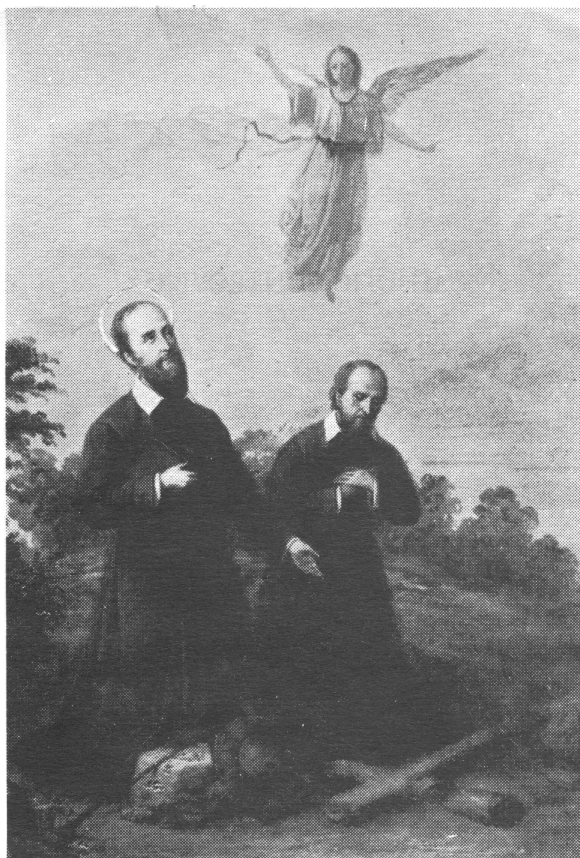


THE CATHOLIC CONTROVERSY



The 27-year-old St. Francis de Sales and his cousin, Canon Louis de Sales, pray to the Guardian Angel of the diocese as they enter the Calvinist district of the Chablais on their great mission of conversion. Louis returned home because of a critical lack of funds, and St. Francis then continued on alone. (Louis was to succeed St. Francis de Sales as Bishop of Geneva.)

THE CATHOLIC CONTROVERSY

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES'
DEFENSE OF THE FAITH

By

St. Francis de Sales

1567–1622

BISHOP AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Translated by

Rev. Henry Benedict Mackey, O.S.B.

FROM THE AUTOGRAPH MANUSCRIPTS

AT ROME AND AT ANNECY

Under the Direction of the

Right Rev. John Cuthbert Hedley, O.S.B.

BISHOP OF NEWPORT AND MENEVIA

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*“He that heareth you, heareth me; and he
that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that
despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.”*

—Luke 10:16

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The following Treatise is the message or teaching of S. Francis de Sales to the Calvinists of the Chablais, reluctantly written out because they would not go to hear him preach. The Saint neither published it nor named it. We have called it "The Catholic Controversy," partly to make our title correspond as nearly as possible with the title "Les Controverses," given by the French editor when the work was posthumously published, chiefly because its scope is to state and justify the Catholic doctrine as against Calvin and his fellow-heretics. It is the Catholic position and the defense of Catholicism as such. At the same time it is incidentally the defense of Christianity, because his justification of Catholicism lies just in this that it alone is Christianity and his argument turns entirely on the fundamental question of the exclusive authority of the Catholic Church as the sole representative of Christianity and Christ. This is the real point at issue between the Church and the sects, and therefore he, as officer of the Church, begins by traversing the commission of those who teach against her. He shows at length, in Part I, that she alone has mission, that she alone is sent to teach, and that thus their authority is void and their teaching but the vain teaching of men.

This teaching he tests in Part II by the Rule of Faith. Assuming as common ground that the Word of God is the Rule of Faith, he shows that the so-called reformers have composed a false Scripture and that they err also in rejecting tradition or the unwritten Word of God. And then, proceeding to the central point of his case, he shows that while the Word of God is the formal Rule of Faith, is the external standard by which faith is to be measured and adjusted, there is need of a judge who may explain, apply and declare the

meaning of the Word. That judge is the Holy Catholic Church. She is thus the necessary exponent of the Rule of right-believing, and each of the voices by which she utters her decision becomes also a part of the Rule of Faith, namely, her own general body, Councils, fathers and her supreme head and mouthpiece, the Pope, the successor of S. Peter and the Vicar of Christ. Miracles and harmony of doctrines may be considered the complement of the Rule of Faith. In all these matters the Saint proves conclusively that the Catholic Church alone fulfils the necessary conditions.

In Part III he comes to the doctrines of the Church in detail, but of this part there only remain to us three chapters on the Sacraments and an Essay on Purgatory.

This may suffice as to the aim and subject matter of the Treatise. Of its intrinsic merits the author's name is sufficient guarantee, but we add more direct testimony because it is a new revelation of the Saint.

The Bull of Doctorate calls it "a complete demonstration of Catholic doctrine." Alibrandi, in the *Processus*, speaks of "the incredible power of his words" and says in particular that no other writer, as far as he knows, has "so conclusively, fully, and lucidly explained the Church's teaching on the primacy, infallible *magisterium*, and other prerogatives of the successors of S. Peter." Hamon, in his Life of the Saint,¹ says, "If we consider it, not as disfigured by its first editor, who made it unrecognisable in trying to perfect it, but as it left its author's hands, we see that it is of inestimable value, that it presents the proofs of the Catholic Church with an irresistible force." Its first editor, Léonard, says, "We are entirely of the opinion that this book deserves to be esteemed beyond all the others he has composed." The Mother de Chaugy, superior of Annecy, in her circular letter of 1661 to the Houses of the Visitation, writes thus, "It is considered that this Treatise is calculated to produce as much fruit amongst heretics for their conversion as the *Introduction to a Devout Life* amongst Catholics for devotion. And their Lordships our Judges (for the cause of Canonization) say that S. Athanasius, S. Ambrose and S. Augustine have not more zealously defended the faith than our Blessed Father has done."

Cardinal Zacchetti, in introducing the cause of Beatification, gives a further proof of its excellence in describing the effect it had on the obstinate men for whom it was composed: "When the inhabitants of the Chablais were forbidden by magisterial decree to attend his sermons or frequent his company, he began to fight with his pen, and wrote to them a letter accompanied with certain selected arguments for the Catholic faith, by which he recalled so great a multitude of wandering souls to the Church that he happily raised up and restored first Thonon and then the other parishes."

And the power of the work lies not in its substance only but also in its manner. It is true controversy, yet unlike all other controversy. He seems to follow the same method as in his practical theology, making the difficult easy, turning the rough into smooth. What S. Thomas and the grand theologians have done for learned men, S. Francis has done for the general people. He ever seems to have little ones in his mind, to be speaking and writing for them. We see in this Treatise the leading of the same spirit which made him love to preach to children, and to nuns and to the poor country people; which made him keep in his own establishment and teach with his own lips the poor deaf-mute of whom we read in his life. It is in great measure this spirit which gives him such an affinity with our age in that sympathy with the weak and miserable, which is one of its best and noblest tendencies. And here again we have a striking proof of his genius. "It is perhaps harder," say the Bollandists in their petition for his Doctorate (xxxv), "to write correctly on dogmatic, moral, and ascetic subjects in such a way as to be understood by the unlearned and not despised by the learned, than to compose the greater works of theology; it is a difficulty only overcome by the best men."

We must now satisfy our readers that we offer them a faithful text of a work of such extreme value. This is the more necessary on the ground that it is an unfinished and posthumous production, and it is especially incumbent upon us, because we put forward our edition as representing in English a *first edition*, the first printing of the true text. Ours is veritably a new work by S. Francis brought out in this 19th century.

The original was written on fugitive separate sheets, which were copied and distributed week by week, sometimes being placarded in

the streets and squares. The Saint did not consider them of sufficient importance to be mentioned in the list of his works contained in the Preface to the *Love of God*, but they were carefully written, and he preserved a copy more or less complete which bears marks of being revised by him later and which he speaks of to the Archbishop of Vienne (L 170) as "studies" suitable for use in a future work on "a method of converting heretics by holy preaching."

The first we hear of a portion of these sheets is in the "Life" by his nephew, Charles Auguste de Sales, who gives a rather full and very accurate analysis of them. They are labeled in his "Table des Preuves" (63) as follows: "Fragment of the work of S. Francis de Sales, Provost of Geneva, on the Marks of the Church and the Primacy of S. Peter; written partly with his own hand when he was at Thonon for the conversion of the Chablais. We have the original on paper." These fragments were the chief part of the article on Scripture, the article on tradition, the chief part of the article on the Pope and half that on the Church. The parts "written with his own hand" were those on Scripture and tradition.

