nous rend tellement propre ce que nous ayons, que nous disons communement que les biens de la chose aimée sont plus a celui qui aime qu'a celui qui les possède. Voyla que c'est la sympathie." *Oeuvres...* IX, p.374.

⁴³"L'ami est ennemi quand il nous veut conduire au peché, et merite de perdre l'amitié quand il veut perdre et damner l'ami." *Oeuvres...* III, p.215.

avoid all contact with these false friends. Once they are admitted into your heart, he admonishes, it is very difficult to expel them. He writes Jane at the beginning of her spiritual direction, "Cut, end these friendships and don't amuse yourself in untying them. Their knots are fine, intertwined and enmeshed; you will think to undo them and they will ensnare even stronger."⁴⁴ Indeed he thinks it such an exigency, he tells Jane it is not he but God who commands it, showing how fundamental relationships are to the moral life in his mind.⁴⁵

Yet in spite of these warnings he seems to have been able to look philosophically at those instances where someone was stung by false friendship. In one letter he comments "These are illness like slight fevers: they leave behind them a grand health."⁴⁶ Francis explains on another occasion that one of the most sure ways to the highest degree of Christian perfection is in having the humility to love being corrected.⁴⁷ The grand health he mentions here is no doubt the wisdom gained from failure in false love, leaving one to be less inclined to follow "the deceit" of their own impulsive judgments. This kind of failure can even happen in spiritual friendship, since sadly, as he puts it, "just as the vines that produce the best wine are most subject to redundancy and need more to be pruned and fortified, so too does friendship, even spiritual friendship."⁴⁸ He adds that one shouldn't be surprised if "little accidents" disappoint us in spiritual friendship, because the most sincere and purest intentions of the human heart tend "to rust and foul" if one isn't vigilant. The ways that friendship can be corrupted are so

⁴⁴"Coupés, tranchés ces amitiés, et ne vous amuses pas a les desnoïer: il faut les ciseaux et le couteau. Non, les noeudz sont minces, entrefichés, entortillés; vous les penseres desfaire, et les entreficheres plus fort; vos ongles [sont] trop courtes pour passer toutes ces boucles. Ce n'est qu'au couteau tranchant qu'on les coupe; aussi bien les cordons ne valent rien: qu'on ne les espargne point." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DIV.

⁴⁵"Ce n'est pas moy qui dis ceci, c'est Dieu." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DIV.

⁴⁶"Ce sont des maladies qui sont comme les fievres legeres: elles layssent apres elles une grande santé." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXXXV.

⁴⁷"Plus heureuses encores celles qui sont tousjours prestes a la recevoir [la correction] avec un coeur doux, paisible et tranquille; elles ont ja fait un grand chemin. ... car malgré toutes les tricheries de la prudence humaine elles arriveront au plus haut point de la perfection chrestienne." *Oeuvres...* X, p.350.

⁴⁸Francis writes a Philothea disappointed in spiritual friendship, "Les vignes qui produisent le meilleur vin qui plus sujets aux superfluités et ont plus besoin d'estre emondees et retranchees? Telle est l'amitié, mesme spirituelle." *Oeuvres...* CCCXLVII.

subtle and numerous that Francis laments, one is often mistaken to think he has a true friend.⁴⁹

Thus the real danger we risk in friendship is not really having a friendship, but to give love for false things, whether compelled by some exaggerated need, or for the temporary satisfaction of some pleasure. This coupled with the natural need and desire to loved and be loved makes it easy, almost too easy to love. Francis therefore cautions, “The danger of loving badly is related to how easy it is to love.”⁵⁰ Aristotle would add that friendships based on some utility, which he says are most common among the old, are another form of false friendships. These are the kinds of friendship where one is, for example, friends with a neighbor for the things he borrows, or because of work the person offers, etc. Francis de Sales wouldn’t even call such ‘business relations’ friendship. He considers them only a kind of coveting, saying we love these things only in so far as they serve us, the way one loves his clothing.⁵¹ However, true friendship is both eminently useful and pleasurable, because, he comments, the love we hold for them renders us happy, which is an “honest coveting by which they belong to us and we belong also to them.”⁵²

If friendship is so dangerous why should we even risk being swept away into false loves and ultimate unhappiness? Francis offers a solution to the jeopardy of acquiring a friend’s bad qualities. After all, as he points out, practically everyone has some imperfection to communicate! He asks rhetorically, “Why do we have to receive pell-mell a friend’s blemishes and imperfections with his friendship?” It

⁴⁹“Qu’elle ne s’estonne nullement de cet inconvenient; car ce n’est qu’une crasse et rouillure qui a accoutumé de s’engendrer au coeur humain sur les plus pures et sinceres affections, si on ne s’en prend garde... en leur commencement, on ne sçauroit presque les voir, si on n’a les yeux bien essués et ouvertz. Ce n’est donc pas merveilles si on s’y trompe souvent.” *Oeuvres...* CCCXLVII.

⁵⁰“Le danger de mal aymer est ataché a la facilité d’aymer.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.320.

⁵¹ “Il y a des biens desquelz nous nous servons en les employant, comme sont nos esclaves, nos serviteurs, nos chevaux, nos habitz; et l’amour que nous leur portons est un amour de pure convoitise, car nous ne les aymons pas que pour nostre profit.” *Oeuvres...* IV p.144.

⁵²“Il y a des biens desquelz nous jouissons, mais d’une reciproque et mutuellement esgale jouissance, comme nous faysons de nos amis; car l’amour que nous leur portons entant qu’ilz nous rendent du contentement, est voirement amour de convoitise, mais convoitise honneste par laquelle ilz sont a nous et nous egalement a eux, ilz nous appartiennent, et nous pareillement leur appartenons.” *Oeuvres...* IV p.144.

suffices to simply be careful, since the participating in another's qualities we have been talking about is merely subtle and sweet, but not absolutely compelling. Clearly, one should love a friend in spite of his or her faults, but be wary of receiving them. "For friendship," he concludes, "requires a communication of good and not of evil."⁵³ But even more than this, "Friendship," Francis says, far from making us adopt the imperfections of a friend, "obliges us to help each other to overcome reciprocally all kinds of imperfections."⁵⁴

The Doctor of love gave friendship a pivotal place in his theory of moral development because, as he says, we somehow acquire the qualities of persons we befriend. Let us pause to evaluate this in light of his conception of love that we might understand how friendship works to form human character.

***Union by love "the end of love is nothing other than union"*⁵⁵**

Francis de Sales' second major work, the *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, develops his theory of love in detail. There he suggests this participation through friendship is based upon the way love seeks unity. There is nothing ingenious about his idea. Since Plato, who Francis cites when he develops the idea of love in the light of Christian revelation that God is Love, love has been defined as a dual motion of the will.⁵⁶ *Complacere*, or admiration, (which Francis translates as

⁵³"Il n'y a presque celui qui n'ait quelque imperfection. Et quelle rayson y a-il de recevoir pesle mesle les tares et imperfections de l'ami avec son amitié? Il le faut certes aymer nonobstant son imperfection, mais il ne faut ni aymer ni recevoir son imperfection; car l'amitié requiert la communication du bien et non pas du mal. *Oeuvres...* III, p.214.

⁵⁴"Chacun a bien asses de ses mauvaises inclinations sans se surcharger de cells des autres; et non seulement l'amitié ne requiert pas cela, mais au contraire, elle nous oblige a nous entr'ayder pour nous affranchir reciproquement de toutes sortes d'imperfections." *Oeuvres...* III, p.214.

⁵⁵"La fin donques de l'amour n'est autre chose que l'union de l'amant a la chose aymee." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.53.

⁵⁶In *The Banquet*, Plato's most important work on the subject, e[ro] is angelic (daivmon) and essentially a mediator between Goodness in itself and men. It is the child of poverty and expediency, of desire and fortuitous plenty, because it is not sufficient in itself. Love is always poor, because it is always desirous of beauty, its beloved. It is hardy, sumptuous and clever as expediency. For Plato, this double tension between the intense desire to be united with the beautiful, and an angelic fullness, a possession of the divine, will never be able to perfectly harmonise. Cfr. M.-D. Philippe, *De l'Amour*, Mame, Paris, 1993 pp.32-55. Francis' platonic vision of love was imbued with

complaysance) being pleased with the object loved, coalesces with the desire to possess it; *deligere*, a movement toward the object loved, seeking to bind itself in union. "The true essence of love consists" Francis affirms, "in the movement and outpouring of the heart that follows *complaysance* spontaneously and terminates in union."⁵⁷ All that consequent action bringing the will towards union is love properly speaking. Seeing beauty "awakens the heart, but love is its consequent action."⁵⁸ He maintains *complaysance* or taking pleasure in the thing loved, constitutes the communion of saints, and works in a similar binding fashion when two persons love each other, because "in the measure that we take pleasure in the good that they are, we are made participants in that good, *complaysance* having this virtue to draw to itself the thing loved to render itself its own."⁵⁹ In fact he thinks this kind of love is by its very nature a participation and communion with those goods one loves in a person.⁶⁰

the mysticism of Dionysius, and the speculations of Augustine and Bonaventure. It was the "general ambience of his times". See W. Marceau, *L'optimisme...* pp.84-128 for a more in depth explanation. For Francis de Sales' Neo-Platonic anthropology, see A. Laun, *Der Salesianisch Liebesbegriff, Nächstenliebe, Heilige Freundschaft, Eheleiche Liebe*. Franz Sales Verlag, Eichstätt, 1993; pp.137-157.

⁵⁷"La vraie essence de l'amour consiste au mouvement et escoulement du coeur qui suit immédiatement la *complaysance* et se termine a l'union." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.42.

⁵⁸"Bref, la *complaysance* est la premiere embranlement ou la premiere esmotion que le bien fait en la volonte; et cette esmotion est suivie du mouvement et escoulement par lequel la volonté s'avance et s'approche de la chose aymee, qui est la vray et propre amour. Disons ainsy: le bien empoigne, saisit et lie le coeur par la *complaysance* mays par l'amour il le tire, conduit et amene a soy... la *complaysance* c'est le resveil du coeur, mais l'amour en est l'action." *Oeuvres...*IV, p.42. In another place he attributes French names to the kinds of love, "On partage l'amour en deux especes, dont l'une est appellee amour de bienveillance, et l'autre, amour de convoitise. L'amour de convoitise est celui par lequel nous aymons quelque chose pour le profit que nous en pretendons; l'amour de bienveillance est celui par lequel nous aymons quelque chose pour le bien d'icelle." In this context Francis uses *complaysance* as both the pleasure of seeing the beloved enjoy the goods benevolence wishes for them, and the desire anxious to procure them when lacking. *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.70-72.

⁵⁹"C'est cette *complaysance* qui fait la communion des Saints, car a mesure que nous nous complaisons aux biens qu'ils ont nous en sommes faits participans, la *complaysance* ayant cette vertu de tirer a soy la chose aymée pour se la rendre propre." *Oeuvres...* IX, pp.369.

⁶⁰"Nous voyons en effet qu'une personne en ayment une autre de cet

Since it is impossible to love what we do not know, the ability to love some quality in another presupposes that it exist somehow already in the lover, rendering him apt to share and appreciate that good. Francis calls it suitability.⁶¹ It is the basis or proportional compatibility, that makes friendship's reciprocal sharing possible. Likeness is already a kind of union providing a foundation for enrichment. Francis explains that suitability consists in what he calls correspondence, "which is nothing other than the mutual rapport that renders things suited to unite in order to communicate between themselves some kind of perfection."⁶² In a variant manuscript of this same chapter of the *Traité*, he likens the difference between correspondence and suitability to the harmonious union between the head and hand in the human body. They do not resemble each other, but their correspondence is enough for them to be united in a way that betters each.⁶³ He then applies the difference to relationships, noting that people of opposite temperament, like the melancholic with bubbly persons or harsh persons with gentle persons, love each other for the mutual influence they receive from one another and in this way their characters are moderated by one another.⁶⁴ Francis will never develop more than this what he means by this apparently natural need for human friendship. Appreciating the many varieties of characters, whatever their beliefs and virtue might be, he saw a clear complementary benefit to their association. Thus it seems that he not only observed such differences as something natural, but

amour attire a soy le bien qui se trouve en elle, car il est impossible d'aymer en cette sorte sans avoir la participation et communion aux biens de ceux qu'on ayme." *Oeuvres...* IX, p.369.

⁶¹Francis cites St. Thomas when developing this aspect of desire showing his conception "embraced all schools of Catholic thought." (Cfr. F. Vincent, *Saint François de Sales directeur...* p.562.) "Certes, tous-jours fault-il que la faculté qui atteint un object ayt quelque sorte de convenance avec iceluy. (S. Thomas Ia IIae, q. 5 art. 1)." *Oeuvres...ltr.* DCXLVII.

⁶²In the *Traité*, he explains: "La convenance donq de l'amant a la chose aymee est la premiere source de l'amour, et cette convenance consiste en la correspondance, qui n'est autre chose que le mutuel rapport qui rend les choses propres a s'unir pour s'entrecommuniquer quelque perfection." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.50.

⁶³"La teste ne ressemble pas au cors, ni la main au bras, mais neanmoins elles ont une si grande correspondance et joignent si proprement l'un'a l'autre, que l'une est grandement." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.76, note m.

⁶⁴"En cette sorte, les melancholiques et les joyeux, les aigres et les doux s'entr'ayment quelquefois reciproquement, pour les mutuelles impressions qu'ilz recoivent les uns des autres, au moyen desquelles leurs humeurs sont mutuellement moderees." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.76.

considered the way ‘opposites attract’ a given evident to all, and therefore, the impulse to join in friendship for completion, was also something engraved in human nature.

Participation has a corresponding counterpart on each side of the loving relationship between persons. Like every Christian thinker he must expand the classic notion of equality as the constituting grounds for every friendship with suitability or proportionality, in order to allow for friendship between man and God.⁶⁵ Equality is so indispensable to friendship because love’s appreciation requires it in order to participate and even to be. He repeats the maxim of antiquity: *Amor aequat amantes* in order to argue that love can even bridge inequality.⁶⁶ He maintains it allows him a simplicity and “good faith” in his friendships, freeing him from worries about being inferior, and allowing a condescending generosity with his inferiors.⁶⁷ Equality, or suitable compatibility, is thus at one and the same time the basis and effect of friendship. “Love” he writes, “not finding us equal, equalizes us, not finding us united, unites us.”⁶⁸ Without it there is no congruence for union, nor is there any appreciation for the person’s beauty without some resonance inspiring the pleasant beholding that ‘awakens the heart’. Love participates, communes, equalizes, and unites because it somehow gives itself and possesses the other. As one of Francis’ most repeated verses of the *Song of Songs* expresses it, “My Beloved is all

⁶⁵Francis argues for friendship with God this way in *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.74-76. Aristotle contended equality was the grounds for friendship and without it friendship is impossible. He says, “Equality does not seem to take the same form in acts of justice and in friendship... This becomes clear if there is a great interval in respect of virtue or vice or wealth or anything else between parties; for then they are no longer friends, and do not even expect to be so. And this is most manifest in the case of the gods; for they surpass us most decisively in all good things.” *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 7, 1158b 29-36. He explains in the *Eudemonian Ethics* that these friendships do not admit reciprocity of affection at all. VII, 3, 1238b 27. However Aristotle does admit a friendship of utility between gods and men in this work (VIII, 14, 1162a 5; IX, 1, 1164b 5 and VII, 3, 1238b 18-19), but there he is speaking more of popular images. Cfr. Gauthier R.-A. & Jolif, J.-Y., *L’Ethique à Nicomaque*, ... II, ii, pp.691-692 for more.

⁶⁶This is a famous adage attributed to Pathagorus, which Francis acknowledges. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXX, and repeats it when arguing for friendship with God in *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.206-208.

⁶⁷Cfr. Francis’ letter to President Frémyot defending his intentions for friendship with André and Jane. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXX. See p.408

⁶⁸“L’amour ne nous treuvant pas egaux, il nous egale; ne nous treuvant pas unis, il nous unit.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.206.

mine, and I am all his.”⁶⁹ To become united to God by love, and thereby rendered like Him, to possess and be possessed, to love only what He loves without measure. Love’s initial pleasure then begins with some inchoate likeness, then moves to possess, completing that likeness somehow, enriching it and enlarging it in a participatory union with the beloved.

If love is a movement to possess, or to be with the one with whom it shares some likeness, then we can understand why he refers to Scripture to conclude that perfect love is union. “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!”⁷⁰ The love of God had this effect on the first apostolic communities, he remarks, creating a “unity of mind by union of peace,” and Christ prayed, he reminds us, that the multitude of faithful may be “all one and the same thing.”⁷¹ This is the meaning of the union of heart he praised with Jane de Chantal and all his friends. Referring to the union of Christ and his disciples, the apostolic community, David and Jonathan and a chorus of supporting accord from the Fathers, Francis argues in the *Traité*, “The unity of peace” is “the unity of heart, mind and soul signifying the perfection of love.”⁷²

⁶⁹“Mon Bienayme est tout mien, et moy je suis tout sienne, il est a moy et je suis a luy” (*Song of Songs*, 2.16; 6.2;7.10). *Oeuvres...* IV, p.144.

⁷⁰“Or sus, Theotime, le roy David, descrivint la suavité de l’amitié des serviteurs de Dieu, s’escrie: (Ps. 133:1) O voyci que c’est chose bonne, qui mille suavités donne, quand les freres ensemblement habitent unanimement!” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.207.

⁷¹“Nostre Seigneur pria son Pere pour tous les fideles affin qu’ilz fussent tous une mesme chose (Jn 17.21); saint Paul nous advertit (Eph. 4.3) que nous soyons soigneux de conserver unite d’esprit par l’union de la paix.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.53.

⁷²With an impressive tour de force, Francis spells out the rich tradition on this theme in the *Traité*: “Quand l’Esprit divin veut exprimer un amour parfait, il employe presque tous-jours les paroles d’union et de conjonction: En la multitude des croyans, dit saint Luc (Act. 4.32) il n’y avoit qu’un coeur et qu’une ame; Nostre Seigneur pria son Pere pour tous les fideles affin qu’ilz fussent tous une mesme chose (Jn 17.21) ; saint Paul nous advertit (Eph. 4.3) que nous soyons soigneux de conserver unité d’esprit par l’union de la paix. Ces unités de coeur, d’ame et d’esprit signifient la perfection de l’amour, qui joint plusieurs ames en une: ainsy est il dit, (I K. 18.1) que l’ame de Jonathas estoit collee a l’ame de David, c’est a dire, comme l’Ecriture adjouste, il ama David comme son ame propre. Le grand Apostre de France, tant selon son sentiment que rapportant celuy de son Hierotee, escrit, je pense, cent fois en un seul chapitre des Noms Divins (ch. 4), que l’amour est unifique, unissant, ramassant, resserrant, recueillant et rapportant les choses a l’unité. Saint Gregoire de

Another self and the profit of speaking

Fr. Lemaire tells us that of all the books of the Old Testament Francis de Sales was most fond of images and citations from the *Song of Songs*.⁷³ It is one of the main pillars of his spirituality. St. Bernard's commentary, which was already famous for centuries, portrays it as a dialogue between God lover and the soul as his bride.⁷⁴ Using those same mystical overtones, Francis develops two important ideas regarding friendship and union by love. First, the instrumental cause of the union of perfect love is to speak. When lover and beloved speak they "pour their souls into one another."⁷⁵ And second he describes union as loving the other as one loves his very self, just as Jonathan loved David "as his very own soul."⁷⁶

He uses the kiss in the *Song of Songs* to poetically represent intimate communication that has no equal. In speaking what is hidden is made

Nazianze (Orat 18.20) et Saint Augustine (Conf. I.4.c.6) disnet que leurs amis avec eux n'avoient qu'une ame; et Aristotle, approuvant des-ja de son tems cette facon de parler: 'Quand,' dit il (*Magna Moralis* I. II, c. 11) 'nous voulons exprimer combien nous aymons nos amis, nous disons: l'ame de celuy ci et l'amour nous assemble': la fin donques de l'amour n'est autre chose que l'union de l'amant a la chose aymee." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.50-53. See also V, p.13. This is the only place Francis refers to the most famous friendship of the Old Testament. Note the word 'glued' is the same Augustine used: "Vera amicitia, quia non est vera, nisi cum cum tu *agglutinas* inter haerentes sibi caritate diffusa in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum, qui datus est nobis." *Confessions* IV, 7.

⁷³Cfr. H., Lemaire, *Les Images chez St. François de Sales*, Nizet, Paris 1962, p.29 et seq.

⁷⁴Bernard says, "When you think of two lovers remember always that not a man and a woman are to be thought of, but the Word of God and the soul." *Canticles*, LXI, 2. A cistercian monk from Cluny, G n brard's course in Paris influenced Francis' interpretation. Even the Protestants, often thought to be puritanical, chased Castellion out of Geneva around 1584, for concluding that the *Song of Songs* was lascivious and obscene. It shows how universally accepted the allegorical image of bride and bridegroom was for God and the soul. Cfr. A. Brix, *Fran ois de Sales commente le Cantique des Cantiques*. p.12.

⁷⁵"Nous ne respandons nos discours ni les pensees qui procedent de la portion spirituelle de nos ames, que nous appellons rayson et par laquelle nous sommes differens d'avec les animaux, sinon par nos paroles... si que verser son ame, et respandre son coeur, n'est autre chose que parler." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.51.

⁷⁶ "Ainsy est il dit, (I K. 18.1) que l'ame de Jonathan estoit collee a l'ame de David, c'est a dire, comme l'Escriture adjouste, *il ama David comme son ame propre*." *Oeuvres...*IV, p.53.

manifest. The spiritual part of our being, thoughts and loves become physical, audible and tangible. He notes it is the one way our union can surpass the animals, since speaking is something particularly human. As a “microcosm” the human person is the only intellectual creature that is both spiritual and physical, in us the angelic and material worlds intersect. In speech the spiritual becomes physical, our heart and mind form intelligible vibrations in the air called sound and thereby the silent thoughts and loves of angels enters the world. Nothing better ‘pours out’ who we are. As we have already seen his love was not just words. That isn’t his point. The truth of a person’s life, of his love and of his words is assumed. Words give shape to another person’s inner being, they explain his actions, his thoughts and intentions. Communication’s quintessential form occurs when one can speak uninhibited to one apt to understand. It is the best way we are able to perceive another, and thereby the way we learn from them and take on their qualities --- participate in the being of another. This explains why he affirms since love tends to union it searches conversation, “and conversation often nourishes and increases love.”⁷⁷

In third part of *The Introduction to the Devout Life*, he advises Philothea to seek conversation with devout and virtuous persons because it is always profitable.⁷⁸ For this same reason he also warns against conversing with “vicious and excessive persons.”⁷⁹ Conversation is even a kind of virtue for him, between vicious and dissolute conversations at one extreme and useful conversations at the other. Here again we fall upon an example of Salesian ‘between the two’. Since conversation is something persons in the world often do, it is an important manifestation of his spirituality for those in the world. He adds two virtuous means between these two extremes. Conversations that are “useless for anything but simple recreation” and what he calls “fine” conversations meant to honor another, like visits and relations that one has a certain duty to respect in function of their state in life. Some spiritual writers like Thomas à Kempis taught that

⁷⁷“Comme l’amour tend a l’union, ainsy l’union estend bien souvent et aggrandit l’amour; car l’amour fait chercher la conuerstaion et la conversation nourrit souvent et accroist l’amour.” *Oeuvres...* VI, p.55.

⁷⁸“C’est un grand avantage pour nous bien exercer a la dévotion, de converser avec les âmes dévotes.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.223-224.

⁷⁹“On appelle mauvaises conversations celles qui se font pour quelque mauvaise intention, ou bien quand ceux qui entretiennent en icelles sont vicieux, indiscretz et dissolus; et pour celles la, il s’en faut destourner...ces vicieux et desbordés ne peuvent estre frequentés qu’avec hazard et peril.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.223.

one should avoid all worldly conversation. Francis adds a nuance considering it sometimes uncharitable to scorn certain conversations and thereby persons. As long as these conversations remain respectful, modest, naively simple and kind they too are not only permissible, but within that fine moderation that marks his spirituality.⁸⁰

Just as friends participate in each other's inner life and qualities by sharing who they are through conversation and many other forms of "secret communication," persons who are not friends also reveal themselves and exchange themselves in a certain way Francis would say, by conversing. The difference between them is in degree, since there is no communication more profound than that of lover and beloved. If conversation can either benefit or put into peril a person seeking perfection, it is because it somehow touches the human heart. He believed it possible to inspire, stimulate and excite the heart by communicating a love held by another human being. It was especially evident in his philosophy of preaching. Person to person, heart to heart exchange, even on a superficial level between individuals who hardly knew each other, could influence our affections and thereby our resolutions, because of the powerful potential witnessing some one's enthusiasm can bear upon a human being. "The heart speaks to the heart, and the tongue only speaks to the ears."⁸¹ It is easier for most persons to assent to an idea wrapped up in a human being, rather than an intellectual concept. Communicating his good or twisted affections and inner self, Francis believed, was the most powerful message of either seduction or virtue one person could communicate to another. Friendship will of course add all the more consequence to communication, because even though its act is to communicate, that interchange is done in a context of great affection and trust, which are the conditions for any heart to open itself completely to another's good or bad influence.

Francis writes Antoine Favre, expressing how he feels himself transformed by their friendship, "I feel I have become yours, to the point to believe myself another man than myself."⁸² Thus not only does one know oneself by contemplating the other, as Aristotle explains, but

⁸⁰Cfr. *Oeuvres...* III, pp.222-224.

⁸¹"Le coeur parle au coeur, et la langue ne parle qu'aux oreilles".
Oeuvres... ltr. DCXCII.

⁸²"Sic enim summa mea voluptate conficio omnio te fratrem amantissimum et omni meliori modo meum esse, qui adeo me fratrem tuum esse perspicio ut a me fere alter mihi videar, ne si alter a me non sim."
Oeuvres... ltr. XIX.

also what one will become through a friendship with them. Moreover, the other self is a mirror because they draw the friend's personality out of him, manifesting who they are by how they relate. This is their communication, the expression and response of each other's inner world, a world each increases and stimulates for the other with his own perspective and gifts.

Two persons always in some respect remain distinct. Therefore if the end of love is "nothing other than union,"⁸³ love can never be perfectly satisfied. He admits as much when he consoles a friend after the loss of someone dear, on more than one occasion, by saying only in heaven will we "accomplish without end the good and Christian friendships that we only began in this world."⁸⁴ Are we to infer that love does not rest, as other passions, in possessing its object, but increases somehow? Does love then increase as participation and union increase over time? Yes, as Francis explains when he compares the satisfaction intellectual love has in its object, with the way animal love destroys its object and is left with a certain sadness. He says, it is more content than it would have hoped because its pleasure (*complacere*) continues in possessing it, and moreover; "That pleasure continues in uniting itself, and unites itself always more in continuing the perfection of its pleasure in beholding."⁸⁵ Union therefore is also conceived in degrees, always seeking to progress to a more profound union of hearts, minds and souls, all the while remaining imperfect when compared to the union of friends in the kingdom of heaven. Participation best indicates this concept of progressing union as always dynamic.

If love is some kind of participation that awakens and stimulates the heart to move to union, a union that will never be perfect, then friendship will always have this certain element of anxiety and restlessness. This is just what we find Francis saying in the context of unity in love, citing the Greek classics. "The lover is perpetually attentive, for it is love's life to be 'always indigent, for once it is satisfied is no longer ardent, and therefore no longer love.'⁸⁶ But this

⁸³"La fin donques de l'amour n'est autre chose que l'union de l'amant a la chose aymee" *Oeuvres*...IV, p.53.

⁸⁴"Ce sera la (au Ciel) ou nous accomplirons et parfarions sans fin les bonnes et chrestiennes amitiés que nous n'avons fait que commencer en ce monde." *Oeuvres*... ltr. CLXXIX. See too ltr. MCCCXIX.

⁸⁵"L'Amour intellectuel treuvant en l'union qu'il fait a son object plus de contentement qu'il n'avoit espere, y perfectionnant sa complaisance, il la continue en s'unissant et s'unit tous-jours plus en la continuant." *Oeuvres*... IV, p.61.

⁸⁶"L'Amant est perpetuellement attentif aux yeux et a la bouche de la

poses a paradox, for love will always be frustrated in spite of its unequaled consolations to the human soul. The Doctor of love calls it “sweet and sour,” for when the beloved is absent the heart is wounded. He offers this explanation. “When it does not love, a heart seems in possession of itself and healthy, but once it is touched by love it begins to separate from itself to give itself to the object loved. Now this division cannot occur without pain, since pain is nothing other than the division of living things that hold fast to one another.”⁸⁷ That explanation of love’s longing may seem simple and even tautological to us today, since we know pain is more than separation. Pain can also consist in union, as the multiplication of cancerous cells. Moreover all division in living things does not cause pain (as for example every cell in the body is replaced many times over a lifetime). But if one only considers it as a separation in the sense of a separation from health we can understand his meaning. It doesn’t explain that love rejoices in union and pains in separation by affirming the cause of all pain is separation. Why is it painful to separate? Because all separation is painful. Why is all separation painful? Because it is. It is the mystery of the nature of love, and I don’t think Francis de Sales would pretend to be explaining that mystery here, it is enough to attempt to describe it.

Thus the strongest natural love human beings feel, the love of their own existence and all required for its enjoyment, becomes equaled, and even surpassed in Christian friendship. His good becomes in a fundamental way my good, to the point of being like Christ willing to give one’s life for his friends.⁸⁸ Francis concludes, with several citations from Scripture and the Fathers: “The unity of heart, of soul and of mind signify the perfection of love joining several souls into one.”⁸⁹ Unity and love are concomitant, just as shape and material,

chose qu’il ayme...Et en fin c’est sa vie que d’estre ‘tous-jours indigent,’ car si une fois il est rassasié il n’est plus ardent, et par consequent il n’est plus amour.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.348-50.

⁸⁷“Le coeur qui sembloit sain, entier et tout a soy mesme tandis qu’il n’aymoit pas, commence, lhors qu’il est atteint d’amour, a se separer et diviser de soy mesme pour se donner a l’object ayme: or cette division ne se peut faire sans douleur, puisque la douleur n’est autre chose que la division des choses vivantes qui se tiennent l’une a l’autre.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.350.

⁸⁸“Nous les devons aymer plus que nous mesme pour observer les regles de la perfection evangelique, qui requiert cela de nous. Nostre Seigneur a dit cela luy-mesmes *Ayez-vous les uns les autres, ainsy que je vous ay aymés.* [John 13:34; John 15:12], car cela veut dire, plus que vous-mesmes.” *Oeuvres...* VI, p.57.

⁸⁹“Quand l’Esprit divin veut exprimer un amour parfait, il employe

where there is one there is always the other. Now note well, perfect love is love exchanged and communicated, not love from afar. Therefore even though one might be able to point to some kind of union possible in love from afar by *complaisance*, or admiration, it is but a shadow of the union between true friends. A friend is another self.

Through union, the fruit of love, a friend really becomes another self, because they think and feel alike. They are united by and in what they are together in a dynamic of friendship's constant activity. Francis writes Favre astonished at their perfect "harmony of thoughts" and "unanimity of feelings."⁹⁰ Loving another as one's self is the natural consequence of communicating what one loves the most. "No one is as close to you as you are to yourself,"⁹¹ Francis remarks citing St. Bernard, and this closeness is what one shares in the highest kind of friendship. We will see that it is what he calls presence in friendship. This is why only one at ease with himself is capable of intimate communication and friendship. Like Bernard, he believes this self

presque tous-jours les paroles d'union et de conjonction: En la multitude des croyans, dit saint Luc (Act. 4.32) il n'y avoit qu'un coeur et qu'une ame; Nostre Seigneur pria son Pere pour tous les fideles affin qu'ilz fussent tous une mesme chose (Jn 17.21); saint Paul nous advertit (Eph. 4.3) que nous soyons soigneux de conserver unite d'esprit par l'union de la paix. Ces unites de coeur, d'ame et d'esprit signifient la perfection de l'amour, qui joint plusieurs ames en une:...Le grand Apostre de France, [Dionysius] tant selon son sentiment que rapportant celuy de son Hierotee, escrit, je pense, cent fois en un seul chapitre des *Noms Divins* (ch. 4), que l'amour est unifique, unissant, ramassant, resserrant, recueillant et rapportant les choses a l'unite. Saint Gregoire de Nazianze (*Orat.* 18.20) et Saint Augustine (*Confessions* 1.4,c.6) disnet que leurs amis avec eux n'avoient qu'une ame; et Aristotle, approuvant des-ja de son tems cette facon de parler: 'Quand,' dit il (*Magna Moralis* 1. II, c. 11) 'nous voulons exprimer combien nous ayons nos amis, nous disons: l'ame de celuy ci et l'amour nous assemble': la fin donques de l'amour n'est autre chose que l'union de l'amant a la chose aymee." *Oeuvres*...IV, p.53.

⁹⁰"Jam vero epistola illa tua postrema cum mea quam ad te eodem die scripseram adeo mente convenit, ut eosdem duorum fratrum animorum sensus esse, in amando praesertim, clare commonstret, quamvis non uno quidem ore expressos, cum elegantia longissimo praecedas intervallo." *Oeuvres*... ltr. XIX.

