



## STUDIES IN SALESIAN SPIRITUALITY

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### *An Introduction to Salesian Anthropology*

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From a Christian perspective, theology is inseparable from anthropology because the perfect model for all humanity is incarnated in the Man-God. Moreover the biblical conception of man invites us to see a double incarnation: the first at the creation of man and the second at the Incarnation of the Word. At both times God takes on our mind in order to establish a very close covenant with all of humanity.<sup>1</sup> Despite the high esteem in which Greek thought held the intelligence and will of man, it is Christian humanism that gives us “the fullness of the affirmation of man as the center of the universal drama, man in the spirit, made to the image and likeness of God according to the Spirit.”<sup>2</sup>

If Christian anthropology places man at the center of this drama, this is not for the purpose of displacing or replacing God. Quite the contrary, this fundamental orientation tells us from the start that the search can enlighten and lead us to the knowledge, love and friendship of God. St. Francis de Sales was fascinated by this idea in his very first sermon. When God decided to create man in his own image and likeness, he revealed his own Trinitarian character, that is to say, his intimate life. Like many of the Fathers, Francis believed that the form of the verb in the text from Genesis indicates that the persons of the Blessed Trinity participated in the creation of man. “For if only one Person had created man, he would have said: ‘I will make’ and not ‘Let us make’.”<sup>3</sup>

Adam’s human action of naming the animals provides him with a deep insight as to the manner in which the Word proceeds from the Father. By naming each thing, Adam expressed his own nature. “But God the father wishing to express and tell what he understood, considered and thought about Himself as if He had wanted to give Himself a proper name, to name Himself. So He spoke a Word which represents Him so clearly and expresses so vividly what is in Him that this Word was an alter ego.”<sup>4</sup> The personal relations within the Trinity are compared to the activity of the first man in the way that revelation manifests him to us. It is evident that for Francis, Adam, in as much as he is the image of God, carries within himself the secret, the key to the knowledge of God. As the crown of creation, man is called to give the universe its own meaning, a *sensus plenior*, if you will, expressed in human forms. From this point of view we

can see a fundamental relationship and harmony between the heart, the senses and the mind of man and the structure and reality of all objects. The world becomes what it is by the convergence of the mind of man and the world.<sup>5</sup> It is by knowing himself and by loving that he will fulfil himself and achieve his cosmic mission.

### *Self-knowledge*

The independent thinkers (*libertins érudits*) of St. Francis de Sales' time such as La Mothe Le Vayer, Gabriel Naudé, Guy Patin and Pierre Gassendi as well as their forerunners (Erasmus, Montaigne, Charron) understood very well the necessity of self-knowledge. Consequently, they gave it a very important place in their lives and in their works. Erasmus, while admitting that the Delphic oracle "know thyself" was the beginning of wisdom, finds its justification not in pagan literature but in the Bible itself. "But this teaching would be of little value with regard to us if it were not in harmony with our Scriptures." Following several Fathers and Doctors of the Church, he finds the injunction to study oneself in a verse of the Cantic of Canticles: (1:7) "The mystic lover in the Cantic threatens somewhat his spouse and commands her to leave, if she doesn't know herself. "If you do not know yourself, O most beautiful of women," leave...."<sup>6</sup>

This great Christian humanist emphasises the fact that the knowledge of oneself is accomplished by leaving, that is, by going out of oneself in the movement of an ecstasy of love. He puts us on our guard about the difficulty of achieving this knowledge because of the profound mystery of the soul. Faithful to his education under the guidance of the Brothers of the Common Life, he insists on the primacy of love. "Know yourself...It is better to know less and to love more than to know more and not love."<sup>7[7]</sup> The thinkers of the Middle Ages also realized the impenetrable mystery that surrounds the being and the soul of man. "Christian Socratism" even with the light of revelation soon confronts this incomprehensibility which fills us with astonishment and, at times, frustration. This illusive element of the study of oneself explains, to a great extent, why mysticism flourished during this period as the most efficacious means of arriving at this knowledge in the superior part of the soul which reflects most perfectly the image of God.<sup>8[8]</sup>

For Pierre Charron, disciple of Montaigne and inspirer of the independent thinkers of seventeenth century France, the practice of the Delphic oracle clears the road that leads to God. "By self-knowledge, man mounts and arrives sooner and better at the knowledge of God." This truth for Charron rests on the fact that man comes from the hand of God as Sacred Scripture teaches us. In support of his argument, he cites a verse from Psalm 138: "You have formed me, and you have placed your hand upon me. That is why the knowledge I have acquired about you has become admirable."<sup>9[9]</sup> Moreover, self-development is our principal duty, and so it demands that from time to time we spend some time alone with ourselves. We have "to observe, analyze and probe ourselves" so that we will always feel perfectly at home with ourselves.<sup>10[10]</sup>

Montaigne's influence on Charron is very evident here. In his *Essays*, Montaigne does nothing more than "observe, analyse and probe himself" and in this way gives us the sweet and sometimes bitter fruits of an incomparable self-development which has enriched all of humanity. In a little treatise by La Mothe Le Vayer entitled *On Self-knowledge*, we find echoes of

Charron's work on *La Sagesse*. Like his predecessor, La Mothe Le Vayer insists that knowledge of God the Creator is acquired by a profound observation of his works. "Since man is the masterpiece of all his productions, nothing can get us closer to a knowledge of God, and consequently to our happiness than the study of ourselves." It is in this way that we will learn to admire "in creation the goodness and power of the Creator."<sup>11[11]</sup>

### *St. Francis de Sales and Self-knowledge*

Among the Ancients all of human wisdom was contained in the motto. "Know thyself." It is in the knowledge of oneself that man recognizes his own limitations, that he is not a god. They envisaged this self-study as a remedy against pride, against the tendency of man to make himself a god. By contrast, according to the Christian humanists this oracle leads to a knowledge that we are not God but that we are made in the image of God. It is in this way that we come to true a knowledge of God. "The first element of knowledge of God," Francis informs us, "is in the knowledge of self."<sup>12[12]</sup> The oracle of Delphi is for him not only a remedy against pride but also more particularly the very basis of true humility. "It is not wrong to consider ourselves in order to glorify God for the gifts He has given us, providing that we do not become vain and complacent with ourselves. It is a saying of the philosophers, but which has been approved as a good one by the doctors: 'know thyself,' that is to say know the excellence of your soul that you will not debase nor despise it."<sup>13[13]</sup>

He hastens to add that we must always express our gratitude to God, who fashioned us and upon whom we depend completely. It is not by denying not ignoring our particular gifts but by contemplating them that we acquire the virtue of humility. "The serious consideration of graces received makes us humble; for knowledge begets gratitude."<sup>14[14]</sup> The complexity, individuality and excellence of each man are calculated to help him cultivate this virtue. The emphasis that he places on the consideration of not only what we have in common with others but more particularly on our own individual gifts takes him a step beyond St. Thomas and gives his teaching on humility its own special character. In [ ]his spirituality, however, the virtue of humility is not solely acquired by contemplating one's gifts. This virtue is based not only on a knowledge of one's self but also on actions which authenticate it, in particular the virtue of generosity. "The humility that does not produce generosity is undoubtedly a false humility."<sup>15[15]</sup>

In the first process of his canonization, one witness testified that the saint wrote "a little treatise on self-knowledge."<sup>16[16]</sup> Unfortunately this work has not come down to us, but the testimony is in perfect accord with the saintly bishop's teaching on the grandeur and littleness of man. These two contrary aspects of our nature are explained by the fact that we spring from "two principles: the first is God who is the first cause of all that exists, the second is nothingness from which everything has been drawn."<sup>17[17]</sup> In Pascal's eyes, even the knowledge of our misery testifies to our superiority because we are capable of knowing that we are miserable.<sup>18[18]</sup> Hegel expresses the same idea when he says: "That which knows itself is quite superior to that which does not know itself."<sup>19[19]</sup>