This abstract was made before 1633 (the Saint died at the end of 1622), and exactly a quarter of a century after that date, when Charles Auguste had been bishop 14 years, he "discovered" the whole manuscript as we have it now, except a comparatively small portion which was, and is, preserved at Annecy. The MS was contained with other papers in a plain deal box which for greater security during those disturbed times had been cemented into the thick wall of an archive-chamber. Of this fact he gave the following attestation:

"We testify to all whom it may concern that on the 14th May of the present year 1658, when we were in our château of La Thuille, from which we had been absent fourteen years, and were turning over the records of our archives, we found 12 large manuscript books, in the hand of the venerable servant of God and our predecessor, Francis de Sales, in which are treated many points of theology which are in controversy between Catholic doctors and the heretics, especially concerning the authority of the Supreme Roman Pontiff and Vicar of Jesus Christ and successor of Blessed Peter. We also found three other books on the same matters, which

were written by another hand except as to three pages which are in the hand of the aforesaid servant of God. All these we consigned to the Rev. Father Andrew de Chaugy, Minim, Procurator in the cause of Beatification of the servant of God.”²

Father de Chaugy, who sent, or probably took, them to Rome, gives the following attestation. The names of witnesses will easily be recognized by those who are familiar with the Saint's life:

“I, Brother Andrew de Chaugy, Minim, Procurator of the Religious of the Visitation for the Canonization of the venerable servant of God, M. de Sales, Bishop and Prince of Geneva, certify that I have procured to be witnessed that these present Manuscripts, which treat of the authority and primacy of S. Peter and of the sovereign Pontiffs his successors, are written and dictated in the hand and style of the venerable servant of God, M. Francis de Sales.

“Those who have witnessed them are M. the Marquis de Lullin, Governor of the Chablais; the Reverend Father Prior of the Carthusians of Ripaille; M. Seraphin, Canon of Geneva, aged 80 years; M. Jannus, Superior of Brens in Chablais; M. Gard, Canon of the Collegiate Church of Our Lady at Annecy; M. F. Fauvre, who was 20 years valet to the servant of God.

“All the above witnesses certify that the said writings are of the hand and composition of this great Bishop of Geneva, and they even certify that they have heard him preach part of them when he converted the countries of Gex and Chablais.”

M. de Castagnery and M. de Blancheville testify that “part was written by the Saint, and that the other part, written by the hand of his secretary, was corrected by him.”

From the many other attestations given by the chief officials, ecclesiastical and civil, of the diocese and county, we select a part

2 The Bishop does not mention the sheets he had handled before 1633, but we have no doubt, from internal evidence, that they formed part of what he found in 1658, though they were probably placed in the deal coffer by another hand. They are all together at the end of the MS, except that the part on the Pope has been brought next to that part of the autograph which treats of the same subject, thus placing the parts on Scripture and tradition one step away from their companion sheets.

of one given by the Rev. Father Louis Rofavier, Chief Secretary to the Commission of Beatification and Canonization.

"Amongst other most authentic papers there were found some *cabiers* in folio, written by the Saint's own hand, and others by a foreign hand but noted and corrected by him, which proved to be one of the Treatises of Controversy composed by him during his mission to the Chablais . . . which Treatise was inserted in the Acts, and produced under requisition, that the court of Rome might have due regard to so excellent a work in defense of the Holy Roman Church. The requisition and production having been made it was judged fit to send the original to our Holy Father Pope Alexander VII. . . . I have had the honour of handling it and of inserting it in the Acts, and moreover of having a faithful copy of it made to be hereafter published." The Marquis de Sales speaks of "two or three copies."

The autograph, with the attestations in original, was deposited by the Pope in the archives of the Chigi family to which he belonged, and there we will leave it for the present while we follow the fortunes of the copy which had been made for publication. It was placed in the hands of Léonard of Paris, editor of the Saint's other works, who brought it out in 1672. We have only to endorse M. Hamon's quoted condemnation of this edition. Léonard himself says, "We have not added or diminished or changed anything in the substance of the matter, and only softened a few of the words." But such an editor puts his own meaning on the expressions he uses. As a fact there is not a single page or half-page which does not contain serious omissions, additions and faulty alterations of matters more or less substantial. The verbal changes are to be counted by thousands; in fact the nerve is quite taken out of the expression, the terse, vigorous and personal sixteenth century language of the man of genius being buried under the trivial manner of the everyday writer employed by Léonard 80 years later. The style and wording of the original make it a monument of early French literature and the nascent powers of the French tongue.

Léonard, again, has garbled the Saint's quotations and almost habitually given the wrong references to the Fathers. In the MS the citations are in almost every case correct as to the sense though

free as to the words, and the references are most exact, though too hastily and briefly jotted down to be of much use to a careless and self-sufficient editor.

Finally, Léonard has made most serious mistakes as to order. He has quite failed to grasp the true division of Part II, simple and logical as it is. He has mingled in almost inextricable confusion the sections on the Church, the Councils, the fathers miracles, and reason,³ he has unnecessarily repeated sections on Scripture and on the indefectibility of the Church, while saying no word of a second recension of the section on the Pope which contains some important additions to the first. He has dragged out of their proper places parts on the unity of the Church, on miracles, and on the analogy of faith and thrust them respectively into the sections on the Pope, on the sanctity of the Church and on the fathers. In some places he alters the past tense into the future to suit his changes, instead of letting himself be guided back to the true order, and when he finds the Saint speaking of the last part as Part III, he drops the numeral rather than give up his mistake in making it Part IV. He says the division into three parts is the Saint's own. So it is, but Léonard does not follow it. He makes four parts, dividing Part II into two and then goes on to blame S. Francis for making a subsection into a section. He divides the Treatise into "*discours*," which is just what they were not. They *had* been; that is, the book was worked up from sermons, but the Saint's very point was to turn these into ordinary writings, and he always speaks of his own divisions as chapters and articles.

Such was Léonard's edition of 1672, and we find no further edition until that of Blaise in 1821, which is merely a reprint as far as the Saint's own words go. It has thus almost all the faults of the first edition, with such deliberate further alterations as approved themselves to the Gallican editor. Some of the quotations are verified and references corrected, the discredit of the mistakes being

3 For instance, Discours XLVI is made up of a part on the fathers, a part on the analogy of faith, and two parts, properly distinct from one another, on the unity of the Church. At each change he puts a note to apologise for the *Saint's* digressions.

attributed to the author instead of the first editor. The notes are the special feature, the special disgrace, of this edition. The editor cannot forgive S. Francis for upholding the full authority of the Pope and the true principles of the Church with regard to such matters as miracles and heresy, and his notes on the chapters treating of these subjects are full of such expressions as these: "the saintly author's innumerable negligences"; "facts whose falsehood is generally recognised"; "this sketch of the life of S. Peter must be corrected by reference to Fleury and others"; "with what superiority Bossuet treats the question!"; "the Saint here" (speaking of the shameless Marot) "quits his usual moderation"; "there reigns such an obscurity, such confusion in his citations"; "he has quoted wrongly according to his custom"; "this miracle is no better witnessed than most"; "the relation of so many miracles shows that in his time there was little criticism"; "here he argues in a vicious circle." Blaise's chief indignation is reserved for the famous list of papal titles, on which he permits himself the following remark at the end of a note of three pages: "S. Francis de Sales has collected at hazard fifty titles accorded to the Apostolic See. It would have been easy to augment the number without having recourse to forged records, false decretals, and a modern doctor, and still that would not be found which is sought for with so much ardour."

We see how low the credit of the work must have been brought by a corrupt text and such annotations as these. It was not till 1833 that the publication by Blaise, in a supplementary volume of part of the section on papal authority, began to give an idea of the way in which the Saint had been misrepresented. Blaise's naïve commendation of this part is the condemnation of all the rest, which is neither better nor worse than the section he amended: "This piece already forms part of our collection of the Works in the 'Controversies,' but so disfigured that we do not hesitate to offer it here as unpublished (*inédite*)." What he did for a part we have done, in an English version, for the whole. Vivès in 1858 and Migne in 1861 brought out editions in which the new part was printed and which had the grace to omit the Gallican notes, but otherwise the text remained the same as in the previous editions, no serious attempt apparently being made to follow up Blaise's discovery. Even the Abbé Baudry, who spent his life collecting, throughout

France and Northern Italy, materials bearing on the life and works of S. Francis, and who made researches in the Vatican Library, only got so far as to have heard that the autograph was in the Chigi Library. It was brought forward at the Vatican Council and made an immense impression upon the fathers. But it was reserved for the present publishers and translator to have the singular honor of resuscitating this glorious work and of bringing it out in its true and full beauty.

This autograph, still preserved in the Chigi Library, is a richly bound volume of foolscap size containing 155 sheets numbered on one side, thus making 310 pages. It is in bold writing, perfectly clear and easy to read but with corrections and slips. Nearly every page has a cross at the top. The arranging and numbering of the sheets is not the Saint's, and there is much disorder here. There are some repetitions, chiefly on the Pope and on Scripture, and slight variations, as might be expected in a work composed as this was, the Saint probably making more than one copy himself. We call it the autograph; two portions of it, however, are not autograph but, as the attestations say, written by a secretary and only noted and corrected by the Saint, namely, (1) sheets 76 to 90, containing the chief part of the section on Purgatory, and (2) one of the two recensions of the part on the Pope and about half the section on the Church, sheets 121 to 155. We mention this in order to be strictly accurate, but there is no difference to be made between the autograph and the nonautograph parts. All the sheets were together, the section on Purgatory is taken up by the Saint in the middle of a sentence and completed by himself, the nonautograph part on the Church fits exactly into the autograph part, was analyzed by Charles Auguste as the Saint's work within ten years after his death, and contains two chapters which occur again in autograph in Part I. The two recensions of the part on the Pope only differ in order and in a few sentences, those on Scripture are both in the Saint's hand. The nonautograph part on the Church is extremely difficult to read, being badly written in German characters and badly spelt.