⁹¹"Nous nous devons a Dieu, a la patrie, aux parens, aux amis. A Dieu premierement, puis a la partrie; mais premierement a la celeste, secondement a la terrestre. Apres cela a nos proches; mays "nul ne vous est si proche que vous mesme" dit nostre Senecque chrestien (St. Bernard *De Consid.* 1, I, ch.5, 1.11.). En fin aux amis: mais n'estes vous pas le premier des vostres? Je remarque que saint Paul dit a son Timothee (1Ep. 4.16) Prends garde a toi et au troupeau; premierement a toi, puis au troupeau." *Oeuvres*...ltr. CCXXX

respect and benevolence is our first responsibility. The Doctor of love elaborates this idea in passing in a different context. Commenting on the golden rule he says that we should show we love one another as ourselves by not fleeing to be with our neighbor. For to show one loves oneself, he argues, one should dwell in oneself when one is alone. This means, rather than fleeing oneself because of restlessness that originates in not being at peace with what one is, one is pleased with himself. A restless heart craves to fill a void that it can never satisfy, it cannot find any pleasure in what it is and ravenously seeks fulfillment in other things. Francis advises on the contrary, “dwell in yourself and you will keep your heart in good condition.”⁹² That is, think first of yourself and then of others. Communicating what one loves most in oneself presupposes that he has found something there to esteem, which could conceivably be even some vicious quality, as the good thief esteems his thieving. But true esteem, as Francis de Sales understood it, is something based on the transformation the love of God forges in the human soul. Where does a person’s pleasure in himself come from? That question is our next step in this investigation.

In summary, both movements of love unite persons in the things loved by some kind of participation that opens their hearts to each other’s influence. They must resemble each other in some way at first, to permit love’s equalizing power to take effect. Then by speaking or even normal conversation the interior and spiritual world of love is expressed. Speaking communicates and shares what love shares, themselves and the things they appreciate, most effectively. They share their worlds, feelings and impressions influencing one another and progressing in degrees of unity. Finally through friendship’s exchanged love, union reaches its highest possible degree in the human condition, where there is such a harmony of thoughts and feelings that one can say a friend is another self. However this union is always imperfect and therefore it has its sorrows. All love’s movement to union depends upon one first being at peace with himself and able to love. Friendship as the most perfect kind of love unites all these aspects of love’s dynamic. But before one can love he must be pleased with himself. Let

⁹²“Il faut aymer le prochain comme soy mesme (Mt. 22.39: golden rule) pour monstrier qu’on l’ayme, il ne faut pas fuir d’estre avec luy, et pour tesmoigner qu’on s’ayme soy mesme, on doit demeurer en soy mesme [Variant manuscript AB reads: qu’on s’ayme soy mesme-- il se faut plaire avec soy mesme] quand on y est. Or, on y est quand on est seul: Pense a toy mesme, dit St. Bernard, et puy aux autres (*De Consid.* 1, I c.III).” *Oeuvres...* III, p.222.

us now consider something even more fundamental to friendship, the source of one's ability to love rightly.

The Causes of Perfect Friendship

A gift of grace

The first cause of friendship, Francis believes, is God. We saw him reveal this in his many friendships in a variety of ways. From the very beginning Francis tells Jane more than once that he is convinced that the affection he feels for her is a precious gift from God, and is growing daily.⁹³ He believed it to be something God has given to both of them for their own advancement and therefore he labors to nourish this affectionate benevolence. "A love like this," he recognizes, "can only be a free and special gift of God Himself."⁹⁴ For Francis de Sales, love was not merely a feeling, but a resolute effort following a decision.⁹⁵ St. Paul says grace helps us to desire what is good and to do what is good.⁹⁶ In friendship, grace somehow inspires affection for a certain person, by what Francis de Sales calls a "secret instinct."⁹⁷ It also

⁹³ "Je ne vous sçauroids pas expliquer ni la qualité ni la grandeur de cett'affection que j'ay a vostre service spirituel; mais je vous diray bien que je pense qu'ell'est de Dieu et que pour cela je la nourriray chèrement, et que tous les jours je la voy croistre et s'augmenter notablement." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII.

⁹⁴ "Un tel amour ne peut estre qu'un don special et gratuit de Dieu luy mesme. Ah! Dieu, par sa bonté ... fasse resgner sans fin en nous, sur nous et contre nous et pour nous, son tres saint amour celeste." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXXVIII.

⁹⁵ "Nous ne sçavons pas que c'est d'aymer Dieu. Il (l'amour) ne consiste pas aux plus grans goustz et sentimenz, mais en la plus grande et ferme resolution et desir de contenter Dieu en tout, et tascher, autant que nous pouvons, de ne l'offenser point, et de prier que la gloire de son Filz aille tous-jours augmentant. Ces choses sont signes d'amour." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMLXXI. If he believed this affection corresponded with his love of God, one can imagine his tenacity to give to those he loved in friendship.

⁹⁶ Phil. 2:13: "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

⁹⁷ Writing about one of the members of the Visitation to Mother Favre the year of his death, 1622, Francis calls this spontaneous affection for a person an instinct. "Dieu n'est il pas bon, ma tres chere Fille, d'avoir ainsy explané le chemin de la retraite a cette chere ame, laquelle, comme vous sçavs, je ne connois pas; mais j'ay certain secret instinct pour elle, qu'il ne se peut dire combien elle m'est chere." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCMIX.

brings the future friends into encounter. Providence leads the paths of their lives to a confluence at some moment most suitable, and something clicks. If the movement of grace, that “rush of affections” Cicero attributed to nature, does not accompany a resolute choice, friendship will not begin. Francis is not only saying that this decision pertains to expressing one’s feelings and approaching the person with one’s affection and good-will, but also the very interior affection planted by grace should be nourished by deliberate acts like contemplating their qualities or how we may be of service to them. Then once begun these same resolutions and virtue assure that love last.

True friendship, especially spiritual friendship, is a gift of grace, but human efforts cooperate with that gift in friendship’s daily exercise of charity. To say friendship is a gift from God doesn’t mean it magically is created *ex nihilo*. It also requires our part, that we love not only in word and speech, but in deed and in truth, requires a daily effort. This is why we find him on other occasions thanking a person for the gift of their friendship.⁹⁸ The great debate of justification by grace versus works comes to bear in his life of friendship being guided by Providence, and yet due to human efforts. Friendship is a gift from both God and the person with whom we share friendship’s mutual good-will. Once they open their arms to one another, grace can work with their feeble human efforts to bring them to new heights. It is an instrument “that will render you fruitful and useful.”⁹⁹ It is a gift, a treasure from God, meant to teach us “to cherish one another in this world as we will eternally in the next!”¹⁰⁰ True friendship is an earthly

⁹⁸Cfr. for example, *Oeuvres...* ltrs. IX (to A. Favre); CCCXIV (to Fr.Possevino); and MDCCV (to Mother Marie de Jésus, daughter of Mme Acarie).

⁹⁹“Ce n’a esté ni vous ni moy qui en avons fermé le traité; ç’a esté un troysiesme, qui en cela n’a pu regarder qu’a Dieu seul. ...c’est Dieu qui l’a voulu et qui l’a fait [Ps 115, 3; 135, 6] Ce fut Dieu qui vous embarqua en la premiere direction, propre a vostre bien en ce temps la; c’est Dieu qui vous a portee a celle ci, laquelle, bien que l’instrument en soit indigne, il vous rendra fructueuse et utile. *Oeuvres...* ltr.CCXXXIV (p.354).

¹⁰⁰“Si vostre mutuelle et reciproque communication se fait de la charité, de la devotion, de la perfection chrestienne, O Dieu, que vostre amitié sera pretieuse!...O qu’il fait bon aymer en terre comme l’on aime au ciel, et apprendre a s’entrecherir en ce monde comme nous ferons eternellement en l’autre! Je ne parle pas ici de l’amour simple de charité, car il doit estre porté a tous les hommes; mais je parle de l’amitié spirituelle, par laquelle deux ou trois ou plusieurs ames se communiquent leur devotion, leurs affections spirituelles, et se rendent un seul esprit entre elles.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.203.

image of the perfect society in the kingdom of God. Just as the traditional definition of faith is an inchoate beginning of eternal life, such friendships are an inchoate beginning of the intimacy the friends of God will share with Him in eternity.

Communication: the intimacy of friendship

“Friendship requires a thorough communication between persons who love,” Francis tells Philothea, “otherwise it can neither be born nor subsist.”¹⁰¹ Grace gives the initial impetus, but communication is the human side of friendship, and equally responsible for friendship to both begin and to continue. The term has surfaced again and again in our inquiry, because it is always where friendship is. He uses the term “reciprocal communication” interchangeably with friendship.¹⁰² Mutual communication distinguishes friendship from other loves, like benevolence and desire, he argues; and this consists in three points: “friends must love each other, know that they love each other and have private and familiar communication together.”¹⁰³ It begins in the initial expression of affection, but continues to prove that love by intimate expression via an infinity of human acts. It opens mere benevolence to a whole new dimension. Friendship’s quest for union translates into a reciprocal desire to render an account of each other’s minds.¹⁰⁴ It is what Francis calls in a letter to Favre, “a breath of sweet air” and the best possible remedy for all sorts of illness.¹⁰⁵ By communication, love

¹⁰¹“L’amitié requerit une grande communication entre les amans, autrement elle ne peut ni naistre ni subsister.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.213.

¹⁰²After the death of Jane’s father he writes, “Mais, Monsieur, la reciproque communication qu’avec tant de confiance je ne faisois presque que commencer avec luy, [M. Frémyot] est cessee et se treuve convertie en l’exercice des mutuelles prieres que nous faysons l’un pour l’autre” *Oeuvres...* DCCXI.

¹⁰³“Quand il est avec mutuelle correspondance, il s’appelle amour d’amitié. Or, la mutuelle correspondance consiste en trois pointz: car il faut que les amis s’entr’ayment, sahent qu’ilz s’entr’ayment et qu’ilz ayent communication, privauté et familiarité ensemble.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.72.

¹⁰⁴This is the way Francis puts it in a letter to de Bérulle shortly after his consecration, Francis writes him the day after being consecrated Bishop, showing the depths of their intimacy: “Ce que je vous dis parce que je vous veux rendre compte de mon esprit comme vous me faites de vostre” *Oeuvres...* CLXXI.

¹⁰⁵“Quid enim convalescentibus optabilius, quid opportunis, quam ex unius domusculae umbra in amoenissimorum florentissimorum hortorum conspectum frequenter exire, ibique inter medios flores expatiari ac auras ordoribus

leaves its solitude and expresses itself, and if it is returned with similar expressions, friendship begins. He remarks on one occasion that knowing a person's merits compels us to befriend them only if we can hope for a reciprocal affection.¹⁰⁶ Communication is therefore an exchange of minds and affections, the two meld together, just as mind and will join to compose the human person. We cannot begin friendship without signs of hope we may be able to share the qualities we recognize in another, that their being might correspond to ours and both might stimulate understand and appreciate what each is and lives for. To the degree that this communication continues there is progress in intimacy, in union, and conversely, if communication stops friendship suffers.

The condition for communication in friendship is benevolence, it must be in some respect a communication of goodwill. "What is the difference between having a benevolent love for someone," Francis asks rhetorically, "and to wish the good for him?"¹⁰⁷ This could even include a perceived goodwill for the ancient philosophers, as for example friendships based on the exchange of love of sports. Each wishes and communicates their knowledge and affection for the sport both participate in together; and each admires the other for his skill and appreciation of the game. But, as we have seen for the Doctor of love friendship "requires a communication of good and not of evil."¹⁰⁸ His idea of good was not relative to whatever someone might think was good for him, it was clearly defined by his Christianity. Francis defines therefore the different kinds of friendship by what the friends communicate. He says in one of the most important texts on friendship,

Oh Philothea, love each and every person with a great charitable love, but only have friendships with those who can communicate virtuous things with you; and the more the virtues you trade are excellent, the more your friendship will be perfect. If you communicate the sciences,

gratissimis onustas colligere? Sic nepe amicissimas tuas litteras lego." *Oeuvres...* ltr. XIV.

¹⁰⁶"La connoissance des merites force a l'amour (je dis a l'amitié); c'en est vraiment un grand motif, mais inutile si on n'espere pas une reciproque affection." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXCIX.

¹⁰⁷"L'amour de bienveillance est celui par lequel nous ayons quelque chose pour le bien d'icelle, car qu'est-ce autre chose avoir l'amour de bienveillance envers une personne que de luy vouloir de bien?" *Oeuvres...* IV, p.70.

¹⁰⁸"L'amitié requerit la communication du bien et non pas du mal." *Oeuvres...* III, p.213.

your friendship will be very praiseworthy, more so if you communicate virtues, in prudence, discretion, fortitude and justice. But if your mutual and reciprocal communication is of charity, devotion, of Christian perfection, O Lord, how your friendship will be precious! It will be excellent because it comes from God, excellent because it tends toward God, excellent because its bond will be God, excellent because it will endure eternally in God. Oh how good it is to love on earth as one loves in heaven, and to learn to cherish one another in this world as one will eternally in the next.¹⁰⁹

Thus communication defines the nature of the friendship, its orientation as well as its dynamic, its daily life. It comprehends all the friends share. We can also infer that if friendship is 'loving on earth as one loves in heaven' it will also be virtuous, and probably will entail sharing other praiseworthy things. For, as Francis says in many different ways, "Charity is among the virtues as the sun among the stars: she distributes to all their clarity and beauty."¹¹⁰

Our life consists in what we are and what we have. Now because all love is generous, 'diffusive in itself,' sharing occurs in two senses; the communication of the things mutually loved (the loves) and the communication of the qualities, or imprint those goods leave upon the lover, because he has fully embraced them. They are the person himself (the lover), who gives not only his ideas and affections, but his very self, within the limits of virtue, and hopes for the same from his friend. Both advance each in pursuit of the goods their lives are oriented to. This is what it means to share their lives. They share news of themselves, reveal all their secrets and have similar dreams.¹¹¹ They

¹⁰⁹“O Philothee, aymes un chacun d’un grand amour charitable, mais n’ayes point d’amitié qu’avec ceux qui peuvent communiquer avec vous de choses vertueuses; et plus les vertus que vous mettres en vostre commerce seront exquisés, plus vostre amitié sera parfaite. Si vous communiquez es sciences, vostre amitié est certes fort louable; plus encor si vous communiquez aux vertus, en la prudence, discretion, force et justice. Mais si vostre mutuelle et reciproque communication se fait de la charité, de la devotion, de la perfection chrestienne, o Dieu, que vostre amitié sera pretieuse! Elle sera excellente parce qu’elle vient de Dieu, excellente parce qu’elle tend a Dieu, excellente parce que son lien c’est Dieu, excellente parce qu’elle durera eternellement en Dieu. O qu’il fait bon aymer en terre comme l’on ayme au ciel, et apprendre a s’entrecherir en ce monde comme nous ferons eternellement en l’autre!” *Oeuvres...* III, p.202-203.

¹¹⁰It suffices to recall that for Francis charity comprehends all the virtues. “La charité est entre les vertus, comme le soleil entre les estoiles: elle leur distribue a toutes leur clarté et beauté.” *Oeuvres...* V. p.268.

¹¹¹For example Francis writes Jane “Mon Dieu, ma Fille, que je soy ayse

share the goods they love in the form of many kinds of gifts, and the things they love to do.

What does communication add to love's benevolence? It is the means by which benevolence becomes an activity. It enables benevolence to express itself, it opens benevolence to be called upon, and even to grow. This is why Francis considered speaking to be so important a means to union, as we have seen. Reasonable persons, unlike animals or hedonists, he notes, "Form and nourish their friendships by the intermingling of their minds."¹¹²

Communication is the human dimension of benevolence, acting itself out and expressing what a person is in the infinity of possibilities in the many complexities of our human condition. It is the cause of friendship and the means to greater friendship, for by this their friendship takes its form. Without communication how could there be consolation and trust, growth and progress, surmounting troubles and difficulties, free and open intercourse, private and unique sharing, nourishment, or finally, true presence? This is why Francis holds that true friendship is not founded upon passing vanities, but truth and "the communication of temporal goods."¹¹³ We might say the communication of temporal existence oriented by certain goods found in the here and now.

Temporal existence, the human condition, imposes difficulties on communication. First, because we must interpret words and actions, since we can never immediately see another person's heart and mind, and secondly, because communication will never be perfect in this life. This is why Francis comments that concord between friends takes effort.¹¹⁴ "There exists no friendship so perfect that it isn't troubled

de parler un peu de ces choses avec vous!" *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCXXXVIII. Those things he dares to speak of, secrets, are the things he hates in himself, as he confides in another letter he is "Tout plein de petitez traverses et secretez contradictions." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXL.

¹¹²"La cordialité n'est autre chose que l'essence de la vraye et sincere amitié, laquelle ne peut estre qu'entre personnes raysonnables, et que fomentent et nourrissent leurs amitiés par l'entremise de la rayson; car autrement ce ne peut estre amitié, ains seulement amour." *Oeuvres...* VI, p.54.

¹¹³"Nostre amitié, puisqu'elle est sainte et non feinte, fondée sur la verité et non sur la vanité, sur la communication des biens temporelz." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCLXXXIII.

¹¹⁴"Quibus ne amantes diligentia cedant, curabo quam potero impensissime ut quod operae miserandum illud gnus hominum suis discordiis ac inimicitiiis [non] recte fovendis tam libenter insumunt et turpiter, id amicitiae ac concordiae liberaliter simul pariter et honestissime conservandae, per sumam

sometimes by small clouds, which once they've passed, *amoris redintegratio sunt*."¹¹⁵ Misunderstandings and friendship's many 'gentle struggles' usually center around the difficulties of communication, but since every person is free to change at any time, there is always the possibility that one friend deliberately abuse another. As Cicero lamented, friends change. In such cases effort lies more in the realm of redemption and humility's bearing on forgiveness. This kind of fidelity has its limits, as we have seen, in the dangers of one who tries to lead a friend into sin. But it is not enough for Francis de Sales to reject a friend for an insult or a slap. He felt, as he once wrote Jane's father, that if a friend changed it is for a new and more vigorous birth from their ashes, like a mystic phoenix, "For although the persons who I love are mortal, what I love in them is principally immortal, and I have always esteemed this fundamental axiom for knowing true friendships that Aristotle, St. Jerome and St. Augustine have so solemnized: The friendship that can cease was never a true friendship."¹¹⁶ Either he is a friend, and this crisis will be resolved with something even stronger emerging, or he never was a friend. For, as he explains to one friend in conflict, "I am in no way delicate, loving ceremonies and compliments, no not even offenses spoil anything with me if they aren't done with the express intention of ruining friendship."¹¹⁷ If someone is negligent, weak, inconsiderate or even suddenly enraged and hateful, he says "It seems to me that a friendship with a little strength should sustain them,

quae iis bonis inest voluptatem, amantes saltem acerrimi attribuant." *Oeuvres...* XXI.

¹¹⁵"Il ni a point de si parfaite amitié que ne se trouble quelquefois par quelque petit nuage, lesquelz estans passes, *amoris redintegratio sunt* [Trent Act. III sc. III.23]." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLVII.

¹¹⁶"C'est la vraye verité, Monsieur, qu'encor que mes amis meurent, mon amitié ne meure point, ains, s'il s'y fait quelque changement, c'est pour une nouvelle naissance qui la voit plus vive et vigoureuse entre leurs cendres, comme un certain pheonix mystique; car, bien que les personnes que j'ayme soyent mortelles, ce que j'ayme principalement en elles est immortel, et j'ay tous-jours estimé cet axiome fondamental pour la connoissance des vrayes amitiés, qu'Aristotle, saint Hierome et saint Augustine ont tant solemnisé: *Amicitia quae disinere potuit, nunquam vera fuit*. [Eud. E. 1,VII,2; Ep.3 ad Ruf.; *Lib. de Amicitia*, Mig. XI, col.833]" *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXI.

¹¹⁷To Count Prospte-Marc de Tournon he writes, "Non certes, Monsieur, je ne suis nullement delicat, amant les ceremonies, les complimens; non, pas mesme les offences ne gastent rien avec moy, si elles ne sont faites et apposteées expres pour ruiner l'amitié (je parle de l'amitié, et non de la commune charité que rien ne doit ruiner)." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMLXXXVII.

considering our humanity which is subject to these mishaps.”¹¹⁸ Patience with himself because of the self knowledge his interior life provided him, resulted in a tremendous resilience in his friendships. Yet even that kind of militant fidelity cannot save friendship if the friend wants to ruin it. Friendship always depends on the mutual resolve to exchange benevolence, it can at anytime be destroyed, although love can never be destroyed.

We encounter an example Francis evoking his imperfections on one occasion when he begs forgiveness from Claude de Quoex with whom he was angry. Claude apparently sent a letter with his apologies to which the Bishop responded with his own apology. He tells him he must not take what he hears too seriously, but in all candor confesses he was upset, though the anger Claude perceived was probably more the message bearer’s.¹¹⁹ This apology reveals communication between friends, confiding his heart humbly is the way he mends their rift. He says, “My heart is going to render to yours the homage of the truth.”¹²⁰ Communication secures reconciliation by humbly admitting its error and bearing the truth of its heart. Forgiveness is a kind of service in friendship. If the Doctor of love was a kind of slave to his friends because he couldn’t refuse them when they asked something good of him, how much more so when it came to begging his pardon. “For, as he explains in his *Traité*, “Love has no exceptions or slaves, but reduces everything to its obedience with a force so delightful, that, just as nothing is as strong as love, so too nothing is as lovable as its strength.”¹²¹

¹¹⁸“Car celles qui proviennent de negligence, de foiblesse, d’inconsideration, voire mesme de quelque soudaine passion d’ire, de courroux et de haine, il me semble qu’un ‘amitié un peu forte les doit supporter, en consideration de nostr’humanite qui est sujette a ces accidens.” *Oeuvres... ltr. CMLXXXVII.*

¹¹⁹“Je vous assure que j’ay ri, mais sçaves vous, de bien bon coeur, quand j’ay veu, sur la fin de vostre lettre, que l’on vous avoit dit que je m’estois mis en grande cholere, et avois dit tout ce que vous me marques...Et je vous dis donq que veritablement, mon Filz, mon coeur va rendre a vostre coeur l’hommage de la verité. Si celuy qui vous a fait un narré de ma cholere, n’en eust pas eu davantage que moy, vous ne series pas en peine de ce chetif Pere. Mays je vous supplie, quand il retournera a vous, embrassés-le de ma part, et luy donnez double charité, car je vous confesse que qu’il n’a pas tout a fait tort. Je suis un chetif homme, sujet a passion.” *Oeuvres... ltr. MCCCX.*

¹²⁰“Mon coeur va rendre a vostre coeur l’hommage de la verité.” *Oeuvres... ltr. MCCCX.*

¹²¹“Car l’amour n’a point de forcatz ni d’esclaves, ains reduit toutes choses a son obeissance avec une force si delicieuse, que, comme rien n’est si fort que

Francis often begins his friendships speaking of himself as a fierce “combatant,” resolutely consecrating himself to all the efforts friendship’s fidelity might demand.¹²² Moreover, experience shows that friendships able to conquer storms are better afterwards. Perhaps this is why he called friendship a virtue.¹²³ For he believed, “Virtues that grow up in prosperity are usually slender and weak, and those born among afflictions are strong and firm, thus one says that the best wines grow between rocks.”¹²⁴ Like every human virtue friendship is a skill, and though friendship’s communication brings together all the virtues in a unique way, making them social, it too requires effort to be achieved and to continue well. Just as it is profitable to myself and my interior life to be patient with myself, so too it is profitable to my friendships. For the difficulties in friendship arise, as Aristotle puts it, in feelings of injustice. And the injustice that threatens friendship most is to not return friendship for friendship, or love for love. This can occur either by a lack of communicating that benevolence or by communicating ill-will. Most of the things that weaken or break friendship center around love. As Augustine remarked, nothing cuts friendship more than the opinion that my friend no longer loves me. Disrespect, treating as unimportant things a friend considers important, waste, angry outbursts, foolishness, desertion, all these in some way detract from friendship, because they detract from “the mixture of fortitude, fidelity and respect” that make the an absolute and honorable love, upon which every friendship is based.¹²⁵ This may even pertain to any kind of

l’amour, aussi rien n’est si aymable que sa force.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.49.

¹²²For example he says in his first letter to Favre, “Quare cum jam per litteras ac obsignato veluti rescripto ferventem jam et suapte natura pugnacissimum hoc in genere certandi militem provocaveris.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. IX.

¹²³Speaking about jealousy, he says “L’amitié humaine, quoy qu’elle soit vertu, si est ce qu’elle a cette imperfection, a rayson de nostre imbecillité, qu’estant departie a plusieurs, la part d’un chacun en est moindre.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.208.

¹²⁴“Les vertus qui croissent entre les prosperités sont ordinairement flouettes et imbecilles, et celles qui naissent entre les afflictions sont fortes et fermes, ainsy qu’on dit que les meilleurs vins croissent entre les pierres.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCMLXXIX.

¹²⁵He writes to Roger de St. Lary, “Il est vray, Monsieur, je veux desormais cherir Vostre Grandeur si fortement, fidelement et respectueusement, que le meslange de la force, de la fidelité et du respect fasse le plus absolu amour et honneur qui vous puisse jamais estre rendu par homme quelcomque que vous ayez provoqué; en sorte que le tiltre de Pere dont il vous plaist me gratifier ne soit ni trop haut ni trop puissant.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMXXXVI.

slowness to act on behalf of a friend in Francis de Sales' opinion. He says, "between friends, one must not wait for extreme necessity" before acting on their behalf.¹²⁶ As we will see when we come to correction in friendship, friendship's love is defined by the good upon which it is based, and therefore straying from that good is a second way friendship is not returned for friendship. However, even in these cases, where friendship is deliberately ruined, Francis believed resolution should never fail to hope for their reconciliation and continue to bear goodwill for them.¹²⁷

Another limit of our human condition on friendship, is more difficult to define. It is the mystery of how two persons seeming to have the material necessary for friendship, like a common vocation, or similar backgrounds, rendering them equals with similar intentions, yet they do not become friends. They lack the spontaneous affection and easy communication that every friendship lives by. Something deeper, something stemming from the way every human being is different; with temperaments, reactions, and idiosyncrasies, does not click between these persons. There were only a few persons with whom Francis de Sales had such a natural correspondence, even though he had many friends on whom he showered abundant affection. We are naturally able to communicate better with some than others, because there is a natural likeness that reaches profoundly to draw some persons together. Yet Francis would probably so esteem the moral quality of certain persons that, even if they were repulsive on a superficial sense level, he would seek some kind of friendship with them, because he believed friendliness was most pleasing to God if it was in spite of an aversion.¹²⁸ Now since the most profound kind of friendship is

¹²⁶“Entre les ennemis l'extreme necessité rend toutes choses communes; mais entre les amis, et entre de telz amis comme sont les filles et les meres, il ne faut pas attendre l'extreme necessité, car le commandement de Dieu nous presse trop. [Ex 20.12; Dt. 5.16; Ephes. ult. 2].” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCLXXVIII.

¹²⁷Such was the case with Madmoiselle Bellot, “Une Ame qui ne veut point estre corrigée par censures, car elles ne luy ont pas manqués au commencement de ses vanités, cause de sa ruine.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMLVII.

¹²⁸“Les caresses mesmes et signes d'amitié que nous faisons contre nostre propre inclination aux personnes auxquelles nous avons de l'aversion, sont meilleurs et plus agreables a Dieu que celles que nous faisons attirés de l'affection sensitive. Et cela ne se doit point appeller duplicité ou simulation, car si bien j'ay un sentiment contraire, il n'est qu'en la partie inférieure, et les actes que je fais, c'est avec la force de la rayson, qui est la partie principale de mon ame.” *Oeuvres...* VI, p.126.

something that can never be forced, but must flow, the degree of friendship possible in such cases is lesser. However, since progress is possible in friendship, this might be a case where someone who repulses us at first is indeed capable of becoming a great friend if only we persevere a little in the beginning. But that ‘chemistry’ isn’t enough without effort to communicate. “Friendship descends more quickly than it ascends” Francis notes once in a letter to Fr. Possevino.¹²⁹ The impulses of what Cicero called nature, or Francis would call grace, await a resolute choice to share in order for friendship to begin and continue.

And finally, Francis observes that our human condition requires “exterior separations” in as much as “distance between places prevents the free communication of souls, that can no more see and understand each other than by this duty of letters.”¹³⁰ Even persons united spiritually in God by the ‘bond of perfection’ suffer when apart, and are limited in their ability to communicate. In modern life it is less so thanks to the telephone, and ironically, letters may give rare occasion to communicate in a more reflected and profound way. In those days, however; all kinds of communication between cities was slow and difficult. Letters were a cause for rejoicing, even though they were only a shadow of what it would be like to finally see and hear a friend after a long separation. Even in the context of Francis’ spirituality, advocating a stripping of all attachments, he could admit that separation between friends would always be painful as long as we are in this life. Thus, even though spiritual friends are always present ‘interiorly’, separation is painful. How then does our author develop that constant presence, as well as the benefits of exterior or physical presence and its effects on communication?

The more intimate the things exchanged the closer the friendship. Communication thus specifies their intimacy in both quality and kind. Without it there may be love and even equality, but never a fertile dynamic relationship. This is why Francis says “silence between

¹²⁹“Je ne pense pas pouvoir estre plus grand que celuy que j’ay de jouir de vostre presence, quoiqu’on dise que l’amitié descend plus vitement qu’elle ne monte.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XLVIII.

¹³⁰“Encor qu’il semble que les unions qui ne tiennent qu’au coeur et a l’esprit ne soyent point sujettes a ces separations exterieures, ni aux desplaysirs qui en procedent, si est ce que, tandis que nous sommes en cette vie mortelle, nous les sentions, d’autant que la distance des lieux empesche la libre communication des ames, qui ne peuvent plus s’entrevoir ni s’entretenir que par cet office des lettres.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDXXXVI.

brothers is always painful.”¹³¹ Friendship constantly desires communication, “I beg you to let me know your news in every detail,” he asks, “as I tell you mine.”¹³² He scolds his brother Bernard for not writing, because he must have seen it as a duty.¹³³ “Love is never mute” he says on one occasion playfully reproving Marie-Jacqueline Favre for not writing for so long.¹³⁴ Communication is continuous in some respect, because friendship is an activity. Moreover, their shared love of God increases those more human ways communication continues all the more. “The children of this century are all separated from each other, because they have their hearts in divers places,” Francis remarks, “but the children of God having their heart where their treasure is and loving only one and the same God, are consequently always joined and united together.”¹³⁵ This must also be the explanation of what he calls “the rule of communication” in one letter, that binds him to befriend a friend of a friend.¹³⁶ He doesn’t elaborate, but in the context it seems he regards it a duty to share something one friend might be able to give another—especially the friendship of another. In the same missive Francis asks for M. de Souflur’s prayers and those of his friends. Even in separation friends are somehow present to one another, (as we shall see when we come to the idea of presence and friendship) and through friendship, by extension, to friends of friends.

The traits of friendship’s communication, he says more than once are that it must be “frank, free, complete and familiar.”¹³⁷ Friends don’t

¹³¹“Le silence entre freres est tous-jours penible, inopportun.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XXI.

¹³²“Permettes moy, je vous supplie, que je desire de sçavoir presque aussi particulierement de vos nouvelles comme je vous en dis des miennes”. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXVII.

¹³³“Une foyz pour toutes il [Bernard] m’escrivit que c’estoient des trop foibles preuves d’affection que d’escrire. O vrayement, je le gourmanday bien.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDXXXVI.

¹³⁴“L’amour n’est jamais muet, mesme le filial qui a tous-jours quelque chose a dire au Pere!” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCLV.

¹³⁵“Les enfans du siecle sont tous separés les uns des autres parce qu’ilz ont leurs coeurs en divers lieux, mais les enfans de Dieu ayant leur coeur ou est leur thresor et n’ayant tous qu’un mesme thresor qui est le mesme Dieu, ilz sont par consequent tous-jours jointz et unis ensemble.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDXXXIX.

¹³⁶“Je doy une lettre a monsieur Asseline et un’autre encores, que je luy adresseray, a un de ses amis qu’il a voulu rendre le mien par la regle de communication; je n’ay le loisir de payer maintenant, ce sera a la premiere commodité.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXXVII.

¹³⁷“Nostre communication doit estre franche, entiere et familiere.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXVII. To Antoine de Hayes sending copies of *The Devout*

want to only tell their troubles, but their news, their “affections, inclinations and impressions.”¹³⁸ These are what he believes one communicates in friendship, not only in words but through every dimension of communication. Such an openness in a friend’s communication inspires a similar openness in return. He says, for example, “I tell you this because I want to render you an account of my mind as you have done for yours.”¹³⁹ This kind of communication increases affection.¹⁴⁰ He believed all communication between friends should be honest, innocent and simple.¹⁴¹ As we have seen simplicity like this in communication stems from his whole spirituality of humble freedom of spirit, which would have naturally pervaded friendship’s communication.

Another sign of the fact that communication has a much larger meaning for the Doctor of love than sharing ideas is in its ability to take on or lighten pain and sorrow. It communicates joys as well as sorrows, conveying true consolation. Listen to Francis’ way of putting it to Favre in the midst of one of the most proving trials of his life, the eve of his ordination. “Commiseration is the incontestable mark of friendship, this sentiment the most gratifying of all, which in our friends is much more precious being mixed with compassion rather than a cold benevolence that doesn’t participate in our pains.”¹⁴² Because love and friendship tend toward union it enables friends to communicate their pains, dreams and joys, since each knows in a

Life, he writes: “Monsieur, c’est a vous a qui j’escris ainsy librement de mes nouvelles.” *Oeuvres...* DLVIII. See also, ltr. DCCXI.