## *The Temptation at Paris and Self-knowledge*

The excruciating temptation to despair that Francis experienced for several months when he was a student in Paris provides us with an excellent example of how he conceived the knowledge of self. Three or four years after this profoundly personal crisis, he made some theological reflections on the significance of this experience which was a turning point in his life and thought. What strikes us from the outset is the way in which he approaches the problem. He formulates the question of sin and predestination in terms of personal responsibility and of his solidarity with other human beings. The ties that bind us to others and particularly to our parents in no way harm our individuality. It is Christ who gives us more human perspectives by his coming. "The son will not bear the iniquity of the father, but it is the sinful soul that will die of itself."<sup>20[20]</sup> Note that in his eyes, it is Christ in his person and his life who realizes completely this prophecy. Christ is the one who wipes away communal guilt and holds the individual responsible.<sup>21[21]</sup>

So as not to become proud and haughty in the independent position he takes on the question of predestination, the saint declares himself ready to exchange all knowledge "in order to know the one who is the knowledge of the Father, 'Christ crucified.'" <sup>22</sup> Of course his point of departure is revelation, but to arrive at the knowledge of Christ and at the same time the knowledge of himself, he is independent and critical in his thinking. Respectfully but decisively, he sets aside the opinions of St. Augustine and St. Thomas, and opts for the salvific will of God towards all sinners, a will, which he envisions as presiding over the creation of the universe. The opinion of the Thomists leaves him dumbfounded and "lifting his eyes upward" toward God, he hears this confronting answer: "I do not will the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live....I have made you like all other things, for myself. My will is nothing other than your sanctification, and my soul hates nothing that it has made."<sup>22[22]</sup>

Later on while reflecting on his deliverance from this temptation, he describes the experience as if he were one of the many people in the Gospel that were touched by the healing power of Christ. He sees himself taking part in salvation history just as these people did by their direct contact with Christ. This tendency of identifying himself with the persons and events of the Bible clearly illustrates that for him salvation could be understood, evaluated and achieved only in the terms of what God did for his people.<sup>23[23]</sup> In his mind the Christian vocation consists essentially of being called to a communitarian life. In his *Meditations on the church (Controversies)*, he stresses the idea that the first effect of our predestination is the invitation to live with others. "Now it was for a good reason that the Christian people were called Church or convocation, because the first benefit that God has given to man to put him in grace, is to call him to the Church. This is the first effect of predestination."<sup>24[24]</sup>

The destiny of a Christian is strictly bound up with the destiny of all men. It is not simply a vocation but a "con-vocation" (in Latin, *convocare* means to be called with other people). As a result we cannot know ourselves fully apart from others, apart from the ecclesial assembly in particular. The rather important place that this idea occupies in his thought becomes evident if we further examine how he understood his struggle at Paris with the problem of predestination. He realizes that self-knowledge is developed and deepened by one's relationship

to the Church while meditating on these words of Isaiah. “Come to the mountain of the Lord, Let us go to the temple of the God of Jacob so that He will teach us his ways...For from Sion will come the law and from Jerusalem the oracle of the Lord” (Isa.2:3)

It is this same verse, “Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,” which summarizes for him this whole experience of the knowledge of self. He uses these words to describe this great crisis in his life. To achieve knowledge of himself, he had to climb this “mountain of the Lord” which was for him a symbol of the Church. In his eyes the true oracle for self-development does not reside at Delphos but on the “mountain of the Lord”, that is, in the Church. It is here that we find the “oracle of the Lord.” Although his experience at Paris was a profoundly personal one, it cannot be completely understood except in the light of the ecclesial designs of God for all humanity.<sup>25[25]</sup>

The relationship between the oracle at Delphi and the role of the Church in the knowledge of oneself becomes more evident in a sermon that the saint preached about the same time that he was working on his *Treatise on the Love of God*.<sup>26[26]</sup> When he tells us that the spouse in the *Canticle of Canticles* “places the first elements of the knowledge of God in the knowledge of self,” we can see some areas of agreement with Charron, La Mothe Le Vayer and especially Erasmus. It was mentioned above that Erasmus saw the obligation and the necessity of studying and knowing oneself as arising from Sacred Scripture. Like Erasmus St. Francis de Sales sees a close connection between the Delpic oracle and the same verse of the *Canticle of Canticles*: “If you do not know yourself, O most of women, follow the tracks of the flocks and lead the kiss to pasture near the dwelling of the shepherds.”<sup>27[27]</sup>

In his exegesis of this verse, Francis considers it a response to the preceding verse where the spouse represents “the voice of human nature in search of its beatitude.” In order to be able to follow more closely his train of thought, he will have to be cited at length. “The spouse answers. He places the first elements of the knowledge of God in the knowledge of self: ‘If you do not know yourself, oh most lovely one.’ As if he were to say: ‘Do you want to be sure...begin by the knowledge of yourself.’” To emphasize, like Erasmus, that self-knowledge is basically a problem of love, he make his thought more explicit: “If you do not know yourself, oh most beautiful of women, follow the tracks of the flocks, that is to say of your different affections. Lead your kids to pasture, that is to say your evil affections.”<sup>28[28]</sup>

If we remember that this sermon was delivered at the time he was working on and planning the *Treatise on the Love of God*, we can better understand the anthropological orientation of the first chapters of his masterpieces.<sup>29[29]</sup> Here he does nothing more than follow the principle enunciated on this sermon, namely that the knowledge of God springs from knowledge of self. He does not begin by considering the attributes of God but with the beauty, nature and function of man’s faculties. The tone is set by the very first chapter which is entitled: “For the Beauty of Human Nature God Has Given Dominion over All the Faculties of the Soul to the Will.”<sup>30[30]</sup> These opening chapters deal with our affections and our passions and the manner in which we must shape our personality and our relations with God and with others. So his sermon gives the rationale for the basic orientation of this work and of his whole spirituality. The most original aspect of the notion of self-development in his thought is the ecclesial accent that he placed on the interpretation of this verse of the *Canticle of canticles*. Self-knowledge implies

the knowledge of one's common destiny in the assembly of love, which is the church. Rejecting the opinion of Sts. Ambrose, Gregory and Bernard who interpret the verb "leave," that is "be gone," as a reproach, Francis follows the interpretation of the foremost exegetes of his day. "For my part, I do not see a reproach here but a benevolent counsel which teaches us the way we must begin in our search for God. 'If you do not know yourself, go out of [yourself]'; that is to say, you will go out of [yourself]."<sup>31[31]</sup>

For both Erasmus and St. Francis de Sales the verb "leave" represents an invitation to a knowledge of oneself conceived as a voyage outside of oneself; a voyage of love and ecstasy because we do not contain within ourselves the complete explanation of ourselves. The direction of this search for God and for our own identity is not turned exclusively inward. It is not meant to isolate us from others but calls us to go out of ourselves. It is precisely here that St. Francis de Sales parts company with Charron, Montaigne and the Ancients who over-emphasized the introspective aspect of the knowledge of self. "The oracle of the Lord," in contrast with the Delphic oracle, leads us to consider our relations with others as necessary for self-knowledge. This is why Francis follows the interpretation of his contemporaries and of Erasmus. Like them, he understands this verse of the *Canticles* as an invitation to put oneself in contact with the Church and the Fathers. Their meaning would be: " 'If you do not know, Oh soul, where I rest at midday, follow the tracks of the flocks' of the ancient Fathers, follow the recognised and common doctrine and lead your kids to pasture near the tent of the pastors, that is to say, of the Bishops proposed to the faithful by the Council of Councils, the apostolic seat."<sup>32[32]</sup>

After having rejected the opinion of those mentioned above, he underscores the twofold meaning of the Delphic motto to highlight "the twofold ignorance" in which "we live with regard to ourselves:" 'Know yourself.' Socrates....says that the knowledge of ourselves consists in the knowledge of the excellence of our soul; others say that it is the knowledge of our baseness with regard to our bodies...."<sup>33[33]</sup> As a reminder of our lowliness, Francis recalls to his listeners that God gave the name of "Adam" to humanity, a name that signifies that which is drawn from the soil, from the earth, that is, earthly or terrestrial. Even though our origin is supposed to make us think of death, he ends this sermon on a positive note, namely that self-knowledge leads us to consideration of the sublime dignity of our soul because it is the image and likeness of God.<sup>34[34]</sup> By examining very carefully this idea, we will put ourselves in direct contact with all the richness, depth, and implications of Salesian anthropology.