With the autograph is a *copy*, of the same date, bound in the same way, and very possibly one of the several copies spoken of by the Marquis De Sales. The writing is like print, large and clear, except in the last part, containing the second recension on the

Pope and half the section on the Church, which are written in a cramped hand and being copied from the difficult German character that are full of misspellings and grammatical errors. The copy contains 207 sheets, numbered only on one side, forming 414 pages. It is not quite complete, omitting the chief part of the article on Scripture, the first half of that on the Church and the whole of tradition. Except that it is not complete this copy is an exact transcript of the original, with which it has been most carefully collated. Our version has been made from this copy, graciously lent to us by Prince Chigi. The translator's brother has transcribed for him the omitted parts.

This Roman MS is our chief but not our only source. There is also an autograph portion of the work at Annecy, certified by the Vicar General of the diocese, Poncet, in an attestation given June 11th, 1875, and by the Mother Superior, exactly fitting in to the other MS. It contains some further most important portions on the Pope and on the Church and almost all we have on Council-Councils. This autograph has been printed for private circulation in the *Processus*, of which we have procured a certified copy.

Our first duty was to arrange the Treatise in its proper order. Here the autograph and the copy were different from each other and from the printed text. The parts misplaced had to be brought back and the whole distributed according to the logical plan laid down by the saintly author in the introduction to Part II. The Annecy autograph had to be rightly joined with the Roman. Then came the question of omitting repetitions, namely, the parts on scandal, on Scripture and on the Pope. Then had to be studied the many single sentences and words about which any difficulty arose. Such difficulties were not frequent concerning the autograph part, but in the nonautograph part they frequently occurred. The original was hard to make out, the copy was not of great assistance here, the printed text was all wrong. Sometimes the consideration of one word would occupy an hour or more in Rome or in England. But success was at last obtained, except in the three instances mentioned in the notes,⁴ and scarcely amounting to two lines in

4 We have forgotten to mention that we took the responsibility of putting Fisher (p. 154) where the Annecy text spells "Fucher" and (p. 180) of translating

all. The quotations had to be carefully verified and the true references given: the original was found to be correct in almost every instance. In fine, titles had to be placed to the three parts and to such articles and chapters as had not received their headings from the Saint. We will now indicate the points which we consider to deserve special notice.

(1) The General Introduction will be seen to be made up, in the French text, of two parts. The ending of the first appears in the middle of the united parts. As the same words form the end of the whole Introduction (p. 10), we have omitted them on p. 4.⁵ There is a second copy of that part of the Introduction which treats of scandal, carefully corrected by the Saint. We give it at the end of our Preface.

(2) The *Discours*, which is called the first in the French being repeated in the second and third, we have omitted it, greatly clearing the text. The Saint gives no guide to the divisions here; we have therefore made our own divisions and titles of the first four chapters.

(3) The Introduction to Part II has a second treatment in another part of the MS, but there is no practical difference between the two. This Introduction is important as regulating the number of parts and the order of articles and chapters. Three parts,⁶ and three parts only, are mentioned, and this division is confirmed in the Introduction to the next and last part. The eight articles of Part II are clearly indicated on p. 86.

fleet (*caravelles*—ships) where the printed French text has *caravanes*, which is certainly wrong. Our MS copy has *Carvarané*. The same incident is related in the *Etendard de la Croix* (II. 4) as having taken place in *l'isle Camarane*.

5 The following lines, of no substantial importance, have been inadvertently omitted on this p. 4. "You will see in this Treatise good reasons—and which I will prove good—which will make you see clearly as the day that you are out of the way that must be followed for salvation; and this not by fault of your holy guide, but in punishment of having left her."

6 We have just discovered in an obscure corner of the MS a sentence which belongs to this subject, p. 87, and which is important as giving the object of Part III. "And because I could not easily prove that we Catholics have most strictly kept them (the Rules of Faith), without making too many interruptions and digressions, I will reserve this proof for Part III, which will also serve as a very solid confirmation of all this second Part."

(4) Of the first part of Article I, on Holy Scripture, we have two very similar recensions. The first editor, who has been followed in subsequent French editions, adopted the plan of giving first the four chapters of the one, afterward the four chapters of the other, with the effect of burdening his text and confusing his readers. We have united the chapters which have the same titles, our table of contents showing the way in which the chapters have been blended. We have made an exception as to c. 7 (the matter of which is given again in cc. 5, 8), because the arguments are put differently and from a different point of view. In c. 5 the Saint gives the heretical violation of Scripture as a consequence of their belief in private inspiration, in the others he gives them absolutely. In this part, particularly at the end of Discours xxxiii, the MS gives many slight directions for locating the different points treated. Similar indications appear here and there throughout, and we need scarcely say that the Saint's intentions have been religiously observed by us.

(5) In cc. 9, 11 of Article I we have quotations from Montaigne. The fact of quoting him was made an objection against conferring the doctorate, on the ground that Montaigne was not only a profane but also an irreligious and immoral writer. The objection is sufficiently answered by Alibrandi's reference to the practice of S. Paul and the fathers, but there is a much fuller defense than that, both of the Saint and of Montaigne. It is enough here to say that these passages are taken from the grand and most religious essay "On Prayer," near the beginning of which Montaigne speaks of what he calls his *fantaisies informes et irresolues*: "And I submit them to the judgment of those whose it is to regulate not only my actions and my writings but my thoughts likewise. Equally well taken by me will be their condemnation or their approbation, and I hold as impious and absurd anything which by ignorance or inadvertence may be found contained in this rhapsody contrary to the holy decisions and commands of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, in which I die and in which I was born. Wherefore, ever submitting myself to the authority of their censure, &c."

(6) Immediately after Scripture and tradition we place the article on the Church. The French editions have here put that on the Pope, probably on account, originally, of a marginal note in the

MS at the beginning of that section: "this chapter to be put first for this part." The same note it probably was which led them to make this article the commencement of a Part III. It ought to have been clear that the Saint used the word *part* not for a division of his work but in the sense of *subject*.

We have said that nothing can be more incorrect and confusing than the order of the French printed texts in Article III. The first four pages are right, though under a wrong title, but on p. 153 we come to a broken sentence:⁷ "every proposition which stands this test . . ." Léonard quickly finished it off with "is good" and then goes off in the same *Discours* to the subject of CouncilCouncils. We have been fortunate enough to find the continuation of the sentence and chapter in the Annecy autograph, which we now begin to use for the first time. ". . . I accept as most faithful and sound." It is not necessary to make further mention of the errors of the French editions down to our Chapter IV. Our Chapter II begins with another section from the Annecy MS. We have brought back the chapter *On the Unity of the Church in Headship* to its proper place here (c. 3) and relegated the parts on fathers, CouncilCouncils and the Pope to their proper places elsewhere. With regard to the exquisite passage on the analogy between the Creed and the Blessed Sacrament, whilst it certainly does not come between the fathers and the Church where Léonard has thrust it (*Discours XLVI*), we cannot be certain that it belongs strictly to Article VIII (c. 2), where we have placed it, though it treats of the same subject. It exactly occupies sheet 31 of the Roman autograph, and we are inclined to think that it was a sheet sent round separately. It may have been an abstract of his little printed work, *Considerations on*

7 We find in a detached note elsewhere an amplification of the sentence immediately preceding this. "As those who look at the neck of a dove see it change into as many various colours as they make changes of their point of view and their distance, so those who observe the Holy Scripture, through which, as through a neck, we receive heavenly nourishment, seem to themselves to see there all sorts of opinions according to the diversity of their passions. Is it not a marvellous thing to see how many kinds of heresies there have been up to now, the source of which their authors all confidently professed to show in the Holy Scriptures?"

the Creed, and perhaps may have helped to produce the good effect referred to in a letter to Favre (5), written about the time when it would be going about: "The ministers have confessed that we drew good conclusions from the Holy Scriptures about the mystery of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar."

(7) Our text now runs on in substantial agreement with the French until the end of the article on the Church, except that we have transferred part of the section on miracles to its proper place as Article VII and omitted from cc. 13, 14 what is already given in Part I.

The verbal corrections, however, required in this article are very numerous. After c. 3 the MS ceases for a time to be autograph, and the German character has puzzled our copyist and much more the French editor. Some examples may be of interest.

"Si fecond" becomes "et tailleurs" in the copy; Léonard removing the difficulty by substituting a safe but irrelevant text. "Frederick Staphyl" is in the copy "Sedenegue Stapsit," afterward "Seneque Staphul" or "Staphu," Blaise supplying the note "unknown work of an unknown author." Vivès gives "Tilmann, Heshisme et Oraste;" he also has "Vallenger" for "Bullinger" and "Tesanzaüs" for "Jehan Hus"; both editors have "Tanzuelins" instead of "Zuingliens." There is some excuse for the word "vermeriques," which we have translated "fanatic" (p. 174); it turns out to be "suermericos," a favorite word with Cochläus, probably from *schwärmer*. "Diego of Alcalá" becomes "Diogenes of Archada," "Judas" is put for "Donatus"; "Heshushius," "Zosime," or "Zuingle" for "Ochin." "Treves," "patriarche," and "ou moyne" become, respectively, "Thebes," "paterneche," and "à moins." "Cochin" is turned into "Virne."⁸ "Chid-abbe" escapes perversion because it is in autograph elsewhere, but Blaise, forgetting that the African S. Augustine is speaking, sagely informs us that "this mountain is in the environs of Thonon." The note on p. 191 represents a not unimportant restoration of the text.

