

THE SPIRITUAL CONFERENCES
OF
SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES
A NEW TRANSLATION
BY
WILLIAM J. RUHL, O.S.F.S.
FROM
THE FRENCH TEXT RECONSTRUCTED
BY
ROGER DEVOS

1997

NIHIL OBSTAT:

IMPRIMATUR:

THIS TRANSLATION OF THE *SPIRITUAL CONFERENCES* IS DRAWN FROM THE
FRENCH WORK ENTITLED:

SAINT FRANÇOIS DE SALES

OEUVRES

PREFACE ET CHRONOLOGIE

PAR ANDRÉ RAVIER

TEXTES PRÉSENTÉS ET ANNOTÉS

PAR ANDRÉ RAVIER

AVEC LA COLLABORATION

DE ROGER DEVOS

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Today, when the words "Spiritual Conference" are used, they usually connote a prepared text which takes anywhere from twenty-five to forty-five minutes for delivery to a wide variety of religious audiences. The message of the "Spiritual Conference" concerns various questions to help understand religious life in the contemporary Church. In the seventeenth century, when renewal in religious life was taking shape after the Council of Trent, "Spiritual Conference" had a quite different meaning. This genre of religious literature was characterized by responses to different questions posed by members of a particular religious community to its Founder(s) or major religious Superior. Today, this genre would be labeled a "religious discussion."

The best way to describe the *Spiritual Conferences* of Saint Francis de Sales is that they were essentially conversations or dialogs between the Founder of the Sisters of the Visitation and the early members of that community at Annecy, Paris and Lyons (1610-1622). The contemporary reader should not be fooled by the length of each *Conference*. Most probably, Francis de Sales in the early years of the foundation of the Visitation at Annecy came several times a week and spoke to the Sisters, taking a few of their questions each time. Later, the results of the individual sessions were united because of the underlying theme that Francis threaded through his response to a particular series of questions over a short period of time.

This brings us to the question of how they should be read now. They are definitely not a prose narrative. Even though skillful scribes of the Visitation put down in writing the memories of one of their Sisters, this did not change the oral nature of Francis' response. This means that the *Spiritual Conferences* should be spoken, read aloud, or at the very least, with a movement of the lips so that the content and the nuances of their originator can be fully realized. Even later purgations of the text by Saint Jane de Chantal did not mar the oral quality of the *Spiritual Conferences*.

How well should a contemporary reader of the *Spiritual Conferences* be acquainted with the spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales? It is my personal contention after ruminating over these *Conferences* for eight years that a reader should be acquainted with the companion volumes of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* and the *Treatise on the Love of God*. I call these two great works companion works because the *Introduction's* purpose is to bring about in its reader a firm commitment to live a life of holiness. The person is brought to the point of realization of what God's grace does for and offers to true disciples of Jesus Christ. The first four books of the *Treatise on the Love of God* delineate God's working in love with the disciple on the way to perfection. This then leads to the books on Prayer in which the committed disciple may experience a passing over from meditative prayer to contemplative prayer and skillfully marks out the experience in each. These are

followed by the exercises of effective contemplation which leads to the stripping of the self, and finally, to the practice of holy indifference. It is my personal belief that Francis de Sales firmly believed that every disciple of Jesus is called to the contemplative life of prayer. However, this does not mean that everyone will reach the same stage in contemplative development. God is the one who takes the initiative; it is God who takes the lead.

With the background that these two major works provide, one will be able to see in the *Spiritual Conferences* a melding together of Francis de Sales' thought presented in the *Introduction* and in the *Treatise on the Love of God*. Though the styles of these works are quite different, their message is one: to lead the Christian disciple to a love for and, ultimately, union with God.

The content of the *Spiritual Conferences* is directed toward what is necessary for perfection with the Sisters of the Visitation. For Francis de Sales, this is a living out of the gospel mandate, living a life of charity, love toward God and love for one's neighbor. This life of charity must manifest itself in the virtue of humility before God and in gentleness toward one's neighbor. Characteristic of writings in the seventeenth century, the language that Francis de Sales uses with reference to humility carries with it a negative asceticism, contempt for the self, the miserable state of the self. However, this must be viewed in the context of the whole of his writings. To understand Francis' conception of humility, the Christian disciple must be clearly aware of the meaning of what has happened to humankind in light of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and, more particularly, to the Christian who experiences this mystery of Divine Love symbolically in the Sacrament of Baptism. It is God who has taken, continues to take and will continue to take the initiative toward his creation, especially human creation. It is only by understanding grace as the mysterious presence of the Holy Spirit that a Christian disciple intimately knows that he or she is incapable of achieving salvation without God's initiative and constant assistance in our life project. Understanding the reality of grace means self-honesty for the disciple—that in and of oneself, one is nothing without God. It is when the disciple can honestly say: "I am nothing," that God can bring his saving plan to fulfillment. This is why there is some necessity for reading the first four books of the *Treatise* because as we learn the way of humility, so our confidence in the loving power of God grows more firm and constant. It is only by emptying the self that God empowers the disciple to become the icon of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This brings us to the virtue of gentleness toward our neighbor. When we realize God's superabounding graciousness toward ourselves, only then can we come to appreciate what God does for our neighbor. Thus, we must come to see and love in them what we see and love in ourselves—the loving kindness of our God. Ultimately, this demands charity in all things, since we all have been blessed by God with varying gifts of the Holy Spirit so as to become one in mind and heart.