### ***Man, the Image of God***

Francis was fascinated and almost bewitched by the profound and practically unfathomable mystery of our resemblance to God. From it he derives his conception of man, his cosmogony and his spirituality. The allusions to this mystery are numerous (at least thirty). This points to a more than passing and superficial interest. In fact, all of "Christian Socratism" takes its inspiration from this truth: that man can only know himself in God and that he "only becomes human in God."<sup>35[35]</sup> As we pointed out earlier, man as the image of God does not only reveal to us God the Creator but also the Christian God, the Blessed Trinity. In a sermon written about two years after his first sermon, he returns to this idea. " 'Let us make man to our image and likeness,' by these words the trinity of this Creator was shown."<sup>36[36]</sup> Here he is only following an interpretation common to the Fathers of the Church and many writers of the Middle Ages.

This interpretation of theology and anthropology is succinctly expressed by Cardinal Berulle. “By revealing himself to us, God reveals us to ourselves.”<sup>37[37]</sup> The revelation of God is not made without revealing man at the same time. He who discovers the mystery of God in himself, that is, the image of God, finds at the same time the mystery of man.

By bringing to the fore all of the fundamental aspects of this image of God, St. Francis de Sales makes us feel the radical difference between Greek thought and Christian anthropology. The dignity of man for the Ancients is reflected by the Greek word *anthropos*. This term in Greek signifies one who looks up, who has his face turned toward heaven. It connotes the idea of man as an upright animal, one who walks on his hind legs. It is an idea which thinkers of the Middle Ages and Pierre Charron favored.<sup>38[38]</sup> The latter saw in the exterior form of man a mark of his royal dignity: “Man, the universal king here below, walks with his head up high like the master in his house ruling everything.”<sup>39[39]</sup>

Despite this dignity of man extolled by pagan wisdom, the conception of man is mixed at times with that of the world and with cosmic forces. Since in biblical thought man is drawn from the earth and fashioned to the image of God, he is snatched from a cyclic and fatalistic destiny which reigns in the chaos of non-creation that is without form, goodness, value or distinction. The biblical narratives of the creation of man give him more profound dimensions and, indeed, a completely new orientation. He is no longer intended to be the plaything of the blind and implacable forces of the cosmos, but is inserted into a linear time, which gives him a sense of history.<sup>40[40]</sup> The Christian humanists of the Renaissance rediscovered the liberating consequences of the idea of man in Scripture. They recognized and felt keenly that man no longer is a mere spectator but a creator of his own world.<sup>41[41]</sup>

### ***Man, the ‘Inspiration’ of God***

By analyzing more closely the texts in which Francis makes allusions to the creation of man in Genesis, we see the biblical roots of his humanism begin to emerge. Instead of considering these two narratives as two separate creations, as Alexandrine Judaism did,<sup>42[42]</sup> he constantly tries to bring them together in order to draw from them all their implication and to clarify the mystery of the image of God. It is the Spirit of God, the breath of love, which presides over the creation of the universe, and especially over the creation of man. “When God with his masterful hand formed him from the slime of the earth...he remained a body...without movement, life and grace until God breathed into (*inspira*) him the breath of life, that is sacred charity. . .”<sup>43[43]</sup>

According to this conception, Adam becomes man when he is ‘inspired’ (in French *inspirer* means to breathe into) by God. The breath of life is at the same time a breath of love. “He breathed into (*inspira*) him a living soul, and he was no sooner ‘inspired’ (*inspirée*) than this heavenly man began to breathe (*respirer*).”<sup>44[44]</sup> He had to be inspired in order to ‘respire,’ to breathe, to live. What does this mean except that to breathe (*respirer*) is not only to live but also to love or to live in love. Thus love enters into the very make-up of man, into the innermost structure of his being. It is love that defines him as man. To live is to love; the two are inseparable and inconceivable without each other as far as the nature of man is concerned. Basically it is not his intelligence, nor the soul, nor reason in itself that makes him man or makes him truly human. This idea is so fundamental to the saint’s thought, that he tires to tie it to the

physical composition of man: “The heart is the first part which is formed and which lives; the eyes are the last and are the first to die; the heart is the last to die.”<sup>45[45]</sup> He seems to be saying here that love is the first thing, which lives in man, and the last thing that dies in him. Man is called to existence by the love of God. Hence man is the image of God first of all by his power to love as God loves and not primarily by his power to rule over creation. What the saint is telling us is that love is the most creative power in the universe. The image of God that reveals itself first to the saint is not that of God the Creator but of God the Lover. This does not, of course, exclude the power to create. This is why he can say, “charity is the measure of man.”<sup>46[46]</sup>

The idea of man as the ‘inspiration’ of God leads us quite naturally to see the creative action of God from an artistic and literary point of view. According to Plato, “poetry by the chain of inspiration puts the profane in contact with the gods.”<sup>47[47]</sup> The Bible teaches us that God created man in an ecstasy of love. He went out of himself to inspire, in the sense of to breathe into man, the breath of life and of love so that man himself could become the inspiration of God, that is, the aesthetic effect of God’s creative word. In effect we can say that man is the “poem’ of God fashioned by his word from the formless chaos. One of the most important consequences of our resemblance to God is that our whole life must be structured by the love of God. “Charity, as the first of all the virtues, rules and tempers all of them, not only because “the first in each species of things serves as the rule and measure for all the rest” [Aristotle] but also because God, having created man in his image and likeness, wills that, like in him, everything be ordered by love and for love.”<sup>48[48]</sup>

The power of love that binds together and integrates everything is not justified primarily by purely philosophical reasons, but more particularly by biblical reasons, but more particularly by biblical reasons or roots of his being. Inasmuch as he carries within himself the image and likeness of God in whom everything is ordered and organized by love, then love must reign supreme in man. This means that God’s love for man has to be revealed by man himself who is the image of God. All that has just been said explains the very close affinity that exists between God and man who has a natural tendency to love God above all things. “We are created to the image and likeness of God. What does this mean except that we have a very great affinity with his divine majesty.”<sup>49[49]</sup> In this respect, our human vocation or destiny and our Christian vocation have the very same objective. “We cannot be real men without having this inclination to love God above all things, nor a true Christian without following this inclination.”<sup>50[50]</sup> To be a Christian is to accept and to put into motion all of our human and divine possibilities, to realize fully our humanity.

The notion of resemblance not only explains our relations with God but also with other human beings. In this regard, we see more clearly how love enters into the very definition of man. Francis finds the evangelical law of love of God and of neighbor engraved in our very being by the fact that we are created in the image and likeness of God. “For as soon as God created man in his image and likeness he ordained at that very instant that he love God and his neighbor also.”<sup>51[51]</sup> This law obliged man even before the Mosaic Law. If our Lord calls it a new commandment, it is in the sense that he came to renew this law written in our hearts.