8 One of Blaise's attacks on the Saint's "criticism" turns on this word. The statement here attributed to the Bishop of Virne is put down, in the *Standard of the Cross*, to the Bishop of Cecine. This latter word only requires the change of the first e into o to make it an Italianized Cochin.

The copy had *sapines*, the printed text *besoins*; the context easily guided one to the right word, *psaulmes*.

In Article IV we return to the Saint's own clear hand in the MS and so to greater verbal correctness. Most of this invaluable section is supplied by the Annecy MS.

(8) Article VI, on the Pope, has been fairly well edited from the Roman MS. We are able to supply from the Annecy autograph a large and most important addition on the qualities of an *ex cathedra* judgment (pp. 299–311), of which we give the original French text in an appendix.

Of this article we find two recensions in the Roman text, one in autograph and the other, which lacks the first two chapters, not. The autograph is much superior on the whole, but the order of the other recension is better, and in this we have followed it. From it also we have introduced into our translation the important passage (pp. 276–7): "And if the wills, &c." to end of paragraph. On the same page occurs the pregnant statement that the headship of Peter is the *form* of Apostolic unity, that is, that the Apostles formed one body precisely by virtue of their union with Peter. This word *forme* was correctly printed in Blaise's edition of this part in 1833, but Vivès and Migne have altered it into *fermeté*. We have paid particular attention to the important list of Papal titles (pp. 291–2). Blaise had certainly a right to complain of the mistakes in the references here, but they are the fault of the first editor, not of the author, and on careful examination we find that of the 53 titles all are correct except perhaps two; of which one cannot be traced, another attributes to Anacletus, a letter which belongs to Siricius. Almost the same list is given in the first chapter of the Fabrian code, Article V.⁹

(9) Article VII, on miracles, now put in its proper place, needs no special remark, except as to the note on p. 312. The sentence of Montaigne's referred to is probably the following, from the 22nd

9 In the note to p. 297 allusion is made to the substitution of the word *permanent* for *infaillible*. The Bull of Doctorate says that the discovery of the true reading of this passage led many of the fathers of the Vatican Council, "as by the hand," to subscribe to the definition of Papal Infallibility.

essay "On Custom": "Miracles are miracles to our ignorance of nature, but not according to the actual powers of nature." Montaigne of course is speaking as the Saint is, of apparent miracles. We have a beautiful expression of Montaigne's faith in real miracles, for instance, such as those related by S. Augustine (*de Civ. Dei* xxii) in Essay 26:

"Of what shall we accuse him (S. Augustine) and the two holy Bishops, Aurelius and Maximinus, whom he calls to be witnesses with him? Of ignorance, simplicity, facility of belief, or of malice and imposture? Is there any man in our age impudent enough to think himself comparable to them, whether in virtue and piety or in learning, judgment, and competence? Giving no reason they would conquer one by their very authority.¹⁰ To despise what we cannot comprehend is a dangerous boldness and serious risk, to say nothing of the absurd rashness which it brings in its train. For after you have established, according to your fine understanding, the limits of truth and falsehood, and it turns out that you are forced to believe things which are still more extraordinary than those you deny, you are already obliged to give them up."

(10) The early sentences of Article VIII will be seen to be a little unconnected. The first paragraph consists of detached notes from various parts of the MS. In c. 3 we have inserted the part on the analogy of faith, as in what seemed to be the most suitable place.

We have now said what we think necessary as to the substance of this work and as to our editing. As to its manner we only repeat that to many this volume will be a new revelation of the Saint. The same calm sanctity, the same heavenly wisdom, the same charisma of sweetness pervade all his works, but as a controversialist, as a champion of the Church, he here puts on that martial bearing, takes up those mighty weapons, proper to inspire confidence into his comrades and to make his enemies quail before him.

It is remarkable that after a sleep of ten generations the Saint should appear first to preach again his true words in a country so similar to that for which they were first preached and providentially written. And though the heresy is more inveterate, it is the

more excusable, and he comes, as he did not come to the Chablais, first recommended by his moral and devotional teaching. It is providential, too, that he should wait so long, that he should slumber during the fierce Gallican and Jansenist struggles of the 17th and 18th centuries, that his words on these controverted matters should up to now be so doubtful that neither friend nor foe could safely dare to quote them. He appears like an ancient record, or rather like an ancient Prophet, to witness to the plain and simple belief of the Church in the days before these storms arose, to prove to us that the Church's exclusive right to teach, the necessity of having mission from her, the evilness of heresy, the supremacy and infallibility of the Pope are not inventions, not doctrines of today or yesterday, but the perpetual and necessary truths of Catholic faith. And this is the particular excellence of S. Francis: he defends the Church from accusations of falseness, but indirectly he still more fully clears her doctrines of the charge of novelty.¹¹ It might well be thought that the controversy of the sixteenth century would be somewhat out of date now. But this is not true of the present work, not only on account of the intrinsic efficacy of its argument and language, not only on account of the sort of prophetic insight by which he reaches in advance of his time and answers objections that had scarcely yet arisen, but also chiefly because there lies behind the strength of his reasons the weight of his authority as a witness, as a doctor, we had almost said, in these days of rapid movement, as a father of the Church. And there is no doctor who better represents the true Catholic supernatural spirit, far removed from rationalism on the one hand, from superstition and fanaticism on the other. Instead of being an extremist, as Gallicans would nickname true believers, he was accused, in his own time, of *lessening* the fullness of Catholic doctrine. He says (p. 2), "It will be seen that I deny a thousand impieties attributed to Catholics: this is not in order to escape from the difficulty, as some have said, but to follow the holy intention of the Church." He preaches the full but simple Catholic truth, and his teaching

11 We have drawn this out at some length in our pamphlet entitled "Four Essays on the Life and Writings of S. Francis De Sales," pp. 99-114.

was at last accepted as such by the 72,000 heretics of the Chablais. They had rejected Catholic doctrine when misunderstood, but when they understood what it was they hesitated indeed, from worldly motives, as to accepting it at all, but then they took it with simplicity as a whole, making no hesitation as to a part, or on the ground of inconsistency of part with part. Modern heretics would make such a distinction, there are even within the Church those who try to do so. For such we add, by way of conclusion to our Preface and of introduction to the Saint's argument, the testimony of an unsuspected witness of his own age:

"What seems to me," says Montaigne, in the essay we last quoted, "to bring so much disorder into our consciences in these troubles which we are in as to religious matters is this dispensation which Catholics make in their belief. They fancy they act as moderate and enlightened men when they grant their adversaries some article which is in debate. But besides that they do not see what an advantage it is to the man who attacks you to begin to yield to him, and to draw back yourself, and how this encourages him to pursue his advantage,—those articles which they choose as the lightest are sometimes very important. We must entirely submit to the authority of our ecclesiastical tribunal or entirely dispense ourselves from it; it is not for us to determine the amount of obedience we owe to it. Besides,—and I can say it as having tried it, because I formerly used this liberty of choosing for myself and of personal selection, holding in light esteem certain points of observance belonging to our Church, which appear on the face of them somewhat idle or strange;—when I came to discuss them with learned men I have found that these things have a strong and very solid base, and that it is only folly and ignorance which make us receive them with less reverence than the rest."¹²

WEOBLEY.

Feast of S. Francis de Sales, 29th January 1886.

¹² [We append here the Saint's second treatment of the subject of scandal, see. p. 5.] There is nothing of which the Holy Scripture gives more warning, history more testimony, our age more experience, than of the facility with which

man is scandalized. It is so great that there is nothing, however good it may be, from which he does not draw some occasion of his ruin; being unhappy indeed in this that having everywhere opportunities of drawing profit he turns and takes them all to his own disadvantage and misery. We may put so exactly into practice what Plutarch teaches—to draw benefit even from our enemy—that even sin, our capital enemy and the sovereign evil of the world, can bring us to the knowledge of self, to humility and contrition. And a good man's fall makes him afterward walk straighter and more circumspectly. So true is the word of S. Paul: *We know that all things work together unto good to them that love God* (Rom. viii. 28).

Not indeed that sin within us helps us, or when no longer in us can work us any good, for sin is bad in every sense, but from it can be derived occasions of great good which it would never of itself produce, imitating the bees which went and made honey within the putrid carcase of the fierce lion which Samson had slain. Is it not then a strange thing that being able to profit by all things, however bad they may be, we should turn all to our harm? If indeed we only took evil from what is evil it would not be a great wonder, for that is what first offers; if we drew evil from indifferent and harmless things nature would not be so much outraged, for these are arms which all hands may use:—though our baseness would still be great in that having it in our power to change everything into good by so easy and cheap an alchemy, for which one single spark of charity suffices, we were of so ill a disposition as to remain in our misery and procure our own hurt. But it is a wonderful thing, and passing all wonder, that in good, profitable, holy, divine things, in God himself, the malice of men finds matter to occupy itself with, to feed and to thrive upon; that in a subject of infinite beauty it finds things to blame; in this illimitable sea of all goodness it finds evil, and in the sovereign felicity the occasion of its misery.