¹³⁸“Il arrive souvent qu’avec la communication de l’amitié, plusieurs autres communications passent et se glissent insensiblement de coeur en coeur, par une mutuelle infusion et reciproque escoulement d’affections, d’inclinations et d’impressions.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.213.

¹³⁹“Ce que je vous dis par ce que je vous veux rendre conte de mon esprit comme vous me faites du vostre” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXI.

¹⁴⁰“Quand nous estimons grandement celuy que nous aymons; car alhors nous ouvrons tellement le coeur a son amitié.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.213.

¹⁴¹“J’estois en mes belles humeurs, et un grand auditoire me convioit par son applaudissement a continuer de faire l’enfant avec les enfans. On me dit quil me siet bien, et je le croy. O Dieu me face vrayement enfant en innocence et simplicité! ... Il ni a remede, je vous fay voir mon coeur tel qu’il est et selon la varieté de ses mouvemens, affin que, comme dit l’Apostre, [II Cor, 7:6] vous ne pensies de moy plus quil n’y a en moy.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXXXV.

¹⁴²“Nisi forstian illus est quod miseratione clarissime illucescit amicitia, quae cum sit optima rerum omnium, in amico longe melius est deprehendere cum miseratione quam si sine ulla mali communione vel nulla vel exigua superesset benevolentia.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XIII.

profound way that the other is capable of understanding. Grief is a very intimate thing, and at that time in his life, Francis felt Favre was the only one able to understand his grief. There were surely others who were priests he had a friendship with, but Favre understood his fears and he understood Francis as only a closest friend is able.¹⁴³ Call it an understanding, a resonance, empathy. It belies a profound communication necessarily to some degree expressed in words. Francis explains the language of love uses the same words as other conversations, but its communication has another dimension, “the manner and pronunciation,” which is so unique that only the lovers understand it.¹⁴⁴ Now of course, Francis and Favre were not lovers, but their understanding of one another is comparable. At this level persons are able to communicate their inner being. For “love does not only speak by the tongue, but by the eyes, by sighs and countenances,” as Francis explains in the *Traité*, “Yes, even silence and forbearance takes the place of words for it.”¹⁴⁵ Because every human being is unique every friendship is unique, and hence their communication is unique and secret. It has a language of its own not confined to words, but speaks in a look, a gesture or a tone. Beyond words, their communication could see one another’s inner feelings by the smallest signs. Over the years they had learned enough about one another to know what the subtler tones and gestures meant, but more than this their union somehow enabled them to feel one another’s joys and pains, anxieties and hopes; in a word, their inner world. Being able to communicate freely relieves pains.¹⁴⁶ This is why too he can speak of a “communication of pains,”¹⁴⁷ for love commiserates.

¹⁴³“Tu vero unus es, amplissime vir, qui huic mentis meae perturbationi percipiendae maxime mihi videris idoneus.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. XIII.

¹⁴⁴ “Le langage de l’amour est commun quant aux paroles, mais quant a la maniere et prononciation il est si particulier que nul ne l’entend sinon les amans.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.305.

¹⁴⁵“L’amour ne parle pas seulement par la langue, mais par les yeux, par les souspirs et contenance; ouy mesme le silence et la taciturnité luy tiennent lieu de parole.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.305.

¹⁴⁶“Voyez vous, Monsieur, je m’allege a vous dire cecy, car c’est grand cas comme c’est une heureuse et souefve (suave) rencontre a un coeur aucunement (quelque peu) blessé de pouvoir se communiquer, quoy que par lettres seulement, a un coeur si doux, si gratieux, si cher, si pretieux et tant amy comme le vostre m’est par vostre bonté.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXIX.

¹⁴⁷As he writes to Favre, “Maxime cum ergo vel nullum vel minimum sentirem dolorem; ac cum tu per summam amicitiam de febricula mea dolores, prope fuit ut nostra dicerem si malorum ut bonum inter nos communio inducta

Four kinds of communication

Speaking to the sisters of the Visitation one day in his *Entretiens*, Francis delineates four foundations of friendship's communication. Friendship either communicates love, a vocation, pretension or quality. It is by one of these that the correspondence or equality of all friendship is constituted. It renders two brothers in some respect, and Francis notes that experience teaches us clearly, "there is no truer friendship, nor stronger, than that between brothers."¹⁴⁸ Each of these was able to be the basis for friendship, rendering two persons enough alike to communicate everything friendship entails. We have already seen how it communicates the qualities of one to another. That was what makes it the most dangerous of loves. Let us look at how he would explain the other kinds of common activities.

Friendship communicates a vocation as a common state in life, as for example Francis writes "God has united us by a common vocation" to fellow Bishop like Msgr. Giovenale Ancina of Saluces, doctor in medicine and philosophy,¹⁴⁹ Msgr. André Frémyot, Msgr. Jean-Pierre Camus, Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, Msgr. Antoine de Revol, or Msgr. Hilderbrand Jost, Bishop of Sion.¹⁵⁰ Their common vocations as Bishops bound them in a mission to implement the reforms of the council of Trent, as well as care for their flock. One of the best accounts we possess of his method and philosophy of preaching comes from a letter to one who in many ways was his superior, André Frémyot, Jane's brother the Archbishop of Dijon.¹⁵¹ According to Trent one of the first duties of every Bishop was to preach the Gospel. Their common vocation was their office with certain skills and duties specific to it, which they were able to reinforce reciprocally through their

foret ... nisi iis doloribus modum facere tandem aliquando satius esset." *Oeuvres...* ltr. XIV.

¹⁴⁸"Il faut de plus, outre l'entremise de la rayson, qu'il y ayt une certaine correspondance, ou de vocation ou de pretention ou de qualité, entre ceux qui contractent de l'amitié: ce que l'experience nous enseigne clairement car n'est-il pas vray qu'il n'y a point de plus vraye amitié ni de plus forte que celle qui est entre les freres?" *Oeuvres...* VI, pp.54-55.

¹⁴⁹"Le Seigneur nostre Dieu nous a unis par une mesme vocation." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXIII. Francis pays him the following homage in another letter, "Je rendray compte a Vostre Paternité de tous les evenemens remarquables et aussi de moy-mesme, comme d'une chose absolument sienne" *Oeuvres...* ltr. CXXIII. Bishop Ancina died from poisoning in the summer of 1604 and was beatified in 1889. Cfr Ravier, *Lettres...* pp.82-86.

¹⁵⁰Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMLX.

¹⁵¹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIX.

friendships. It wasn't, of course, the only thing they communicated, but it was naturally characterized by concerns and responsibilities of its own. Sharing in the apostolic character of the Church they may have even felt a sacramental hue in their friendship in the semblance of the bond the apostles themselves must have felt. A common vocation, however, was not sufficient alone to establish a friendship. There are numerous extant letters to the nuncio Ricardi, for example, that are businesslike without any pretension of friendship.¹⁵²

It also would include marriage, 'the vocation of friendship,'¹⁵³ which we will investigate later. This could even extend in some degree to neighbors, colleagues, family, or others who by virtue of our state in life share something and whom we don't necessarily choose.¹⁵⁴ In Salesian spirituality, one's situation in life was part of Providence's plan for a person's particular way to perfection. Embracing that vocation entails its entourage, provided of course that one is able to distinguish between good and evil influences or occasions to serve Christ in serving them. He says antecedent duties oblige us to cultivate these kinds of friendships, referring to the duties of one's state in life.

There is another possible sense that communicating a vocation could cover, namely a common particular spiritual work. This was the conviction he appealed to in evaluating the appropriateness of his feelings for Jane before their meeting at St. Claude. He saw in her 'the cornerstone' of something he felt called to build, and therefore accepted a much deeper involvement with Jane. We also saw an example of the binding effect of the mission in the Chablais with Favre, Chérubin and de Foras, among others. Sharing a common purpose, seeking to serve God in an activity, constructing something outside themselves, was the basis for their communication in all these friendships. This is different than the vocation of one's state in life because it is like a charism, having a particular mission meant to achieve something benefiting God's people in a permanent way. Moreover, it would suggest

¹⁵²For example, "Que vostre bonté daigne me pardonner si, au milieu de tant de graves sollicitudes qui l'accablent, je l'entretiens d'une affaire qui m'est personnelle." *Oeuvres...* XCVII. See also: LXXII; XC and XCII. André Ravier seems to me to be very munificent when he notes a "tendency of intimacy" in these letters. Cfr. *Lettres...* p.77.

¹⁵³Cfr. *Oeuvres...* III pp.264-266.

¹⁵⁴"Il ne faut pas ni quitter ni mespriser pour cela [qu'il faut uniquement cultiver les amitiés spirituelles] les amitiés que la nature et les precedens devoirs vous obligent de cultiver, des parens, des allies, des bienfaiteurs, des voisins et autres; je parle de celles que vous choisisses vous mesme." *Oeuvres...* III, p.204.

something that one could not achieve alone. So many achievements; The Florimontaine Academy with Favre, the reform of Talloires with the de Quoex brothers, the foundation of the Oratory in Thonon with Ancina, The Visitation, were a common effort that was at the same time fruit and cause of friendship.

Communication in French has a much larger sense than in English. It encompasses all exchange from one being to another. Communicating for Francis de Sales is not merely exchanging ideas. It signifies everything two persons are able to exchange, a common work, a shared purpose, more---a participation somehow through each other and in the good. How often are friendships begun because people share a common interest or past time? Whether it be in occupations of leisure, like golfing or cooking, or politics, or professions; a common interest binds people together. How much more binding then is having a difficult life's purpose as a common interest? For him and his friends this was clearly to love God. Francis experienced that kind of compelling affection for Jane's brother André. Their common work as Bishops opened both to one another immediately. Francis would later remark reflecting on his exchanges with André, that their mutual desires to serve God were "sharpened and animated by the encounter."¹⁵⁵

When Francis says friendship communicates pretension he is referring to one's purpose in life, what he calls in one letter "our final pretension, which is the love of God."¹⁵⁶ He uses it in several senses bringing people together: a pretension for marriage in courtship;¹⁵⁷ to cultivate virtue and gain eternal life;¹⁵⁸ the love of God;¹⁵⁹ the unique

¹⁵⁵"Nous nous sommes bien coupé de la besoigne l'un a l'autre; nous desirs de servir Dieu et son Eglise (car je confesse que j'en ay, et luy [André] ne scauroit dissimuler qu'il n'en soit plein) se sont, ce me semble, aiguisés et animés par la rencontre." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXX.

¹⁵⁶"Qu'ilz [les autres biens] ne soyent que des moyens et acheminemens a nostre finale pretention, qui est le divin amour." *Oeuvres...* V, p.179.

¹⁵⁷Cfr. III, p.197 and III, p.206.

¹⁵⁸ He cites in this context Gregory of Nazianzen speaking of his friendship with Basil (Orat. 43.20) "Que s'il ne faut pas croire ceux qui desent que toutes choses sont en toutes choses, si nous faut-il pourtant adjouster foy que nous estions tous deux en l'un de nous, et l'un en l'autre; une seule pretention avions-nous tous deux, de cultiver la vertu et accommoder les desseins de nostre vie aux esperances futures, sortans ainsy hors de la terre mortelle avant que d'y mourir." *Oeuvres...* III, p.205; and another example: "En fin nous sommes tout a Dieu, sans reserve, sans division, sans exception quelconque, et sans autre pretention que de l'honneur d'estre siens." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLVIII.

¹⁵⁹"Nostre finale pretention, qui est le divin amour." *Oeuvres...* V, p.179.

pretension¹⁶⁰ and the spiritual pretension of divine love.¹⁶¹ The texts referring to marriage only pertain to friendship in the sense that those pretensions define their exchange toward that end. The real sense of pretension englobes all the other usages. It is the openly declared design for Christian perfection, which he says many times should be the only desire of our hearts. He therefore speaks of the holy pretensions, or resolutions between friends to live virtuously.¹⁶² The abnegation or spiritual nudity he and Jane suffered to attain, especially during the retreat of 1616 testify to its meaning. That most fundamental resolution to make God the center of one's life and orientation of every choice is the meaning of spiritual friendship's communication. It differs from friendships of pleasure in this sense, because the predominant quality of a spiritual life is the intellect's complete lucidity. The medievals used to say "the awakened intelligence seeks the absolute." A life seeking God and virtue is not wandering from one passionate pleasure to another, but walks straight 'like a man with a vision,' to its purpose. It is in a certain sense objective and above the noise of the world. This is the meaning of the classic idea of justice and wisdom, that our passions and emotions correspond to the true value of things.¹⁶³ The wise person is able to evaluate the many goods life presents him and thereby increase what is best in himself. "Everything is either eternal death or eternal love, and all Christian wisdom consists in choosing well."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ He writes Jane, "Ma chambre est plein de gens qui me tirent; mais mon coeur est solitaire toutefois, et plein de desir de vivre a jamais tout pour ce saint amour, qui est l'unique pretention de ce mesme coeur." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXIII. See also MDLXXIX, it is a closing formula often occurring in his letters.

¹⁶¹"Le divin amour supplante et assujettit les affections et passions, les destournant de la fin a laquelle l'amour propre les veut porter et les contournant a sa pretention spirituelle." *Oeuvres...* V, p.312.

¹⁶²For example he writes to Chanoine Honore des Echelles in the midst of conflict "Cher Frere, je ne regrette rien tant que de voir differer le bonheur que nos coeurs se promettoyent de se pouvoir entretenir a souhait sur leurs saintes pretentions; ... Mais voici le temps qu'il faut employer l'avantage que nostre amitié a au dessus de celle des enfans de ce monde." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDLXVI.

¹⁶³Francis develops this in the *Traité*, showing that contrary to the Stoics there are good passions, even divinely inspired ones, all are measured noble or ignoble by their objects: "Or ces affections que nous sentons en nostre partie raysonnable sont plus ou moins nobles et spirituelles selon qu'elles ont leurs objectz plus ou moins releves, et qu'elles se trouvent en un degre plus eminent de l'esprit." *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.35-37.

¹⁶⁴"Tout est ou morternelle, ou amour eternel, et tout la sagesse chrestienne consiste a bien choisir." *Oeuvres...* V, p.346.

Pretension could be used interchangeably with resolution in his writings. Love is not sentiments, Francis repeatedly says, but the unfailing resolution and desire to make the loved one happy in everything.¹⁶⁵ Sharing their resolutions was the thing that brought him and Jane most together from the beginning. He writes her of “our resolutions” that give his heart a unique firmness in God and stimulates his affection for her.¹⁶⁶ Communicating their resolutions or pretension, made them a common purpose, and in as much as each friend aspired to that purpose because he esteemed it, so too they mutually esteemed someone who was an ally in that same goal. Intentions are more for the motives of individual actions,¹⁶⁷ whereas pretension is the rationale giving substance to every intention. It communicates the dreams either good or bad that persons share, and naturally every means each friend might dispose of to realize their purpose.¹⁶⁸ Pretension adds the sense of confessed and declared intention that gives a character to one’s every action and countenance. It creates the spirit of friendship by defining its purpose, and because these declarations are not usually public but within the context of friendship, they pertain to the understanding friends have about each other’s lives. This helps to mitigate misunderstanding, since it has a role in the way one judges ambiguous acts.

Friendship is the perfect love of our neighbor for Francis de Sales.¹⁶⁹ In one text he speaks of the ways we communicate that love to our

¹⁶⁵For example, “Nous ne savons pas ce que c’est d’aymer Dieu. Il (l’amour) ne consiste pas aux plus grands goûts et sentimens, mais en la plus grande et ferme resolution et desir de contenter Dieu en tout, et tacher, autant que nous pouvons, de ne l’offenser point, et de prier pour que la gloire de son Filz aille toujours augmentant. Ces choses sont signes d’amour.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMLXXI.

¹⁶⁶“Vous ne sçauriés croire combien mon coeur s’affermit en nos resolutions et comment toutes choses concourent a cet affermissement. Je m’en sens une suavité extraordinaire, comme aussi de l’amour que je vous porte; car j’ayme cette amour incomprablement. Il est fort, impliable et sans mesure ni reserve, mais doux, facile, tout pur, tout tranquille; bref, si je ne me trompe, tout en Dieu. ... Dieu, qui void les intimes replis de mon coeur, sçait qu’il n’y a rien en ceci que pour luy et selon luy.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.CDII.

¹⁶⁷“Nous pouvons, comme vous voyes, donner diverses perfections a nos actions, selon la varieté des motifs, fins et intentions que nous prenons en les faysan”. *Oeuvres...* V, p.285.

¹⁶⁸“Au monde, tous ne conspirent pas a mesme fin, tous n’ont pas le mesme esprit; il faut donq sans doute se tirer a part et fare des amitiés selon nostre pretention.” *Oeuvres...*III, p.204.

¹⁶⁹Cfr. *Oeuvres...* XXI p.144, for example, where he uses the terms as

friends. “The perfect Godly love of our neighbor communicates itself in different manners: it helps by words, by works, and by example, it provides for all his necessities as much as possible; it rejoices in his temporal pleasures and happiness, but much more in his spiritual advancement.”¹⁷⁰ He goes on to say that it does everything it can to serve for his salvation, with great affection, but at the same time it remains detached and at peace, “with a pure charity.”¹⁷¹ Spiritual friendship uses all of these ways to communicate the one thing we owe our friends above all—love. If friendship is indeed a means to salvation for Francis de Sales, as we are attempting to prove, it is because it communicates the love of God, in its mercy, in its encouragements, in its commiserating, in countless acts and words of kindness only those with the strength to love consistently, virtuously, Christianly know. It is one of the most powerful ways that the love of God can be experienced by human beings. In the *Traité*, when he is elaborating why charity is a friendship with God, he indicates the purpose of communication: “God does not cease to do us good and render all kinds of testimonies of his holy affection, having openly revealed to us all his secrets, as to his friends and confidants.”¹⁷² Like the benevolence that it acts out, communication seeks to do good, express affection and to confide.

The relationship between friendship and redemption

Once we have plunged deeply into the thought of Francis de Sales it becomes apparent that the whole problem of friendship and virtue turns around the obstacles presented by sin within the human person and in

identical.

¹⁷⁰“L’amour parfait du prochain qui est selon Dieu se communique en diverses manieres: il l’ayde par paroles, par *Oeuvres* et par exemple; le prouvoit de toutes ses necessités entant qu’il luy est possible; il res.jouït de son bonheur et felicité temporelle, mais beaucoup plus de son avancement spirituel;” *Oeuvres...* XXI, p.145.

¹⁷¹[The spiritual friend] luy procure les biens temporelz en tant qu’ilz luy peuvent servir pour obtenir la beatitude eternelle, luy desire les biens de la grace, les vertus qui le peuvent, selon Dieu, perfectionner; les luy procure par toutes les voyes licites avec grande affection, mais avec quietude d’esprit, sans aucune alteration; avec une pure charité.” *Oeuvres...* XXI, p.145.

¹⁷²“En fin, nous sommes en perpetuelle communication avec luy, [Dieu] qui ne cesse de parler a nos coeurs par inspirations, attraitz et mounemens sacres. Il ne cesse de nous faire du bien et rendre toutes sortes de tesmoinages de sa tressainte affection, nous ayant ouvertement revele tous ses secretz, comme a ses amis confidens.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.163.

society. What need would there be for testing a friend, for confidence or consolation if it weren't for the evils in the world? The danger he speaks of is to live among the worldly and become like them—to have a friendship with the world, to be persons of this century. As social creatures we fall or rise together in a certain way. Redemption offers the only real escape from the interior and exterior afflictions of sin and their consequent threat to true friendship. Francis de Sales never says explicitly that redemption and friendship are so related, but it is everywhere underpinning his idea of friendship. He was no doubt familiar with Augustine's comment "It is most evident that there is no greater way to either awaken or to increase love than to know oneself to be loved, when one does not yet love, or to be loved in return when one loves already, either to hope to be loved, or to receive proofs of love. And if this is true in impure loves, how much more so in friendship!"¹⁷³ Let us explore for a moment the Salesian notion of redemption and apply it to his interpretation of Christian friendship, because the real core of our investigation lies somewhere in this stratum.

Friendship is not redemption, it is sharing its "beatitude" or complete peace and happiness of knowing we are loved and that life has meaning because of Christ's love for us. Through friendship with Christ one is changed, redeemed, reconciled with his own hateful contradictions. Without his death at Calvary there is no love, no life only eternal death.¹⁷⁴ It is, as the Doctor of love summarizes to conclude his *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, "the most gentle and most violent motive than could ever animate our hearts in this mortal life."¹⁷⁵ Only this way can one be pleased with what one is in spite of what one is: because Christ died for us, loved us, while we were sinners.¹⁷⁶ The results of that reconciliation is a new man who is 'divinized' by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Consider in the context of friendship what he says about the fruits of the Holy Spirit. "Divine love gives us a joy and interior consolation, with a grand peace of heart that withstands adversities by

¹⁷³*De catech. rud.* IV, 7.

¹⁷⁴"Sur le Calvaire on ne peut avoir la vie sans l'amour, ni l'amour sans la mort du Redempteur: mais hors de la, tout est ou mort eternelle, ou amour eternel, et tout la sagesse chrestienne consiste a bien choisir." *Oeuvres...* V, p.346.

¹⁷⁵"Or enfin, pour conclusion, la Mort et Passion de Nostre Seigneur est le motif le plus doux et le plus violent qui puisse animer nos coeurs en cette vie mortelle." *Oeuvres...* V, p.345.

¹⁷⁶Cfr. Romans . 5: 6-11.

patience, and renders us gracious and benign to help our neighbor by a cordial goodness.”¹⁷⁷

Redemption gives birth to a peaceful joy that not only seeks to share its happiness, but makes a person more able to be a friend. He is “joyful, peaceful, patient, benevolent, long-suffering, gentle, faithful, modest, temperate, and chaste.”¹⁷⁸ Its goodness is more constant and persevering, affable and humble, tolerating the moods and imperfections of others, remaining perfectly loyal and confidently simple. Because Christ has been so tolerant of our imperfections, we are patient with ourselves and with others. The fruits of the Holy Spirit, the prize of redemption, are “beatitude and happiness, that gives a contentment of inestimable value which is so strong that the waters of tribulations and rivers of persecutions can not extinguish it.”¹⁷⁹ Indeed, he adds, it is so resilient that it is made stronger in adversity, because it is a love united to the cross, the “child of pain and joy together.”¹⁸⁰ It is why he often repeated in his correspondence, “Go jovially,”¹⁸¹ “Live joyfully,”¹⁸² “For God is the God of joy.”¹⁸³ It is the mark of authentic

¹⁷⁷“Le divin amour nous donne une joie et consolation interieure, avec une grande *paix* de coeur qui se conserve entre les adversités par la *patience*, et qui nous rend gracieux et benigns a secourir le prochain par une *bonté* cordiale envers iceluy.[Gal. 5:22,23.]” *Oeuvres...* V, p.306.

¹⁷⁸“L’Apostre donq ne veut dire autre chose sinon que *le fruit du Saint-Esprit est la charité*, laquelle est joyeuse, paisible, patiente, benigne, bonteuse, longanime, douce, fidele, modeste, continent, chaste”. *Oeuvres...* V, p.306.

¹⁷⁹“Cette fruit ... est une beatitude et felicité tres desirable.. elle nous donne un contentement d’inestimable valeur. Contentement lequell est si fort, que *les eaux* des tribulations et les fleuves des persecutions *ne le peuvent eteindre*, ains, non seulement il ne périt pas, mais il s’enrichit parmi les pauvretés [Ct. ult. 6]” *Oeuvres...* V, p.307.

¹⁸⁰“La beauté de l’amour est en la laideur de la douleur. Que si je porte le deuil dur la Passion et Mort de mon Roy, ... je ne laisse pas d’avoir une douceur incomparable de voir l’exces de son amour emmi les travaux de ses douleurs...comme je suis dolente de ses douleurs, je suis aussi toute ravie d’ayse de son amour; non seulement je m’attriste avec luy, mais je me glorifie en luy [Rm. 8:17]... Ainsy naist l’union precieuse de nostre coeur avec son Dieu, laquelle, comme un Benjamin mystique, est *enfant de douleur* [Gn. 35:18] et de joye tout ensemble.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.273.

¹⁸¹“Tenez vostre coeur bien large devant Dieu; allons tous-jours gayement en sa presence. Il nous ayme ... il y a rien a craindre.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLII.

¹⁸²“Vous ne voudriez pour rien du monde offenser Dieu, c’est asses pour vivre joyeuse.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII. See also ltrs. MCDLXXXVII; CCC and MCCCLXIII.

¹⁸³“Je suis bien consolé de voir combien vous estimez le bien de servir

devotion.¹⁸⁴ Thus the fruits of redemption's reconciliation is a joy that conquers all. It is one of the first things one seeks to share in friendship, which enabled Antoine Favre to write Francis in the beginning of their friendship, "Indeed, by the conjunction of our souls your happiness was wholly poured into me."¹⁸⁵

Redemption enables friendship to risk rejection because one's happiness is not in friendship as much in Christ. Albeit there is a compelling desire to share its happiness, a happiness only increased in sharing itself, friendship is not the main cause of its happiness. For this reason one can suffer much and be happy, because happiness of reconciliation is like the happiness of little children in their mother's lap. It is the happiness of being loved and loving God, which Francis clearly states is the universal cause of every subsequent human love.¹⁸⁶ Even in the trials of betrayal or loss, that happiness in the "fine point of the spirit" remains always shining like the sun, "impenetrable."¹⁸⁷ That gives it a certain objectivity from the ups and downs of every human relationship, and a humility that loves generously. After all what has anyone done to merit redemption?

In summary, the grateful soul, redeemed by Christ's death, loves like he does. His love does not seek *quid pro quo* justice, nor does it crave fulfillment in restless searching. It overflows from an abundance of happiness and humbly seeks to give in return for its own gracious redemption—to even give to the point of martyrdom. "To be a good servant of God," Francis summarizes, "is to be charitable to your neighbor, to have an inviolable resolution in the superior part of the spirit to follow the will of God, to have a very humble humility and simplicity, to entrust yourself to God and to pick yourself up as often as you fall, to endure yourself in your abjection and peacefully tolerate

Dieu...Je le suis autant du contentement que vous donnez aux vôtres et de la gayeté avec laquelle vous vives: car Dieu est le Dieu de la joye." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCLXXV.

¹⁸⁴"Il faut non seulement vouloir faire la volonté de Dieu, mais, pour estre devot, il faut le faire gayement." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIII.

¹⁸⁵"Quod si accidet, non tantum in felicitatis tuae partem venisse me putabo, verum etiam pro animorum nostrorum conjunctione felicitatem tuam quanta tota erit in me transfudisse si non invidabis." *Oeuvres...* XI, p.382.

¹⁸⁶Cfr. for example *Oeuvres...* IV Ch 22 p.163, where he concludes, "La charité est le soleil qui orne tout, eschauffe tout et vivifie tout".

¹⁸⁷"Mais tout cela ne touche point la pointe de l'esprit qui assuré de plus en plus de l'indissoluble et invariable unité que Dieu a faite de ce que nous sommes, demeure aussi impenetrable a toute sorte d'aprehension." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MXLV.

others in their imperfections.”¹⁸⁸ To love as Christ therefore, Francis believes, we must love our neighbors more than we love ourselves, so long as the love of God prevails.¹⁸⁹ This spirit is the key to understanding the rationale of Salesian spiritual friendship. “Whoever is resurrected in this new life of the Savior does not live any more by himself, nor in himself nor for himself, but by his Savior, in his Savior and for his Savior.”¹⁹⁰ This is the meaning of his often repeated VIVE JESUS! Redemption determines the quality of friendship’s love, but it also limits that love to Christ. Outside of God friendship is not possible for Francis de Sales, because everything friendship lives and aims for is directed to giving thanks to Christ the “Friend of my heart”¹⁹¹ and “the Friend of friends.”¹⁹²

Once a person has a joy to share they have a basis for true friendship. For you cannot give what you don’t have. The changes embracing the love of God produce have a direct relationship not only with beginning friendship, but in keeping it alive. The nature of this new something they have to share affects their whole being. He contends that it is seen in a confident simplicity in words and actions, a

¹⁸⁸“Estre bonne servante de Dieu, ce n’est pas estre tous-jours consolee... c’est estre charitable envers le prochain, avoir en la partie superieure de l’esprit une inviolable resolution de suivre la volonte de Dieu, avoir une tres humble humilite et simplicité pour se confier en Dieu et se relever autant de fois qu’on fait des cheutes, s’endurer soy meme en ses abjections et supporter tranquillement les autres en leurs imperfections.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDIX.

¹⁸⁹“Le glorieux saint Bernard dit que ‘la mesure d’aymer Dieu est de l’aymer sans mesure’... Ce qui se dit pour Dieu se doit entendre de l’amour du prochain, pourveu toutesfois que l’amour de Dieu surnage tousjours au dessus et tienne le premier rang; mais apres, nous devons aymer nos [freres et] Soeurs de toute l’estendue de nostre coeur, et ne nous contenter pas de les aymer comme nous-mesmes, ainsi que les commandemens de Dieu nous obligent; mais nous les devons aymer plus que nous-mesme pour observer les regles de la perfection evangelique, qui requiert cela de nous. Nostre Seigneur a cela dit luy-mesme *Aymez-vous les uns les autres, ainsy que je vous ay aimés.* [John 13:34; John 15:12].” *Oeuvres...* VI, p.57.

¹⁹⁰“Or, quiconque est resuscité a cette nouvelle vie du Sauveur, il ne vit plus ni a soy, ni en soy, ni pour soy, ains a son Sauveur, en son Sauveur et pour son Sauveur.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.32.

¹⁹¹“O Dieu, vous estes le seul *un* et la seule unité *necessaire* a mon ame! [Lk 10. 42] Helas, cher Ami de mon coeur, unisses ma pauvre unique ame a vostre tres unique bonté.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.19. See also, IV, p.255-256.

¹⁹²“O Dieu, c’est de l’Ami des amis, et ses conseilz sont plus aymables que le miel: l’ami c’est le Sauveur, ses conseilz sont pour le salut.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.85.

humble life without disorder of any kind. "So that our whole personality be imbued with divine love, as much interiorly, by joy, peace, patience, long suffering, goodness and loyalty, as well as exteriorly by benevolence, mildness, modesty, continence and chastity." Loving others is the spilling over of a rich interior love and friendship with God, it renders us gracious, gentle, affable and tolerant, so that the reflection of the quality of one's relationship with God is measured by his ability to love others well.¹⁹³ "Charity," Francis explains, "by the multitude of acts it produces, imprints in us a certain facility to love, which it leaves even after we are deprived of her presence."¹⁹⁴ By God's gift of Himself, the soul is justified, divinized and redeemed in a way that improves the person's ability to love and hence to be a friend. In fact he says charity is so powerful that the soul is slow to lose its effects. Even if one sins the human love charity produces lingers, but it is only like an echo of divine love without any merit for eternal life.¹⁹⁵ Thus, since human love is the creature of charity, one can know charity by its effects, "Man's approach to man is the true image of celestial love of man's approach to God."¹⁹⁶ Loving God is so united to loving one's neighbor that how one treats his neighbor reveals his relationship with God. "Let us fear God," he writes in the *Traité*, "And we will not fear anything else, let us love God and

¹⁹³"Le divin amour nous donne...un courage de longue estendue, au moyen dequoy nous sommes rendus doux, affables et condescendans envers tous, supportans leurs humeurs et imperfections et leur gardant une loyauté parfaite, tesmoignans une simplicité accompagnée de confiance tant en nos paroles qu'en nos actions, vivans modestement et humblement, retranchans toutes superfluités et tous desordres au boire, manger vestir, coucher, jeux, passetems, et autres telles convoitises voluptueuses par une sainte continence, et reprimant sur tout les inclinations et seditions de la chair par une soigneuse chasteté: affin que toute nostre personne soit occupée en la divine dilection, tant interieurement, par la joye, paix patience, longaniminé, bonté et loyauté; comme aussi extereurement, par la benignité, mansuetude, modestie, continence et chastité." *Oeuvres*.. V, p.306.

¹⁹⁴"La charité, par la multitude des actes qu'elle produit, imprime en nous une certaine facilité d'aymer, laquelle elle nous laisse après mesme que nous sommes privés de sa presence." *Oeuvres*... IV, p.247.

¹⁹⁵Francis is probably addressing the problem of noble non-believers, like the philosophers of Antiquity, who have a certain human excellence in their love, but without charity, except in some vague diest way. He considers it without merit, as he shows in a entire chapter of the *Traité* (V, pp.269-275).

¹⁹⁶"l'Homme envers l'homme est la vraye image de l'amour celeste de l'homme envers Dieu." *Oeuvres*... V, p.205.

we will love everything else.”¹⁹⁷ Charity is the “queen of the virtues,”¹⁹⁸ because it animates them all and establishes order in the soul by the indwelling of the Trinity.