At this juncture, it might be a good idea to single out a very important progression in Francis’ thought. While commenting on the two biblical narratives of man’s creation, at times

he conforms to the thought patterns of the Greeks who envisaged man as a composite of soul and body. In this conception it is the soul which is breathed into man. Hence it is in the soul that the image and likeness of God is primarily revealed: "Our soul is spiritual, indivisible, immortal. It understands, wills and wills freely. It is capable of judging, of reasoning, of knowing and of having virtues. In these ways it resembles God."<sup>52[52]</sup>

If we limit ourselves to this text and similar ones, we might be left with the impression that Salesian thought is impregnated with the idea of the sharp dichotomy that the Greeks made between body and soul. Although this influence is evident in the saint's writings, it is not the predominant one. Quite the contrary, he teaches the biblical and Christian doctrine of the dignity of the whole man. Accordingly, the body is not considered as something unworthy of man but an integral part of his person that commands our respect and love. "The Christian must love his body as the living image of the body of our incarnate Savior, as coming from the same stock as his, consequently, belonging to him by kinship and consanguinity."<sup>53[53]</sup>

Salesian anthropology cannot be completely explained, however, by the idea of resemblance alone. The most original aspect of Salesian thought on the affinity between God and man does not rest on the principle of similarity but rather on the notion of dissimilarity. The cause of love for Francis does not only depend on similarity but on complementarity, on qualities which appear to be contradictory, in particular as far as our love of God is concerned, upon God's abundance and man's indigence. "In addition to this congruity based on likeness, there is an unparalleled correspondence between God and man because of their reciprocal perfection. This does not mean that God can receive any perfection from man. But just as man cannot be perfected except by the divine goodness, so also divine goodness can rightly exercise its perfection outside itself nowhere so well as upon our humanity."<sup>54[54]</sup>

The depth and boldness of this thought is startling. Everything in man, his weakness, his imperfections and even his sins, everything counts. "Hate then your imperfections because they are imperfections, but love them because they make you see your nothingness and emptiness and that they are subject to the exercise and perfection of virtue and mercy of God."<sup>55[55]</sup> Elsewhere he speaks explicitly of our sins: "Sin can be salutary for us because it is only shameful when we commit it, but once it is converted by confession and repentance, it is honorable and salutary."<sup>56[56]</sup> This is a very penetrating and truly human insight. The humanity of Francis' teaching could not be more clearly accentuated. Man whole and entire, even that part which is not in the image and likeness of God and which in his cosmogony is nothingness, has value. For this reason, this part of man must not be rejected nor despised; it is necessary to help him establish ties of love with God.

Since Francis feels that pagan wisdom did not appreciate the value of human nature in all of its manifestations, he approaches the question of man's creation with the Semitic vision of man. This point of view provides him with a more comprehensive framework. Toward the end of his life, he gives the two narratives on the creation of man a more biblical interpretation and one that better conforms to his spirituality. At the creation of man, the earth is transformed into "human flesh". "For after having said: 'Let us make man to our image and likeness,' he took clay and fashioned a body out of it, a body which was nothing more than a mass of earth. Afterwards, he breathed into this body and then this mass was changed into flesh and blood, that is to say it became a living man."<sup>57[57]</sup> This "mass of earth" becomes human only after receiving the breath

of love. It is only at this moment that he becomes “flesh and blood,” that is, truly human. By the action and love of God, the mass of clay does not merely become “a living soul” but “a living human being.” This marks a very important and significant development in his thought. Against this background, we can better understand why the saint insists that even in his body man is made in the image and likeness of God.

The transformation effected by man’s creation is similar to the transubstantiation of the Mass because, as Francis de Sales remarks, it is the same word which “gave life and being to man, and by which also at the last banquet that he had with his disciples, he changed wine into the blood of the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.”<sup>58[58]</sup> In a sense this transformation of man at his creation can be conceived of as a Passover, as a Pasch. By the word and breath of God, man passes from the terrestrial to the celestial state. In a way, the creation of man represents his first Passover in the sense of deliverance from the tyranny of the earth and earthly things. To sum up, then, in the mind of St. Francis de Sales, man is the inspiration of God. The breath that constitutes him as man is a breath of life, of love and liberty because it frees him from the earth and cosmic forces. For this reason, human life is to be considered essentially as a life of freedom in love.

### ***The Role of the Passions and the Affections***

What has just been said about man as God’s inspiration provides us with a better context for discussing the role of the passions and emotions in Salesian anthropology. While following the rational psychology of scholasticism that postulates two basic tendencies in the soul, the sense appetite and the rational appetite, the saint avoids the scholastic method and its terminology. He likes to speak of the relations of the will with the other faculties in more human terms. He envisions them as relations between a father and his family. The authority that the will exercises over the intelligence, memory, imagination and sense appetite is analogous to that of a husband over his wife. Sometimes she obeys, sometimes she rebels and refuses to give in. With respect to the sense appetite, he makes this very basic observation; “Before the will consents to the appetite, it has it under control; but after giving in, it becomes its slave.”<sup>59[59]</sup>

The passions, which are nothing more than movements of the sense appetite toward good or away from evil, are all ordained for man’s good. They constitute an essential part of our being so that we can exercise our will in love and fulfil ourselves completely. He strongly criticizes the foolish wisdom of the Stoics because they denied that the wise man could have passions or emotions. He particularly found their doctrine inconsistent because they deny in their speech that which they actually practice in their lives. In the humanism of St. Francis de Sales it is always Christ, the perfect man, who is at the center of his thought and who is the measure of humanity. It is Christ who is the model and the criterion for all that is truly human and valuable in the life of man. By looking at and studying him, we can understand the importance of the passions in the life of man. Christ very definitely experienced and deeply felt the movements of the sense appetite. He “feared, desired, rejoiced and sorrowed to the point of tears, became livid, trembled and sweat blood, although these movements were not passions strictly like ours.”<sup>60[60]</sup>

Just as the movements of the sense appetite are called passions, so the movements of the will or of the rational appetite are known as affections. These two tendencies constantly struggle against each other. In this consists the war that we feel every day between the spirit and the flesh;

between the exterior man, which depends upon the senses, and the interior man, which depends on reason; between the old Adam, who follows the appetites of Eve or of concupiscence and the new Adam, who favors heavenly wisdom and holy reason.<sup>61[61]</sup> Here we must be careful not to conclude that this struggle is essentially a conflict between the body and the soul. As we will see later on, this war is one primarily between the flesh, that is, man's reason dominated by the passions, and the spirit, that is, reason led by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of love.