The great Simeon predicted of Our Lord, having him in his arms and the Holy Ghost in his soul, that the child would be the ruin of many and a sign to be contradicted. Almost the same had Isaias said long before when he called Our Lord a stone of stumbling and of scandal, according to the interpretation of S. Paul. Is there not here reason for lamenting the misery of man who stumbles and falls over the stone which had been placed for his firm support, who founds his perdition on the stone of salvation? . . . But the necessity there is in this world that scandals should come must not serve as an excuse to him who by his bad life gives it, nor to him who receives it from the hand of the scandalizer, nor to him who of his own malice goes seeking and procuring it for himself. For as to those who give it, they have no other necessity than what lies in the design and resolution which they have themselves made of living wickedly and viciously. They could if they liked, by the grace of God, avoid infecting and poisoning the world with the noisome exhalations of their sins, and be a good odour in Jesus Christ. The world, however, is so filled with sinners that, although many amend and are put back into grace, there always remains an infinite number who give testimony that scandal must needs come. Still, *woe to him by whom scandal cometh.*

And as to those who forge scandals for themselves, tickling themselves to make themselves laugh in their iniquities, who, like their forerunner, Esau, at the slightest difficulty to their understanding in matters of faith, or to their will in the holy commandments, persuade themselves that they will die if they do not alienate the portion which they have in the Church,—since they will have malediction and seek it, no wonder if they are accursed. Both the one and the other, the giver and the taker of scandal, are very wicked, but he who takes it without having it given to him is as much more cruel than the man who gives it as to destroy oneself is a more unnatural crime than to kill another.

In fine, he who takes the scandal which is given, that is, who has some occasion of scandalizing himself and does so, can have no other excuse than Eve had with regard to the serpent and Adam with regard to Eve, which Our God found unacceptable. And all of them, the scandalizer, the scandalized and the taker of scandal, are inexcusable and guilty, but unequally. For the scandalized man has more infirmity, the scandalizer more malice, and the taker of scandal goes to the extreme of malice. The first is scandalized, the second is scandalous, the third scandalous and scandalized together. The first is wanting in firmness, the second in kindness toward others, the third in kindness toward himself. . . .

How greatly this third form of scandal has been in use up to this present the universal testimony of ecclesiastical history shows us in a thousand places. We shall scarcely find as many instances of all the other vices as we shall find of this alone. Scandal, whether passive or taken, appears so thickly in the Scriptures that there is scarcely a chapter in which its marks are not seen. It would be pointing out daylight at high noon to take much pains to produce the passages. These will serve for all. Did not those of Capharnaum scandalize themselves in good earnest over Our Lord's words, as S. John relates (vi), saying, *This is a hard saying, and who can bear it?* And on what an occasion! Because Our Lord is so good as to desire to nourish them with his flesh, because he says words of eternal life, do they turn against him. And over what do those labourers scandalize themselves—those (Matt. xx) who murmured because the lord of the vineyard gave to the last comers as to the first—save over kindness and liberality and benefits? What, says the good lord, *is thy eye evil because I am good?* Who sees not, in that holy banquet and supper which was given to Our Lord at Bethany (John xii), how Judas grows indignant and murmurs when he sees the honor which devout Magdalen does to her Savior—how the sweetness of the odor of that poured out ointment offends the smell of that hideous reptile? Already then did they stumble over that holy stone. But since then—who could recount all that history tells us of the same? All those who have abandoned the true Church, under what pretext so ever, have made themselves [his imitators]. . . .

INTRODUCTION

In September 1594, a 27-year-old priest entered the Chablais region, on the south shore of Lake Geneva, to begin a difficult Apostolic mission. For a young man ordained less than a year—a young man of refined upbringing and education—its physical and moral hardships must have been daunting.

Although the Catholic Duke of Savoy had regained control of the Chablais a short time earlier, Calvinism had put down roots and anti-Catholic feeling was rife. When, responding to the Duke's plea, the Bishop of Geneva looked about for priests to send and the young man volunteered, his father protested: "I allowed my son to devote himself to the service of the Church to be a confessor, but I cannot give him up to be a martyr."

The young priest prevailed; he went to the Chablais, accompanied by his cousin Louis. Four months later, his personal resources exhausted, Louis left. The priest stayed, wrestling with a problem: how do you evangelize people who slam their doors in your face and will not listen to your sermons?

"He decided to confute their errors by means of leaflets which he wrote between his sermons and scattered to be passed hand to hand, hoping they might reach the heretics." So explains the encyclical *Rerum Omnium* (1923) in which Pope Pius XI, marking the third centenary of the priest's death, designated him the Patron of Writers and Journalists—for the solution which St. Francis de Sales hit upon was to turn to the pen and use the written word to reconcile his separated brethren with the Church.

He kept it up for over two years, writing and printing leaflets and distributing them however he could. (Often, it is said, he slipped them under Calvinist doors in the villages and towns he

visited.) While these tracts can scarcely have turned the tide by themselves, there is little doubt they helped. When St. Francis left the region after four years, the restoration of Catholicism in the Chablais was well under way.

Once their immediate purpose had been accomplished, he seems not to have paid these early essays much attention, neither reprinting them nor listing them among his literary works. It was nevertheless to them that he apparently referred when he spoke later to an archbishop of certain “studies” which might yet prove useful as a guide to “a method of converting heretics by holy preaching.” Revised copies were found among his papers years after his death. They were brought together in book form in an edition (by all accounts, a highly defective one) which was published in Paris in 1672 under the title *Controversies*. The work has been known under that name, or as *The Catholic Controversy*, from that time until now.

What interest do these essays have for today’s reader? In fact, it is of three kinds: religious, literary and exemplary—as expressions of their author’s mind and heart.

In religious terms, the essays are exercises in apologetics. Their aim is to explain, defend and render attractive the teaching of the Catholic Church. And, although they deal with controverted questions of the 16th and 17th centuries, neither the questions nor St. Francis’ thoughts on them are of merely antiquarian interest.

On that score, the judgment of Dom Henry Benedict Mackey, O.S.B. (whose attractive 19th-century English translation is used in the present edition) remains sound. In these pages, he says, St. Francis

appears like an ancient record, or rather like an ancient Prophet, to witness to the plain and simple belief of the Church . . . to prove to us that the Church’s exclusive right to teach, the necessity of having Mission from her, the evilness of heresy, the supremacy and infallibility of the Pope are not inventions, not doctrines of to-day or yester-day, but the perpetual and necessary truths of Catholic faith.

It hardly needs saying that these matters are as important now as they were in Dom Mackey’s time—or, for that matter, in

St. Francis'. Declaring him a Doctor of the Church in 1877, Pope Pius IX called this work "a full and complete demonstration of the Catholic religion." And, as his translator remarks, "there is no Doctor who better represents the true Catholic supernatural spirit, far removed from rationalism on the one hand, from superstition and fanaticism on the other," than St. Francis de Sales.

He begins by considering legitimacy and illegitimacy in the preaching of the Gospel, arguing forcefully that, as Pius XI was to say long after, "In the Church of Christ, it is not possible even to think of any authority granted without [a] legitimate mandate." That leads to an examination of the attributes of the true Church, after which St. Francis takes up what he calls the "Rules of Faith." He discerns eight: Scripture, tradition, the Church, Councils, the fathers, the Pope, miracles and natural reason. Ultimately, however, all come down to this one: "The sole and true rule of right-believing is the Word of God preached by the Church of God."

St. Francis has no patience with the suggestion that in anything of doctrinal consequence the Catholic Church has wandered from the truth. "He who considers how perfectly authentic is the testimony which God has given of the Church," he says, "will see that to say the Church errs is to say no less than that God errs, or else that he is willing and desirous for us to err; which would be a great blasphemy."

This is not hollow triumphalism, however, for he recognizes the faults of the Church's human clay. In fact, if the reformers had "censured vices, proved the inutility of certain decrees and censures, borrowed some holy counsels from the ethical books of St. Gregory, and from St. Bernard's *De Consideratione*, brought forward some good plan for removing the abuses which have crept into the administration of benefices through the malice of the age and of men, and had addressed themselves to His Holiness with humility and gratitude, all good men would have honoured them and favoured their designs." Unfortunately, that is *not* what happened. Instead, "You listen to your ministers; impose silence upon them as regards railings, detraction, calumnies against the Holy See, and you will have your sermons half their length."

Such spirited prose suggests the work's second point of interest for the contemporary reader: its literary quality.

St. Francis de Sales was a man of the Renaissance, with an excellent classical and ecclesiastical education acquired at the University of Paris in the Jesuit college of Clermont and at the University of Padua. Plainly, too, he had outstanding natural gifts. The literary first fruits of this combination of talent and training—the essays in this book—exhibit an impressively mature grasp of content and style. The work has been called a monument of early French literature; already one sees operative in it that blend of spiritual ardor and literary genius which would in time produce *The Introduction to the Devout Life*, *The Treatise on the Love of God* and other works.

If this book is a literary monument, however, it is a living one. Four centuries after they were written, St. Francis' essays retain much of their original vivacity and charm—qualities, happily, which are also present in Mackey's older yet still very readable translation.

He has a knack for the telling phrase, "Their scandal," he says of those who claim to be scandalized by the Church, "has no other subject than their own malice, which keeps ever tickling them to make them laugh in their iniquities"—but he is no less at home in passages rich in rhetorical artifice. For instance,

Our Lord had cast the fire of his charity upon the earth, the Apostles blowing on it by their preaching had increased it and spread it throughout the world: you say it has been extinguished by the waters of ignorance and iniquity;—who shall enkindle it again? Blowing is of no use: what is to be done then? Perhaps we must strike again with nails and lance on Jesus Christ the holy living stone, to bring forth a new fire:—or shall it be enough to have Calvin or Luther in the world to relight it?