How does all this affect friendship? How does one experience that divine love and its gifts? Here we step onto the terrain of God’s communication to the soul that believes in Him and keeps his word. The person who befriends God advances in charity and virtue, making them the most apt to be true friends, because they have learned to love by how God has loved them. All the honor in loving rightly stems from sacred love which has all the virtues. “Patience is not patient enough, faith is not faithful enough, nor hope confident enough, nor good nature gentle enough, if love does not animate them.”¹⁹⁹ Christ is the great physician of the soul. By divine invitation in the person of Jesus, God offers a continuous “incommunicable communication;” in a word he offers his friendship. It grows and increases “from virtue to virtue” being renewed every day as one perseveres in God’s friendship. Good works proliferate from the justice bestowed upon them, Francis observes, and therefore the longer a person walks in God’s friendship the more it makes them whole.²⁰⁰ But alas, wholeness, and reconciliation do not mean we can hope for perfection. The irony of Christian perfection is in what Francis de Sales calls loving our imperfections. Redemption consists in this, in accepting, even in loving the abjection of your humanity, the faults that never seem to go away. The ‘joy and interior consolation’ redemption imparts comes from this mystery, God’s love is merciful, for Christ died for us while we were sinners. “Hate your faults with a tranquil hatred,” he advises. Don’t torment yourself, but profit from their lessons of humility, for “God wants to speak to us in thorns and the bush, as he did to Moses, and we want him to speak to us in the sweet and fresh breeze as he did to

¹⁹⁷“Craignons Dieu et nous ne craignons point autre chose; aymons Dieu et nous aymerons tout autre chose.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.DCXXXV.

¹⁹⁸Francis alludes to tradition when he remarks, “Si l’ame est un royaume duquel le Saint Esprit soit le Roy, la charité est la reine.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.163. Some of the many places he develops this idea are: IV, p.247-248; IV, pp.55-60; CCCLXXXV; and V, pp. 309-313.

¹⁹⁹“Il faut rapporter tout leur honneur a l’amour sacré, qui a toutes les vertus; la patience n’est pas asses patiente, ni la fay asses fidele, ni l’esperance asses confiante, ni la debonnaireté asses douce, si l’amour ne les anime et vivifie.” *Oeuvres...* V, p.248.

²⁰⁰“Les amis de Dieu allant de vertu en vertu, sont renouvelés de jour en jour; c’est a dire, croissent par bonnes *Oeuvres* en la justice qu’ilz ont reçue par la grace divine, et sont de plus en plus justifiés.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.167.

Elijah.”²⁰¹ Only then can he possess himself, be at ease in solitude and begin to consider a friendship not based on some craving need. For, as he reminds one friend, Christ says patience is to possess your own soul.²⁰² Thus one reconciled with his own contradictions by the love of Christ *à travers* those contradictions, or imperfections is at ease with himself, patient and at peace. It is intimately related to humility in his spirituality, he firmly believes, “one cannot be without the other.”²⁰³

Once a soul has experienced God’s love even through his imperfections, the mercy of his love can finally be fully embraced. “We must suffer our own imperfection in order to have perfection; I say suffer with patience, and not to love or to caress: humility is nourished in this suffering.”²⁰⁴ This is, as Francis de Sales explains the cause of true humility, “the virtue of virtues.”²⁰⁵ He believed contemplating the lowly condition Christ accepted was the surest way to love our own abjection. What’s more because God leaves us weak and imperfect in order to exercise his merciful love in us, they are our glory and our joy. “Glorify yourself in being nothing.”²⁰⁶ Once a person recognizes this

²⁰¹“Ne tormentes pas vostre esprit. Il faut hair nos defautz, mais d’une hayne tranquille, et quiete, non point d’une hayne despitueuse et troublee; et si, il faut avoir patience de les voir, et en tirer le profit d’un saint abyssement de nous mesmes... Dieu nous veut parler dedans les espines et le buisson, comme il fit a Moyse, et nous voulons qu’il nous parle dans le petit vent doux et frais, comm’il fit a Helie.” *Oeuvres...* ltr.DXII.

²⁰²“*En vostre patience, dit le Filz de Dieu, vous possederez vos ames* [Lc 21.19]. C’est donc l’effet de la patience de bien posseder son ame, et a mesure que la patience est parfaite, la possession de l’ame se rend plus entiere et excellente.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCLXXIII.

²⁰³“C’est par inspiration divine que vous m’interroges de la paix de l’ame et de l’humilité ensemblement; car c’est bien la verité que l’une ne peut estre sans l’autre.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCLXXX. See too its relationship to the concept of indifference as he develops it under the theme of hope in the *Entretiens* VI, pp.91s.

²⁰⁴“Sçaches que la vertu de patience est celle qui nous assure le plus de la perfection [Jac.1:4;3], et s’il la faut avoir avec les autres, il faut aussi l’avoir avec soy meme. ...Il faut souffrir nostre propre imperfection pour avoir la perfection; je dis souffrir avec patience, et non pas aymer ou caresser: l’humilité se nourrit en cette souffrance. Il faut confesser la verité, nous sommes des pauvres gens qui ne pouvons guere bien faire; mais Dieu qui est infiniment bon, se contente de nos petites besognes” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CXC.

²⁰⁵“Ayez beaucoup d’humilité, car c’est la vertu des vertus, mais humilité genereuse et paisible.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLXXII.

²⁰⁶“Qu’est ce donc que l’humilité chrestienne? C’est l’amour de cette pauvreté et abjection, en contemplation de celle de Nostre Seigneur Aymes

debt to the great generosity of God's friendship, his life fills with gratitude, and seeks to return generosity with generosity. This is why Francis comments, "The humility that does not produce generosity is undoubtedly false."²⁰⁷ It is a generosity that also turns inward upon ourselves. Humility is intimately linked with charity in this sense in Salesian spirituality. They are the "mothers of the virtues"²⁰⁸ for the entire Christian life. His famous concept of *douceur* is the sweet gentleness (the word entails both ideas at once in French) that expresses humble charity in his system of Christian life.²⁰⁹ The two always accompany one another, counterbalancing each other, "It is almost impossible," Francis affirms, "to have charity without being humble and to be humble without having charity."²¹⁰ At the same time it is paradoxically firm and courageous. "Vitalize continually your courageous humility, with confidence in God." he writes one Philothea, "so that your courage be humble and your humility courageous."²¹¹ To call courage pride and vanity, he says is fraudulent, Christians call that cowardice. "They call courage," he continues, "patience, *douceur*, good-nature, humility, accepting and loving scorn and your own

cette chetive condition, glorifies-vous de n'estre rien, soyés en bien ayse, puisque vostre misere sert d'object a la bonté de Dieu pour exercer sa misericorde Humilions nous... affin que Nostre Seigneur vous remplisse de son Royaume...*Je me glorifie en mes infirmités* dit [II Cor. 12:9] l'Apostre." *Oeuvres...* CCXXXVIII bis.

²⁰⁷"L'humilité qui ne produit point la generosité est indubitablement fausse." *Oeuvres...* VI p.76.

²⁰⁸"(Entre les vertus) l'humilité et la charité sont les maitresses chordes; toutes les autres y sont attachees. Il faut seulement se bien maintenir en ces deux-la; l'une est la plus basse, l'autre plus haute... Ce sont les meres aux vertus." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXXXV.

²⁰⁹"Qu'il playse a Nostre Seigneur de consoler vostre ame de sa benediction, la faysant abonder en son saint amour et en la sacree humilité et douceur de coeur qui ne sont jamais sans ce saint amour, non plus que le saint amour sans elles." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCXVII.

²¹⁰"Si vous n'avez l'humilité vous n'avez pas la charité, et si vous estes sans charité vous estes aussi sans humilité, d'autant qu'il est presqu'impossible d'avoir la charité sans estre humble et d'estre humble sans avoir la charité, ces deux vertus ayans une telle sympathie et convenance par ensemble qu'elles ne peuvent jamais aller l'une sans l'autre." *Oeuvres...* X, p.192.

²¹¹"Animes continuellement vostre courage d'humilité, et vostre humilité, c'est a dire vostre misere et le desir d'estre humble, animes les de confiance en Dieu, en sorte que vostre courage soit humble et vostre humilité courageuse." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDXXIV.

abjection.”²¹² This kind of love is like Christ’s love, it is naive and simple, yet constant and devoted. Its courage, like its meekness comes from a disciplined yet passionate ‘gentle flame’ of a heart without duplicity. He wishes his friends a courage that can say, “Live Jesus! without reserve, or worry about the sweet or the bitter, light or darkness.”²¹³ Redemption changes a soul rendering it reconciled and therefore at peace with its contradictions and confident God’s love will never fail it. He would especially rely upon this ‘good news’ when counseling those journeying through the world seeking perfection. Why complain, why be scandalized, why become bitter and angry? “It is an awful temptation to get upset in letting yourself be saddened with the world, when you must be there by necessity. God’s Providence is wiser than we are.”²¹⁴ Peace therefore leaves a certain attitude of good faith in God’s care for his little lambs. It is likewise patient with oneself and not anxious, because it is not seeking to earn that love as much as it simply seeks to live Jesus, more in emptying itself in simply loving than any great virtue, asceticism or ambitions. This is why Francis considers over-eagerness “the mother imperfection of all imperfections.”²¹⁵ True hope is neither impatient nor worrisome, taking the trials of life in stride together with one’s failings, it believes “God to whom you belong will deliver you.”²¹⁶ It is a childlike patience that

²¹²“C’est un mauvais langage d’appeller courage la fierté et vanité! Les Chrestiens appellent cela lascheté et couïardise; comme au contraire ilz appellent courage la patience, la douceur, la debonnaireté, l’humilité, l’acceptation et amour du mespris et de la propre abjection.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXXVIII.

²¹³“Je vous souhaite un courage grand, et non point chatoüilleux, un courage lequel, tandis quil peut dire bien resoluement: VIVE JESUS! sans reserve, ne se soucie point ni du doux ni de l’amer, de la lumiere ni des tenebres.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDVII.

²¹⁴“C’est une rude tentation de se desplaire, en s’attristant, au monde, quand il y faut estre par nécessité. La providence de Dieu est plus sage que nous. Il nous est advis que, changeant de navire, nous nous porterons mieux; ouy, si nous nous changeons nous mesme.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXII.

²¹⁵“Vous savez que Dieu veut qu’on le serve en l’aymant sur tout, et nostre prochain comme nous-mesmes... L’empressement, l’agitation du dessein n’y sert de rien... C’est cet empressement que je vous defende expressement, comme la mere imperfection de toutes les imperfections.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXIV. And in another letter he warns, “Gardés vous des empressements et inquietudes, car il n’y a rien qui nous empesche plus de cheminer en la perfection.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXVI.

²¹⁶“Ne prevenes point les accidens de cette vie par apprehension, ains prevenes les par une parfaite esperance qu’a mesure qu’ilz arriveront, Dieu, a

seeks honestly to do good, without too much self consciousness, accusation or self doubt, “to not be too fastidious in exercising virtue, but to go forward nearly, frankly, naively, freely, in good faith and *grosso modo*.”²¹⁷

Thus in conclusion, friendship with God changes a soul rendering it humble and joyful. Its joy gives it something to share, its humility helps it understand human vicissitudes and weakness. Both allow friendship’s love to be like God’s own love and lend great stability to friendship. By the Holy Spirit living in the persons and their friendship, their ability to love well, communicate and survive conflicts is much more than persons without an intimate experience of God’s love. Their health then sets the stage for a new kind of growth in this grace, which will unfold as we progress in this investigation. And conversely, just as friendship with God influences friendship with others, friendship with others influences charity, or friendship with God. We saw him observe as much in his relationship with Jane de Chantal, and it will come to the fore as we progress. But first there is a uniquely Salesian interpretation of charity’s humility that has practical bearing on friendship.

Freedom of the children of God and friendship

What we might call an attitude of humility was the Salesian development of another idea which he takes from St. Paul that has equal importance in the life of friendship’s ‘gentle struggle’. Francis often appealed to “The just freedom that the Spirit of God gives to those He possesses.”²¹⁸ Freedom of spirit, freedom of the beloved children of God, holy indifference, freedom of mind, holy naiveté, or holy sincerity, was not caprice,²¹⁹ but a childlike simplicity, a

qui vous estes, vous en delivrera.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDII. Or as he concludes in the *entretien* on generosity: “L’humilité ne gist pas seulement a nous defier de nous memes, ains aussi a nous confier en Dieu; et la defiance de nous memes et de nos propres forces produit la confiance en Dieu.” *Oeuvres...* VI, p.77.

²¹⁷“Je vous ay dit si souvent,qu’il ne faut point pointiller en l’exercice des vertus, mais qu’il faut aller rondement, franchement, naïvement, a la vieille françoise, avec liberté, a la bonne foy, *grosso modo*.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXVIIIbis.

²¹⁸“La juste *liberté* que *l’Esprit de Dieu* donne a ceux qu’il possède [II Cor 3.17].” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXI. Or as he says elsewhere, “Alles a la bonne foy, sous la providence de Dieu, ne vous souciant que du jour present, laissant vostre coeur a Nostre Seigneur, car vous le luy avez donné, sans jamais le vouloir reprendre pour aucune chose.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMLXXXVI.

²¹⁹“Je combatz pour une bonne cause quand je defens la sainte et charitable

confidence in God's care for his loved ones that didn't get lost in scrupulous worrying, but kept good faith. As he explains to Jane at the very beginning of their friendship, "It is the disengagement of the Christian heart from all things in order to follow the acknowledged will of God."²²⁰ Not anxious about rewards or consolation, nor overly dependent on spiritual exercises, it only is concerned that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It loves good things, but it loves God's will above all, and the privation of any of these good things does not disturb its joy because its heart does not rest in them.²²¹ He explains that the marks of such a freedom are a great peace of mind, a sweet gentleness and an ability to condescend to anything not sinful or spiritually dangerous. It leaves a person with a gentle and agreeable disposition, pliable to every act of virtue and charity.²²² Secure in God's love, the soul is freed from disquiet over the effect of its efforts and the justice of its judgment.²²³ It is enough to be earnestly trying, the rest

liberté d'esprit, laquelle, comme vous sçaves, j'honore singulierement, pourvu qu'elle soit vraie et esloignee de la dissolution et du libertinage qui n'est qu'un masque de liberté." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLI. See too ltr. CCXXXIV.

²²⁰ "La liberte de laquelle je parle c'est la *liberté des enfans bienaymés* [Rm 8.21]. Et qu'est ce? C'est un desengagement du coeur chretien de toutes choses, pour suivre la volonte de Dieu reconneü." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.363). This long letter marks the debut of his spiritual direction of Jane de Chantal (October 14, 1604). A large part of it is devoted to explaining this freedom.

²²¹"Premiere marque. Le coeur qui a cette liberté n'est point attaché aux consolations, mais reçoit les afflictions avec toute la douceur que la chair peut le permettre. Je ne dis pas qu'il n'ayme et qu'il ne desire les consolations, mais je dis qu'il n'engage pas son coeur en icelles. Deuxieme marque. Il n'engage nullement son affection aux exercices spirituelz; de façon que si, par maladie ou autre accident, il en est empesché, il n'en conçoit nul regret. Je ne dis pas aussi qu'il ne les ayme, mays je dis qu'il ne s'y attache pas. 3 Il ne perd guere sa joie, parce que nulle privation ne rend triste celuy qui n'avoit son coeur attaché nulle part. Je ne dis pas qu'il ne la perde, mais c'est pour peu." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.363).

²²²"Les effectz de cette liberté sont une grande suavité d'esprit, une grande douceur et condescendance a tout ce qui n'est pas peché ou danger de peché; c'est cette humeur doucement pliable aux actions de toute vertu et charité." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.363).

²²³Consider this in light of Protestant views of Catholicism, summarized perhaps best in Theodore de Beze's words to Francis, "You embroil souls in too many ceremonies and difficulties, because you say that good works are necessary for salvation, which, however are merely decency." (Cfr. A. Ravier, *Francis de Sales...* p.84.) Childlike confidence in grace was another Salesian between the two, i.e. between grace and the merits of Christ to save us, and

shouldn't really concern us, since we can hardly know the complete implications of our actions nor be responsible for things that are beyond our human ability. "Hold your heart firm and raised high in God with complete confidence in his holy Providence, which surely would not have given you the design to serve him without also giving you the means to do so."²²⁴ In a nutshell, the soul only tries to love as best it can without scrupulous interrogation, for "all bows to charity."²²⁵ The strength of this kind of love is in its gentleness (*douceur*), "the virtue of virtues."²²⁶ That famous *douceur* is however the fruit of an asceticism, which have led some to call him the most mortifying of all saints.²²⁷ He writes "Are not the crosses of God more gentle and full of consolation? Yes, provided one die there as the Savior did."²²⁸ The author of *The Devout Life's* genius was, in the words of Jane de Chantal, "to raise souls to a love of God so pleasant that all the difficulties that one believe to be in the devout life fade away."²²⁹ Holy freedom is the freedom of love that accepts all and gives what it can.

works, our own cooperation in redemption's efficacy.

²²⁴"Tenés vostre coeur ferme et haut eslevé en Dieu par une entiere confiance en sa sainte providence, laquelle sans doute ne vous a pas donné le dessein de la servir qu'elle ne vous donne tous les moyens de ce faire." *Oeuvres...*ltr. CDII.

²²⁵"Pergamus alacriter, Fratres optimi, omnia cedunt charitati; *Fortis ut mors dilectio*, et amanti nihil difficile." *Oeuvres...* VII, p.110. *Song of Songs* 8:6 reads: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame."

²²⁶"L'humble douceur ... la vertu des vertus." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDXXXIX. And like virtue he considers this gentleness a hard won strength. Michel Favre testifies, "Il estoit naturellement doux et debonnaire, mais pourtant il m'avoue luy mesme quil ne l'estoit pas tant par inclination naturelle comme il estoit par habitude ayant travaillé pour acquerir cette vertu longues anees." *Deposition de Michel Favre* p.331.32 of the manuscript copy, ad secundum art. from the archives of Père Lajeunie "recherches et travaux préparatoires", consultable at the Bibliothèque Saulchoir, Paris. Cfr. ltrs DXVI and MDXXIV. Francis himself tells us *douceur* is not to be confused with weakness."Il faut avoir l'esprit d'indignation contre le mal et estre fort resolu de n'y acquiescer jamais; il faut pourtant demeurer avec grande douceur a l'endroit du prochain. *Oeuvres...* ltr MMLXXII.

²²⁷ Cfr. H.Bremond, *Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux en France* t.1, "l'Humanisme Dévot" (1580-1660), pp.106-109.

²²⁸ "Les croix de Dieu sont elles pas douces et pleines de consolation? Ouy, pourveu que l'on y meure comme fit le Sauveur. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDII.

²²⁹ *Oeuvres de sainte Chantal*, t. II, p.201. Dom Mackey is of the same opinion. Cfr. III, p.XLI.

There are two contrary vices to this freedom, first what he calls restlessness and second subjugation or licentiousness. The first kind of false freedom is evoked when one wants to continuously change their state in life or activity for the slightest pretext and without any real reason or inquiry into God's will. By this the heart dissipates and is lost on countless diversions, rendering it "like an orchard whose fruits are not for the master, but for all who may pass."²³⁰ The latter is a lack of freedom where the mind is overcome either by boredom or anger and cannot perform what it has already decided, as long as it thinks it should be doing something better.²³¹ He gives the example of prayer, on the one extreme it is wrong to interrupt one's determination to pray for whatever inconvenience might arise, and on the other hand it is wrong to tenaciously stick to it when more important things arise.²³² "To serve God in meditating or to serve God in tolerating one's neighbor, both are the will of God."²³³ Or as he puts it elsewhere, we should sometimes even leave the Lord to receive our neighbors for love of Him.²³⁴ The

²³⁰ "A la moindre occasion on change d'exercice, de dessein, de regle ...[et] sa loüable coutume, et par la , le coeur se dissipe et se perd, et est comme un verger ouvert de tous costés, duquel les fruitz ne sont pas pour le maitre mais pour tous passans. [Ps 80.13]" *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.364).

²³¹ "Cette liberté a deux vices contraires: l'instabilité et la contrainte, ou la dissolution et la servitude. L'instabilité d'esprit ou dissolution est un certain excès de liberté par lequel on veut changer d'exercice, d'état de vie, sans rayson ni connoissance que ce soit la volonté de Dieu [...]. La contrainte ou servitude est un certain manquement de liberté par lequel l'esprit est accablé ou d'ennuy ou de cholere quand il ne peut faire ce qu'il a desseiné, encor qu'il puisse faire chose meilleure. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.364).

²³² "The measure of more important things is their relation to God's will, which is known by three criteria: necessity, obedience and charity. He develops them in this letter to Jane and also in *Oeuvres...* ltr. :DCCXCVIII.

²³³ "Une ame qui s'est attachee a l'exercice de la meditation, interrompés la, vous la verres sortir avec du chagrin, empressee et estonnee. Une ame qui a la vraye liberté sortira avec un visage esgal a l'endroit de l'importun qui l'aura incommodée, car ce luy est tout un, ou de servir Dieu en meditant, ou de le servir en supportant le prochain; l'un et l'autre est la volonté de Dieu, mais le support du prochain est necessaire en ce temps la." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (pp.363-64).

²³⁴ "Il est force que quelquefois nous laissons Nostre Seigneur pour agreer aux autres, pour l'amour de luy. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXVII. He gives a little more explanation in another letter: "Et qu'est-ce cela, sinon avoir son esprit desengagé de tout, et de Dieu mesme, pour faire la volonté de Dieu et le servir; laisser Dieu pour Dieu et n'aymer pas Dieu pour l'aymer d'autant mieux et plus purement?" *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.367).

best way to know those occasions is when things occur asking something good of us that goes against our inclinations.²³⁵

Holy freedom does have some limits, however. All the while, it is important that this freedom not give rise to any scandal or injustice nor be averse to one's vocation. On the contrary, it should make each person to be pleased with dwelling in his or her vocation, which is where God wants them.²³⁶ It is the Salesian version of Augustine's "Love and do what you will,"²³⁷ which Francis formulates: "Do everything by love and nothing by force"²³⁸ Or at another opportunity, "Everywhere holy freedom and sincerity must reign, and we must have no other law or constraint but love."²³⁹ It is counterbalanced by discernment of what he calls "God's good pleasure,"²⁴⁰ or his will, which comes both in the situations and circumstances of our life, by Providence's designs for our good, and in the desires by which God speaks to the human heart. The former God does without our cooperation and the latter depend upon our cooperation.²⁴¹ If a soul is

²³⁵ "Ses occasions de cette liberté sont toutes les choses qui arrivent contre nostre inclination; car quicomque n'est pas engagé en ses inclinations ne s'impatiente pas quand elles sont diverties." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.364).

²³⁶ "La deuxième règle est que, lorsqu'il faut user de liberté par charité, il faut que ce soit sans scandale et sans injustice. ... De manière que cette liberté ne préjudicie jamais aux vocations; au contraire, elle fait que chacun se plait en la sienne, puisque chacun doit savoir que c'est la volonté de Dieu qu'on y demeure [I Co. 7.20]." He gives the examples of St. Charles Borromeo who interrupted the severe rigors of his lifestyle to eat with protestants, and Spiridion who ate meat during lent to alleviate the scruples of a pilgrim who needed to eat when meat was all they had, and St. Ignatius Loyola who obeyed his doctor and ate meat. Cfr. *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV(pp.365-66).

²³⁷ "Il faut partout que la sainte liberté et franchise regne et que nous n'ayons point d'autre loy ni contrainte que celle de l'amour, lequel, quand il nous dictera de faire quelque besogne pour les nostres, il ne doit point estre corrigé comme s'il avait mal fait, ni luy faire payer l'amende." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLI. Or elsewhere, "Je vous laisse l'esprit de liberté, neuy pas celuy qui forclost l'obeissance, car c'est la liberté de la chair; mais celuy qui forclost la contrainte et le scrupule ou empressement." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV(p.359).

²³⁸ He writes it in capitals to Jane, "IL FAUT TOUT FAIRE PAR AMOUR ET RIEN PAR FORCE; IL FAUT PLUS AYMER L'OBEISSANCE QUE CRAINDRE LA DESOBEISSANCE." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV(p.359).

²³⁹ "Il faut partout que la sainte liberté et franchise regne et que nous n'ayons point d'autre loy ni contrainte que celle de l'amour." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLI.

²⁴⁰ "Rien ne se fait, hormis le peché, que par la volonté de Dieu qu'on appelle volonté absolue et de bon plaisir." *Oeuvres...* V, p.109.

²⁴¹ "Des choses que Dieu veut estre faites, il veut les unes estre faites sans

resigned to holy spiritual nudity, seeking only to please God, then it can find many mortifications in the circumstances of ordinary life. By giving one's time if someone asks out of legitimate need, for example, or by accepting food one doesn't like and countless other silent ways one can obey and love in the situations of life as they present themselves. He says, "How holy and agreeable to God we will be if we would know well to employ the ways to mortify ourselves that our vocation furnishes us, for they are without a doubt greater than those of the Religious."²⁴² For this reason holy freedom and indifference are often synonymous in his letters.²⁴³ "Spiritual nudity," "Resignation" and "Indifference," are all terms Francis uses to describe a complete obedience to God's good pleasure in big ways as in small ways, which leaves a soul free from worry and machinations, free to naively and simply serve God, listening to daily life's occasions to satisfy Him. "Our Lord wants to strip you of everything," he explains, "so that He alone might be everything."²⁴⁴

This would have certain consequences for his method of spiritual direction. It would leave his direction always subject to the judgment, or freedom of his directee. Its intention was to make them as independent as possible, able to listen to the stirrings of grace in their particular lives. He would tell them "Never take my words strictly, for I do not want them in any way to confine you, but that you have the freedom to do what you believe best."²⁴⁵ Mother Angélique Arnauld

notre consentement, et en celles cy tousjours il est obei: telle est la production des choses, la pluÿe, neige, tempeste, les maladies et afflictions. Les autres, il ne veut qu'elles soyent faites sans nostre consentement es sans nostre concours. Et quant a celles cy ... en terre, il n'y est pas tousjours obei." *Oeuvres...* VII, pp.12-13.

²⁴² "Que nous serions saints et agréables a Dieu si nous savions bien employer les sujets de nous mortifier que nostre vocation nous fournit, car ilz sont plus grands sans aucun doute qu'entre les Religieux." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDLXIX.

²⁴³ As for example, "O voyla pourquoy il nous faut acquerir le plus que nous pourrons l'esprit de la sainte liberté et indifference; il est bon a tout." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXVIII.

²⁴⁴ "Nostre Seigneur vous veut despouiller de toutes choses, affin que luy seul vous soit toutes choses. Que de tresors dans cet abisme d'affliction spirituelle! Nous pensons que tout soit perdu, et c'est où nous treuvons la delicate, toute simple et pure union de nostre esprit avec ce divin bon plaisir." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMLXXXIII. See: Power, J. "Entre l'une et l'autre volonté divine," in *L'Unidivers Salésien...* pp.265-276.

²⁴⁵ "Ne prends point mes paroles ric a ric, car je ne veux point qu'elles vous serrent, mais que vous ayes la liberté de faire ce que vous croires estre

once remarked that his technique of spiritual direction was in effect having her guide herself.²⁴⁶ As we observed in the testimony of those who knew him, one of the remarkable traits of the man was his ability to listen, he applied this same gift to himself and sought bring it out of his directees when he thought it possible. His first question in spiritual direction was who are you, from that continual starting point both would try to seek how to love God best within the gifts and limits of the person's personality and life's situation. Spiritual direction will come up again in our investigation, because Francis considered the spiritual guide as a friend.

Apart from the limit of using this childlike freedom in a way that would scandalize others, in which case it would not be wrong per se, but only because of the context and limits of others whom we are bound to respect, there is another sense freedom can be abused, and this independent of its context. He believed it possible to take the privilege of spiritual freedom too far, in which case it becomes a kind of presumption and akin to pride, and like pride though we might mitigate it with the love of God, it always remains in some way in the human heart.²⁴⁷ We might call it a spirit of rebellion that is the opposite of the naive obedient spirit of children. We see here his vision of holiness was a meek love, sincerely human, because it was aware of its littleness and tendency to err, yet remained joyful and optimistic focusing on "little virtues" instead of doing heroic things. He confesses to Jane he repeats often the necessity to live joyfully and humbly with a childlike naiveté, because it is "the key to the mystery for you and for me."²⁴⁸

Freedom of mind enabled their friendship, as he writes Jane on one occasion, to endure hardships like separation, or offense—"it is good

meilleur" *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXXXIX.

²⁴⁶Cfr. A. Ravier, *Lettres...* p.645.

²⁴⁷"L'amour propre, l'estime de nous mesmes, la fause liberté de l'esprit, ce sont des racines qu'on ne peut bonnement arracher du coeur humain, mais seulement on peut empescher la production de leurs fruitz, qui sont les pechés.. et diminuer leur ardeur par la pratique des vertus contraires, et sur tout de l'amour de Dieu." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCLXXIII.

²⁴⁸"Tenes vous donc joyeusement et humble devant Dieu; mais tenes vous esgalement joyeuse et humble devant le monde. Soyés bien ayse que le monde ne tienne conte de vous: s'il vous estime...riés de son jugement et de vostre misere qui le reçoit; s'il ne vous estime pas, consoles vous joyeusement dequoy, au moins en cela, le monde suit la verité....Mais que ce soit tous-jours naïvement et joyeusement. Je le repete souvent parce que c'est la clef de ce mystere pour vous et pour moy." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXVIIIbis.

for everything.”²⁴⁹ It afforded a sincere simplicity in his friendships, which were naively confident in the other person’s affection, and goodwill. Yet all the while it is not so naive as to enter into friendship with anyone, trusting without being critical. That was rather to come before friendship. Some may have thought that such openness, especially in the drawing rooms of 17th century French nobility, to be brash, but Francis sees it otherwise. “Friendships founded on Jesus Christ do not give up being respectful by being very simple and in good faith.”²⁵⁰ This attitude enabled friendship not to count the cost, nor to anger easily, because it was not rigid or full of expectations, but sought simply to love. If you strip away ambition, restlessness and caprice, friendship becomes much more patient and able to understand differences. Isn’t it easier to befriend someone without hidden agendas or who is not dissatisfied with what they are or the position they hold? All these worries, even the bizarre spiritual detours a soul is capable of, like being proud of its humility, are avoided by this unassuming simplicity. There is no second guessing, no commanding, no using each other for pleasure or utility, only a simple and even naive desire to give and communicate as it pleases God to do so. Of course, this cannot be friendship with a reciprocal giving in return, but as much as that might enrich the giving of someone with this spirit of holy indifference, its motive to give is not so much to give in return as to give because it loves.

We have seen communication’s functioning, and the importance of a spiritual life in making it work well. Now let us turn to some of the effects of communication, which will prove important for our inquiry into friendship’s ability to transform persons into something better.

²⁴⁹“Mais dites moy, ma Fille, ne m’est ce pas de l’affliction de ne vous pouvoir escrire qu’ainsy a la desrobee? O voyla pourquoy il nous faut acquerir le plus que nous pourrons l’esprit de la sainte liberté et indifference; il est bon a tout, et mesme pour demeurer six semaines, voire sept, sans... aucunes nouvelles l’un de l’autre.” *Oeuvres*. ltr. CCCXXVIII.

²⁵⁰He defends his friendships with Jane and André to President Frémyot, “Or, Monsieur, les amitiés fondees sur Jesus Christ ne laissent pas d’estre respectueuses pour estre un peu fort simples et a la bonne foy. Nous nous sommes bien couppe de la besoigne l’un a l’autre; nos desirs de servir Dieu et son Eglise (car je confesse que j’en ay, et luy [André] ne scauroit dissimuler qu’il n’en soit plein) se sont, ce me semble, aiguisés et animés par le rencontre.” *Oeuvres*.... ltr. CCXXX.

The Effects of True Friendship

Participating in the intimacy of the Trinity

Men have always considered love something divine, and superhuman. We aren't surprised therefore to learn that Francis de Sales considers union the joint accomplishment of a gift of grace and human cooperation.²⁵¹ God grants union, Francis explains, to render us stronger, that we might find consolation, and "one by the other, one in the other."²⁵² The primary effect of spiritual friendship lies in this very succinct phrase's meaning. It depicts two essential aspects of spiritual friendship. It suggests the bond is at least in some measure able to make the acts of one like the acts of another. Each carries the other with the friend, "in their heart" as he would sometimes describe it to Jane. One advances by the other in inspiring him on, in correcting his errs, in consoling his imperfections. What's more in tolerating his faults he is himself able to exercise virtue and thus grow. In loving and being loved, the friends become united in a spiritual way that is most evident in their spiritual interior journey to perfect Christian love. They share every aspect of themselves. As St. Thomas explains love goes out to embrace and engulf the beloved, to possess it taking pleasure in its very existence for its own sake, one is in the other, allowing a constant presence, a constant reverence for their friendship. This in turn lends added strength, because every person is confirmed in his very personality by the assurance that he is understood and loved for who he is.

He advises in friendship to love earthly things only to love eternal things. We have seen him declare that conviction many times in his correspondence, especially to Jane de Chantal. Love can be thus both

²⁵¹Francis comments on the *Song of Songs*: "Et pour monstrier que tous-jours toute l'union se fait par la grace de Dieu, qui nous tire a soy et par ses attraitz esmeut nostre ame et anime le mouvement de nostre union envers luy, elle s'escrie [*Song of Songs* 1.3] comme toute impuissante: Tires moy; mais pour tesmoinger qu'elle ne se laissera pas tirer comme une pierre ou comme un forcat, ains qu'elle cooperera de son coste et meslera son foible mouvement parmi les puissans attraitz de son Amant: nous courrons, dit-elle, a l'odeur de vos parfums." *Oeuvres...* V, p.13.