In spite of all the clarity with which Francis presents his thought on the necessity and function of the passions and affections in human nature, there are writers who misrepresent and even distort his teaching. One of the most eminent historians of Jansenism, Jean Orcibal, gives the impression that Salesian spirituality demands that the soul be despoiled of all affections as a permanent state. To support his position, he quotes the following passage of the *Treatise*: "Out of love for the Savior, his spouse has despoiled herself of the old affection that she had for her parents, her country, her house, her friends." From this incomplete quotation, he draws the following conclusion: "St. Francis de Sales teaches us to renounce not only every worldly desire, but the most legitimate affections."<sup>62[62]</sup>

His zeal to show the relationship between Port Royal and St. Francis de Sales makes this historian give a rather faulty and incorrect idea about the saint's thought on a very important matter. Orcibal's quotation from the *Treatise on the Love of God* leaves out some essential aspects of Salesian thought. If we read further on, we see that "one cannot remain for a long time in this state of nudity, stripped of every kind of affection.... One will have to put on an entirely new affection...." in order to sanctify the name of God. What Francis wants to say is abundantly clear from the words that Orcibal chose to leave out or ignore. "We will have to put on again several affections, and perhaps the very ones which we have given up and renounced." But this time these affections must spring from the love of God. So, far from having us renounce legitimate affections, the saint tells us that we cannot really live without them.<sup>63[63]</sup>

In addition, Francis' whole life and his writings give sufficient evidence of the importance and necessity of the passions and the affections. He has a tender heart full of compassion for others, and he was not in the least embarrassed to reveal to us his preferences in this regard when he says: "I don't care at all for certain souls who are not fond of anything and remain unmoved under all circumstances."<sup>64[64]</sup> Moreover, he feels the need of being loved and complains when he had misunderstandings with the Duc de Nemours: "A day will come when to love me will not be held against anyone."<sup>65[65]</sup> According to St. Francis de Sales, the highest roads of spirituality do not impose on us the obligation of giving up being human in the fullest meaning of the term. He gently criticizes the Baroness de Chantal of being a little cold toward her son, Celse Bénéigne, and advises her to receive him with all the warmth and affection of a mother's love: "Oh! No my dear daughter, don't be so cruel. Show him that you're pleased to see him."<sup>66[66]</sup>

In another letter written several years before this one, he speaks about the death of his mother. It is here in particular that he shows us all the tenderness and humanity of his heart. After painting a very vivid and moving picture of her saintly death, he admits quite simply that "there was a big lump in my throat, and I cried over this good mother of mine more than I had done since I became a priest. But this was without bitterness, thanks be to God."<sup>67[67]</sup> Later on in the same letter, he refers to the premature death of St. Jane's daughter Charlotte and remarks:

“We have to cry for her a little for don’t we have a human heart and a sensitive nature?” He finds the justification for this type of behavior in Sacred Scripture: “Why not cry a little for our dead, since the Spirit of God not only permits it, but invites us to do so.”<sup>68[68]</sup> We can continue to cite texts that highlight all the richness of Salesian thought on the passions and the affections. From what we have cited, it is evident that he did not want to fragment man’s being. Quite the contrary, his whole spirituality is aimed at teaching us how to integrate all the elements of our personality.

To follow more closely his thought on human psychology, let us now consider what constitutes the soul in his system. Even if the soul is by nature one and indivisible, there are different degrees in it, for example it is sensitive, living and rational. This helps us to understand better all the diversity of its operations. Following St. Augustine, he distinguishes two major parts in the soul, the inferior and the superior. The inferior or lower part reasons and draws its conclusions according to the data supplied by the senses. This part “is ordinarily called ...human reason.”<sup>69[69]</sup> The superior part of the soul reasons and draws conclusions according to human knowledge or revelation and is commonly called the mind or the mental part of the soul.

Christ’s experience during his agony in the garden of Gethsemane gives us the certitude that this distinction between the inferior and superior part of the soul is a real one. He submitted to our human condition in all things. He experienced hunger, thirst, sorrow, etc., everything except sin. He suffered as man and not only in his body or in his soul, but as a whole and perfect man. This is the reason why he cried out: “My soul is sorrowful unto death.” As a human being he felt the full force of the overwhelming fear of death when he asked his Father that the chalice of suffering be taken away from him. “In this he manifestly expresses the will of the inferior portion of the soul which reasons on the sorrowful and agonizing aspects of the Passion prepared for him. The picture of this was so vividly impressed on his imagination that he concluded, as a very reasonable consequence, that he should flee and avoid it.”<sup>70[70]</sup>

At the hour of his suffering, Christ makes us understand that the true conflict in man is not between the sensitive appetite and the rational appetite, between the body and the soul. Through the life and sacrifice of Christ, we clearly see that the “inferior part of the soul is not the same thing as the sense portion of it, nor that the inferior will is the same thing as the sense appetite.”<sup>71[71]</sup> Our Lord’s prayer to his father indicates that he used the inferior portion which reasons according to the knowledge based on the senses, that is, according to sorrow and grief. But the superior part wins out over the inferior when he says: “Not my will but your will be done.”

### ***Man, Image of God the Creator***

Since we have already alluded to the notion of man as creator, we will now have to go into greater detail as regards this extremely fertile idea. It is here that we can appreciate how current Salesian thought really is. The image of God in the first chapters of Genesis is quite obviously that of God the Creator. He is first and foremost the Creator of man inasmuch as he fashioned him according to his own image and likeness by an indescribable benevolent love. This is the aspect of the image of God that primarily impresses Francis. In his mind, God is not the Creator principally because he has absolute power over all his creation, but because he is Creator-Lover who out of love engraves his image on man. This perspective is especially

emphasized in his teaching on fraternal love. By loving others as God commands us, man creates God's image in them. "Man has been created to the likeness of God. So the love of neighbor leads us to love in him the resemblance and image of God, that is to say that we help to make this image and this resemblance more and more perfect."<sup>72[72]</sup> Man realizes himself by acting and by loving like God the Creator. Louis Lavelle in a short but very penetrating essay on the saint admirably sums up this sublime idea. "It has to be said...that by loving we continue to co-operate with the very act of creation."<sup>73[73]</sup> Once man has been "inspired" by this image of God, he becomes capable of "inspiring" or of "breathing" it into other persons.

If creation is nothing more than the effect of God's benevolent love, then it follows that it is completely gratuitous. The creation of man is accomplished by "the breath of his mouth" (Ps. 33:6), which Francis conceives as the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love and of liberty.<sup>74[74]</sup> In this light, we can say that the spirit of liberty created the world and that the breath of freedom has touched it. This breath or this spirit of liberty is not a quality or a power "of doing wrong, but only of doing good." The perfection of free will consists in the fact that it freely follows the good. Moreover, "God could have created us in Paradise, and placed us there from our childhood. Our nature, however, requires that he make us his co-operators." To add greater strength to his argument, he quotes the great Augustine: "He, who made us without us, does not save us without us."<sup>75[75]</sup> It is in this spirit of creative freedom that we manifest our resemblance and likeness to God. "It is the dignity, at once splendid and tragic, of that image of God which is the human soul, to resemble its Maker so far as to be itself a *cause* and not an effect merely, to be a free agent and not a mechanical instrument" .<sup>76[76]</sup> The new horizons that this vision of the world and of man opens up for us are almost unlimited. It obliges us, like the humanists of the Renaissance, to re-orient and re-examine all of our conceptions.

The particular affective quality that Francis gives to Christian humanism encourages us to search for additional ecclesial implications of his thought. First of all, the soul as the image of God reveals to us the communitarian life of the persons of the Blessed Trinity. The saint speaks elsewhere of the union that must reign among us and which is brought about by the love that we bear to each one as the image and likeness of God. It is this union of fraternal love that symbolizes and produces the type of unity among men that exists in the Trinity itself. Commenting on our Lord's priestly prayer for unity, Francis exclaims: "Who else would have dared...to make such a comparison and ask that we be united like the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit are joined together."<sup>77[77]</sup> It is in this sense too that the soul and its powers are the image of the triune God.<sup>78[78]</sup> The image of God that we are is the real link of friendship which binds all men together: "How lovingly should we receive the neighbor, honoring in him the divine resemblance, tying again the sweet bonds of charity which keeps us bound, tied and joined to each other."<sup>79[79]</sup>

The law of the love of God and of neighbor, engraved in our hearts at the very moment that God created us in his image and likeness, was perfectly realized by the primitive Church. As a community of love and friendship, the first Christians renewed this commandment of love promulgated by God the Creator: "The first Christians behaved in this way by having only one heart and one soul."<sup>80[80]</sup> These Christians by their bond of love manifested this "truth in the depth of their hearts," namely that we are all united by our likeness to each other. "For carrying within us the image of the Creator, we are consequently the image of each other."<sup>81[81]</sup> These words declare to us clearly that the Church has to be by its nature the new humanity or a renewed

humanity. It has as its mission to create friendship among men and to tell us what we are and to make us what we are - the image of God.