In this and many places like it, one sees what Pope Paul VI meant when he remarked (in an Apostolic letter of 1967 celebrating the fourth centenary of the Saint's birth) that St. Francis de Sales "reinstated sacred eloquence and let it flow like a broad river."

Finally, there is the evidence afforded here of the author's special qualities of character. Biographers never tire of speaking of his kindness, his amiability; together with the zeal for souls which St. Jane de Chantal considered his outstanding characteristic,

it constitutes the distinctive Salesian trait. And, as these essays illustrate, kindliness peeps through along with zeal even when St. Francis turns his hand to controversy.

He can, and does, write with strenuous indignation about those he blames for fracturing Christendom and leading souls away from the true Church. But by the standards of the time, even his polemics are gentle—an exercise in wit and the rhetoric of argumentation rather than a violent verbal assault on his adversaries. Mackey calls this “true controversy, yet unlike all other controversy.” Citing his “supreme mildness and benignity,” Pope Paul VI says of St. Francis, “He is never violent in dispute, he loves those who err while he corrects errors.” One recalls St. Francis’ remark to Theodore de Beza, Calvin’s successor, with an eye to whose conversion Pope Clement VIII had sent him to Geneva: “Sir, I have not come to dispute with you but to talk with you frankly about the most important business that you can have in the world.” It is that spirit which makes this volume not only a valuable record of the Counter-Reformation but a lasting testimonial to a saintly heart, at once ardent and charitable, which has much to say to the ecumenical movement of our times.

Over a century ago, Leigh Hunt captured something of this spirit in a panegyric, “The Gentleman Saint,” which praised St. Francis by measuring him by Samuel Johnson: “A man as sensible as Dr. Johnson, with all the piety and patience the Doctor desired to have, all the lowliness and kind fellowship it would have puzzled him to behold in a prelate, and all the delicacy and truth which would have transported him.” Today’s readers may not refer so readily to Dr. Johnson, but they will find ample evidence here to support this praise of St. Francis de Sales.

—Russell Shaw

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES
AND THE ORIGIN OF
THE CATHOLIC CONTROVERSY

The Catholic Controversy is a remarkable work, a book one would admire as the accomplishment of a middle-aged cleric who had spent years in study and who had a long history of pastoral experience behind him. But the fact is that St. Francis wrote these pages between the ages of 27 and 29, beginning about one year after his ordination to the priesthood. He wrote them during a seemingly hopeless mission to win back to the Faith the 72,000 Calvinists in the Chablais (now eastern France). These people had heard just about nothing of the True Faith since the Church had been virtually obliterated in their area 60 years earlier by violent persecution and heavy fines for worshiping in the old religion (Catholicism). The government had recently returned to Catholic hands in principle, but the Calvinists still held sway and were adamant against a return to the old Faith. Salesian tradition tells us that when St. Francis arrived, only 27 persons out of the 72,000 were still Catholic, but that after four years of his efforts, the figure was exactly reversed, there remaining only 27 Calvinists: 72,000 souls had returned to the true faith. It is one of the most remarkable conversion stories in all Catholic history.

When St. Francis set out on this assignment on September 14, 1594, he was accompanied by his cousin, Canon Louis de Sales, though Louis returned home shortly because of a critical lack of funds. Entering into the Chablais, St. Francis would be seen as both a religious and a political enemy (although he had been invited in by the Duke), so for the time being he made the garrison of Allinges his home base, though he almost never accepted

the offer of an armed escort as he traveled about the region on foot; he made light of the occasional physical attacks he had to face. This high-born young man of the nobility, with two university degrees—one in civil law and one in canon law—spent his first winter tramping around the countryside going door to door searching out Catholics and trying to make a friendly contact here and there among the Protestants. St. Francis' main financial support was supposed to come from his family, but his father, who deeply disapproved of Francis' mission to the Chablais, refused to send him any money. It was left to his mother to send him surreptitiously some items of necessary clothing and a little money.

Sometimes St. Francis would spend the night in a hayloft, and on one occasion, to escape from wolves, he spent the night in a tree after tying himself onto a branch so he would not fall off in his sleep; some peasants found him the next morning and unfastened him, numb with cold. Though St. Francis had a strong constitution, he always suffered from poor circulation, which made the cold winter even more painful for him.

For many months, the results of St. Francis' mission were about nil. He had found a few Catholics, but Calvinists were afraid to listen to him preach, even if they wanted to, for fear of reprisals, and the Saint was often greeted with jeers and stones. The one hopeful sign he could count was the fact that one or two Calvinist leaders had gone out of their way to be friendly to him. Some people "back home" did not approve of St. Francis' work, as they felt he might be stirring up political trouble. Yet in the midst of these struggles, during a month-long break from his arduous mission, St. Francis was to receive a special grace on the Feast of Corpus Christi. During prayer he experienced a sense of closeness to God which made him say, "Hold back, O Lord, this flow of grace. Come not so near me, for I am not strong enough to endure the greatness of Your consoling touch, which forces me to the ground." This was one of the extraordinary graces which St. Francis de Sales received during his life.

As time went on and St. Francis saw his efforts to preach to the Calvinists frustrated, he began to work on another approach: writing pamphlets. In these pamphlets the Apostle of the Chablais

could say the things he could not preach to the Calvinists in person. These little tracts in defense of the truths of the Faith would be small enough to be slipped under the doors of those the Saint wished to reach. Soon he was having them printed to be passed out hand to hand and also to be posted in appropriate places.

It was these pamphlets that would be gathered together after St. Francis' death and published as *Controversies*, or *The Catholic Controversy*. They are remarkably to the point, showing a thorough grasp of the Calvinist claims, courage in standing up to them and a keen intelligence in exposing them. Despite the fact that St. Francis de Sales had only three books with him for reference (the Bible, St. Robert Bellarmine's *Controversies* and St. Peter Canisius' *Catechism*), his learning is obvious, as he confidently quotes the Sacred Scriptures, the fathers and doctors of the Church and speaks of the Greek and Hebrew versions of the Bible. Yet these pamphlets were by no means academic; St. Francis was right there in the thick of the religious controversy fray, and he knew exactly what points to go after.

The tracts apparently did their work, enabling the Saint to reach his intended audience, who would not listen to him, and enabling the Calvinists to see that it is the Catholic Church, after all, which is the true religion of Christ, with the mission to teach in His name.

These people who for 60 years—two or three entire generations—had not heard what the Catholic Faith teaches now learned about it again. Centuries later, in declaring St. Francis de Sales a doctor of the Church (1877), Pope Pius IX stated that this book is “a full and complete demonstration of the Catholic religion.” St. Francis begins his argument with an examination of *mission* from God, showing that the Catholic Church possesses this mission and the Protestant sects do not. He also delineates eight Rules of Faith—Holy Scripture, the Apostolic traditions, the authority of the Church, the authority of Councils, the authority of the ancient fathers of the Church, the authority of the Pope, miracles and the harmony between faith and reason—showing how all point to the Catholic Faith as the divinely given religion. He states, “Ultimately, however, the sole and true Rule

of right-believing is the Word of God preached by the Church of God." But why, he asks, should anyone bow to the supposed authority of a Luther or a Calvin?

Our admiration of St. Francis' technique must not blind us to the fact that his weapons were first of all spiritual. He had planned to take Geneva by love—"Love will shake the walls of Geneva." "Ardent prayer must break down the walls of Geneva and brotherly love charge them . . . Everything gives way to love. Love is as strong as death, and to him who loves, nothing is hard. . . ." In speaking of his hope to win back the Chablais for the Church, St. Francis said, "But the way to this is the propitiation of Almighty God by our penances." A huge mural in the Visitation Monastery of Thonon in the Chablais gives another clue to the Saint's success: It pictures him and his cousin Louis invoking the guardian angel of the diocese as they approached the region for the first time. And it will be recalled that in his youth St. Francis had promised Our Lady to pray the Rosary daily. His Apostolic use of intelligence, perseverance and personal contact were certainly fueled and directed by much grace.

St. Francis' own beautiful personality played a large part here, as it would for the rest of his apostolic life. He took time to speak with the peasants, joining in the daily chitchat. To a talkative old woman who loved to converse with him and who one day said she was scandalized by the celibacy of the clergy, St. Francis answered, "But, my dear, you keep on coming to see me. Think of the time it takes to talk to you. How on earth could I manage to help you with all your difficulties if I had a wife and children!"

Slowly the tide began to turn, such that on Christmas day of 1596, St. Francis felt bold enough to offer the first public Mass offered in Thonon in 60 years. (He had made that city his headquarters some time before.) The fact that there was no public disturbance on this occasion was in itself a sign of the great progress made in the preceding two years. The church furnishings were gone, and he had to make do with, as he expressed it, a "badly made, simple wooden altar we put together for Christmas."

Having the Mass gave the Catholics new heart and set many Calvinists to thinking. The following Lent, however, some of the latter

created a great disturbance when St. Francis proceeded to restore the old Catholic custom of giving out ashes; in the face of threats of prison and even death, he had to retreat out an open door.