²⁵²"Dieu par apres, la consideration duquel a donné naissance a cette si grande liayson, la benere de sa sainte grace, affin qu'elle soit fertile en toute consolation pour l'un et l'autre des coeurs qui, ensemblement, l'un par l'autre et l'un en l'autre, ne respirent emmi cette vie mortelle que d'aymer et benir l'éternité." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMXXXVI.

earthly and divine, human and pure. With this method human love can, he believes, lead to God. God is unity by essence, and that means that His love is a “sacred fire that changes all into itself,” uniting in the Trinity’s own one true love and intimacy.²⁵³ All love and all unity are ultimately some kind of participation and communication with the divine, which is why true unity is permanent.

There is only one way to hit the mark and many ways to miss it, as Aristotle affirms in his *Metaphysics*. Since there is only one reality, there is only one truth. That foundationalist epistemology, as our contemporaries like to label it, is behind Francis’ very classic Christian tenant that all love is one.²⁵⁴ As Francis explains there is one goodness loved in common and common to both. “The love of this goodness can only be one sole love.”²⁵⁵ Just as the love of the Father for the Son is one love of the unique perfect goodness, so too every other love is the image of that love as every goodness is the image of God’s perfection. In this way all love in true friendship is a participation in the intimate life of the Trinity. There can only thus be one true love, all others miss the mark in some fashion. All true love loves what God, who is Love and Truth Himself, loves. It takes human form in Christ, the “dear Friend of our souls,”²⁵⁶ whose friendship is the principal means to that one love, which imparts the gifts of the Holy Spirit, “The properties and qualities of charity.”²⁵⁷ The love between the Father and the Son is friendship, Francis argues in the *Traité*, which is nothing other than the Holy Spirit. He puts it the following way, “What is lovable and

²⁵³He writes Jane in 1611: “Ce feu sacré qui change tout en soi, veuille bien transmuier nostre coeur, affin qu’il ne soit plus qu’amour et qu’ainsy nous ne soyons plus ayments, mais amour’ non plus deux, mais un seul nous-mesme, puisque l’amour unit toutes choses en la souveraine Unité.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXCII.

²⁵⁴For example Paul’s admonishment to union in Phil. 2:2 “Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.” See also John 17:22-23.

²⁵⁵“La bonté du Pere et du Filz n’estant qu’une seule tres uniquement unique bonté, commune a l’un et a l’autre, l’amour de cette bonté ne peut estre qu’un seul amour; parce qu’encor qu’il y ayt deux amans, a sçavoir le Pere et le Filz, neanmoins il n’y a que leur seul tres unique bonté qui leur est commune, laquelle est aymee, et leur tres unique volonté qui ayme, et partant il n’y a aussi qu’un seul amour, exerce par un seul souspir amoureux.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.206.

²⁵⁶“Ce cher Ami de nos ames” *Oeuvres...*IV, p.293.

²⁵⁷“[les dons du Saint-Esprit] Or ilz ne sont pas seulement inseparable de la charité, ains,...proprement parler, ilz sont les principales vertus, propriétés et qualités de la charité. *Oeuvres...* V, p.292. See ltrs. DXCII; MDCCCXI; DCLX; and V, p.35, for his explanation of that unity in Christ.

congenial if not friendship? And if friendship is lovable and congenial, what friendship can be so in comparison to that between the Father and the Son, and who is the same God unique with them?²⁵⁸ Reminiscent of Aelred's "God is Friendship," Francis affirms that the unifying love within the Trinity, the highest form possible, is the Holy Spirit who is friendship. The one true love we participate in is the Holy Spirit proceeding from the intimacy of the Trinity. It is above human and even angelic love and "gives life to our hearts."²⁵⁹ All who love therefore must participate in this one true love, the only true love. Genuine union is consequently not merely between two but extends to the entire Church, both visible and invisible, so that "all participate in the good of each."²⁶⁰

From this, one sees how identical Francis de Sales concept of loving another and loving God truly are. All love is some kind of participation in the divine love of the Trinity. The model, cause and end of human love is a unity of equals in the Godhead. It wishes happiness for the beloved and it wishes to share itself to unite, to own and to be owned freely. Happiness, for the Doctor of love, is possessing and being possessed by God the highest good that exists, and the only way this can occur is through loving true goodness. It is the only kind of love that can rightly exist without measure. Outside of the love of God all 'loves' are some kind of selfishness either seeking to use someone or something for profit, or they are silly sentimentality without consequence. "Either nothing or God; for all that is not God, is either nothing or worse than nothing. There within let us love powerfully."²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ "Qu'y a-il d'aymable et d'amiable si l'amitié ne l'est pas? et si l'amitié est amiable et ayvable, quelle amitié le peut estre en comparayson de cette infinie amitié qui est entre le Pere et le Filz, et qui est un mesme Dieu tres unique avec eux?" *Oeuvres...* IV, p.208.

²⁵⁹ "Theotime, ce n'est pas un amour que les forces de la nature ni humaine ni angelique puissent produire, ains *le Saint Esprit* le donne et *le respand en nos coeurs* (Rm 5.5); et comme nos ames, qui donnent la vie a nos cors, n'ont pas leur origine de nos cors, mays sont mises dans nos cors par la providence naturelle de Dieu, ainsy la charité, qui donne la vie a nos coeurs, n'est pas extraite de nos coeurs, mays elle y est versée comme une celeste liqueur, par la providence surnaturelle de sa divine Majesté." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.164.

²⁶⁰ "La communion des Saints par laquelle le corps de l'Eglise est tellement uni que tous ses membres participent au bien de chacun: de là vient que tous les Chrestiens ont part à toutes les prieres et bonnes *Oeuvres* qui se font dans la sainte Eglise." *Oeuvres...* X, p.283.

²⁶¹ "Vive Dieu! ma Fille: ou rien, ou Dieu; car tout ce qui n'est pas Dieu, ou n'est rien, ou est pis que rien. Demeurés bien tout en luy, ma chere Fille, et le priés que j'y demeure bien tout aussi, et la dedans aymons-nous

True friendship's union is all the more profound because it communicates the intimacy of the Trinity in human form. Now admittedly, the love between the persons of the Trinity is also called charity. It is a reciprocal charity. But here our analogy between divine and human loving fails, because in the Godhead there can be no human love, nor can there be love without mutual response. If human beings were without sin, all human friendship would be encompassed in charity, since there would be no false love, nor any love that would be wasted, yielding no reciprocal response. Nor would fear be great enough to prevent it from being expressed. That is why Francis says in the kingdom of God friendships are perfect. "This charity is none other than the communion of saints, and when we die we will be more united with them than we are with our dearest friends here on earth."²⁶² All are united in Christ their king.

Living among the scandals of the world where all love is not united in God's own love for Himself, charity can be one sided and silent so to speak. In our human condition, friendship's charity is able to reach farther than one-sided charity because of its mutual communication. This allows a common effort that renders the way to perfection easier. Moreover, union and communication is a process lasting an entire lifetime and its participation will always remain unsatisfied, not because friendship is only an image of the love we were made to share with God Himself, but because of our limits in the here and now. This one love has many faces, many manifestations, allowing each friendship to remain unique with its own secret communication; and yet, it is one love participating in the source of all love and truth. That last point, friendship remains somehow unique even though all love is one, brings us to the question of charity and friendship. Isn't friendship in this very mystical perspective only a species of charity? If God is everything in spiritual friendship what are we? Aren't we just absorbed into the absolute, denuded of our individuality --- of our personality? The answer lies in the difference Francis de Sales gauges between friendship and charity.

puissamment... car nous ne sçaurions jamais ni trop ni asses [aimer]."
Oeuvres... ltr. DCLX.

²⁶²"Cette charité n'est autre que la communion des Saints, et quand nous mourrons nous serons plus unis avec eux que nous ne sommes pas avec les plus chers amis que nous ayons ça bas en terre." *Oeuvres...* IX, p.368.

Charity vs. spiritual friendship

Now one might raise the objection that charity and spiritual friendship are really the same thing. They both share friendship with God and are wholly oriented to God. Spiritual friendship is really only a more intense and shared charity. As Francis says, “Charity gives life to our hearts.”²⁶³ One might further argue, every kind of love is ultimately a kind of charity, even when it is particular and communicated. For all true love must be one. But we find Francis making an important distinction, “Charity has three parts: love of God, affection for oneself, and partiality for one’s neighbor.”²⁶⁴ Friendship is not what the Doctor of love would ever call mere partiality for one’s neighbor. The objection merits our stopping to consider it.

He exposes his theory of friendship when he tells Philothea to only have virtuous friendships communicating only virtuous things. These have different degrees of excellence, but none surpass the excellence of “mutual and reciprocal communication of charity, of devotion, of Christian perfection.”²⁶⁵ These friendships are eternal, they tend to God and come from God, he tells her, indeed their very bond is God. This bond, as he owns to Jane at the beginning of their friendship is the “bond of perfection.” He also calls it elsewhere “the bond of zealous favor,”²⁶⁶ and “the grand bond of holy devotion that is pure gold.”²⁶⁷ It is stronger than death, its “immutable fundament is the heart of God, for whom and by whom” the friends cherish one another.²⁶⁸ “Oh how

²⁶³“La charité, qui donne la vie a nos coeurs, n’est pas extraite de nos coeurs, mais elle y est versée comme une celeste liqueur, par la providence surnaturelle de sa divine Majesté.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.163.

²⁶⁴“La charité a troys parties: l’amour de Dieu, l’affection a soy mesme et la dilection du prochain.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCLXXIII.

²⁶⁵“ Mais si vostre mutuelle et reciproque communication se fait de la charité, de la devotion, de la perfection chrestienne ô Dieu, que vostre amitié sera pretieuse!” *Oeuvres...* III, p.202.

²⁶⁶ I prefer to translate dilection as favor rather than tender love, since diligere in latin has the first meaning of to choose out, to prize. Francis includes zeal in the following way, “Nous n’avons aucun lien que le lien de la dilection, qui est le lien de la perfection, car la dilection est forte comme la mort et le zele d’amour ferme comme l’enfer.” *Oeuvres...* XXV, p.135.

²⁶⁷“Ce grand lien de la sainte devotion qui est tout d’or” *Oeuvres...* III, p.202.

²⁶⁸“Le lien en est indissoluble, et que rien, non pas mesme la mort, ne le peut rompre, demeurant eternellement ferme sur son immuable fondement, qui est le coeur de Dieu, pour lequel et par lequel nous nous cherissons.” *Oeuvres...* MCDXXXVI (to a lady, probably Marguerite de la Croix de Chevieres).

good it is to love on earth as one loves in heaven” he bids Philothea, “and to learn to cherish each other in this world as we will in eternity.”²⁶⁹ Through friendships based on God, friends learn to love rightly, and what’s more their friendship itself takes on a divine character, participating somehow in the qualities of God, like immutability. Their intimacy, their bond, is a participation in something divine. But, isn’t that just what charity entails? Isn’t charity friendship with God, and spiritual friendship shared friendship with God, because of God, in God and for God?

Francis responds: “I am not speaking here of the simple love of charity, which must be born for all men; but I am speaking of spiritual friendship.”²⁷⁰ Some have wanted to argue that there really is no difference between the Salesian idea of friendship and charity. But Francis couldn’t be more explicit. All men, of course, includes both one’s enemies and those who, for whatever reason, are repugnant to our senses.²⁷¹ He goes on to explain in one of his rare passages, the anatomy of spiritual friendship, “by which two or three or several souls communicate their devotion, their spiritual affections and render themselves one sole spirit between them.” Their mutual devotion “distills from one of the hearts in the other by continual participation.”²⁷² With the words “by which” he underlines the usefulness of spiritual friendship as a means to advance in Christian devotion. It has some kind of causal role in devotion’s nourishment, which Francis emphasizes when he says that this progress doesn’t come only from God, but “from one heart in the other” in a continual

²⁶⁹“O qu’il fait bon aymer en terre comme l’on ayme au ciel, et apprendre a s’entrecherir en ce monde comme nous ferons eternellement en l’autre!” *Oeuvres... III*, p.202.

²⁷⁰“Je ne parle pas ici de l’amour simple de charité, car il doit estre porté a tous les hommes; mais je parle de l’amitié spirituelle, par laquelle deux ou trois ou plusieurs ames se communiquent leur devotion, leurs affections spirituelles, et se rendent un seul esprit entre elles. Qu’a bon droit peuvent chanter telles heureuses ames: *o que voyci combien il est bon et agreable que les freres habitent ensemble!* (Ps 132) Ouy, car le baume delicieux de la devotion distille de l’un des coeurs en l’autre par une continuelle participation, si qu’on peut dire que Dieu a respandu sur cette amitié *sa benediction et la vie jusques aux sciecles des sciecles.* (Ps 132)” *Oeuvres... III*, p.203.

²⁷¹“Il nous faut avoir un coeur bon, doux et amoureux envers le prochain, et particulierement quand il nous est a charge et a degout; car alors nous n’avons rien en luy pour l’aymer que le respect du Sauveur qui rend l’amour sans aucun doute plus excellent et digne d’autant qu’il est plus pur et net des conditions caduques.” *Oeuvres... ltr. MXXIX*.

²⁷²*Oeuvres... III*, p.203.

dynamic back and forth. The word 'distill' is also important, because it shows how another person's life expresses in its own way the light of grace. Human devotion resonates different melodies in different beings, like two filters, grace is purified of human obstacles to its flourishment by the way it has formed one and the other heart. Two different hearts, two different lives of grace, participate and commune seizing on different things, noticing different traits and sharing complimentary strengths to assuage different weaknesses. Because everyone's journey in faith is different; their temperament, their background and education all combining to mold their personality, no two friends are ever really equal. They are equal only in kind, in a generic sense. And it is precisely this difference that allows for the complimentary benefits of friendship.

Confusion arises because both spiritual friendship and charity are based upon and oriented to a love of God. Francis' commentary on the golden rule articulates the similarity and relationship between charity and love of neighbor better than any other of his writings. He explains we love God for who He is and our neighbor because of the dignity he has as the image of God, capable of grace and participating in the divine nature. He says "And thus it is that the same charity which produces acts of love of God, produces likewise those of the love of neighbor."²⁷³ Charity however must for this reason extend to all men, even sinners, because first they are the image of God and second because God loves them enough to die on the cross for them. Just as we saw Francis extending his friendship to Jane and Favre's families and friends for love of them, charity loves those God loves for the love of God. "Theotime, loving our neighbor by charity is to love God in man or man in God. It is to cherish God alone for the love of Himself and the creature for love of Him."²⁷⁴

Charity's love for neighbor does not depend on any reciprocal goodwill or communication to exist. Its goodwill is not exchanged and it has no common interest to bind persons. Its love is one-sided, and only a kind of spilling over of the abundance of love one shares in friendship with God. Charity loves even enemies, but we cannot speak of friendship with those who bear ill-will for us. Francis continues in

²⁷³"Et c'est ainsy, que la mesme charité qui produit les actes de l'amour de Dieu, produit quant et quant ceux de l'amour du prochain: "*Oeuvres...V*, p.205.

²⁷⁴"Theotime, aymer le prochain par charité c'est aymer Dieu en l'homme ou l'homme en Dieu; c'est chérie Dieu seul pour l'amour de luy mesme, et la creature pour l'amour d'iceluy." *Oeuvres...V*, p.205.

the commentary on the golden rule, implicitly pointing out an important difference between friendship and charity. He refers to the way Raguel rushed Tobias to kiss him weeping upon learning that he was his cousin's son.²⁷⁵ And he asks, "But why? Not certainly because you are good young man, for that I do not yet know, but because you are the son and resemble your father, who is a very good man."²⁷⁶ Charity differs from friendship in that friendship loves a man because he is good and able to share it somehow, and not only because he is the image of God. All its communication is founded on this quality of his being. He is the resplendence of that image of God. Grace does not destroy nature, it perfects it. The man who radiates God's goodness does so in an individual human way, as the person he or she is. There are therefore two different steps loving our neighbor, first because he is created in the image of God and capable of opening himself to the flourishing of that dignity, and second loving him because of how good he has become. The second is indeed so much better than the first that the first is only praiseworthy in so far as it renders the second possible. The capacity for dignity is itself a dignity, because the splendor of human dignity is such a great thing. Friendship, apart from differing from charity because it is reciprocal and exchanged or communicated, also differs because it always loves the friend for this radiating human dignity in him. True friendship is between the virtuous. Friendship cannot attain the mere potential for that kind of character, it can only exist where there is a certain equality and basis for its communication.

Clearly, to show that friendship and charity are not identical is easy enough, but perhaps one might say friendship is a kind of charity, more intense and exchanged between equals. There we would have a harder time refuting this notion. The genus of charity is friendship loving God for its own sake. True friendship also loves God for his own sake and helps the friend to do the same. Like charity true friendship is a gift from God to bring both closer to Himself, it is permanent, and eternal. It requires virtue and tends toward union of hearts. It has communication and is even reciprocal, as Francis affirms above. However there remains one formal difference—the subjects.

Every relationship is defined as something between two persons or things. The subject gives every relationship its identity in a fundamental way. Spiritual friends may be bound by charity which

²⁷⁵Cfr. Tobit 7:1-7.

²⁷⁶ "Mays pourquoy? non point, certes parce que tu es un bon jeune homme, car cela je ne le sçay pas encor, mays parce que tu es filz et ressembles a ton pere, qui est un tres homme de bien." *Oeuvres...V*, p.205-206.

becomes a common interest, their entire friendship may breathe only within its atmosphere and its end may be union with God for the beloved, but it is not friendship with God, they already have it. It is friendship with another human being. It may enrich friendship with God, it may share friendship with God and it may be some kind of participation in the intimacy of the Trinity. But it is first an exchange between two flesh and blood human beings. It passes by a human intermediary. Its communication, consolation, and its basis are all human. Since we are limited to understanding God within human terms and images, friendship is the primary analogate for the highest relationship one can have with God.

Charity must be born to all, spiritual friendship by its very nature is specific and particular and therefore unique. It has its own secret communication. "How good it is when the brethren dwell together," he summarizes citing the psalmist (Ps. 133:1). In one of the more succinct texts where Francis speaks about the nature of friendship, he argues that charity is not an interested love, but true friendship between the soul and God. He says the soul's intimate relationship with its God entails all the elements of true and permanent friendship. It is reciprocal, it is mutually declared and recognized,²⁷⁷ and it enjoys a continuous communication by the different inspirations and emotions that God makes his presence known to every human being that chooses him.²⁷⁸ Those three elements: reciprocal, continuing communication, and mutually declared, are the anatomy of spiritual friendship. Without any one of them the relationship is not spiritual friendship. Spiritual friendship is two persons communicating themselves and their charity, and not just another form of charity. Spiritual friendship is divine like charity. It shares God's love and the struggles along the way to Him, but spiritual friendship is first and foremost between two human beings. It is more earthly, subject to risk and misunderstandings. It is more needy, dependent on the expressions of hidden feelings and consolation. It must work to be, it must express itself in words and actions. It must build upon confidence, risk itself and grow with time. It is a human activity divinized when penetrated by faith and grace.

²⁷⁷ "Mais cette amitié [with God, or charity] est une vraie amitié, car elle est reciproque, Dieu ayant aimé éternellement quicomque l'a aimé, l'ayme ou l'aymera temporellement (1 Jn 4.10); elle est declaree et reconneüe mutuellement." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.163.

²⁷⁸ "Et, en fin, nous sommes en perpetuelle communication avec luy, qui ne cesse de parler a nos coeurs par inspirations, attraitz et mounemens sacrés." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.163

When Francis says the bond of these friendships is God, one would be mistaken to conclude that since the bond of charity is also God they are the same. They are similar, true, but all the bonds of true love enrich and strengthen one another. This is why he is careful to tell Jane that this immutable bond of perfection, which is God, does not contradict any other obligation. In spiritual friendship human and divine love reinforce rather than compete with one another. Charity spontaneously seeks to give and receive good things to its neighbor, but, as Francis remarks, if one adds to charity's general tendency to give the generosity of a particular friendship, "she becomes excessive in this facility."²⁷⁹ The two intersect in intention, having God's life within as both their cause and goal. There is always a danger that human love be a distraction from perfect love of God, that one remain attached to its consolations and pleasures. But human love can become a means to a greater charity and charity can in turn enrich human friendship. It can perhaps be compared to the feelings of a mystical experience that was a phenomena repeatedly scrutinized in the Seventeenth Century. Francis remarks, "The good do not desire to be loved, but only that one love He who gives them, not that he doesn't give us something to love, but that this is not what it seeks, while the bad wants only to be loved above all. And when leaving, the good does not press us to seek after it or to caress it, but the virtue that it procures us, while the bad desire presses and worries us to seek it incessantly."²⁸⁰ A good friend, given by God is like these good feelings, given to be loved for the qualities in him, because they bear us blessing, and because they are good.

Every two persons sharing faith do not become spiritual friends. Is it because there is not enough charity in them? Or is it because sharing friendship is something distinctly personal, that requires compatibility on a natural and human level? Two persons with hearts full of charity may have one of the best basis possible for friendship, but would they necessarily be friends? Pope Pius IX wondered about the encounter of

²⁷⁹“La charité est esgalement facile a donner et a recevoir les bonnes impressions du prochain; mais si a sa generale inclination on adjouste celle de quelque particuliere amitié, elle se rend excessive en cette facilité.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXX.

²⁸⁰“Bref, le bon [sentimens] ne desire point d'estre aymé, mais seulement que l'on ayme Celuy qui le donne, non qu'il ne nous donne sujet de l'aymer, mais ce n'est pas cela qu'il cherche; la ou le mauvais veut que l'on l'ayme sur tout. Et partant, le bon ne nous empresse pas a le rechercher ni a le caresser, mais la vertu [qu'il] nous procure; le mauvais nous empresse et inquiete a le rechercher incessamment.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXIV.

two saints. Would they recognize each other? Would they look into each other's souls? Would they be friends? Already friendship between every individual and God is different, just as every friendship is unique, because every person is unique. Spiritual friendship's particular human aspect is all the more revealed by its uniqueness. Some people hit it off and are attracted to one another, understand and admire one another very quickly. What's more as every author we have looked at until now has repeated true friendship can only extend to a few.

Let us come back to earth and look at the human aspect of communication's effects. Communication by love's union has human expression, and this is shown best in the rub of daily life, where friends come into conflict, where the edges spark and scrape when two persons try to communicate. This too will lead to another effect, the reward of friendship, consolation and understanding in the only true benevolence, which has the ability to be continuously present, as we shall see.

Correction

Since communication is the means to love's benevolence, it is also a means to union. When two friends are able to pour their souls into one another, sharing absolute confidence in each other and understanding one another, it is because they have successfully passed through the many snarls of the human condition together. Because we do not begin with perfect harmony, communication is a tool that rounds the edges in friendship, and this it does by what the Doctor of love calls fraternal correction. "To speak as friends should" is to speak frankly.²⁸¹ For, he remarks "One loves weakly and perniciously when one leaves his friend in sin."²⁸² But then, correction need not only apply to sin, it may apply to lesser things, because "Love cannot keep quiet."²⁸³ If he believes we should never cease to cooperate in the salvation of our neighbor,²⁸⁴ then how much more so for our friends, those for whom

²⁸¹He writes to his fundamentalist Catholic friend, Benigne Milletot, about his recently published book, "Mais commençons donq par icy a parler comme il faut entre les amis parfaitz, ... En verité, je treuve vostre main bonne, louïable, ains [mieux encore] exquisite et rare, mais la matiere me desplaist; s'il faut dire le mot que j'ay dans le coeur, je dis: la matiere me desplaist extremement." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXI.

²⁸²"On ayme foiblement ou mechamment quand on laisse son ami dans le peché." *Oeuvres...* II, p.195.

²⁸³"L'amour ne se peut taire où il y va de l'interest de celui qu'on ayme." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIX.

²⁸⁴"On ne sait pas les conseilz de Dieu, et il ne faut jamais cesser de

God has dilated our hearts. This kind of love challenges us to be better. It breaks our illusions about the world on an intellectual level, and our behavior on an ethical level. Friends often are the ones to make the contradictions in us most biting. In intimacy what a person truly is comes out, all the niceties fall away and our proclivity to laziness, irritability, tempers, etc. are exposed. In this way a friend can become a great ally in progress and honesty, revealing things about ourselves we either deny or cannot see. "Charity fears so much to encounter evil," he warrants, "that she makes herself go and find it."²⁸⁵ The closer we approach God the more detestable become our sins, charity therefore hates sin first in ourselves, and then for the same reason hates to find it in those we love. She therefore goes to those who know her, a true friend, to find it in us; and likewise she goes to the friend to expose it in him—to correct and banish it. He calls it a kind of circumcision of the heart which is worth practically nothing when we do it ourselves, but which is most effective when another takes the knife to our faults.²⁸⁶ But alas, as we have seen, some faults are meant to remain with us for our humility, those charity cannot banish, we must bear in the friend and in ourselves.

What causes difficulties between friends in spiritual friendship is what distances each person from God, since He is the principle of their union.²⁸⁷ This kind of friendship is based upon an assumption. Each person's love is, in Augustine's words for "What God is in him and what God might be in him." Each is seeking virtue and to shed every lie and error in light of Christian faith. To love correction, Francis explains, is to love the folly of the cross, because it embraces something "completely contrary to the doctrine of this world."²⁸⁸ This kind of humility submits itself obediently to being corrected and "knows no greater pleasure than being alerted to its faults and

cooperer au salut du prochain, en la meilleure facon qu'on peut." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMLVII.

²⁸⁵ "La charité craint de rencontrer le mal, tant s'en faut qu'elle l'aille chercher." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DVIII.

²⁸⁶ "Vous voyez donques combien il est necessaire qu'un autre prenne en main le couteau pour nous circoncire, car il sçait beaucoup mieux que nous mesmes où il le faut appliquer." *Oeuvres...* X, p.157. Francis do doubt is refering to Paul, Rom. 2:29 "He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal".

²⁸⁷ "Vous ne me desclairés jamais que quand vous desclairés a Nostre Seigneur et que vous vous esloignerés de son pur et saint amour." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXXIX.

²⁸⁸ "Cette doctrine est tout contraire a celle du siecle." *Oeuvres...* III, p.161.

deficiencies.”²⁸⁹ Any soul so disposed to receive correction with a gentle and peaceful heart has already made great progress. He calls it the means to wisdom and the highest point of Christian perfection.²⁹⁰

Accepting correction may pertain to two kinds of errors. It may be for an offense against a friend, or it may be for an error concerning life in a more general way of being or living. This, of course presupposes enormous trust, in the other’s judgment and intentions. That is why Francis could say on one occasion that it is a great privilege to be invited to correct a friend. For him this is the sign of true friendship.²⁹¹ Correction applies truth to friendship, it adjusts living to be coherent with their professed ideals. When Francis apologizes for being angry with a friend, he calls it his heart rendering “the homage of truth” to his friend’s heart.²⁹² We see here the value of humility in friendship, both to repair trespasses and to render each person supple to understand and benefit from the other. It allows them to fashion their lives to aid one another to improve themselves, and to bring out what is best in each other. “You must not always favor evil, flatter it or cover it over, but speak simply and frankly bad of evil, blaming blamable things, when the utility of the one you are speaking to requires it.”²⁹³ To tolerate some things and blame others, to know just when usefulness requires

²⁸⁹“Voyés vous comme la perfection de la croix est une folie devant les sages du monde, car elle embrasse ce que la prudence humaine abhorre? Elle ayme la correction, s’y sousmet et se complaist de ne plus rencontrée que pour estre corrigée, et n’a point de plus grand playsir que d’estre reprise et advertie de ses defauts et manquemens. O bienheureuses sont ces ames qui ne se parlent que pour s’advertir ou faire la correction fraternelle en esprit de charité et profonde humilité; mais plus heuruses encores celles qui sont tousjours prestes a la recevoir avec un coeur doux, paisible et tranquille; elles ont ja fait un grand chemin.” *Oeuvres...* X, 349-350.

²⁹⁰“Aussi tous les Saints ont tasché de se rendre sages de cette folie et ont souffert pour icelle tous les mespris, censures et humiliations qui leur sont arrivés de la part des sages du monde...Qu’elles soyent humbles et fidelles, et qu’elles prennent bon courage, car malgré toutes les tricheries de la prudence humaine elles arriveront au plus haut point de la perfection chrestienne.” *Oeuvres...* X, 349-350.

²⁹¹“Vous m’avez grandement obligé recevant en bonne part ma franchise.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXXII.

²⁹²“Mon coeur va rendre a vostre coeur l’hommage de la verité.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCCCX.

²⁹³“Il ne faut pas toutefois favoriser le mal, le flatter ou le couvrir, mais parler rondement et dire franchement mal du mal, et blasmer les choses blasmables, quand l’utilité de celui de qui l’on parle le requiert.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DVIII.

intervention is the fine judgment that one gains living together the same rule of Christian life.

But given the desire for unity that correction presupposes, friendship does not insist, in the Doctor of love's view an absolute agreement. In a more general context, like different preferences, or estimations of the better means to the same goal, "Good people always have the right to different opinions on a question without wounding their friendship."²⁹⁴ Even in the very messy affair of the reform of monasteries in his diocese that became civil suits, he evoked this same principle. "Our friendship is not based on the reformation, which is why I beg you to conserve me as your friend throughout these negotiations, as for my part, I am invariable in this by the respect I owe you."²⁹⁵ Friendship should somehow remain above different opinions. Just as Peter and Paul had different opinions "Without diminution of their insoluble charity." He believed true friends would not consider their opinions as a rule of life for one another.²⁹⁶

The whole idea of fraternal correction in friendship is that it not be cold candor, pointing out faults without charity, only because it is true, no matter how painful; for, as he remarks, slander excuses itself claiming it is only being frank and free.²⁹⁷ Friendship's homage to the truth warrants that correction be always in the context of love and understanding. At the other extreme Francis also calls flattery's "prefaces of honor" and "little niceties" the most subtle and venomous slander.²⁹⁸ Thus fraternal correction in friendship must apply a rule that

²⁹⁴"Les gens de bien ont toujours eu le droit de differer d'avis sur une question, sans que leur amitié en soit blessée." Francis cites this quotation in latin, the editors were unable to determine its origin. *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXI.

²⁹⁵He writes to the de Quoex brothers, "Nostre amitié n'est pas fondée sur la reformation ni des unes ni des autres: c'est pourquoy je vous supplie de me bien conserver la vostre au travers de toute cette negociation, comme, de mon costé, je suis invariable en celle que par tant de respectz je vous dois. Je sçay qu'un autre moins discret et charitable que vous pourroit beaucoup dire de choses de moy entre les poursuittes, comme il a esté fait a Chamberi." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMXXXVII.

²⁹⁶"Non certes, je ne pense pas que ni mon sentiment, ni mes opinons, ni mes interestz doivent servir de regle a pas un homme du monde, et particulièrement a mes amis; trop obligé que je leur seray si, reciproquement, ilz ne m'estiment rien moins leur affectionné et veritable amy quand je seray d'autre opinion qu'eux.... Saint Pierre et saint Paul en eurent... sans diminution de leur indissoluble charité." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CMXXXVII.

²⁹⁷"S'il se treuve une personne vraiment mesdisante, ne dites pas pour l'excuser qu'elle est libre et franche." *Oeuvres...* III, p.238.

²⁹⁸"Ceux qui pour resdire font des prefaces d'honneur, ou qui disent de

lies between these two extremes. It must not be so careful to not wound that it indulges in flattery, or must it be so unconcerned with kindness as to be brutally cold. He warns to beware, for when speaking about others the tongue is like a razor in a surgeon's hand cutting between nerves and tendons. Therefore "Above all" he counsels, "you must be careful in blaming the vice to spare the person as much as you can."²⁹⁹ We must never speak evil of our neighbor, for grace can operate a conversion in a moment.³⁰⁰ And we must never try to correct a friend in anger.³⁰¹ For it is easier to err in saying too much than too little.³⁰² Therefore he believes the most effective way to correct someone, especially a friend is with the heart using gentleness to an extreme, even to foolishness. Already excuse them in your heart, he advises, and make little of their fault.³⁰³ This gentleness combined with the understanding and means to communicate a close and true friend has permit that delicate operation to have its best chance of success.

In the reform of the monastery of Talloires, he writes the monks sent there to reform the monastery, telling them not to correct with words and gestures, but by their edifying example and conversation—an effort, he admits, that requires relentless courage and patience.³⁰⁴

petites gentillesses et gausseiries (mockery) entre deux, sont les plus fins et veneneux mesdisans de tous" *Oeuvres...* III, p.238.

²⁹⁹"Ma langue, tandis que je parle du prochain, est en ma bouche comme un rasoir en la main du chirurgien qui veut trancher entre les nerfs et les tendons: il faut que le coup que ce qui en est. Et en fin, il faut sur tout observer en blasant le vice, d'espargner le plus que vous pourres la personne in laquelle il est." *Oeuvres...* III, p.238.

³⁰⁰"Je vous conjure de ne dire jamais mal du prochain ni rien qui tant soit peu le puisse offenser...d'autant plus que la bonté de Dieu est si grande, qu'un moment seul suffit pour impetrer sa grace. Et qui pourra assurer que celui qui estoit hier pecheur et meschant, le soit aujourd'huy." *Oeuvres...*DVIII.

³⁰¹"D'empescher que le sentiment de cholere ne s'esmeuve en nous et que le sang ne nous monte au visage, jamais cela ne sera;... car pendant le trouble il ne faut dire ni faire aucune chose." *Oeuvres...* VI, p.144.

³⁰²"Il n'y a point de plus mauvaise façon de mal dire que de trop dire." *Oeuvres...* DCCXXII.