### ***Man, the Ark of the Covenant***

While explaining how the love of God necessarily implies the love of neighbor, Francis tells us that “it is in our capacity as the holy and living images of the Divinity...that we belong to God by a very close covenant”.<sup>82[82]</sup> The notion of covenant in the Bible teaches us that men are called to lead a life in communion with God and with others. In a sermon delivered several years before the publication of the *Treatise*, he uses the very same expression “a close covenant” to describe the perpetuity and indefectibility of the Church. He asks rhetorically if after Christ’s sacrifice “would this Church be so abandoned that it would be completely destroyed?” And he proceeds to answer it this way: “Certainly such a Mediator deserves a perpetual peace, a very close covenant about which Isaiah says: ‘And I will make a perpetual covenant with them,’ speaking of the Christians.”<sup>83[83]</sup> The marriage of Christians as symbolizing the love of Christ toward the Church is also called “a close covenant.”<sup>84[84]</sup> In the light of these texts, we can safely conclude that for St. Francis de Sales the Church in a very broad sense goes back to the time when God created man in his image and likeness because it was then that he established “a close covenant” with him.

### ***Man, the Paradise of God***

Among many of the Neo-Stoics of the sixteenth century, we observe the tendency of trying to reconcile the wisdom of Stoicism with Christian teaching. “They advanced the conformity of the Stoic morality with the Scriptures.”<sup>85[85]</sup> For example, the four rivers of Paradise were considered as representing the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. This Neo-Stoic current marked Salesian anthropology. The saint uses this very same comparison of the four rivers of the Garden of Eden and the four cardinal virtues to show “how love employs the cardinal virtues.” “A river flowed out of the place of delights to water the terrestrial paradise, which from there divided or separated into four streams...Now man, without a doubt is the paradise of Paradise itself since the earthly paradise was only made to be the dwelling place of man, as man was made to be the dwelling place of God.”<sup>86[86]</sup> If we compare this passage with a similar one, we can see that according to the saint, man is truly the paradise of God. This is precisely what he tells us elsewhere: “God made your heart for his paradise.”<sup>87[87]</sup>

He also likens the Church itself to the garden of Paradise. He expresses the desire that the river of the Gospel water the whole Church the true terrestrial paradise. While comparing the Church to the garden of Paradise watered by the living water, which is Christ, he tells us in effect that the Church is the ‘natural’ habitat of man in the sense of a habitat, a paradise willed by God for the re-creation of all of humanity.<sup>88[88]</sup> Since the Calvinists and the other heretics left this paradise, they are truly the “uprooted, who can no longer bear fruit.”<sup>89[89]</sup> Hence under the symbol of paradise he binds indissolubly the happiness and the perfection of man and even his destiny with the destiny of the Church. All of this is in perfect harmony with the image of the Church as the new humanity.

This notion is reinforced by the image of the “thieving partridge” which steals the eggs from the nests of others. According to Francis, the heretical churches are powerless to beget children “but only to steal the young of other birds, like the partridge does.”<sup>90[90]</sup> In the *Treatise* he takes up again the story of the “thieving partridge” to show that we have a natural inclination to love God above all things: “As soon as the partridge that was hatched out and nourished under the wings of the strange hen hears the first call of its true mother, which had laid the egg from which it came, it leaves the thieving partridge, returns to the first mother, and joins itself to her brood. This is because of the correspondence it had with its first origin.”<sup>91[91]</sup> By bringing together the two texts on the partridge, we see that this natural inclination to love God above all things finds its full development in the true Church. If this interpretation is valid, then we can conclude that man needs the Church as a community of love and friendship in order to realize himself fully as man. This fits in perfectly with the saint’s thought, for he tells us that we cannot be human beings without this natural desire to love God above all things and we cannot be Christians without following this desire.<sup>92[92]</sup> This amounts to saying that Salesian anthropology is fundamentally oriented towards his idea of the Church and is, in a word, ecclesial.

### ***Man, the Priest of the World***

At the very heart of the Salesian conception of man, as was already pointed out, we find the God-Man who in his capacity as priest reveals to us his humanity as the ideal of all men. The sacred in Christ is seen and understood only through his human life. The point of contact with the sacred for man is the humanity of Christ. “The Divinity cannot be properly contemplated by us in this world, if it had not first been joined to the sacred humanity of the Savior.”<sup>93[93]</sup> We cannot know God except by means of the human nature of his Son. Paradoxically, the most sacred aspect of Christ is uncovered for us by the most human elements in his life. This is one of the key ideas in Salesian thought. If we analyze his conception of the priesthood of Christ in relation to the priesthood of the faithful, his idea will become much clearer. By going back to the Fathers, he had ideas that were far ahead of his time on the priesthood of the laity. He is not in the least embarrassed or scandalized by the fact that the first Christians exercised their priesthood by proclaiming the Canon of the Mass with the priest who presided. “Justin, the Martyr, describing the ancient office that the Christians performed on Sundays...says ‘that after the general prayers they offered bread, wine and water...the people blessed saying Amen...’ Several things here are noteworthy: the water is mixed with wine, they offered, they consecrated.”<sup>94[94]</sup>

The direct participation and collaboration of the people during the sacrifice of the Mass in the primitive Church clearly manifests that they actively exercised their priesthood. This fact is very important in order to follow Francis’s line of argumentation. In a sermon preached for the feast of the Presentation, St. Francis de Sales, using a method that recalls to mind the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, gives a detailed comparison between the tabernacle of Moses and the Church.<sup>95[95]</sup> The most remarkable thing here is not the comparison to the Church but rather the application of these ecclesiastical and liturgical terms to man, his nature and his destiny. For this reason it would be very profitable to examine more closely the first few pages of this sermon.

Francis tells us at the outset that when God commanded Moses to construct the ark of the covenant, he ordered him also to put up a tent or a tabernacle over it. The saint draws our attention to the copper basin filled with water and placed between the exterior tabernacle where

the people came to offer sacrifices and the interior tabernacle where the priests of the Law dwelled. The priests used this basin to wash their hands and feet before offering sacrifices. He mentions that the Fathers gave three interpretations to this basin: (1) as a symbol of Bbaptism, (2) a sign of repentance, and (3) the teaching of the Gospel. In his customary manner, he accepts and unites all three interpretations. “This basin placed between the two tabernacles represents Baptism, repentance, and the teaching of the Gospel. These are the ties by which the Church militant is linked to the Church triumphant.”<sup>96[96]</sup> While speaking of this basin as a symbol of Baptism, he underscores the necessity of this sacrament in order to enter the interior tabernacle, that is to say to arrive at salvation:

For nobody would be able to enter the interior tabernacle, which is nothing other than Heaven without passing through the exterior one which is the Church.... In order to offer and sacrifice to our Lord any victim or holocaust it is so necessary to be washed by this water, in reality or at least by a very ardent desire for this sacrament, that without it every offering and oblation are not offerings but execrations.<sup>97[97]</sup>

Afterwards he describes man as composed of two tabernacles, the one exterior, which is the body, the other interior that is the soul. It is by priestly activity, be means of our priesthood, that we are able to enter the interior tabernacle. He points out that in the Old Testament this tabernacle was the dwelling place of the priests and is also heaven. Every person who passes from one tabernacle to another by means of the evangelical law, that is, the law of love, becomes a priest of the New Law and also a “heavenly man” in the Pauline sense of a man who lives by the resurrected life of Christ (1 Cor.15). Hence the priest is the celestial man par excellence because he dwells or ought to dwell in the interior tabernacle of his being. But also Francis compares this tabernacle to heaven. The priest is heavenly or celestial not in the sense that he lives in the clouds, but in the sense that he lives in the very center of his being, in the holy of holies of his personality, that is, in the domain where he is completely and wholly himself.