When St. Francis de Sales had been in the area three years, he organized a 40 Hours Adoration—40 hours of continual solemn exposition of the blessed Sacrament, accompanied by constant prayers. This was then a new devotion which had started in Italy but was not yet widespread. It was still too risky to hold it in the city of Thonon, but a procession of 500 people began in Thonon and moved 18 miles to the town of Annemasse, where the devotion would be held. Another procession, headed by the Bishop, came up from Annecy. Many more people joined along the way, and in the end something like 30,000, including some curious Calvinists, were present. A year later 40 Hours Devotion was again held, this time in Thonon itself. At this occasion, many Protestants asked to be baptized and confirmed—200 from one parish, 60 from another and so on. Priests and a bishop were busy administering the Sacraments. Another 40 Hours was held two weeks later, attended by officials of Church and state. On this occasion the Papal Legate was present to receive the abjurations of Protestantism from many notable persons; the Vatican Archives has a list of some 2,300.

Around this time there was a stir over a report of a miracle attributed to St. Francis de Sales. A baby, the child of a Protestant mother, had died without Baptism. St. Francis had gone to speak to the mother about Catholic doctrine and prayed that the child would be restored to life long enough to receive Baptism. His prayer was granted and the whole family became Catholic.

With souls being won back to God and the Church, St. Francis' task became one of an administrator who had to reopen parishes and obtain the missals, chalices, crosses and other needed items which had disappeared over the years. Around 18 parishes would come back into operation. A priest named Père Cherubin would largely take charge of these matters, with St. Francis de Sales in the background to help out in difficulties. At this point, St. Francis was still only 31 years old.

Soon after the conversion of the Chablais, political conflicts again arose to test the new converts' faith, but they held firm. This is a testimony to the fact that St. Francis had gone right to the core with his little tracts, dismantling the very heart of the Calvinist position rather than simply engaging in ostentatious rhetoric. And of course he went beyond tearing down, as he worked to rebuild the edifice of faith that had been possessed by the Catholic ancestors of these peasants of the Chablais three generations before.

When one considers the poor prospects of success St. Francis had faced at the beginning of his mission to the Chablais, the results are rightly seen as truly remarkable. In one of his later sermons St. Francis would assure his hearers that no amount of preaching and exhortation will produce religious vocations, which are something only God can give; he would certainly affirm the same thing with regard to conversions to the Faith. We can be sure that we will never on this earth know the full story behind the remarkable success of St. Francis de Sales' mission to the Chablais.

We are indeed blessed to have, four centuries later, these tracts which were so instrumental in so many conversions. They are still apropos today, as the same objections against the Faith have unfortunately seen a resurgence in recent years. We hope that St. Francis de Sales' pamphlets may still work today to clear away obstacles to the acceptance of the Catholic Faith in minds and hearts and lead many back to that ancient and ever fresh and pure Faith which is the Faith of Peter, the Faith of our Fathers, the Faith left to us by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and still taught the world over by the Roman Catholic Church.

—The Publishers
November 28, 1989

AUTHOR'S GENERAL INTRODUCTION¹²

by St. Francis de Sales

Gentlemen, having prosecuted for some space of time the preaching of the Word of God in your town, without obtaining a hearing from your people save rarely, casually and stealthily, wishing to leave nothing undone on my part, I have set myself to put into writing some principal reasons, chosen for the most part from the sermons and instructions which I have hitherto addressed to you by word of mouth, in defense of the Faith of the Church. I should indeed have wished to be heard, as the accusers have been, for words in the mouth are living, on paper dead. "The living voice," says S. Jerome, "has a certain indescribable secret strength, and the heart is far more surely reached by the spoken word than by writing."¹³ This it is which made the glorious Apostle S. Paul say in the Scripture, *How shall they believe him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? . . . Faith then cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*¹⁴ My best chance, then, would have been to be heard, in lack of which this writing will not be without good results. (1) It will carry to your houses what you will not receive at our house, at our meetings. (2) It will satisfy those who, as sole answer to the arguments I bring forward, say that they would like to see them laid before some minister, and who believe that the mere presence of the adversary would make them tremble, grow pale and faint away, taking from

¹² Addressed to the inhabitants of Thonon. [Tr.]

¹³ Ep. *ad Paulinum*.

¹⁴ Rom. x.

them all strength; now they can be laid before them. (3) Writing can be better handled; it gives more leisure for consideration than the voice does; it can be pondered more profoundly. (4) It will be seen that I deny a thousand impieties which are attributed to Catholics; this is not in order to escape from the difficulty, as some have said, but to follow the holy intention of the Church, for I write in everybody's sight, and under the censorship of superiors, being assured that, while people will find herein plenty of ignorance, they will not find, God helping, any irreligion or any opposition to the doctrines of the Roman Church.

I must, however, protest, for the relief of my conscience, that all these considerations would never have made me take the resolution of writing. It is a trade which requires apprenticeship and belongs to learned and more cultivated minds. To write well, one must know extremely well; mediocre wits must content themselves with speech, wherein gesture, voice and play of feature brighten the word. Mine, which is of the less, or, to say the downright truth, of the lowest degree of mediocrity, is not made to succeed in this exercise; indeed I should not have thought of it, if a grave and judicious gentleman had not invited and encouraged me to do it: afterward several of my chief friends approved of it, whose opinion I so highly value that my own has no belief from me save in default of other. I have then put down here some principal reasons of the Catholic faith, which clearly prove that all are in fault who remain separated from the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. And I address and offer it to you with good heart, hoping that the causes which keep you from hearing me will not have power to hinder you from reading what I write. Meanwhile, I assure you, that you will never read a writing which shall be given you by any man more devoted to your spiritual service than I am, and I can truly say that I shall never receive a command with more hearty acceptance than I did that which Monseigneur, our most reverend Bishop, gave me, when he ordered me, according to the holy desire of His Highness, whose letter he put into my hand, to come here and bring you the holy Word of God. Nor did I think that I could ever do you a greater service. And in fact I thought that as you will receive no other law for your belief than that interpretation of the Scripture

which seems to you the best, you would hear also the interpretation which I should bring, namely, that given by the Apostolic Roman Church, which hitherto you have not had except perverted and quite disfigured and adulterated by the enemy, who well knew that had you seen it in its purity, never would you have abandoned it. The time is evil; the Gospel of Peace has hard striving to get heard amid so many rumors of war. Still I lose not courage; fruits a little late in coming preserve better than the forward ones. I trust that if Our Lord but once cry in your ears his holy *Ephpheta*, this slowness will result in much the greater sureness. Take then, gentlemen, in good part, this present which I make you, and read my reasons attentively. The hand of God is not withered nor shortened and readily shows its power in feeble and low things. If you have with so much promptitude heard one of the parties, have yet patience to hear the other. Then take, I charge you on the part of God, take time and leisure to calm your understanding, and pray God to assist you with his Holy Spirit in a question of such great importance, in order that he may address you unto salvation. But above all I beg you never to let other passion enter your spirits than the passion of Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, by which we all have been redeemed and shall be saved, unless we are wanting on our part; since he *desires that all men should be saved and should come to the knowledge of his truth*.¹⁵ I beseech his sacred Majesty that he would deign to help me and you in this affair, as he deigned to regard the glorious Apostle S. Paul [whose] conversion [we celebrate] today.

All comes back to the saying of the prophet, *Destruction is thy own, O Israel!*¹⁶ Our Lord was the true Savior who came to enlighten every man and to be a light unto the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of Israel; whereas Israel takes hereby occasion of ignominy. Is not this a great misfortune? And when it is said that he is set for the ruin of many, this must be understood as to the actual event, not as to the intention of the divine Majesty. As the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had no virtue to teach Adam either good or

¹⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

¹⁶ Osee xiii. 9.

evil, though the event gave it this name, because Adam by taking the fruit experienced the evil which his disobedience caused him. The Son of God came for peace and benediction, and not for evil to men; unless some madman would dare to cast up to Our Lord his holy Word: *Woe to that man through whom scandal cometh*,¹⁷ and would condemn him by his own law to have a millstone tied about his neck and be cast into the depths of the sea. Let us then confess that not one of us men is scandalized save by his own fault. This is what I undertake to prove by force of argument. O my God, my Savior, purify my spirit; make this your word distill sweetly into the hearts of my readers, as a sacred dew, to cool the ardour of the passions which they may have, and they shall see how true, in you, and in the Church your spouse, is that which you have said.

It was, I think, that great facility which men find for taking scandal, which made Our Lord say that *scandals needs must come*,¹⁸ or, as S. Matthew says, *Woe to the world because of scandals*;¹⁹ for if men take occasion of their harm from the sovereign good itself, how could there not be scandals in a world where there are so many evils?²⁰

Now there are three sorts of scandals, and all three very evil in their nature, but unequally so. There is a scandal which our learned theologians call *active*. And this is a bad action which gives to another an occasion of wrongdoing, and the person who does this action is justly called scandalous. The two other sorts of scandal are called *passive* scandals, some of them passive scandals *ab extrinseco*, others *ab intrinseco*. For of persons who are scandalized, some are so by the bad actions of another, and receive the active scandal, letting their wills be affected by the scandal, but some are so by their own malice and, having otherwise no occasion, build and fabricate them in their own brain and scandalize themselves with a scandal which is all of their own making. He who scandalizes another fails in charity toward his neighbor, he who scandalizes himself fails in charity

¹⁷ Matt. xviii. 7.

¹⁸ Luke xvii. 1.