³⁰³"Faites tous-jours vos corrections avec le coeur et les paroles douces, et reprenant les defaultz, faites qu'en vostre coeur vous excusiez la defaillante, amoindrissant la faute; car ainsy les advertissemens font meilleure operation. En fin, il faut avoir la douceur jusques a l'extremité envers le prochain, jusques mesme a la naiserie, et n'user jamais de revanche vers ceux qui font des mauvais offices." *Oeuvres...* MMXC.

³⁰⁴"Il faut que le tout s'entreprenne avec une tres grande humilité et simplicité, sans que ce petit nombre fasse semblant de vouloir reprendre ou

Michael Favre recounts in the beatification hearings, that Francis used a similar method of teaching by example with his domestics. He would kindly interject, when the occasion arised, a word of redress. "It made them see their faults without correction, practically without letting them know he had seen them, wanting that they recognize them themselves and esteeming that they would amend their faults better than if he reproached them."³⁰⁵ We can imagine the same kind of subtlety and spontaneity being used in friendship.

Ironically, however, the closer his friendship with someone the less tactful he felt one need be when correcting each other. He observes that he is not easily offended or delicate in his friendships "cemented in the blood of the Lamb."³⁰⁶ How can he be as careful as a surgeon and not delicate? Misunderstandings are most likely when we speak about touchy things to persons who we do not know well. The Japanese have a proverb: "Words are the cause of all evil." It means that words are full of ambiguity that can betray good intentions. Since so many things are hidden, the purity of purpose, the humility with which it is born, the respect these things do not diminish, and more unsaid aspects behind words of correction remain unknown. With friends, however, these things are communicated in the regular intercourse of a healthy friendship, and moreover when it is based on Christ the ambiguities are less threatening. He writes Jane one day in Paris, when calumny flares up because he was offered to become Archbishop, revealing how humility receives correction and even insult. "Oh my Mother, you needn't be so sensitive concerning me, I should be censured: if I don't merit it in one fashion, I do in another."³⁰⁷ If a friendship breaks over saying something too sensitive at the wrong time it isn't worth very

censurer les autres par paroles ni par gestes exterieurs ains que simplement il les edifie par bon exemple et conversation....il faut avour un courage inexpugnable et attendre *le fruit dans la patience.*" [Lc 8:15] *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXXXVIII.

³⁰⁵"Il tâchait de cultiver leur crainte de Dieu, par des paroles douces et amicales entrejetées par-ci par-la selon les rencontres. Il leur faisait voir leurs défauts sans les censurer, ni presque témoigner qu'il les connût, voulant qu'ilz les reconnaissent d'eux-mesmes et estimant qu'ilz s'en amenderaient mieux que si on leur en eût fait des reproches." R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les Témoins de sa vie...* p.165.

³⁰⁶" Les amitiés cimentees au sang de l'Aigneau n'ont pas besoin de tant de ceremonies." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMLXIII.

³⁰⁷"O ma Mere il ne faut pas estre si tendre sur moi, il faut bien vouloir qu'on me censure: si je ne le merite pas d'une façon, je le merite de l'autre." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDLXXVIII.

much. Francis de Sales could even be a bit “rough and awkward,” considering it better in order to speak naively.³⁰⁸ “Monsieur,” he writes Bénigne Milletot, “will you not respond that this is speaking too frankly? This is, however how I deal with those who want me to contract a full friendship with them.”³⁰⁹ Milletot was a friend of Jane de Chantal’s father and Francis took issue with his gallican view of the Church. When M. Milletot replies accepting his criticism Francis admits he would have never offered it without believing invited to do so “under the favor of true friendship.”³¹⁰

As we have seen when studying communication, every friendship is subject to misunderstandings and therefore conflicts. Fraternal correction sometimes overlaps with these kinds of altercations, but its real application is not in the sparks that fly from two different persons rubbing their lives together. It is aimed more at the quality of the person, their virtue, their truthfulness and the coherence of their life, words and actions with a professed way of life. It may concern little things like offenses, which is how it coincides with communicating *à travers* misunderstandings, but its real object is a more general and permanent condition of who the person is. True, correction is a kind of communication, a kind of loving. It requires great humility on the part of the one who accepts criticism as well as on the part of the one who offers criticism. Things so difficult to hear can only be accepted by someone we believe truly faithful. He writes to Claude de Quœx abhorred that events of the reform of Talloires were bringing men supposedly Christian leaders to civil court, “You know how much and how tenderly I love you particularly, which leads me to believe you will take this warning as gently, that I reprove you with a very great

³⁰⁸“[Je] me suis contenté de vous dire ainsy en gros et grosseirement mon petit sentiment, ains, pour parler naïvement, mon grand sentiment pour ce regard.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXI.

³⁰⁹“Monsieur, si je m’excuse envers vous de vous parler ainsy franchement, repliqueres vous point que c’est aussi trop franchement? Voyla pourtant comme je traite avec ceux qui veulent que je contracte une entiere amitié avec eux.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXI.

³¹⁰“Vous m’avez grandement obligé recevant en bonne part ma franchise, bien qu’a vray dire vous ne pouvies bonnement luy refuser ce gracieux accueil, puisqu’elle alloit vers vous avec le sauf conduit de vostre semonce (invitation) et sous la faveur d’une vraye amitié; aussi n’avois-je garde de luy donner le vol autrement.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXXII. Francis probably intervened to keep his book off the index. The year after Francis died, 1623, Bénigne Milletot’s work was officially condemned.

affection.”³¹¹ The kind of understanding only friendship’s long involvement knows is the key to measuring what the person is ready to hear, choosing the occasion to say it, even collaborating with other friends to bear acrid words as gently as possible. “For,” he advises, “it is something very hard for a person to see themselves corrected”.³¹²

Between equals fraternal correction is invited implicitly under the assumptions of friendship. When the term of the relationship is guidance, most often between unequals, it steps into the realm of spiritual direction. The two approach each other, yet there is a fundamental difference. Francis seems to equivocate between spiritual direction and spiritual friendship. Are they in fact the same?

Presence

There are two kinds of presence in friendship, the one is spiritual and the other physical. Physical presence is desired in all friendship, because love seeks to be united with the one we love, and since all the means of communication are at our disposal in physical presence love’s communication can run freely. Francis says as much in many different letters to his friends. He tells Favre, for example he enjoys an “extreme contentment” in his presence.³¹³ He tells Possevino that he regrets not being able to visit him, because friendship descends more quickly than it ascends.³¹⁴ Friendship is nourished somehow by their physical presence, where one can just rest at ease in the consoling presence of

³¹¹“Vous sçaves comment et combien tendrement je vous ayme, et particulièrement, [ce] qui me fait criore que vous prendres cet avertissement aussi doucement qu’avec tres grande affection je vous fais la remontrance.” *Oeuvres ...* ltr. CMXLVI. See too the several pages of his *Entretiens* (VI, pp.144-147) devoted to foster humility so it may accept correction.

³¹²[Celles qui font la correction] doivent avoir une grande discretion pour bien prendre le temps et la saison de la faire avec toutes les circonstances deuës, elles ne doivent jamais s’estonner ni offencer de voir que celles a qui elles la font en ont du ressentiment; car c’est une chose bien dure a une personne de se voir corriger.” *Oeuvres... VI*, p.147.

³¹³“Disposés vous a la plus rigoureuse residence que vous ayez encore faite icy, s’il vous plait, mon tres cher Frere, car je ne vous en dispenseray nullement; non tant fondé sur l’extreme contentement que j’ay en vostre presence.” *Oeuvres... ltr. MMXVIII*.

³¹⁴“L’amitié descend plus vistemment qu’elle ne monte. Et si ce n’estoit que je suis icy engagé en un jeu ou qui la quitte la perd, je me serois desja rendu par devers vous; ce que je me prometz de faire, Dieu aydant.” *Oeuvres... ltr. XLVIII*.

the beloved. In each other's physical presence friends can "live joyfully their friendship."³¹⁵ It permits them to renew their friendship and allows communication its fullest expression. He writes his friend, a former doctor of medicine and Bishop of Saluces, Juvénal Ancina that he will make every effort to arrange his affairs so he can visit him "So that, hand in hand and face to face we may renew this friendship, that cannot age, but for which feelings always grow by presence."³¹⁶ Seeing again a good and dear friend adds something to spiritual presence, making it all the more enjoyable.³¹⁷ We found him many times in our study on his life, accepting invitations to preach in various cities, like Augustine, because he had friends there to visit.

Since the author of these friendships is out of time and place, he explains, they are not dependent upon presence.³¹⁸ Their fundament is God, he writes, and God is everywhere.³¹⁹ Though friends might be far in body they are close in spirit, united by affections in Christ. This kind of spiritual presence, or unity in Christ enables them to therefore share "contentments and displeasures."³²⁰ It principally consists in prayers for each other. Praying for a friend renders him present to us, and at the

³¹⁵"Dans deux jours je seray avec vous, et pourrons dire le restetout a l'ayse... A Dieu donq, Monsieur, jusques a vendredi prochain; ains, a Dieu soyons nous jusques a l'eternité des eternités, car a meilleur maistre ne sçaurions nous estre. Je le supplie que son saint amour fasse tous-jours vivre joyeusement nostre amitié et celle de tous ceux qui nous appartiennent pour luy." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCXCIX.

³¹⁶"Con questa occasione non mancarò di andar dove V.S.Rma. si ritrovarà, acciò che, consertis manibus *os ad os* (3John 14) rinoviamo l'affetto che se bene no si può inveterare, cresce nientedimeno almanco nelli sentimenti per la presenza." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXIII.

³¹⁷"Car de m'attendre au bien que nous avons presque esperé, de vous voir a nos beaux Offices en ces si dignes solennités, c'est chose que le temps et les affaires ne me peuvent permettre, si ce n'est en cette façon ordinaire par laquelle vous estes toujours present a mon ame." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXLII.

³¹⁸"Son autheur n'est point lié au tems ni au lieu. Certes, mon tres cher frere, ces amitiés sacrées que Dieu a fait sont independantes de tout ce qui est hors de Dieu." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDLXVI.

³¹⁹"C'est une qualité des amitiés que le Ciel fait en nous de ne perir jamais, non plus que la source dont elles sont issues ne tarit jamais, et que la presence ne les nourrit non plus que l'absence ne les fait languir ni finir, parce que leur fondement est partout: puisque c'est Dieu" *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCCV.

³²⁰He writes Claude Arnauld: "Je vous regarde de bien loin selon le corps, mais de bien pres selon l'esprit, et je vois vostre coeur paternel affligé de plusieurs accidens survenus depuis mon depart...je soys inseparable d'affection d'avec vous et vostre famille." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDLVII.

same time renders him and ourselves present to God.³²¹ We find therefore a triple presence in spiritual friendship, and he believes in this sense one may say that spiritual friends are more present, whether apart or together, than two persons physically together.³²² Presence between spiritual friends is akin to the presence of God's repose. Friends rest in God's peace, he says, inseparably united by Christ's blood, the one who lives forever in their hearts.³²³ He tells Jane he is always as present to her soul as she is to herself, in order to console and encourage her after her father dies.³²⁴ It is the sense of their one heart. He writes another friend in adversity "I am near you in these trials," because spiritual presence is a constant consolation, especially in difficulties.³²⁵ But also in normal absence, spiritual presence, knowing he is loved and understood, gives him, as he confesses to Jane, a constant sense of consolation and inspiration.³²⁶ Yet, he admits because of our human

³²¹ "Vous estes tousjours present a mon ame, et principalement a l'autel et le jour de Noël, environ lequel j'eues cette si chere grace de vous voir." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCXLII.

³²² "Soit que nous allions, soit que nous revenions, soit que nous soyons en un lieu, soit que nous soyons en divers lieux, porveu que nous soyons avec Dieu nous ne pouvons jamais estre séparés... puisque, graces a Dieu, nous n'avons qu'une volonté, qui est d'accomplir la sienne selon nostre petitesse." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDI.

³²³ "Allés en paix, ma tres chere Fille, allés en paix ou Dieu vous appelle; demeurés en paix, mais demeurés en la sainte *paix de Dieu* [Ph 4:7] ou il vous tient et arreste icy. Les ames que Dieu a rendu tout une sont inseparables, car, qui peut separer *ce que Dieu a joint*? [Mt 19:6; Mc 10.9] Non, *ni la mort, ni chose quelconque, ne nous separera jamais de l'unité qui est en Jésus-Christ* [Rm 8: 38-39] qui vive a jamais en vostre coeur. Amen." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MXXXVI.

³²⁴ "Je seray tous-jours present a vostre chere ame comme vous mesmes, et repandray soigneusement la benediction des Sacrifices divins sur vostre peyne, affin qu'elle vous soit douce et utile au saint amour." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCXIII.

³²⁵ "Courage, ma cher Soeur, ...Acceptés mille fois le jour cette croix,...Vous ne vous abuserez point, en vous imaginant que je suis pres de vous en ces tribulations; je le suis aussi de coeur et d'affection." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCLXXX.

³²⁶ "Au moins, parmi ces jours sacrés mille desirs m'ont saysi de vous donner le digne contentement que tant vous souhaitez de mon ame comme de la vostre mesme, en m'avançant soigneusement a cete sainte perfection a laquelle vous aspirez et pour laquelle vous respirez en la faveur de ce coeur, qui, reciproquement, vous souhaitez sans fin toute la plus haute union avec Dieu qui se peut trouver icy bas." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXIII.

condition distance is nevertheless painful. Only in paradise will union and therefore presence be perfect.³²⁷

Francis de Sales uses the image of the first Temple of Jerusalem to describe the interior privacy of the human soul. He describes the three courts dividing Temple of Solomon: the outer for the gentiles and Diaspora, the next for the Levites, and finally the most interior sanctuary, the holy of holies where Yahweh dwelt on Earth. Likewise he says, there are three degrees of human reason. In the first we argue according to sense experience, in the second according to scientific evidence, in the third according to faith. Beyond that there is a spiritual faculty, at the inner sanctum within the mystical temple of the human person. It is the supreme point of reasoning, not lead by arguments, but by “a simple gaze of understanding and a simple assent of the will, by which the mind acquiesces and submits itself to the will of God.”³²⁸ He calls it the peak of our soul, the fine point, or the supreme point of the human mind. It governs the rest and is the natural dwelling place of faith, hope and love. True intimacy operates on this level. As he writes Jane on one occasion, their indissoluble unity abides within this holy of holies with God, and remains impenetrable to whatever sorrow,

³²⁷“Il est impossible de n’avoir pas des ressentimens de douleur en ces separations; car, encor qu’il semble que les unions qui ne tiennent qu’au coeur et a l’esprit ne soyent point sujettes a ces separations exterieures, ni aux displaysirs qui en procedent, si est ce que, tandis que nous sommes en cette vie mortelle, nous les sentions, d’autant que la distance des lieux empesche la libre communication des ames, qui ne peuvent plus s’entrevoir ni s’entretenir que par cet office des lettres.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDXXXVI.

³²⁸“Il y a aussi troys parvis, qui sont troys differens degrés de rayon: au premier nous discourons selon les l’experience des sens; au second nous discourons selon les sciences humaines; au troisieme, nous discourons selon la foy et en fin, outre cela, il y a une certaine eminence et supreme pointe de la rayon et faculté spirituelle, qui n’est point conduite par la lumiere du discours ni de la rayon, ains par une simple veüe de l’entendement et un simple sentiment de la volonté, par lesquelz l’esprit acquiesce et se soumet a la vérité et a la volonté de Dieu. Or, cette extremité et cime de nostre ame, cette pointe supreme de nostre esprit, est naivement bien representee par le Sanctuaire, ou mayson sacree....Car encor que la foy, l’esperance et la charité respandent leur divin mouvement presque en toutes les facultés de l’ame, tant raysonnables que sensitives, les reduisant et assujettissant saintement sous leur juste autorité, si est ce que leur speciale demeure, leur vray et naturel sejour, est en cette supreme pointe de l’ame, des laquelle, comme une heureuse source d’eau vive elles s’espanchent par divers surgeons et ruyseaux sur les parties et facultés inferieures.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.67-70.

temptation or trouble their souls may suffer.³²⁹ Just as God is present always to the soul in this way in his friendship,³³⁰ so too is a spiritual friend—at the most intimate and highest part of our consciousness. This is the meaning of the unity of heart he frequently spoke of with Jane and other friends.

Until now we have considered the cause and effects of spiritual friendship, let us now turn to two particular manifestations, without which our study would be sorely deficient.

Two Forms of Spiritual Friendship

Spiritual Direction

It has always posed a problem for me in studying Francis de Sales that he seems to identify a spiritual director with friendship. He joins two separate ideas with the conjunction of two different Scripture texts: (*Tobit 5:2,4 search for some man to lead you; and Sirach 6:14 The faithful friend is a great protection; he who finds it has found a treasure. The faithful friend is a medicine of life and immortality, he who fears God will find him.*) to make a link that Scripture itself never explicitly makes. Francis then explains, “These divine words concern principally immortality, for which above all you should have this faithful friend who guides our actions by his opinions and counsels, and in this way keeps us from the foul traps of the shrewd one”³³¹ Is

³²⁹“Quand je le portay [Nostre coeur] la premiere fois ou il avoit accoustumé de trouver son ame [Jane] et quil ne l’y treuva plus, il fut saisi d’un estonnement nonpareil qui luy a duré trois ou quatre jours et le resaisit souvent, c’est a dire quand il y pense par maniere de privation du bien quil ayme plus que tout autre du monde. Mays tout cela ne touche point la pointe de l’esprit qui assure de plus en plus de l’indissoluble et invariable unité que Dieu a faite de ce que nous sommes, demeure aussi impenetrable a toute sorte d’aprehension.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MXLV. For more on the fine point of the soul, see p.195.

³³⁰“Nous l’appellons donq [la charité] amitié surnaturelle pour cela, et de plus encor, parce qu’elle regarde Dieu et tend a luy, non selon la science naturelle que nous avons de sa bonté, mais selon la connoissance surnaturelle de la foy. C’est pourquoy, avec la foy et l’esperance, elle fait sa residence en la pointe et cime de l’esprit. *Oeuvres...* IV, p.163.

³³¹“*Cherche quelque homme qui te conduise [Tob. 5.2,4] ...L’ami fidelle, dit l’Ecriture sainte, est une forte protection; celui qui l’a treuvé a treuvé un tresor. L’ami fidelle est un medicament de vie et d’immortalité; ceux qui craignent Dieu le treuvent [Eccl. 6.14,16]. Ces divines paroles regardent*

friendship more than spiritual direction? Is all friendship spiritual direction? Is all spiritual direction friendship?

A term like friendship, as one has already been able to gather from this study, has many senses. Spiritual direction was a well defined office in the Renaissance Church. It was not unusual to call a spiritual director friend, eventhough it is most often a relationship between the guide and the pilgrim, between unequals, which is not ordinarily considered as a friendship. Contrary to such opinions, Francis de Sales seems to believe that one should always conceive spiritual direction in the context of friendship. Judging by what we have seen in his life and thought until now, all friendship was a kind of spiritual direction. If not actively so, at least there was the hope that it could become active one day. One cannot find nor imagine Francis having a true friendship without hope of being able to speak of one another's life in the presence of eternity. Therefore, if there were absolutely no spiritual direction in a relationship nor the hope of some form of it, there could be no friendship for him. Likewise there could be no spiritual direction without some form of friendship. The question is what degree of friendship would that be? Would mere "testimonies of friendship" or friendliness be sufficient? It is impossible to be intimate with many, yet one can be spiritual director of many. Francis asked Vincent de Paul to be spiritual director for the Visitation, which by then numbered over one thousand. Although there are some differences between friendship and spiritual direction, perhaps we should consider what Francis writes Jane at the beginning of their friendship before we get too perplexed with this apparent problem. "What does it matter for you to know if you should consider me your spiritual father or not, so long as you know how my soul is towards you and that I may know how yours is towards mine?"³³² Their trust and mutual desire to serve one another was the basis of their relationship, he goes on to explain, the rest really isn't important.

principalement l'immortalité, comme vous voyes, pour laquelle il faut sur toutes choses avoir cet amy fidelle qui guide nos actions par ses advis et conseilz, et par ce moyen nous garantit des embusches et tromperies du malin." *Oeuvres...* III, p.24.

³³²"Que vous importe-il de sçavoir si vous me pouves tenir pour vostre pere spirituel ou non, pourveu que vous sachiez quell'est mon ame en vostre endroit et que je sache quell'est la vostre au mien? Je sçai que vous aves une entiere et parfaite confiance en mon affection; de cela je n'en doute nullement, et en reçois de la consolation. Sachiés aussi, je vous supplie, et croyes-le bien, que j'ay une vive et extraordinaire volonté de servir vostre esprit de toute l'estendue de mes forces." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXIII.

What is important for us is that if spiritual direction and friendship are inseparable, they will have similar qualities. We may not be able to say precisely if it is a kind of friendship or if it is only like friendship, but in either case they share fundamental similarities. They have the same cause and orientation, even though the communication may not be apt to enjoy a full mutual understanding. Every benefit of spiritual direction will accrue to friendship, because true friendship is the greater. A true friend is a guide gently correcting our errors, a consolation and inspiration. All the treasured qualities of a spiritual director belong therefore to a true friend.

Francis says such a person is a rare find, a fount of wisdom in our afflictions, sadness and falls, “a medicine to relieve and console our hearts and spiritual sicknesses, he will keep us from harm and render our good better.”³³³ If you are perfectly open and sincere with him, he tells Philothea, he will be a means for your good to be assured and your evil to be corrected. But he cautions that before giving complete confidence to this person, respecting him like an angel descended from heaven or a father, make sure he is “full of charity, knowledge and practical wisdom: if one of these three are lacking, there is some danger.”³³⁴ Such persons are extremely rare, he admits, but if you are humble and pray God to send him to you, you will find one. And once you do, remain firmly attached to him going ahead with simplicity and confidence on your spiritual journey making great speed.

What this text teaches us about friendship is, besides all its consolations and aids for those seeking God, that those whom one should let freely and completely into his heart are rare. If he admonishes Philothea only to have holy friendships, then they must be only with holy persons. However, as we have seen, friendship admits many degrees, it is possible to communicate some form of mutual benevolence between persons who are not perfect. That is the risk of friendship, a risk Francis was willing to accept. One need not open his heart completely to every friend, indeed to be so uncritical is reckless. Francis would most likely say, you may have all kinds of exchanges

³³³“Il nous sera comme un tresor de sapience en nos afflictions, tristesses et cheutes; il nous servira de medicament pour alleger et consoler nos coeurs es maladies spirituelles; il nous gardera du mal, et rendra nostre bien meilleur; et quand il nous arrivera quelque infirmité, il empeschera qu’elle ne soit pas a la mort, car il nous en relevera.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.24.

³³⁴“Il le faut plein de charité, de science et de prudence: si l’une de ces trois parties luy manque, il y a du danger.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.24. See also, F. Vincent, *Saint François de Sales Directeur d’âmes, l’éducation de la volonté*, Paris, Beauchesne (1923) especially pp.397-547.

with persons also aspiring to God. You may be able to help one another in many ways, but you need not treat all of them as a spiritual father. Perhaps it may happen that putting the best qualities of several close friends into one you may be able to wholly confide yourself. One friend may be perfect in his charity, another in his knowledge, and another in his prudence. If you know their strengths and weaknesses, and of course your own, it would be possible to consult all of them to create the best advice. But having said this, it would be misleading to say friendship could simply replace spiritual direction. We know Francis had a spiritual director all his life, even though he may have benefited from Jane, Favre, Dom Guerin, Vincent de Paul and many others in a similar way.

Marriage: each other's "dear half"³³⁵

Two chapters of *The Devout Life* discuss Christian perfection in the state of married life.³³⁶ He felt marriage was the "root and spring of every stream" of society, and shunned any spiritual currents that denigrate it as somehow a lesser vocation for the weak. He says, almost emphatically, "In everything; its origin, its end, its utilities, its form and its matter it is holy."³³⁷ He was not the first to give marriage as much importance in Christian life, but he was defying a strong current over several centuries that relegated marriage to those who could not control their passions, (I Cor. VII, 8) or as a responsibility to advance the family with little consideration for love.³³⁸ Marriage is a kind of friendship, "nuptial friendship," he calls it in one letter.³³⁹ They

³³⁵He writes Antoine des Hayes, enclosing copies of *The Devout Life*, "Je les offre a madame vostre chere moitié." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLVIII.

³³⁶*Oeuvres...* III, pp.263-278.

³³⁷"La conservation du bien du mariage est extremement important a la republique, car c'est sa racine et la source de tout ses ruisseaux.... En tout, son origine, sa fin, ses utilités, sa forme et sa matiere sont saintes." *Oeuvres...* III p.264.

³³⁸In 1548 Claude Baduel used the formula *adjutrix et socia*, in his celebrated defense of marriage as a way to affirm faith and piety. Cfr. Cl. Baduel, *Traité très utile et fructueux de la dignité du mariage et de l'honneste conversation des gens doctes et lettrés*, Paris, 1548. See too R. Pillorget's article "Le mariage chrétien selon saint François de Sales" in *L'unidivers salésien...* pp.241-255.

³³⁹"On m'écrit que vostre amitié nuptiale est si entiere et parfaite que rien plus; et n'est ce pas cela la veritable et certaine marque de la benediction de Dieu sur un mariage?" *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDCXXXV. See also, MCCCLXXXIX.

communicate their bodies, “life, industry, goods, affections and an indissoluble fidelity,” making it a “true and holy friendship.”³⁴⁰ Since it is a state of life, we might call it the state of friendship, it is a means to sanctification with its own particular duties.³⁴¹ He admired several persons, like Pernette Boutey, who he considered saints living in the state of marriage.³⁴² Especially in a society like early Seventeenth Century France, women were more often the ones who contributed the most to marriage, frequently saddled with a man they had to patiently endure. Francis observes, a good husband is a great assistance, “But there are few like that, and as good as one might be, one receives more subjection from him than assistance”!³⁴³ He considered it a state of life requiring more virtue and tenacity than any other, calling it “a perpetual exercise in mortification.”³⁴⁴ But, in difficult situations he would advise a humble gentleness, and tenacity, which in the end would yield its own consolations and render the person truly holy.³⁴⁵

He advises, first and foremost a mutual love, commenting on St. Paul’s Husbands, love your wives as Jesus Christ loves his church, he writes, “Oh husbands, the weaknesses and faults, whether in mind or in body of your wives should not provoke any kind of disdain in you, but rather a gentle and loving compassion, since God created them so in order that they be dependent upon you that you might receive more honor and respect for it, and so that you might have them in this way as

³⁴⁰“La communication des voluptés charnelles est une mutuelle propension et amorce brutale, laquelle ne peut non plus porter le nom d’amitié entre les hommes que celles des asnes et chevaux pour semblables effectz; et s’il n’y avoit nulle autre communication au mariage, il n’y auroit non plus nulle amitié; mais parce qu’outre celle-la il y a en iceluy la communication de la vie, de l’industrie, des biens, des affections et d’une indissoluble fidelité, c’est pourquoy l’amitié du mariage est une vraye amitié et sainte.”

³⁴¹“[Mariage] n’est nullement deshonneste devant Dieu; au contraire il luy est agreable, il est saint, il est meritoire.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXI.

³⁴²“Une Monique dans son mesnage et une Magdeleine dans l’orayson.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXVIII. See also, CCCLVIII.

³⁴³“Il est vray, sans doute, c’est une grande assistance que celle d’un bon mari; mays il en est peu, et, pour bon qu’on l’ayt, on en reçoit plus de sujettion que d’assistance.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXXIV. He also comments sardonically, “Que les vertues d’une femme mariee sont agreables a Dieu! Car il faut qu’elles soient fortes et excellentes pour durer en cette vocation.” ltr. DXVI.

³⁴⁴“L’estat de mariage est un estat qui requiert plus de vertu et constance que nul autre; c’est un perpetuel exercice de mortification.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCMXCVIII.

³⁴⁵“Vous marcherez en cette vocation, vous y aurez bien de la consolation, et deviendrez fort sainte a la fin.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DCCCLX.

companions while you be nonetheless head and superior.” And to the wives he recommends a reciprocal love, “Oh wives, love tenderly, ardently, but with a respectful love full of reverence for the husbands God has given you.”³⁴⁶ With such resolve to love one another through the vicissitudes of feelings and the many forms of seduction, marriage’s first effect is therefore indissoluble union, “not principally of body, but of heart, affection and love.”³⁴⁷ Marriage’s love not only unites permanently, but with an inviolable fidelity, which is represented by the ring each wears. When love and fidelity are conjoined, marriage will always enjoy confidence and privacy.³⁴⁸ Being faithful to one’s spouse is to be faithful to God, because He has tied the “sacred bond” of their marriage and has given them to each other. He recommends that they pray regularly for the progress of their marriage in reciprocal friendship and fidelity.³⁴⁹

Granted their condition of life, he believed married couples can easily inspire one another to virtue, “they sanctify one another in a true fear of the Lord.”³⁵⁰ Their mutual tolerance, he explains, is one of the

³⁴⁶ “Conservés donq, o maris, un tendre, constant et cordial amour envers vos femmes: pour cela la femme fut tiree du costé plus proche du coeur du premier homme, affin qu’elle fust aymee de luy cordialement et tendrement. Les imbecillités et infirmités, soit du cour soit de l’esprit de vos femmes ne vous doivent provoquer a nulle sorte de desdain, ains plustost a une douce et amoureuse compassion, puisque Dieu les a creés telles affin que, dependant de vous, vous en recussies plus d’honneur et de respect, et que vous les eussies tellement pour compaignes que vous en fussies neanmoins les cheffz et superieurs. Et vous, o femmes, aymes tendrement, cordialement, mays d’un amour respectueux et plein de reverence, les maris que Dieu vous a donnés.” *Oeuvres... III* p. 273.

³⁴⁷ “Dieu conjoint le mari et la femme en son propre sang, c’est pourquoi cette union est si forte que plustot l’ame se doit separer du cors de l’un et d’autre, que non pas le mari de la femme. Or cette union ne s’entend pas principalement du cors, ains du coeur, de l’affection et de l’amour.” *Oeuvres... III*, p.265.

³⁴⁸ “L’amour et la fidelité jointes ensemble engenderent tous-jours la privauté et confiance.” *Oeuvres... III*, p.270.

³⁴⁹ “Que les maris et femmes, confessés et communiés en ce jour la, [anniversaire] recommandassent a Dieu plus ferverment que l’ordinaire le progres de leur mariage, renouvelans les bons propos de le sanctifier de plus en plus par une reciproque amitié et fidelité, et reprenans haleynes en Nostre-Seigneur pour le support des charges de leur vocation.” *Oeuvres... III*, p.273.

³⁵⁰ “St Paul a dit que l’homme infidelle est sanctifié par la femme fidelle, et la femme infidelle par l’homme fidelle, parce qu’en cette estroite alliance du mariage, l’un peut aysement tirer l’autre a la vertu. Mais quelle benediction

first ways this humble love in God's presence works. This is why he believed they must never compete with each other, thereby letting dissension or arguing creep into their relationship.³⁵¹ Competing takes away what is best in marriage, opposing good works, instead of letting them reciprocally fortify and console spouses. It belittles husband and wife, instead of developing and encouraging them. This is why he concludes that the Holy Spirit cannot dwell in a house full of bickering, retorts and fighting. We might consider all cajoling, kindness and encouragement between a married couple as a kind of caress. Both these verbal caresses and physical affection, "demonstrations of pure and frank friendship," are important in marriage, he affirms, for building confidence and binding hearts in endearment.³⁵² A good husband or wife is a blessing from God for the Doctor of love, because "the yoke of the Savior, which is sweet and easy in itself, becomes more so when two carry each other together."³⁵³ Yet at the same time it is very difficult. Unfortunately the Doctor of love was never able to fulfill his promise to write "a little essay" on the virtues proper to married women.³⁵⁴ His letters to women like Madame Brûlart, give the most insight. The virtues of a married woman, he notes are pleasing to God, because to endure in this vocation one need be especially strong.³⁵⁵

est-ce quand l'homme et la femme fidelles se sanctifient l'un l'autre en une vraye crainte du Seigneur!" *Oeuvres...* III, p.272.

³⁵¹"Au demeurant, le support mutuel de l'un pour l'autre doit estre si grand, que jamais tous deux ne soyent courroncés ensemble et tout a coup, affin qu'entre eux il ne se voye dela dissention et du desbat." *Oeuvres...* III, p.273.

³⁵²"L'amour et la fidelité jointes ensemble engenderent tous-jours la privauté et confiance; c'est pourquoy les Saintz et Saintes ont usé de beaucoup de reciproques caresses en leur mariage, caresses vrayement amoureuses, maris chastes, tendres mais sincerés... bien que ces petites demonstrations de pure et franche amitié ne lient pas les coeurs, elles les approchent neanmoins, et servent d'un ageancement agreable a la mutuelle conversation." *Oeuvres...* III, p.270.

³⁵³"Vous estes bien heureuse d'avoir un mari si chrestien, comme est celuy que Dieu vous a donné en sa debonnaireté, car le joug du Sauveur qui est en soi si doux et si suave, le devient encore davantage quand deux se portent ensemble." *Oeuvres...* DCCCLXXXI.

³⁵⁴"Vous me demandies encor, ma chere Soeur, un petit memorial des vertus plus propres a une femme mariee; mais de cela je n'en ay pas le loysir. Un jour je vous en mettray quelque chose en escrit". *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXI.