As has been pointed out previously, the idea of man that the saintly bishop had derives from the biblical conception of Christ as the perfect man. He arrived at a profound knowledge of Christ’s humanity and human nature in general by meditating on the priestly activity of Christ during his suffering in the garden of Gethsemane. The interior conflict of Christ in his agony, which so intrigued other writers like Pascal, Vigny and Albert Camus, provides Francis with the incontrovertible fact of the deep rift in the rational part of man’s being.

He further develops his anthropology by comparing the rational part of the soul to the Temple of Jerusalem. Like this temple, there are three courts or degrees of reason or of the rational soul; that which reasons according to sense knowledge; that which reasons according to purely human knowledge and that which draws its conclusions from the data of revelation.<sup>98[98]</sup> But beyond these areas there is the supreme point of the soul, the center of man’s personality. This “summit of the soul” is compared to the Holy of Holies where the High Priest enters once a year. When man penetrates the innermost part of his being, it is then that he becomes the high priest of his being, that he finds himself again and becomes capable of integrating all the facets of his existence. However this center of man’s existence is not intended to isolate him from others. Far from isolating him from others and from himself, it makes him more capable of

unifying all his forces and faculties so that he can give himself in love for others and to the world. This sanctuary of the summit of the soul is the dwelling place of faith, hope and charity from which like a joyous source of living water, these virtues pour out by different branches and streams over all the lower parts and faculties.

To reach the Holy of Holies, man passes from one level of consciousness to another until he arrives at the inmost recesses of his being. In a word, the self-development and perfection of man is achieved through a series of “passovers”. This makes us realize that the Paschal mystery is intimately connected with the mystery of man. This truth is central to the teaching and the spirit of the Second Vatican council. “The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light.” But this mystery can only be fully appreciated in terms of what Christ accomplished by passing over from this world to his Father. Man understands himself fully only when he is associated with this Passover. “All this holds true not only for Christians, but also for all people of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.”<sup>99[99]</sup>

The way in which St. Francis de Sales envisaged the priesthood of men anticipated the anthropology of the Council. For him baptism is essentially a Pasch or Passover: “Pasch signifies nothing more than Passover; and men make this very happy Passover in their Baptism, for they pass from the tyranny and servitude of the devil to the grace of the adoption of the children of God.”<sup>100[100]</sup> We must remember that in the sermon cited above, he emphasized the necessity of Baptism, either the sacrament or the desire for the sacrament in order to exercise a priestly function and to bring about this Passover in our very beings. Baptism or the desire for it inserts us into the Paschal mystery of Christ. Without this sacrament, it is impossible to fulfil our priestly role, to accomplish with the help of God this Passover in our lives. This Pasch or Passover is understood primarily in terms of fraternal love. “We know that we have *passed [over]* from death to life because we love our brothers.” (1 Jn:3,14)

As a matter of fact others appreciated the sacerdotal dignity of man in St. Francis de Sales’ day. Pierre Charron in his treatise on *Wisdom* taught that the wise man, that is, the perfect man, exercised priesthood over all of creation. “The wise man is a true priest of the great God. His mind is his temple, his soul is his image, and his affections are the offerings. His greatest and most solemn sacrifice is to imitate, serve and implore him” (Op.cit., vol. 2.pp. 144-45). This observation from the pen of a writer who was very influential in forming the modern conception of man reveals a tendency to bring together the sacred and the profane. We see here the roots of a theology of the secular. If we go beyond the terms of the temple and of liturgical practices, we will understand that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the priestly sacrifice of Christ took place in his humanity. This liturgy did not take place in the temple of Jerusalem but in the temple of humanity. “Christ...passing over the greater and more perfect tent entered once and for all into the sanctuary...with his own blood.” (Heb. 9:11-12)

As a present-day theologian points out, Calvary was a slice of human life, which Jesus experienced as worship. “The death of Christ is not the liturgical orchestration of a flight from the world, but a plunging of his person to his innermost depths, into human life lived in the world and for him.”<sup>101[101]</sup> It was in reality a conflict with the leaders of the people. Since it was an

earthly event, we can conceive of his death or his Passover as a secular liturgy, which did not take place on the periphery but in the mainstream of human existence. As his followers, we are called to experience our whole life as liturgy, as an act of worship, in a word as priests. “From that time on, all earthly activity must be integrated into the paschal mystery, for this mystery alone can teach the Christian that life for others and the building-up of the city of men is not an idle dream.”<sup>102[102]</sup> It is within the framework of his deep understanding of the priestly character of men, that St. Francis de Sales’ notion of the devout life finds its deepest meaning. All aspects of human endeavor are to be consecrated and experienced as liturgy by man’s priestly mission on earth. This is why he emphatically states: “It is an error, or rather a heresy, to try to banish the devout life from the regiment of soldiers, the shop of mechanics, the court of princes, or the home of married folk.”<sup>103[103]</sup>

In the ecclesial liturgy we celebrate with great joy and profound gratitude the event that Christ accomplished for all. This act teaches us that the Paschal mystery has universal implications. In this respect, it is good to remember that according to Francis by Baptism we become the “Ark of the Covenant,” that is, the sign of the solidarity of God with all men because all men have been washed in the bath of the blood of the new covenant shed for all men.<sup>104[104]</sup> The priestly character imprinted by Baptism destines man to create here on earth a community of love. This will be accomplished first of all by attempting to unify and integrate all the levels of our personality. But this can only be done by going down deep into our being, by penetrating the holy of holies of our consciousness. It is only after having made this interior paschal journey that man can be truly effective in creating communion among men. The vision of man as priest of the universe makes us better understand the incomparable dignity that St. Francis de Sales attributes to man: “Man is the perfection of the universe, the mind is the perfection of man, love is the perfection of the mind, and charity is the perfection of love.”<sup>105[105]</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Lynch, “*Toward a Theology of the Secular*,” *Thought*, XLI (Spring 1966), p.361.

<sup>2</sup> E. Garin, “*La dignitas hominis e la letteratura patristica*” *La Rinascita*, 1(1938), p.125

<sup>3</sup> *Oeuvres de Saint Francois de Sales, Eveque de Geneve et Docteur de l’Eglise*, 27 vols., v. 7, p.5, Sermon 1:1

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> J. Lynch, *Op. Cit.*, p.361

<sup>6</sup> *Enchiridion Manuel du Chevalier chrestien*, trans. by I., de Berquin, Lyon, 1525, p.xivii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.lxxvi.

<sup>8</sup> E. Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, New York, Scribner, 1940, p.219

<sup>9</sup> *La Sagesse*, Paris, 1820, v.1, p.4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, v.3, p.442.

<sup>11</sup> La Mothe Le Vayer, *De la Connoissance de Soy-mesme*, *Oeuvres*, Paris, 1669, v.13, p.452.

<sup>12</sup> *Oeuvres*, 8:81, Sermon 2:84

<sup>13</sup> *Oeuvres*, 9:254 Sermon 3:28

<sup>14</sup> *Introduction to the Devout Life*, 3:5; *Oeuvres*, 3:146; To retain the play on words, one could translate: “For knowledge begets acknowledgement.”