¹⁹ xviii. 7.

²⁰ See, in note to Preface, a fuller treatment of the subject of scandal.

toward himself, and he who is scandalized by another is wanting in strength and firmness. The first is scandalous, the second scandalous and scandalized, the third scandalized only. The first scandal is called *datum*, given, the second *acceptum*, taken, the third *receptum*, received. The first passes the third in evil, and the second so much passes the first that it contains first and second, being active and passive both together, as the murdering and destroying oneself is a cruelty more against nature than the killing another. All these kinds of scandal abound in the world, and one sees nothing so plentiful as scandal: it is the principal trade of the devil; whence Our Lord said, *Woe to the world because of scandals*. But scandal taken without occasion holds the chief place by every right, [being] the most frequent, the most dangerous and the most injurious.

And it is of this alone that Our Lord is the object in souls which are given up as a prey to iniquity. But a little patience: Our Lord cannot be scandalous, for all in him is sovereignly good; nor scandalized, for he is sovereignly powerful and wise—how then can it happen that one should be scandalized in him and that he should be set for the ruin of many? It would be a horrible blasphemy to attribute our evil to his majesty. *He wishes that every one should be saved and should come to the knowledge of his truth*. He would have no one perish. Our destruction is from ourselves and our *help* from his divine goodness.²¹ Our Lord then does not scandalize us, nor does his holy Word, but we are scandalized in him, which is the proper way of speaking in this point, as himself teaches, saying, *Blessed is he that shall not be scandalised in me*.²² And when it is said that he has been set for the ruin of many, we must find this verified in the event, which was that many were ruined on account of him, not in the intention of the supreme goodness, which had only sent him as a light for the revelation of the Gentiles and for the glory of Israel. But if there are men who would say the contrary, they have nothing left [as I have said] but to curse their Savior with his own words: *Woe to him by whom scandal cometh*.

21 The Saint adds in margin: *This is the will of God, your sanctification*. 1 Thess. iv. 3. [Tr.]

22 Matt. xi. 6.

I beseech you, let us look in ourselves for the cause of our vices and sins. Our will is the only source of them. Our mother Eve indeed tried to throw the blame on the serpent and her husband to throw it on her, but the excuse was not valid. They would have done better to say the honest *peccavi*, as David did, whose sin was immediately forgiven.

I have said all this, gentlemen, to make known to you whence comes this great dissension of wills in matter of religion, which we see among those who in their mouths make profession of Christianity. This is the principal and sovereign scandal of the world, and in comparison with the others, it alone deserves the name of scandal, and it seems to be almost exactly the same thing when Our Lord says it is necessary that scandals come, and St. Paul says that *there must be heresies*,²³ for this scandal changes with time and, like a violent movement, gradually grows weaker in its evilness. In those Christians who begin the division and this civil war, heresy is a scandal simply *taken*, passive *ab intrinseco*, and there is no evil in the heresiarch save such as is entirely in his own will; no one has part in this but himself. The scandal of the first whom he seduces already begins to be divided, but unequally, for the heresiarch has his share therein on account of his solicitation, the seduced have a share as much the greater as they have had less occasion of following him. Their heresy having taken root, those who are born of heretical parents among the heretics have ever less share in the fault: still, neither these nor those come to be without considerable fault of their own, particularly persons of this age, who are almost all in purely passive scandal. For the Scripture which they handle, the neighborhood of true Christians, the marks which they see in the true Church, take from them all proper excuse, so that the Church from whom they are separated can put before them the words of her Lord: *Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting: and the same are they that give testimony of me.*²⁴ *The works that I do in the name of my Father, they give testimony of me.*²⁵

²³ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

²⁴ John v. 39.

²⁵ Ib. x. 25.

Now I have said that their scandal is purely or almost purely passive. For it is well known that the occasion they pretend to have for their division and departure is the error, the ignorance, the idolatry, which they aver to be in the Church they have abandoned, while it is a thing perfectly certain that the Church in her general body cannot be scandalous, or scandalized, being like her Lord, who communicates to her by grace and particular assistance what is proper to him by nature: for being her head he guides her feet in the right way. The Church is his mystical body, and therefore he takes as his own the honor and the dishonor that are given to her; so it cannot be said that she gives, takes, or receives any scandal. Those then who are scandalized in her do all the wrong and have all the fault: their scandal has no other subject than their own malice, which keeps ever tickling them to make them laugh in their iniquities.

See then what I intend to show in this little treatise. I have no other aim than to make you see, gentlemen, that this Susanna is wrongfully accused and that she is justified in lamenting over all those who have turned aside from her commandments in the words of her spouse: *They have hated me without cause.*²⁶

This I will do in two ways: (1) by certain general reasons and (2) by particular examples which I will bring forward of the principal difficulties, by way of illustration. All that so many learned men have written tends and returns to this, but not in a straight line. For each one proposes a particular path to follow. I will try to reduce all the lines of my argument to this point as to the center as exactly as I can. The first part will serve almost equally for all sorts of heretics: the second will be addressed rather to those whose reunion we have the strongest duty to effect. So many great personages have written in our age that their posterity have scarcely anything more to say but have only to consider, learn, imitate and admire. I will therefore say nothing new and would not wish to do so. All is ancient, and there is almost nothing of mine beyond the needle and thread: the rest I have only had to unpick and sew again in my own way, with this warning of Vincent of Lerins:

“Teach, however, what thou hast learnt; that whilst thou sayest things in a new way thou say not new things.”²⁷

This treatise will seem perhaps to some a little too meager: this does not come from my stinginess but from my poverty. My memory has very little stored up and is kept going only from day to day, and I have but very few books here with which I can enrich myself. But still receive favorably, I beg you, gentlemen of Thonon, this work, and though you have seen many better made and richer, still give some little of your attention to this, which will perhaps be more adapted to your taste than the others are, for its air is entirely Savoyard, and one of the most profitable prescriptions, and the last remedy, is a return to one's natal air. If this profit you not, you shall try others more pure and more invigorating, for there are, thank God, of all sorts in this country. I am about therefore to begin, in the name of God, whom I most humbly beseech to make his holy Word distill sweetly as a refreshing dew into your heart. And I beg you, gentlemen, and those who read this, to remember the words of S. Paul: *Let all bitterness and anger, and indignation, and clamour, and blasphemy be taken away from you, with all malice. Amen.*²⁸

27 Comm. 1^{um}. cap. xxxvii.

28 Eph. iv. 31.

PART I
MISSION

CHAPTER I

THE LACK OF MISSION IN THE MINISTERS OF THE NEW PRETENDED CHURCH LEAVES BOTH THEM AND THEIR FOLLOWERS WITHOUT EXCUSE.

First, then, your ministers had not the conditions required for the position which they sought to maintain, and the enterprise which they undertook. Wherefore they are inexcusable, and you yourselves also, who knew and still know or ought to know this defect in them, have done very wrong in receiving them under such colors. The office they claimed was that of ambassadors of Jesus Christ Our Lord; the affair they undertook was to declare a formal divorce between Our Lord and the ancient Church his spouse, to arrange and conclude by words of present consent, as lawful procurators, a second and new marriage with this young madam, of better grace, said they, and more seemly than the other. For in effect, to stand up as preacher of God's Word and pastor of souls—what is it but to call oneself ambassador and legate of Our Lord, according to that of the Apostle:¹ *We are therefore ambassadors for Christ?* And to say that the whole of Christendom has failed, that the whole Church has erred, and all truth disappeared—what is this but to say that Our Lord has abandoned his Church, has broken the sacred tie of marriage he had contracted with her? And to put forward a new Church—is it not to attempt to thrust upon this sacred and holy Husband a second wife? This is what the ministers of the pretended church have undertaken; this is what they boast of having done; this has been the aim of their discourses, their designs, their writings. But what an injustice have you not committed in believing them? How did you come to take their word so simply? How did you so lightly give them credit?

1 2 Cor. v. 20.

To be legates and ambassadors they should have been sent, they should have had letters of credit from him whom they boasted of being sent by. The affairs were of the greatest importance, for there was question of disturbing the whole Church. The persons who undertook them were extraordinaries of mean quality and private persons, while the ordinary pastors were men of mark, and of most ancient and acknowledged reputation, who contradicted them and protested that these extraordinaries had no charge nor commandment of the Master. Tell me, what business had you to hear them and believe them without having any assurance of their commission and of the approval of Our Lord, whose legates they called themselves? In a word, you have no justification for having quitted that ancient Church in which you were baptized, on the faith of preachers who had no legitimate mission from the Master.

Now you cannot be ignorant that they neither had, nor have, in any way at all, this mission. For if Our Lord had sent them, it would have been either mediately or immediately. We say mission is given mediately when we are sent by one who has from God the power of sending, according to the order which he has appointed in his Church, and such was the mission of S. Denis into France by Clement and of Timothy by S. Paul. Immediate mission is when God himself commands and gives a charge, without the interposition of the ordinary authority which he has placed in the prelates and pastors of the Church: as S. Peter and the Apostles were sent, receiving from Our Lord's own mouth this commandment: *Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,*² and as Moses received his mission to Pharaoh and to the people of Israel. But neither in the one nor in the other way have your ministers any mission. How then have they undertaken to preach? *How shall they preach, says the Apostle, unless they be sent?*³

² Mark xvi. 15.

³ Rom. x. 15.