³⁵⁵"Que les vertus d'une femme mariée sont agreables a Dieu! Car il faut qu'elles soient fortes et excellentes pour durer en cette vocation." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DXVI.

Francis gives a second warning to jealous husbands. Jealousy corrupts the substance of marriage little by little. Where there is true reciprocal friendship and virtue in marriage there is never jealousy, he remarks, “For the perfection of friendship presupposes the assurance of the virtue of the thing that one loves, and jealousy presupposes its incertitude.”³⁵⁶ This kind of jealousy stems from an insecurity which can suffocate love. Yet there is a sense in which marriage’s friendship is exclusive and admits no sharing of its affection. Jealousy is sometimes just, he admits, provided it doesn’t become excessive.³⁵⁷ This too is a way in which marriage differs from normal friendships.

Marriage has another purpose normal friendship does not, namely the procreation and education of children.³⁵⁸ Francis devotes an entire chapter of *The Devout Life* to what he calls the “nobility of the nuptial bed.”³⁵⁹ He recognizes a proper place for “noble eroticism” in marriage, in contrast to many of his contemporaries. He admits it can be dangerous and sometimes lead persons into mortal sin, but contends “nuptial commerce” is holy, just, recommendable, and useful for the republic.³⁶⁰ It must be ordered to creating children and is a duty married persons owe each other for reciprocal and legitimate satisfaction. He formulates the now classic Catholic teaching that the couple must always be open to having children, saying “the nuptial duty must be always faithful and sincere and all the same as if it were with the hope of producing children, even though sometimes one might not have such hope.”³⁶¹ He draws a parallel between eating and the appetite for

³⁵⁶“Certes, la jalousie n’arrive jamais ou l’amitié est reciproquement fondee sur la vraye vertu...C’est donc une sottise vance d’amitié que de la vouloir exalter par la jalousie, ...puisque la perfection de l’amitié presuppose l’assurance de la vertu de la chose qu’on aime, et la jalousie en presuppose l’incertitude.” *Oeuvres...* III p.268.

³⁵⁷“La jalousie est quelquefois juste, pourveu qu’elle soit moderee; car les mariés ont rayson d’empescher que leur amour ne soit point partagé et par consequent d’estre jaloux l’un de l’autre.” *Oeuvres...* V p.428.

³⁵⁸“Le troysiesme friut du mariage c’est la production et legitime nourriture des enfans...il vous rend les cooperateurs.” *Oeuvres...* III p.267.

³⁵⁹*Oeuvres...* III, pp.274-278; i.e. III, xxxix.

³⁶⁰“A la verité le commerce nuptial qui est si saint, si juste, si recommandable, si utile a la republique, est néanmoins en certain cas dangereux a ceux qui le pratiquent; car quelquefois il rend leurs ames grandement malades de peché veniel, comme il arrive par les simples exces, et quelquefois il les fait mourir par le peché mortel, comme il arrive lhors que l’ordre establi pour la production des enfans est violé et perverti.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.276.

³⁶¹“Le devoir nuptial doit estre tous-jours rendu fidellement, franchement,

conjugal union, eating only to satisfy one's appetite is tolerable, but not praiseworthy. Similarly, if either eating or "bodily commerce" is done only for pleasure or excessively it is a kind of gluttony and condemnable. Thus he expressly condemns contraception. And just as it would be vulgar and abject to revel in the thought of a meal before dinner time, making as St. Paul says a God of their stomachs, so too it is reprehensible to revel in thoughts of sexuality. It must always be done with great respect and never engage our affections. In summary, these physical consolations must never distract from the couple's spiritual pretensions. Use them, he counsels "like all things of the world as befits your vocation, but in such a way that they don't engage in any way your affection, that you remain free and prompt to serve God as if you didn't use them at all."³⁶²

This teaching is a grand originality.³⁶³ Augustine wrote two treatises on marital life, *De bono conjugali* and *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*. There he formulated a theory of conjugal relations that became classic for centuries in western Christendom. Even though it comports eroticism, Augustine believed intercourse between spouses intending to have children is completely without sin. Just as eating only for pleasure is sinful, conjugal union without intention of procreation is a venial sin. Augustine admits, by the way, that he has never heard of a man claim to only unite with his wife for children. Francis de Sales adds two other means between these two extremes of culpable eroticism and praiseworthy procreation. A couple may also avail of their "bodily commerce" for mutual consolation and as a way to express and edify their love for one another. And secondly, he believes it permissible to have conjugal union when pregnancy is impossible, and sees no shame whatever in receiving the Eucharist just after or before indulging in these marital consolations. For, as he writes Madame Bûlart, "That exercise is in no way dishonest in the eyes of God; to the contrary it is agreeable, it is holy, it is meritorious, at least for the part that renders its duty, not seeking the act, but only condescending to obey he to whom God has given the authority to be obeyed in this regard."³⁶⁴ This doesn't

et tout de m'seme comme si c'estoit avec esperance de la production des enfans, encor que pour quelque occasion on n'eust pas telle esperance." *Oeuvres...* III, p.275.

³⁶²"Que tous donques usent du monde, un chacun selon sa vocation, mais en telle sorte que n'y engagent point l'affection, on soit aussi libre et prompt a servir Dieu comme si l'on n'en usoit point." *Oeuvres...* III, p.278.

³⁶³Cfr. R. Pillorget, "Le mariage chrétien selon saint François de Sales" in *L'univers salésien*. ... for a more detailed explanation.

³⁶⁴"Communiés tout asseurement ... puisque vous vous y sentes inclinee et

mean the husband's will is supreme, his desires are likewise governed by love of his wife. Thus the Doctor of love agrees with Augustine that conjugal union is meant for procreation, but admits that the mutual consolation and edification of the couple is equally legitimate and fundamental, even when procreation is impossible. And moreover, he seems to not accept that this would even be a venial sin, but on the contrary something praiseworthy. He agrees with Augustine that the other extreme, egotistically seeking intercourse for pleasure, without regard either for the other person or marriage's orientation to having children is sinful.

Parents are co-operators in the creation of humanity, he says, providing the body which God then informs with a soul. Friendship is not a vocation, because it is not a state of life. Marriage, on the other hand is a kind of friendship which is also a state of life. The couple mutually takes responsibility for each other by a social contract. Its bond is sacramental and institutionalized so that the family might avail of the stability children need to grow up healthy. One of parent's first responsibilities in the education of their children, Francis points out, is not to fill their house with material goods, but to spare no pain in working to teach them the fear of God and virtue.³⁶⁵ Marriage is thus the vocation where two halves unite in order to accomplish both their mutual aid in living Christian virtue and participating with God to bring new persons into the world. They need each other for both of these to be best achieved, and each end of marriage is a vocation centered, like every other service, on their Creator to bring out the best in themselves.

consolee. Et ne vous mettes nullement en peyne de l'apparence qu'il y a de quelqu'irreverence pour l'exercice de la condition en laquelle vous estes; car, ma chere Fille, il ni a null'irreverence, mais seulement une apparence. Cet exercice la n'est nullement deshonneste devant les yeux de Dieu; au contraire, il luy est agreable, il est saint, il est meritoire, au moins pour la partie qui rend le devoir, et n'en recherche pas l'acte, mais seulement y condescend pour obeir a celuy a qui Dieu a donne l'autorite de se faire obeir pour ce regard." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCCLXI. See too ltr. CCXXXIV to Jane where he notes, "c'est une fauss liberte aux femmes mariees de s'esloigner de leurs maris sans legitime rayson, sous pretexte de devotion et charite." This rule of legitimate authority is important to remember for all obedience in the Salesian spirituality.

³⁶⁵"Ce n'est pas faire une bonne mayson de fourrer beaucoup de biens mondains en icelle, mais de bien eslever les enfans en la crainte de Dieu et en la vertu: en quoy on ne doit epargner aucune sorte de peyne ni de travaux, puisque les enfans sont la *couronne* du pere et de la mere." *Oeuvres...* III, p.272.

The Necessity of Friendship for Salvation

Throughout our exposé, we have seen the different dimensions of friendship's exchange and its effects on the persons who struggle to persevere in it. The underlying spirituality that marked Salesian friendships plays an important role in all of this, as we have noted. Now by means of conclusion, let us turn to the arguments bearing on friendship's role in salvation. First with the refutation of the objections Francis faced, which underlines his insistence on its pivotal role in his spirituality, and finally with an assembly of texts where he says so explicitly.

Particular friendships

Just as the Doctor of love had to challenge the common idea that holiness was only for those in monasteries --- those who quit the world; he must also challenge a parallel notion that friendship takes one away from love of God, entangling the heart in too human loves. St. Basil the Great for example writes sometime around the year 370 in his *Constitutions*:

No particular friendships whatever are compatible between two or three brothers in an ascetic institution. It is fitting that the brothers have a mutual charity, but not that two or three agree to form a group. This would not be charity but sedition, division and proof of its wickedness for those who might do it. Because if one really desired the good of the common discipline then without a doubt he would love all with an equal love.³⁶⁶

He goes so far as to say it should be corrected like a sickness of the mind (*mente aegrotans*) and if a monk persists he should be expelled like the pest. St. Benedict, John Cassian and St. Teresa of Avila are among those who condemn particular friendships with the same line of argument: It is uncharitable to love one more than another.³⁶⁷ Tradition

³⁶⁶*Constitutiones Monasticae*, XXIX, PG. 31, 1417.

³⁶⁷John Cassian, for example, in his *Institutions* warns against the dangers of particular friendships, especially for the young. However in his *Conferences* a more optimistic optic is taken. Cfr. *Institutions cénobitiques*, Bk II, chapt. 15, pp 85-86, in Sources chrétiennes no. 109, and *Conférences*, vol. II ,no. XVI, pp.222-247, in Sources chrétiennes no. 54. ed. H. de Lubac and J. Daniélou. Teresa of Avila, who had an important influence on Francis, writes in her *Way of Perfection*: "For the love of the Lord, refrain from making individual friendships, however holy, for even among brothers and sisters such things are

is not unanimous, however; Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Spirituali Amicitia* in the Twelfth Century considered it something excellent and beneficial even within the walls of the cloister. Indeed there is an entire monastic literature of friendship which is the dominant theme of their letters. It is, "the reflection of what is deepest in the monastic soul."³⁶⁸ However, it seems throughout the Middle Ages, that respect for particular friendships eroded and pessimism prevailed. It was probably more due to misgivings for human penchant to abuse than a condemnation of friendship per se.³⁶⁹ More work needs to be done in this area, especially on the contribution of the desert fathers, who had a long tradition of friendship and monasticism.³⁷⁰ Brian Patrick McGuire points out that Francis de Sales was used in monasteries over recent centuries as an authority against particular friendships.³⁷¹ He notes two apprehensions behind traditional opposition: John Cassian's warnings that they could develop into conspiracies against the Abbot, and the constant fear of homosexuality. The text most often cited is from *The Devout Life*, where the Doctor of love tells Philothea she needs a friend to traverse over the dangerous mountain passages of life, but those on the plains, in religious life, proceed more securely and don't need particular friendships.³⁷²

Now there are several problems with this interpretation. We know that Teresa of Avila and Francis de Sales and other saints all had particular friendships.³⁷³ Basil's friendship with John Chrysostom and

apt to be poisonous and I can see no advantage in them." *Teresa of Jesus, The way of Perfection*, Sheed and Ward, London 5th ed. (1957) vol. 2 p.17. At the same time Teresa recognized the benefits of friendship, Cfr. *Teresa of Jesus, The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, trans. K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez, Institute of Carmelite Studies Publications, Washington D.C. (1976) *Life* vol. 1, pp.64-65.

³⁶⁸J. Leclercq, *L'Amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu...*p.175

³⁶⁹G. Vansteenberghe shares this position in his article "l'Amitié" in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* t. 1 Beauchesne, Paris 1932, col. 522. J. Dubois agrees in his introduction to Aelred's *De Spirituali Amicitia*, Paris Beyaert, 1948, p.lxxx.

³⁷⁰Cfr. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, 2 vols. Oxford, 1884. See too: I. Hausherr, *Spiritual Direction in the Early Christian East*, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo 1990.

³⁷¹McGuire, B.P. *Friendship and Community. The Monastic Experience 350-1250*. Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo 1988. pp.420-422.

³⁷²*Oeuvres...* III, p.202.

³⁷³Teresa had friendships with John of the Cross, Gracián and at least one of the sisters in her community. Cfr. *The Letters of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, trans. E. Allison Peers, t.1 Sheed and Ward, London, 1951 and 1980, ltr. 145 and ltr.

Gregory of Nazianzen, are well known. If they all had important friendships, why do they condemn it in community life? Indeed every friendship is unique and therefore particular, so even the nomenclature is problematic. How can we even conceive of friendship that is not particular? Another problem is to know whether spiritual direction is a particular friendship. Is Francis merely telling Philothea she needs a spiritual director? Could the religious have friendships with a spiritual director but not within the community?

In his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Francis de Sales skirts this very thorny problem, choosing only to argue for particular friendships in the world. Later with the sisters of the Visitation he would maintain the position that particular friendships are to be avoided because the love sisters in Christ owe each other should be equal, being motivated by love of God's will and not their preferences. He tells them if they have a natural affinity for one over another, that they shouldn't even entertain the thought, and much less tell the person.³⁷⁴ Nonetheless, we know that he advocated a friendship between Jane de Chantal, and Marie-Jacqueline Favre. Moreover, we don't find him reprimanding any of the sisters of the Visitation for having friendships. When Claude de Quoex, who was a religious, asks if their friendship is permissible, Francis confesses he doesn't know where he might find the texts where Christ permits it, but he feels deeply in his heart, and with firm conviction that all his affection for Claude is not a distraction from his love of God.³⁷⁵ He was apparently struggling with the question himself.

147. See also *ibid.* chapter 3. The monks and martyrs Cosmus and Damien were always together. Jerome and Pachome also exchanged a dozen letters of friendship. Cfr. Migne c. p.87.

³⁷⁴“Si tant est qu’il soit vray que nous ayons de l’inclination a en aymer une plustot que l’autre, nous ne devons nous amuser a y penser, et encor moins a le luy dire; car nous ne devons pas aymer par inclination, ains aymer nostre prochain, ou parce qu’il est vertueux, ou pour l’esperance que nous avons qu’il de deviendra, ains principalement parce que telle est la volonté de Dieu.” *Oeuvres...* VI, p.64.

³⁷⁵“Tempus et locum ignoro, dilectissime Frater, quando dabit Dominus ut nos invicem possimus invisere; sed Frater in Christo suavissime, interim et semper, et in aeternum et ultra, unice amemus ac diligamus Deum. Libenter dicam charitati vestrae, quod si vel minimum suspicarer in corde meo dilectionis motum qui ad Deum non tenderet, aut alteri quam divino consecraretur amori, infidelem ac spurium hunc animi mei foetum, omni conatu, cum ipsis visceribus evellere statgerem, nec in mente mea abortivum illud vel uno momento patierer.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCMLXIX. See too a similar justification for his friendship with Louise Duchastel in R. Devos, *Saint François de Sales par les témoins...*p.260.

Tradition seemed to be saying one thing, yet his conscience—the depths of his heart was urging him in a different direction. It is the saints who are the only theologians in the orthodox tradition. They believe only those close to God can be an authority. Francis was close to God, and his own experience within was strong enough to compel him to break with tradition, or perhaps it is better to say to make a respectful distinction between friendship in the world and friendship in the monastery. A distinction he doesn't seem to have been really satisfied with.

It is important to notice that when he speaks to the sisters of the Visitation against loving the virtuous more than the less virtuous among them, he uses a different term, he says they shouldn't show them more "testimonies of friendship."³⁷⁶ He wouldn't say to Jane or Favre that he had a testimony of friendship for them. Why this different term? Was he making a subtle distinction between friendship and friendliness? True he was original in some areas without care for scruples, but his deferring to the Bishop of Lyon on the status of his newly founded order reveals another side of Francis de Sales. He considered obedience to the Church one of the pillars of holiness, and preferred to err in being too obedient than in being too discerning.³⁷⁷ I wonder if he was only being respectful to tradition in these discourses, yet feeling and allowing exceptions. He was sagacious enough to perhaps see a way to have friendships even within the monastery, provided they not injure community life.

Granting the danger that "particularities become partialities," he was able to see a way to unify all these loves in the love of God—a unity that did not detract, but strengthened each. That was the message of the famous retreat he and Jean did together at Pentecost of 1616. He takes an image used by Catherine of Sienna. Like a glass in a fountain of water that will never empty no matter how much one drinks from it, these friendships are never diminished if they remain united to their

³⁷⁶“Bien que nous syons obligés d'aymer davantage ceux qui sont plus vertueux, de l'amour de complaisance, nous ne les devons pas pourtant plus aymer de l'amour de bienveillance, et ne leur devons pas tesmoigner plus des signes d'amitié; et cela pour deux raisons. La premiere est que Nostre Seigneur ne l'a pas fait,... Le seconde raison pour laquelle nous ne devons pas rendre des témoignages d'amitié aux uns plus qu'aux autres, ni ne nous devons pas laisser aller à les aymer davantage, est que nous ne pouvons pas juger quels sont ceux qui sont plus parfaits ... et bien souvent ceux qui nous semblent estre les plus vertueux ne le sont pas.” *Oeuvres*...VI, pp.62-63.

³⁷⁷“J'ayme mieux obeir au peril de la discretion, que d'estre discret au peril de l'obeissance.” *Oeuvres*... ltr. CCXXX.

source.³⁷⁸ He seems to believe true and sincere friendship was the binding force of community life. He calls it cordial friendship, “The essence of true and sincere friendship,” because its foundation is in the heart.³⁷⁹ Just as the early Christian communities called each other brothers, he explains, being a religious is a kind of brotherhood. It is the firmest kind of friendship because it is between equals, like brothers.³⁸⁰ He tells the sisters it is “very recommendable.”³⁸¹ How good it is that the brothers dwell together! he cries in unison with the *Psalms*.

Yet, granting this praise of friendship in the religious community, and of loving all with all, one must admit it has its limits. Friendship in the monastery with all isn’t really humanly possible. Aristotle says a friend to all is a friend to none. However testimonies of friendship, or a certain degree of friendship that includes an exchange charity does not, is possible with all in religious life. Perhaps one could argue that he uses the term friendship in community life in a different sense. Without getting too tangled in an ancient problematic that concerns religious life more than life in the world, let’s look at just a couple of texts from Francis de Sales that shed some light on the problem. He devotes a chapter of the *Traité* to show that while one loves God with his whole heart, he can at the same time love several other things with God. “No love will ever remove our hearts from God but one contrary to Him.”³⁸²

³⁷⁸“A ce propos, sainte Catherine de Sienne fait une belle comparaison [Dialog. c. lxiv] Si vous prenez, dit elle, un verre, et que vous l’emplissiez dans une fontaine, et que vous beuviez dans ce verre sans le sortir de la fontaine, encor que vous beuviez tant que vous voudrez, le verre ne se vuidera point; mais si vous le tirez hors de la fontaine, quand vous aurez beu, le verre sera vuide. Ainsy en est-il des amitiés; quand l’on ne les tire point de leur source elles ne tarissent jamais.” *Oeuvres...* VI, p.126.

³⁷⁹“La cordialité n’est autre chose que l’essence de la vraye et sincere amitié” *Oeuvres...* VI, p.54.

³⁸⁰“Les anciens Chresitens de la primitive Eglise s’appelloient tous freres...pour marque de la sincere et vraye amitié cordiale qu’ilz se portent ou qu’ilz se doivent porter.” *Oeuvres...* VI, p.56.

³⁸¹“Mais celle qui est entre les freres est tout au contraire, car elle est sans artifices, et partant fort recommandable. Cela donc estant ainsy, je dis que c’est pour ce sujet que les Religieux s’appellent freres, et partant ont un amour qui merite veritablement le nom d’amitié non commune ains d’amitié cordiale, c’est a dire d’une amitié qui a son fondement dans le coeur.” *Oeuvres...* VI, p.56.

³⁸²“L’homme se donne tout par l’amour, et se donne tout autant qu’il ayme: il est donq souverainement donné a Dieu lhors qu’il ayme souverainement sa divine bonté; et quand il s’est ainsy donné il ne doit rien aymer qui puisse oster son coeur a Dieu. Or, jamais aucun amour n’oste nos

True friendship with persons does not foreclose friendship with God. There is always the danger that persons be too attached and love their friends for the consolation or pleasure that friendship enjoys, but as long as one could be friends because it was the will of God, these two loves need not be opposed. In fact, they are the same love. "The same charity that produces acts of love for God," he argues, "produces as often the charity of the love of neighbor." We love them because of their dignity as God's image and therefore, like Jacob's ladder, "One same affection reaches out to love God and our neighbor, revealing the loving society of others."³⁸³ He says the measure of loving God is without measure, and since how we love God should be the model of love for our neighbor, we should also love our neighbor with our whole heart mind and soul. Love all with all, he would say.³⁸⁴ This is possible, he explains, so long as "The duty by which one is all to some is not contrary to the duty by which he is all to others."³⁸⁵ He takes the example of Jacob who loved Rachel and God with all this strength, "but that doesn't mean he loved Rachel like God, nor God like Rachel. He loved God with an absolutely and sovereign supreme love and Rachel with a supreme nuptial love; and one of these loves is in no way contrary to the other."³⁸⁶ The love of Rachel doesn't violate or

coeurs a Dieu sinon celui qui luy est contraire." *Oeuvres...* V, 171.

³⁸³"La mesme charité qui produit les actes de l'amour de Dieu, produit quant et quant ceux de l'amour du prochain: et tout ainsy que Jacob vid qu'une mesme eschelle touchoit le ciel et la terre, servant egalement aux Anges pour descendre comme pour monter (Gn 28.12), nous scavons aussi qu'une mesme dilection s'estend a cherir Dieu et le prochain, nous relevant a l'amoureuse societe des prochains; en sorte toutefois, que nous aymons le prochain entant qu'il est a l'image et semblance de Dieu, cree pour communiquer avec la divine Bonté, participer a sa grace et jouir de sa gloire." *Oeuvres...* V, p.205.

³⁸⁴"Le glorieux saint Bernard dit que 'la mesure d'aymer Dieu est de l'aymer sans mesure' [*De diligende Deo, initio.*] ...Ce qui est dit de Dieu se soit aussi entendre de l'amour du prochain, pourveu toutesfois qu l'amour de Dieu surnage tousjours au dessus et tienne le premier rang...*Aymez-vous ainsy que je vous ay aimés*; car cela veut dire, plus que vous-mesme...que nous preferions tousjours le prochain a nous...il veut, et la regle de la perfection le requiert, que nous fassions tout ce que nous pouvons les uns pour les autres excepté de nous damner; mais hors de la, nostre amitié doit estre si ferme, cordiale et solide, que nous ne refusions jamais de faire ou de souffrir quoy que ce soit pour nostre prochain et pour nos Soeurs." *Oeuvres...* VI, p.57-58.

³⁸⁵"Un homme ne laissera pas d'estre tout a Dieu, tout a son pere, tout a sa mere, tout au prince, tout a la republique, tout a ses ennemis, tout a ses amis; en sorte qu'estant tout a un chacun, il sera encore tout a tous." *Oeuvres...* V, p.171.

³⁸⁶"Il ayme Rachel de toutes ses forces, il ayme Dieu de toutes ses forces:

encumber love of God, just as the love of Jane or Favre did not strain, but strengthened their other obligations of love. This is one of the reasons Francis' friendship extended also to their families. "You would not believe how much my heart is affirmed in our resolutions," he writes Jane. And then after praising the benefits of their particular friendship, he goes on to justify it saying, "God, who sees the intimate corners of my heart, knows that there is nothing in this but for Him and in Him, without which I want, by His grace, to be nothing to anyone and that no one be anything to me; but in Him, I want not only to keep, but to nourish, and very tenderly, this affection."³⁸⁷ On the contrary, Francis felt true friendships brought them all closer to God, not away from Him.

Historically, mistrust of particular friendships because they risk becoming envy or distract the heart and mind, seems to have moved from monastic spirituality and pervaded all religious life. Some seem to have been using saintly author's complaints of excessive affections and their harm to religious life to say that it is the same in itself for all—even persons in the world.³⁸⁸ "They err in their advice," he responds. He

mais il n'ayme pas pour cela Rachel comme Dieu, ni Dieu comme Rachel. Il ayme Dieu comme son Dieu, sur toutes choses et plus que soy mesme; il ayme Rachel comme sa femme, sur toutes les autres femmes et comme luy mesme, Il ayme Dieu de l'amour absolument et souverainement supreme, et Rachel, du supreme amour nuptial; et l'un des amours n'est point contraire a l'autre, puisque celuy de Rachel ne viole point les privileges et avantages souverains de celuy de Dieu" *Oeuvres...* V, 174.

³⁸⁷ "Vous ne sçauriés croire combien mon coeur s'affermit en nos resolutions et comme toutes choses concourent a cet affermissement. Je m'en sens une suavité extraordinaire, comme aussi de l'amour que je vous porte; car j'ayme cet amour incomparablement. Il est fort, impliable et sans mesure ni reserve, mais doux, facile, tout pur, tout tranquille; bref, si je ne me trompe, tout en Dieu....Si ne rayeray-je pas ces paroles; elle sont trop veritables et hors de danger. Dieu, qui void les intimes replis de mon coeur, sçait qu'il n'y a rien en ceci que pour luy et selon luy, sans lequel je veux, moyennant sa grace, n'estre rien a personne et que nul ne me soit rien; mais je veux nourrir, et bien tendrement, cette unique affection." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDII.

³⁸⁸ "Plusieurs vous diront peut estre qu'il ne faut avoir aucune sorte de particuliere affection et amitié d'autant que cela occupe le coeur, distrait l'esprit, engendre les envies: mais ilz trompent en leurs conseilz; car ilz ont veu es escritz de plusieurs saintz et devotz autheurs que les a amitiés particulieres et affections extraordinaires nuisent infiniment aux religieux; ilz cuydent que c'en soit de mesme du reste du monde, mais il y a bien regle le dessein commun de tous tend a la vraye devotion, il n'est pas requis d'y faite ces (b) particulieres communications, de peur que cherchant en particulier ce qui est commun, on ne

is convinced that friendship for those in the world is fundamentally necessary. There distinction and “holy partiality” is not a risk to unity and charity for the obvious reason that the world is full of snares. The monastery is supposed to be a model of the kingdom of God. Its whole constitution is a community of friendship, bound together in Christ. The world is completely different.³⁸⁹ Francis de Sales felt this opposition was strong enough that he gives a long list of authorities in support of particular friendships in the world, beginning with Christ. The text is rather long, but we think it important enough for our purposes to include it in its entirety.

Indeed, no one can deny that our Lord loved with a very tender and special friendship St. John, Lazarus, Martha and Magdalen as Scripture bears witness. We know that St. Peter loved tenderly St. Mark and St. Petronilla, as St. Paul did St. Timothy and St. Thecla. St. Gregory Nazianzen boasts of his exceptional friendship with the great St. Basil a hundred times and describes it in this manner: ‘...Both of us had one single aim to practise virtue and to adapt all the aims of our life to future hopes...’ St. Augustine testifies that St. Ambrose loved singularly St. Monica because of the rare virtue he saw in her, and in turn she loved him as an angel of God.

I may be wrong in detaining you on so clear a topic. St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Gregory, St. Bernard and all the greatest servants of God, had very special friendships without prejudice to their perfection. St. Paul reproaching the disorders of the gentiles accuses them of being people without affection (Rm 1:31), that is to say without friendships. St. Thomas like all the good philosophers declares that friendship is a virtue. Then he speaks about particular friendship because, as he says, perfect friendship cannot be extended to many persons. Thus perfection does not consist in having no friendship at all but in having only that which is good, holy and sacred.³⁹⁰

passé de particularités aux partialités; mais quant à ceux qui sont entre les mondains et qui embrassent la vraie vertu, il leur est nécessaire de s’allier les uns aux autres par une sainte et sacrée amitié; car par le moyen d’icelle ilz s’animent, ilz s’aydent, ilz s’entreprennent au bien.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.202.

³⁸⁹“Au monde, tous ne conspirent pas à mesme fin, tous n’ont pas le mesme esprit; il faut donc sans doute se tirer à part et faire des amitiés selon nostre prétention; et cette particularité fait voirement une partialité, mais une partialité sainte, qui ne fait aucune division sinon celle du bien et du mal, des brebis et des chevres, des abeilles et des frelons, separation nécessaire.” *Oeuvres...* III, p.202.

³⁹⁰“Certes, on ne sauroit nier que Nostre Seigneur n’aymast d’une plus douce et plus spéciale amitié saint Jean, le Lazare, Marthe, Magdeleine, car

Francis therefore affirms against a fairly strong contemporary current that particular friendships among those in lay life are necessary for those in the world. He seems to then try and remain deferent to traditional interdictions in religious life, but doesn't seem to consider it an absolute. He more likely conceived of a middle way, where a certain minimal degree of 'testimony of friendship' be equal among the brothers or sisters united in a community of true 'cordial' friendship, while at the same time admitting that grace opens the human heart to certain persons for their benefit. As long as one could maintain these friendships without harm to the community of friendship in the monastery where they lived together, they were acceptable as loving all with all, and beneficial.

Friendship as a means to salvation

In this last part let us now put together all the texts where one might construe friendship as a means to salvation in the Doctor of love's writings. Some of the texts have already emerged in different contexts, but bringing them all together will best elucidate his conviction of

l'Escriture le tesmoigne (Jn 13,23; 11,5). On sçait que saint Pierre cherssoit tendrement saint Marc et sainte Petronille, comme saint Paul faisoit son Timothee et saint Thecle. Saint Gregoire Nazianzene se vante cent fois de l'amitié nonpareille qu'il eut avec le grand saint Basile, et la décrit en cette sorte (*Orat.* 43.20) 'Il sembloit qu'en l'un et l'autre de nous, il n'y eust q'une seul ame portant deux cors. Que s'il ne faut pas croire ceux qui desent que toutes choses sont en toutes choses, si nous faut-il pourtant adjoûter foy que nous estions tous deux en l'un de nous, et l'un en l'autre; une seule pretention avions-nous tous deux, de cultiver la vertu et accommoder les desseins de nostre vie aux esperances futures, sortans ainsy hors de la terre mortelle avant que d'y mourir.' Saint Augustine tesmoigne (*Conf.* 1.6, cc 1&2) que saint Ambroise ay moit uniquement sainte Monique, pour les rares vertus qu'il voyoit en elle, et que'elle reciproquement le cherssoit comme un Ange de Dieu. Mays j'ay tort de vous amuser en chose si claire. Saint Hierosme, saint Augustine, saint Gregoire, saint Bernard et tous les plus grans serviteurs de Dieu ont eu de tres particuliers amitiés sans interest de leur perfection. Saint Paul reprochant le detraquement des Gentilz, les accuse d'avoir esté gens sans affection (RM 1.31) c'est a dire qui n'avoient aucune amitié. Et saint Thomas, comme tous les bons philosophes, confesse que l'amitié est une vertu (*Summa theologica* II II Qu. 23, art. III, ad I.) or, il parle de l'amitié particuliere, puisque, comme il dit (*In x lib. Eth. Arist.*, l. ix. lect XII, et *Quaest. disput. de Malo*, Qu. 7, art II ad 12) la parfaite amitié ne peut s'estendre a beaucoup de personnes. La perfection donques ne consiste pas a n'avoir point d'amitié, mais a n'en avoir que de bonne, de sainte et sacree." *Oeuvres...* III, p.202-203.

friendship's essential role in the spiritual life, and thus be the culmination of our work's purpose to show that friendship is important if not necessary for salvation according to Francis de Sales.

First within the whole of Salesian spirituality, there are several elements that already orient us to the importance of friendship for perfection. The first is the role of desires in God's plan for our particular vocation, and the second is the social dimension of that Christian life. Both of these come to bear in his friendship with Jane de Chantal. Francis believed "It isn't necessary that we go always against our inclinations, when they aren't bad and having examined them we find them good."³⁹¹ His spirituality seeks to find God's will in little ways and in things near us rather than in grand projects far from us and beyond our power. It is constantly attentive to ordering desires to one's state in life and the vocation specific to one's strengths and weaknesses. Too often, he regularly advises, desires are too scattered, and consequently dissipate a person's good resolutions.³⁹² Now desires are the things one loves to do or have. If our desires play an important part in discerning God's will in the little things of daily life, the desire to be with and befriend another person naturally takes a fundamental place in the spiritual life. First, because of the goodness in them, but also because they can be beneficiaries of the benevolence loving God spurs, not to mention all they can do to be a help to us. Recall his words to Jane at the very beginning of their friendship. "From the first time you fraternally shared with me your interior, God gave me a forceful love for your spirit."³⁹³ He experienced something similar with Angélique Arnauld, to whom he writes, "God has desired to be between us, because I feel it powerfully, and I don't believe this feeling could come from elsewhere. And what's more, I know that it is beneficial for me and that it encourages me to do better." He tells her he will not tell

³⁹¹"Il n'est pas requise que nous marchions toujours contre nos inclinations, quand elles ne sont pas mauvaises et qu'ayant esté examinees elles ont esté trouvées bonnes." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDXIX.

³⁹²"Il ne faut desirer les choses impossibles, ni bastir sur les difficiles et incertaines. Il ne suffit pas de croire que Dieu nous peut secourir par toutes sortes d'instrumens; mais il faut croire qu'il ne veut pas y employer ceux qu'il esloigne de nous, et qu'il veut employer ceux qui sont pres de nous. Pendant que j'estois la, je n'eusse pas rejezté cette persuasion; mais maintenant elle est du tout hors de saison...Il faut commencer par les effects palpables et exterieurs, qui sont le plus en nostre pouvoir." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CLXXXI.