<sup>15</sup> *Conferences* 5; *Oeuvres*, 6:76

<sup>16</sup> *Testimony of Louis de Genève*. First Process, *ad art*, 26.

<sup>17</sup> *Oeuvres* 10:342, Sermon 4:64

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- <sup>18</sup> A. Renaudet, *Humanisme et Renaissance*, Paris, 1958, p.47
- <sup>19</sup> G. Picon, *L'écrivain et son ombre*, Paris, p.7
- <sup>20</sup> *The Opuscles*, 1:1; *Oeuvres*, 22:63-67; The scriptural texts he quotes are from Jeremiah 31:29 and Ezech. 18:2,20.
- <sup>21</sup> Cf. Ibid., p.64
- <sup>22</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 42
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67
- <sup>25</sup> *Controversies*, 1:2:1 *Oeuvres*, 1:42
- <sup>26</sup> *Opuscles*, 1:1; *Oeuvres*, 22:66. For the idea of the Church as "the mountain of the Lord" see *Controversies*, 1:3:18; *Oeuvres*, 1:135.
- <sup>27</sup> *Sermons* 2:84; *Oeuvres*, 8:74-75. This sermon was written in 1612.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 80
- <sup>29</sup> Loc.cit.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.80
- <sup>31</sup> *Sermon* 2:84; *Oeuvres* 8:80-81
- <sup>32</sup> At the end of this sermon, he uses the story of the Greek painter, Phidias, and his painting of Minerva. We find the same story in the *Treatise* (Bk. r, chp. 4) but used in a different way.
- <sup>33</sup> *Treatise* 1:1; *Oeuvres*, 4:23.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.81, 85
- <sup>35</sup> H. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mysteries*, New York, Harper & Row, 1963, p.xx.
- <sup>36</sup> *Sermon* 1:30; *Oeuvres* 7:254
- <sup>37</sup> H. de Lubac, *Le mystère du surnaturel*, Paris, 1965, p.265
- <sup>38</sup> E. Garin, *op.cit.*, p. 142. He names explicitly Guillaume de St. Thierry, Isaac de Stella, one of St. Francis de Sales' favourite theologians, and Peter Lombard.
- <sup>39</sup> Op.cit., vol. I, p.16.
- <sup>40</sup> E. Garin, Op.Cit., p.124 ff.
- <sup>41</sup> L. Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVIe siècle*, Paris, 1962, p.406.
- <sup>42</sup> *Vocabulaire de Theologie Biblique*, published under the direction of X. Léon Dufour, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1964, p.463
- <sup>43</sup> *Treatise* 11:10; *Oeuvres* 5:268-269
- <sup>44</sup> *Controversies* 1:2:3; *Oeuvres* 1:64
- <sup>45</sup> *The Opuscles* 6:5; *Oeuvres* 26:119; see also *Treatise* 11:8
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.116
- <sup>47</sup> E. La Blénie, *Recherches sur la technique des arts littéraires*, Paris, 1962, p.112.
- <sup>48</sup> *Treatise* 1:6; *Oeuvres* 4:39-40
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., 1:15 ;*Oeuvres* 4:74
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., 10:10 ; *Oeuvres* 5:203
- <sup>51</sup> *Sermon* 4:59 ; *Oeuvres* 10:270
- <sup>52</sup> *Treatise* 1:15; *Oeuvres* 4:74
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid., 3:8; *Oeuvres* 4:193
- <sup>54</sup> *Treatise on the Love of God*, New York, Image Books, 1963, 2 vols. trans. by J.K. Ryan, vol. 1, p.91.
- <sup>55</sup> *Letter* 341; *Oeuvres* 13:163
- <sup>56</sup> *Introduction* 1:19 ; *Oeuvres* 3:57

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- <sup>57</sup> Sermon 43 ; *Oeuvres* 10:4  
<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.15  
<sup>59</sup> *Treatise* 1:3 ; *Oeuvres* 4:29  
<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.31  
<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.36  
<sup>62</sup> J. Orcibal, *Jean Duvernier de Houranne, Abbé de Saint-Cyram*, Paris, 1948, p.162.  
<sup>63</sup> *Treatise* 9:16; *Oeuvres* 5:161-162  
<sup>64</sup> *Let* 488; *Oeuvres* 14:82  
<sup>65</sup> *Let* 1053; *Oeuvres* 16:321  
<sup>66</sup> *Let* 895; *Oeuvres* 16:38  
<sup>67</sup> *Let* 581; *Oeuvres* 14:262  
<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.264  
<sup>69</sup> *Treatise* 1:11; *Oeuvres* 4:63. A word of caution: here he does not use inferior and superior in the same way that he does in the *Introduction to a Devout Life*. In the chapters on temptations, inferior is practically equated with the purely bodily aspects of our nature apart from reason. *Intro* 4:3; *Oeuvres* 3:296. We follow his thought as expressed in the *Treatise* since it represents his more mature ideas on this question.  
<sup>70</sup> *Treatise* 1:11; *Oeuvres* 4:65-66  
<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.66. Sermon 99; *Oeuvres* 8:148  
<sup>72</sup> Sermon 99; *Oeuvres* 8:148  
<sup>73</sup> L. Lavelle, *Quatre saints*, Paris, 1957, p.19  
<sup>74</sup> Sermon 1; *Oeuvres* 7:10-11  
<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p.13-14  
<sup>76</sup> John Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, London, 1960, p.124-125  
<sup>77</sup> Sermon 59; *Oeuvres* 10:267  
<sup>78</sup> *Treatise* 1:15 *Oeuvres* 4:75  
<sup>79</sup> Sermon 59; *Oeuvres* 10:275  
<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.271  
<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.270  
<sup>82</sup> *Treatise* 10:11; *Oeuvres* 5:204  
<sup>83</sup> Sermon 21; *Oeuvres* 7:217  
<sup>84</sup> *Introduction* 3:38; *Oeuvres* 3:273  
<sup>85</sup> L. Zanta, *La renaissance du stoïcisme au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1914, p.133  
<sup>86</sup> *Op* 5:6; *Oeuvres* 26:44-45; *Treatise* 11:8; *Oeuvres* 5:262, 483, 485  
<sup>87</sup> *Letter* 1396; *Oeuvres* 18:160  
<sup>88</sup> *Sermon* 3; *Oeuvres* 7:63; *Controversies* 1:3:20; *Oeuvres* 1:139  
<sup>89</sup> *Sermon* 25; *Oeuvres* 7:216-217  
<sup>90</sup> *Controversies* 1:3:19; *Oeuvres* 1:138; *Treatise* 1:16; *Oeuvres* 4:79  
<sup>91</sup> *Treatise* 1:16; *Oeuvres* 4:79  
<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 10:10; *Oeuvres* 5:203  
<sup>93</sup> *Introduction* 2:1; *Oeuvres* 3:70  
<sup>94</sup> *Controversies* 3:1:2; *Oeuvres* 1:355  
<sup>95</sup> *Sermon* 37; *Oeuvres* 9:380  
<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p.382  
<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p.381

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<sup>98</sup> *Treatise 1:11; Oeuvres 4:67-69*

<sup>99</sup> *The Documents of Vatican II*, Edited by Walter Abbot, New York, 1966, *The Church Today*, p.220-222

<sup>100</sup> *Sermon 18; Oeuvres 9:150*

<sup>101</sup> Schillebeeckx, "*Foi chretienne et attente terrestre*", *L'Eglise dans le monde de ce temps*, Paris, 1967, p.152

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.137

<sup>103</sup> *Introduction to the Devout Life*, p.6

<sup>104</sup> *Treatise 4:3 Oeuvres 4:225*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 10:1; *Oeuvres 5:165*