³⁹³"Des le commencement que vous conferastes avec moy de vostre interieur, Dieu me donna un grand amour de vostre esprit." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.354).

her to do the same, because if God truly wishes them to be friends, He will inspire her in the same way—and he is sure He will.³⁹⁴ Why else would God want to be between him and another friend, but for the good of each? And for what good if not salvation? Friendship is one of the natural God given things that fulfills a basic human need with all its concomitant pleasures and difficulties. It is not only natural that we desire it with certain persons, but the desire is itself part of God's way of raising us to Himself. Asceticism, or great adventures may have a place as some particular and exceptional way God wished to teach men something, but he firmly believed this was not the way to holiness for most of us.³⁹⁵ His spirituality was more optimistic, more flexible. He was rigorous, perhaps the most rigorous, as some have thought, but he also believed God's will could be achieved in pleasant things, as he tells Jane in one of their many letters: "Isn't it reasonable that the very holy will of God be executed as well in things we cherish as in other things?"³⁹⁶ Friendship's consolations and pleasures were no reason to banish it from the realm of prayer, but part of the holy desires every Christian must learn to discern as God draws those who seek him—both in the great desires inscribed on our nature as well as the little desires of daily life.³⁹⁷ God wants us to have other loves, he would teach, so long as we still know how to love our Creator above all creation.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁴“Dieu a voulu estre entre nous, parce que je le sens puissamment, et ne croy pas que ce sentiment puisse venir d'ailleurs. Et de plus, je connois qu'il m'est proffitable et qu'il m'encourage a mieux faire: c'est pourquoy je le conserveray soigneusement. De vous dire que vous en facies de mesme, je ne le feray pas; car s'il plait a Dieu, il vous l'inspirera, et je ne puis douter qu'il ne le face.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. MDXXIV.

³⁹⁵“Que l'on ne me rapporte point non plus un saint Simeon Stylite, lequel demeura quarante quatre ans sur une colonne, faisant chaque jour deux cens actes d'adoration par des genuflexions, car il agissoit de la sorte, aussi bien que saint Paul, par une inspiration toute particuliere, Dieu voulant faire voir en iceluy un miracle de sainteté.” *Oeuvres...* X, 192-194.

³⁹⁶“Eh bien, ma chere Fille, mais n'est il pas raysonnable que la tres sainte volenté de Dieu soit executee, aussi bien dans les choses que nous cherissons comme aux autres?” *Oeuvres...* CDXVIII.

³⁹⁷ Francis de Sales was among those who beleived in a natural inclination in every human being to know and love God. See *Oeuvres...* IV, pp.74-76, see too ltr. MDXIX.

³⁹⁸“La divine dilection veut bien que nous ayons des autres amours, et souvent on ne scauroit discerner quel est le principal amour de nostre coeur; car ce coeur humain tire maintefois tres affectionnement dans le lit de sa complaysance l'amour des creatures, ains il arrive souvent qu'il multiplie

The importance of desires is elaborated many times in his thought. Before agreeing to become Jane's spiritual director, he was careful to examine his desires to be close to Jane in prayer over several months and to consult her own perception and even their confessors, to discern if he was not deceiving himself. But as he tells Jane the peace and consistence of their desire to be close were true signs that these desires originated in the Holy Spirit's plan for them. His particular affection for her has only grown and is already a great consolation and inspiration for him, he tells her it is "extremely useful" to him, because he feels God's hand in it all.³⁹⁹ Thus the desires moving us in the daily context of our state in life can be important messages to following God in little and in big things. Attractions to certain persons can be a powerful way God acts in ordinary human life. Holiness doesn't consist in Buddhist detachment from every single desire, but in the fine harmony of discerning which desires are the stirrings of the Holy Spirit so that one might do God's will passionately, yet indifferently. It means to be attached only to God's will, yet to wax to give all for Him and to be content despite the inevitable failures due to our littleness.

The second general aspect is the whole importance of relationships in the Salesian interpretation of Christian life. If men were made to live in society, it is because they are able to be more when they join together, Francis de Sales saw this as a lesson of divine Providence and a means to our perfection. "What God says to me by my neighbor moves me very much," he writes, showing how important human society was for both the subtle and obvious fashions God speaks to us and cultivates the human heart.⁴⁰⁰ The pursuits one enjoys are somehow made better by sharing them in friendship, and this may be on many different levels with all sorts of persons. The fact we need others is the essential social aspect of human nature. In a prayer, Francis acknowledges how much he believes friends are part of God's plan for our salvation. "If I hope in the aid of a friend, can I not say: You have established our life in such a way Lord, that we have to take refuge, relief and consolation in each other; and because it pleases you, I will therefore use this man, whose friendship you have given me for this

beaucoup plus les actes de son affection envers la creature que ceux de sa dilection envers son Createur." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.190.

³⁹⁹"Chasque affection a sa particuliere difference d'avec les autres; celle que je vous ay a une certaine particularité qui me console infiniment, et, pour tout dire qui m'est extremement profitable." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXXIV (p.354).

⁴⁰⁰"Ce que Dieu me dit par le prochain m'esmeut beaucoup." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CDVII.

intention.”⁴⁰¹ But he doesn’t only believe friends are an aid in adversity, helping us to persevere in the trials and scandals of the world. A friend is like a fortress to help us resist all adversity. “How strong we will be,” he writes an unknown lady, “if we continue to maintain ourselves bound to one another by this bond dyed vermilion in the Savior’s blood! For no one will attack your heart and not find resistance both at your side and at my side, which is wholly dedicated to yours.”⁴⁰² For God favors us with attractions to things beneficial to our eternal life and with “reciprocal consolations” when we find one to whom we can speak to about Him in this world.⁴⁰³

But that is not all. True, there is a secondary sense: one can argue protection and encouragement are a means to salvation, but the Doctor of love believes friendship had an even more direct role in God’s plan for leading us to perfection. Friendship has an active part in shaping the human person. Recall his words to Jane after many years of friendship. “We must really take courage in order to serve God as highly and valiantly as we are able; for, why do we think he might wish to make one sole heart from two, if not so that this heart be extraordinarily hardy, brave, courageous, constant and loving of its Creator and Savior, by whom and for whom I am all yours.”⁴⁰⁴ Two hearts are stronger than one, but he isn’t speaking of mere force in numbers. Their hearts are rendered one so that each be made stronger, so that their love of God might increase. “To have your heart open to the faithful and naive

⁴⁰¹“Si j’espere l’assistance d’un amy, ne puis-je pas dire: Vous avez establi nostre vie en sorte, Seigneur, que nous ayons a prendre secours, soulagement et consolation les uns des autres; et parce qu’il vous plaist, j’employeray donc cet homme, duquel vous m’avez donnee l’amitié a cette intention.” *Oeuvres... V*, p.313.

⁴⁰²“Que nous serons fortz si nous continuons a nous entretenir liés l’un a l’autre par ce lien teint au sang vermeil du sauveur! car nul n’attaquera vostre coeur qu’il ne trouve de la resistance et de vostre costé et du costé du mien, qui est tout dedié au vostre.” *Oeuvres... ltr. MMI*.

⁴⁰³He writes Angélique Arnauld, “Demeurés en paix, ma tres chere fille, et priés souvent pour mon amendement, affin que je soy sauvé et qu’un jour nous tressaillions en la joye eternelle, nous ressouvenant des attraitz dont Dieu nous a favorisés, et de reciproques consolations qu’il a voulu que nous eussions en parlant de luy en ce monde.” *Oeuvres... ltr. MDLXXIX*

⁴⁰⁴“Il nous faut bien mettre sur la grandeur de courage, pour servir Dieu le plus hautement et vaillamment que nous pourrons; car, pourquoy pensons-nous qu’il ayt voulu faire un seul coeur de deux, sinon affin que ce coeur soit extraordinairement hardi, brave, courageux, constant et amoureux en son Créateur et son Sauveur, par lequel et auquel je suis tout vostre.” *Oeuvres... ltr. DCI*.

communication that we should have between us,” he tells one friend, “is an excellent condition for advancing spiritually.”⁴⁰⁵ Communicating each others qualities in all the manners we have already seen is the first way one grows in loving and knowing. A second way is the humble acceptance of fraternal correction. And a third is tolerating the faults of those we love, which is one of the biggest ways we exercise our love.⁴⁰⁶ He advises applying the contrary virtue as a remedy to a friend’s fault, so that one would use patience against anger, constancy against restlessness, courage against worry, etc.⁴⁰⁷ Recall, Aristotle also taught that friendship was an activity, like happiness, and therefore an occasion to exercise virtue as well as to learn virtue. One gains strength of character, like physical strength, by exercising the virtue concerned. Friendship provides many occasions to exercise love, making little sacrifices of generosity, admitting error, forgiving, accepting the person with warts and all, and the many other ways we have seen it abide in Francis’ life.

If all grace works in human ways, then what more human means to communicate God’s love than true friendship? Francis remarks in the *Traité*, “What are the ordinary cords by which divine Providence is accustomed to draw our hearts to his love?” Just as in the Sinai, he responds with a citation from *Hosea*, God will *draw them with bonds of charity and friendship*.⁴⁰⁸ He explains grace uses human ways; desires, enticements, and holy inspirations, “proportional and suitable to the human heart, for which freedom is natural.”⁴⁰⁹ All human beings need

⁴⁰⁵“C’est une bonne condition pour avancer selon l’esprit que d’avoir le coeur ouvert pour la fidele et naifve communication que nous devons faire entre nous.” *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXV.

⁴⁰⁶“C’est une grande partie de nostre perfection de nous supporter les uns les autres en nos imperfections, car en quoi pouvons-nous exercer l’amour du prochain sinon en ce support?” *Oeuvres...* XVI, p.118

⁴⁰⁷“Il faut beaucoup ressentir les fautes du prochain, mais il faut sçavoir en mesme temps que la charité s’exerce a les supporter et non pas a s’en estonner. Il faut le recommander a Notre Seigneur et tascher d’exercer la vertu contraire a la faute avec grande perfection.” *Oeuvres...* XXI, p.186

⁴⁰⁸“Mays quelz sont donq les cordages ordinaires par lesquelz la divine Providence a accoustume de tirer nos coeurs a son amour? Telz, certes, qu’elle mesme les marque, descrivant les moyens dont elle usa pour tirer le peuple d’Israel de l’Egypte et du desert en la terre de promission: *Je les tiray*, dit -elle par Osee [11.4], *aves ces liens de charité et d’amitié*.” *Oeuvres...* IV, p.126.

⁴⁰⁹“Sans doute, Theotime, nous ne sommes pas tires a Dieu par des liens de fer, comme les taureaux et les buffles; ains par maniere d’allemens, d’attraitz delicieux et de saintes inspirations, qui sont en somme "les liens d’Adam et d’humanite; c’est a dire proportionnes et convenables au coeur

and desire it, derive great pleasure and consolation from friendship's communication and exercise every virtue in its daily engagement. All of these natural enticements are animated by grace to help finish through human society what grace has begun in them. Thus there is a suitability for friendship to be a means to salvation in Salesian thought, because it is so proportional to the human heart.

Grace and charity add a medicinal and bolstering dimension to friendship's human love. It uses human love and gives it a supernatural force.⁴¹⁰ When charity concurs with friendship's propensity to give and receive, he comments, "she becomes excessive in this facility."⁴¹¹ God, he believed, gives birth to friendship, and blesses it, distilling hearts, "one by the other and one in the other" to help two living among worldly things to only "to love and bless" eternal things.⁴¹² "Love me so that I be a true lover of God," he writes one friend.⁴¹³ As if friendship were a cause in some way of his perfection. If the love of God begins in taking pleasure in his goodness, and then becomes benevolent action, as Francis thinks,⁴¹⁴ then one of the most compelling ways divine

humain, auquel la liberte est naturelle." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.126. See too sermon for pentecost *Oeuvres...* X, pp. 417-430.

⁴¹⁰"Tandis que la charité est en l'ame, elle se sert de cet amour humain, qui est sa creature, et l'employe pour faciliter ses operations,...les actions faites en l'absence de la charité, par la seule habitude de l'amour humain, ne sont d'aucun merit ni d'acune valeur pour la vie eternelle, quoy que cet amour humain ayt appris a les faire de la charité et ne soit que cet amour humain, en l'absence de la charité, n'a plus aucune force surnaturelle pour porter l'ame a l'excellente action de l'amour de Dieu sur toutes choses." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.248.

⁴¹¹"La charité est esgalement facile a donner et a recevoir les bonnes impressions du prochain; mais si a sa generale inclination on adjouste celle de quelque particuliere amitié, elle se rend excessive en cette facilité." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCXXX.

⁴¹²"Dieu, par apres, la consideration duquel a donné naissance a cette si grande liayson, la benira de sa sainte grace, affin qu'elle soit fertile en toute consolation pour l'un et l'autre des coeurs qui, ensemblement, l'un par l'autre et l'un en l'autre ne respirent emmi cette vie mortelle que d'aymer et benir l'eternité." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MMXXXVI.

⁴¹³"Oh! si j'estois veritablement Theophile comme vostre grand Prelat m'appelle (plus selon la grandeur de sa charité que selon la connoissance qu'il a de mes infirmités), que je vous serois agreable, mon tres cher Frere! Mays si vous ne me pouvez aymer parce que je ne le suis, aymes moy affin que je le sois, priant nostre grand Androphile qu'il me rende par ses prieres son Theophile." *Oeuvres...* ltr. MCDLXVI.

⁴¹⁴"En l'amour que Dieu exerce envers nous, il commence tous-jours par la

goodness can be communicated is by a human love that imitates God's goodness. Love me, accept me, encourage me, forgive me, understand me, help me, in other words, to know God and be healed in the process. This elucidates why friends, like health, sustenance and every other condition of our life that benefits spiritual progress are what he calls a "corporal grace."⁴¹⁵ The progress friendship sparks pertains to the purpose of our lives in society, and is most effective when one lives the simplicity he so often evokes. "Noble freedom," he explains enables us to learn from everyone and to avail of the gifts God has given to others.⁴¹⁶ How much more might two friends avail of each other's gifts and learn from one another? "It is a happy meeting," he exclaims, "when two souls only love one another to better love God."⁴¹⁷ Friendship's communication is therefore also a kind of communication of grace. God gives Himself to them in their friendship. This is why when the Doctor of love comments on the golden rule, he concludes that "The fulfillment of the love of the divine goodness of the heavenly Father consists in the perfection of the love of our brothers and companions."⁴¹⁸ Therefore grace is frustrated and without purpose if it does not cause us to love one another, and the more the love it inspires and facilitates is a true and profound love of our neighbor, the more grace approaches achievement. And as the following text commenting on the friendship of Gregory and Basil "cemented in the blood of the Lamb" implies, friendship is the highest form of loving our brothers and companions, and thereby the fulfillment of grace.

Saint Gregory Nazianzus and Basil loved one another of this love which, like a river abundant in clear water, goes sweetly, lending itself to the countryside for all kinds of ease, ... for it flows and does not surge, it

bienveillance, voulant et faisant en nous tout le bien qui y est,...Mais nostre amour envers Dieu commence, au contraire, par la complaisance que nous avons en la souveraine bonté et infinie perfection que nous scavons estre en la Divinite, puis nous venons a l'exercice de la bienveillance." *Oeuvres...* IV, p.276.

⁴¹⁵"Consideres les graces corporelles que Dieu vous a donnees: quel cors, quelles commoditiés de l'entretenir, quelle santé... quelz amis, quelles assistances." *Oeuvres...* III, p.38.

⁴¹⁶"On doit vivre avec une honneste liberté, et, quand il est requis, il ne faut faire nulle difficulté d'apprendre d'un chacun et de se prevaloir des dons que Dieu met en plusieurs." *Oeuvres...* ltr. CCLXXXII.

⁴¹⁷"C'est une heureuse rencontre que de deux esprits qui ne s'ayment que pour mieux aymer Dieu." *Oeuvres...* ltr. DLXXXIX.

⁴¹⁸"Le comble de l'amour de la divine bonté du Pere celeste consiste en la perfection de l'amour de nos freres et compaignons." *Oeuvres...* V, p.205.

waters and does not ravage it babbles and makes no blare. Likewise, the perfect love of our neighbor, which is set in God, communicates itself in diverse ways: it aids by words, works and examples, provides for all necessities as much as in its power, it rejoices in his happiness, but much more in his spiritual advancement, it procures for him temporal goods in as much as they can serve him to obtain eternal happiness, desiring principally the goods of grace, the virtues that can perfect him in God; procuring them for him by every legal means with grand affection, but with peace of mind, without alteration, with a pure charity and without any passion of sadness or indignation in contrary events.⁴¹⁹

Even though friendship can be called a participation of grace, or a tool of grace, because we are united to God and our neighbor in one friendship and one love, and because it is a human manifestation of God's benevolence, it would be an error to think friendship is the end of life. The Doctor of love clearly holds that the end of human life is to know and to love the one true God, to become recreated in His image, to be his adopted sons eternally beholding him as He is in his kingdom. It is salvation from sin and ignorance, the conditions of our birth. Now salvation is the result of Christ's sacrifice, all the power grace has to elevate human beings to become friends of God comes only through Christ. Grace is God's gift of Himself to the human soul. It justifies us in conjunction with our free choice to let it do so. Grace inspires us and makes it easy for us to change, but without its help, we would be unable to move. Francis de Sales uses the image of a bird without feet that flies by opening his wings to the wind that envelops him.⁴²⁰ Contrary to the Protestant idea that by faith in Christ alone and not

⁴¹⁹“Les amitiés cimentés au sang de l’Aigneau n’ont pas besoin de tant de ceremonies... Il est vrai que l’amour pur lie inseperablement les coeurs sans toucher les cors. Ainsy saint Gregoire Nazianze et saint Basile s’entr’aymoient de cet amour qui, comme un fleuve abondant en eau claire, va doucement, la prestant a la campagne pour toutes sortes de commodités, sans bruit, sans ravages, sans flotz; car il coule et ne flotte point, il arrouse et ne ravage point, il gazouille et ne bruit point. De mesme, l’amour parfait du prochain qui est selon Dieu, se communique en diverses manieres: il l’ayde par paroles, par *Oeuvres* et par exemples; le pourvoit de toutes ses necessités entant qu’il luy est possible; il se res-joïit de son bonheur et felicité temporelle, mais beaucoup plus de son avancement spirituel; luy porcure les biens temporelz entant qu’ilz luy peuvent servir pour obtenir la beatitude eternelle, luy desire les principaux biens de la grace, les vertus qui le peuvent, selon Dieu, perfectionner; les luy procure par toutes les voyes licites avec grande affection, mais avec quietude d’esprit, sans aucune alteration; avec une pure charité, sans aucune passion de tristesse ou indignation pour les evenemens contraires.” *Oeuvres...* XXI, p.145.

⁴²⁰Cfr. *Traité de l’amour de Dieu*, IV, pp.129-130.

works we are saved, Francis and the Church of Trent insisted that there must be the human part, as feeble as it might be in God's economy of salvation. Thus true and perfect spiritual friendship is not salvation. It leads us to salvation through friendship with God, it even unites us in friendship with God, but always human friendship, as God-like as it might be conceived, has its source and end in an intimacy with God. In as much as spiritual friendship is a means to friendship with God it is a means to salvation. And in as much as this friendship with God already exists within the obscurity of faith, it is manifested in the quality of love we bear for one another. "The love of our family, friends, benefactors is in itself Godly," Francis explains, "but we can love them excessively, even our vocations as spiritual as they may be, when one loves them as last end, though they be only a means to our final pretension, which is divine love."⁴²¹ Even friendship, for all its merits, is not our last end. Its value and dignity derive from another love, a love it shares and even enhances, but a love that exceeds it because it animates and defines all friendship is. 'God is our bond,' he often repeats, but God and not the bond is the goal of life. Admittedly, God is somehow present to them in their friendship and participating in it, as he expresses with words like: "May our love be all in God, and God be in all our love,"⁴²² yet God and not 'our love' is the prize. Everything we might love in a friend is good because of grace's human expression. Even though a friend may be able to touch us in a unique way, relate to us and share like no other, every good friend communicates by the limits of the human condition is a partial image of the complete goodness that is God.

In summary, friendship is a means to salvation first because it is so human. We might call it a commentary on how grace perfects nature. The desires that give human life its flavor have a place in its perfection. Ordering them is the meaning of virtue, but in a finer way than loving higher goods over base and immediate ones entailed in the classic idea of justification, they also have meaning in daily discipleship. The more

⁴²¹"L'amour de nos parens, amis, bienfacteurs, est de soy mesme selon Dieu, mais nous les pouvons aymer excessivement; comme aussi nos vocations, pour spirituelles qu'elles soyent, et nos exercices de pieté (que toutefois nous devons tant affectionner) peuvent estre aymes desreglement, hors que l'on les prefere a l'obeissance et au bien plus universel, ou que l'on les affectionne en qualité de derniere fin, bien qu'ilz ne soyent que des moyens et acheminemens a nostre finale pretention, qui est le divin amour." *Oeuvres...* V, p.179.

⁴²²"A Dieu, ma chere Fille; nostre amour soit tout en Dieu, et Dieu soit en tout nostre amour. Amen. Vive Jesus! C'est en luy, par luy et pour luy que je suis sans fin, sans reserve et uniquement vostre." *Oeuvres..* ltr. CDXXIX.

difficult discernment between goods appropriate for all the qualities and conditions of an individual life among the worldly, is also the focus of Salesian spirituality. The tugs and impelling force of the human heart towards another person stem from a natural need disposed to the action of God's grace. It enables charity to be exercised and thereby strengthened, and it is a useful protection and consolation. Just as God uses human society to enable us to be more, friendship on a micro scale achieves this in a more deeply intimate way. Yet still, friendship is only a means to salvation, and therefore but a good that derives its goodness from another. The relationship requires that both already possess the good they share. Just as virtuous friendship is between the virtuous, spiritual friendship is between the godly. What friendship adds is an enhancement, a facility and deepening of this good possessed. Its activity helps to mold the clay of our being into something it could not have become alone. So that together friends take one another's hand over the rocky paths of life among the worldly and say to one another: "Onward then, and take courage, excellent brothers, all bows to charity; love is strong as death, and for he who loves nothing is difficult."⁴²³

⁴²³"Pergamus alacriter, Fratres optimi, omnia cedunt charitati; fortis ut mors dilectio, et amanti nihil difficile." *Oeuvres...* VII, p.110. *Song of Songs* 8:6 reads: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame."

XII

Conclusion

As a leading Christian Humanist of the Early Modern Catholic Church, Francis de Sales espoused all the classic esteem for friendship's importance and beauty, but with Augustine and Aelred, he envisioned all friendship in the light of Christianity as an important way God's grace is actively played out in human life. Instead of philosophical abstractions and synthesis that defined the theology of antiquity and the scholastics, the primary interest of the Humanists of his age was in the human story, its dramas, poetry, desires and concrete realities of life. The Jesuit pedagogical guide that was so influential on the age was the *modus Parisiensis*, which emphasized experience over theory, and used Quintilian's method of studying a text in depth over medieval logic and grammar. "Rhetoric became the art of arts", which integrated Christian virtue with the Ciceronian ideal, where philosophy becomes real in the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*. Rhetoric surpassed philosophy, because it had the power to make abstractions real and transform human society by communicating ideas and setting fire to human hearts. It was a time when not only the students but the nobility of Europe were reading the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a guide to living among other classics, especially the newly discovered oratory treatises of Cicero, Seneca and Tacitus.⁴²⁴ As a man of his times, de Sales

⁴²⁴ Cicero's *De Oratore* was discovered in 1421 and had a large influence on the Renaissance, which embraced its ideal of rhetoric as a complete intellectual culture uniting wisdom and the word in an eloquent instrument of justice,

approached early modernity's new discoveries and critical scientific methods as both a pastor and as a spiritual master. Friendship became a leitmotiv of his spiritual vision for those living the devout life in the world. Relationships were the centerpiece of his theology of a daily and truly human cooperation with grace in life's pilgrimage. That conviction came, as we have shown from his temperament as a particularly empathetic listener, and the benefits he experienced from the many friendships he shared in his own life. Characteristic of the age's emphasis on empirical experience, he relied on his pastoral years to shape a new flexible and interior theology for the laity that was wholly compatible with the classic theology of the Catholic tradition. It is also important to note his emphasis on God's love as the deeper truth of life, and his reliance on the *Song of Songs* as the paradigm of the spiritual life, because these were the mark of authentic Christianity for de Sales in answer to the post-Tridentine Church's great quest against the marring hypocrisy of the age that has split Christendom. And finally, it would be remiss to not also point out the hostilities of French militant Catholicism that spawned nationalistic violence in the context of civil war, regicide and fundamentalist Catholic ascetic groups like the Jansenist that set the tumultuous backdrop of his lifetime.⁴²⁵ Those circumstances make his *douceur* and flexible yet rigorous spirituality all the more significant and shed light on his enormous influence and eventually being acclaim as doctor of the Church in the late Nineteenth Century.

De Sales' ideal of friendship goes beyond charity in the sense that it is both given and received as a means to sustain, encourage and heal, just as divine love, or grace, is both given and received for the very same benefits. He elaborates a set of virtues unknown to antiquity, such as devotion, humility, *douceur*, conviviality, penitence, charity, faith and hope. The love of Christ "betters, quickens and enriches all the good it finds in the souls which it rules".⁴²⁶ So too, does it benefit friendship, in such a way that he, like the Christian authors before him,

interpreter of history, and fusion of political life and the philosopher's contemplation. It united the school of life and philosophy in a synthesis that flows from the very character of the orator. Seneca and Tacitus' oratory works were published in 1587 and 1574 in editions that launched them into European culture. M. Fumaroli, *l'Age d'eloquence*, Albin Michel, Paris 1994, pp.47-70.

⁴²⁵ Thomas A. Donlan, *The Reform of Zeal: Francois de Sales and Militant Catholicism During the French Wars of Religion*, dissertation submitted to the Faculty of History, University of Arizona, published by the Author 2011.

⁴²⁶ *Treatise*, Bk XI, Chapter V

would say that only friendships sharing the many rewards of divine love could be called true friendships. Every other friendship may bear the hope of becoming a true friendship, but true friendship could only find its fullest meaning as a means to Christ. Augustine's great innovation, that God alone can join two persons, was Francis' interpretation of every encounter, and every attraction he experienced for others. He believed God had made his heart that way; to love his people with a great tenderness, and that every human encounter was a moment of grace. He believed that love could go the farthest, wherever it could be exchanged. Friendship is the only love that has this reciprocity. It's very nature is to communicate, to render equal, to engage, to correct, to console, to understand and to stimulate to do better. In this way it shares the same purpose of grace to heal and sanctify the soul.

Friendship is therefore an integral part of Christian life in Salesian spirituality. We have seen this in our author's own life by how completely he was willing to give himself to others, and yet never losing himself, because it was all balanced and integrated in a love of God and of himself. Indeed, he breathed friendship, because as he firmly believed, the love of God makes all our loves right, especially the love of neighbor – with one difference; in friendship that love is mutually communicated instead of simply given. This too is a difference with the classics. Whereas for them friendship was noble men sharing virtue in kindness and like ideals or *consensio*, for de Sales it was always something oriented outside itself to Christ and Trinitarian. His faith in Christian redemption gave his friendships a humble sacredness that was more understanding, more forgiving and yet more unyielding, because it was united to the cross, arising out of profound gratitude. That Christian Humanist perspective brought friendship into the intimacy of the Trinity and made its beginning, its development and its daily life something sacred. Living friendship in God's presence, for the Doctor of love, was the most human and necessary way of sharing the indwelling of divine life among persons hazarding their way in the noise and dangers of the world.

Friendship's pivotal place in *The Introduction to the Devout Life* derives from its importance in human development and the preoccupation of early modernity with empirical reasoning over purely theoretical exercises and transforming action over philosophical abstraction. The Doctor of Love believed friendship could be either a great aid or a great risk, because of its influence on the human heart. The whole affective and emotional side of our being is engaged in friendship's love, to such an extent that it can override reason's

judgment and profoundly influence one's thoughts, pleasures, and character. For one who believed the human heart was the seat of our very personality, and the sacred place where God encounters us, all the moral life is oriented to the heart's right development. However, even though love is king of all the passions, De Sales would emphasize in chorus with the Christian tradition that charity is queen of our love and all the virtues. Friendship with God gives direction and form to human love, it corrects it and renders it fertile. Reason's role is more as a servant to love's benevolence and desire for union. Resolutions, and guidance are ways reason helps to perfect love, but all education and judgment clearly avails only if it increases love of God. Therefore friendship, like reason, is only good in as much as it serves to lift human love to the heavens. Friendship's communication is rendered possible, increased and perfected, because it is first an act of love, and love by its very nature seeks union. Because friendship is an affair of the human heart it has a fundamental role in the formation of the human heart. It is where Christian love becomes active and most transformative. In true friendship one receives the aid so necessary in the trials and uncertainties of life and at the same time life's joys become more to celebrate when shared with those who appreciate them as only another self can.

We have also seen the way this formation occurs in Francis' life and thought. Friendship is a sweet and gentle struggle, because its efforts bear not only consolation and encouragement, but because its victories over misunderstanding or conflict bestow a lasting benefit to the hearts of those committed to taking pains to understand, to forgive, and to humbly accept correction. All these efforts enable become a better person, to grow in virtue and to make active the contemplative and interior love of God. Friendship forces the goodness in a person to be ecstatic, and in doing so, that goodness is increased. Love without works is dead, and in friendship love works to the farthest reaches of our personality, there in the inner sanctuary of one's personality, where we are most vulnerable and most deeply influenced, friendship is engaging us. Friends unite in one common heart, Francis often says, and this is in their feelings, their ambitions, the fine point of their spirits, where God dwells in them, where all masks fall away, and where the human person is absolutely naked. As Augustine put it, God is closer to us than we are to ourselves, and if one converts to seek God dwelling in his heart he will discover Him there, as well as himself. Only then, only when one is able to die to the sin in himself (the old man) and embrace God's merciful redemptive love, can he be truly at ease and come to a wholesome unselfish love of self (the new man). By

the power of redemption's grace and forgiveness one may find peace. Peaceful and pleased with himself, in spite of his contradictions, a person is finally free to invite another into that Trinitarian joy, which compels to be shared.

Thus friendship is necessary for salvation because its influence increases the human heart in the love of God. Its love is greater than charity, because it is actively exchanged and can reach farther into the lives of both giver and receiver. It shares the essence of eternal life as the image of Christ's love for us in the human condition, and participates in the one love of the Trinity. Its effort adapts love to our human ways of growing and learning, taking us outside of selfishness and delusion. And finally, it lends a hand of prayer and encouragement, not out of a 'cold benevolence,' but engaged and committed for life, as sincere love must be.

One might venture to say, for Francis de Sales, friendship is a kind of sacrament. Its *res* is the humanity in time and space of each friend's corporal existence, with all its needs and limits, but also with its strengths and resplendence. Its *sacramentum* is the divine indwelling in their hearts reaching out, reverberating their redeemed new dignity and sharing themselves and the divine goods that they have learned to appreciate. If we can say friendship is given us because our social nature requires it, may we not also say our salvation requires it? Grace, the gift of Christ Himself, the love of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity, mysteriously touches us, and aids us *in via* through the Church and her sacraments. If the Church is supposed to be the society of love, the Kingdom of Heaven, "already and not yet", then isn't it above all in spiritual friendship that her purpose is quintessentially realized? Isn't this the true 'sacrament of the moment'? The sacramental mystery of God's love, coming into the world through rituals instituted by Christ and the Apostles, is just as much the community of friendship as the different steps along the way of life in that community. As Wendy Wright notes the "world of hearts" created by friendship is an essential and distinguishing feature of Salesian spirituality, which seeks to foster the unifying force of divine love through its communication.⁴²⁷ Spiritual friendship is the sign of God's love in the world and the kernel of the Church's intimate life with Christ. Christ instituted a new kind of friendship for the same reason as the sacraments. The Church itself begins as a society of the friends of Jesus. God is found in true friendship, God is friendship, and this gift and grace is the fruit of not

⁴²⁷ Wendy Wright, *Heart Speaks to Heart: The Salesian Tradition*, Orbis Books (2004) chapter 2.

only virtue, but also Christ's redemption. Christ has made all the difference in friendship among Christians and the fruits of that reverberating love are the active and corporeal way that grace fills ordinary life.

Together friends living their friendship signify and are one with the Trinity's intimacy, the divine friendship. It is a sign of the mystery of God in human life. Its bond is God, Francis often says; because it is a way two or more participate in the divine life. God causes its attractions, waters its communication and benevolence, and uses it to train and strengthen the human heart. It is the most human way grace can bring the divine presence into the world. Friendships as spiritual as those we have seen that Francis de Sales had are very rare, as rare as saints. What his friendship was is the expression of what he himself was. Yet at the same time they improved him and were a necessary part of what he was able to be. Just as one cannot imagine Christian perfection, and thereby salvation without loving others, a life without friendship is a life of cold benevolence, offering invulnerable and distant love. For Francis de Sales the essence of Christianity was found in the sweet and gentle struggle of friendship, with its trials, demands of service and sacrifice as well as its consolations and joys. At a time when the world was asking how God is glorified in human life, his answer was in friendship with God that could not be conceived without becoming friendship with others, which like grace makes those who choose it, live it and share it whole.

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