These are the two virtues that Francis de Sales threads through all of his responses to the questions raised by the Sisters of the Visitation. They are the rock upon which the Visitation rises or falls; they are the hallmark of Salesian Spirituality.

Now we must consider the principles that guided me in this translation. First of all, I wanted to present an accurate, readable translation of the reconstructed text prepared by Monsieur Roger Devos. Secondly, I wanted to use contemporary language and the insights of contemporary theological writers to make the text more meaningful for readers of our time. Finally, I shortened the sentence structure in many places in the French text by breaking up long, run-on sentences into shorter ones in the English translation. This was not always possible because faithfulness to the reconstructed text and particular thoughts and insights of Saint Francis de Sales prevented it.

Furthermore, because of many linguistic changes between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, it has been necessary to rework some of the titles of the *Conferences* as well as some words within the *Conferences*. These are some examples: *The Fifth Conference*, entitled *On the Love of Creatures* in the French text, has been translated *On the Love of Human Persons*, since the subject of the Conference is the relationship among the Sisters within a particular community of the Visitation. *The Seventh Conference* is entitled *On Several Questions* rather than "On Antipathies" because it deals with several questions as well as treating "Natural Dislikes." The word "antipathy" has little meaning in the contemporary world; however, "natural dislike" seems to convey what Saint Francis de Sales was trying to address.

I have also given *The Tenth Conference* the title *On Heartfelt Love* rather than *On Cordiality*. I did this because cordiality today no longer carries the meaning that Saint Francis de Sales intended. Being "cordial" in contemporary society sometimes carries the connotation of superficial respect. *The Fifteenth Conference* is now called *On Indulging the Self*. The French text bears the title *De la tendreté que l'on a sur soi-même*, which when translated literally means "On the tenderness one has for oneself." I believe today we can speak of "Indulging the Self" because Saint Francis de Sales was addressing the problem of an over-attentiveness to the self to the detriment of love for one's neighbor.

Within the text, I have not translated the French word "ame" by the English word "soul" but by the English words "human spirit." The principal reason for this is to make the *Spiritual Conferences* more readable to a person schooled in contemporary theological thought. Today, contemporary theology no longer speaks of the human person as a composite of body and soul but rather as "enfleshed spirit" to signify the oneness and the interrelatedness of the spiritual and material in the one human person. A further reason is that in some places Francis de Sales himself uses "human spirit" rather than "human soul." What he usually means in the context of the *Spiritual Conferences* is that if a Sister wishes to be a true Daughter of the Visitation, she must practice virtue by overcoming the contrary fault. To do this one must change one's heart and this can only be accomplished by a firm and constant act of the will. These are the ultimate decisions that a Sister of the Visitation has to make in her religious commitment. In contemporary theology, such decisions are made at the ground of one's being where the human person faces God, "in the highest point of the human spirit," as Saint Francis de Sales would say. Such decisions in the human spirit vitally affect persons as they make their journey toward ultimate union with God.

As I mentioned above in discussing humility as one of the foundation stones and hallmarks of the Salesian spirit, I have tried to avoid much of the negative parlance concerning humility that has come

down even to our own times. Francis de Sales saw the human person as essentially good and created and re-created according to the Word-become-flesh, Jesus Christ. The reality of grace brings confidence in God. This causes a self-examination that reveals that in and of ourselves we are nothing in relation to who and what God is and what he has done for us. Perhaps the *Second Conference* and the *Nineteenth Conference* should be read before one undertakes reading the remaining *Conferences*, especially the *Eighth Conference, On the Five Degrees of Humility*. Humility has to be seen positively as well as negatively so that the words of John the Baptizer, "He must increase, I must decrease" (John 3:30) can become the goal of Saint Francis de Sales' teaching on this foundational virtue.

Two appendices have been added to the *Spiritual Conferences* in the reconstructed text. They are drawn from the recollections of Sisters or monasteries particularly about the spirit of the Sisters of the Visitation. Others are extracts from the foundation of different monasteries in the principal cities of France. The final extract describes the final days of Saint Francis de Sales' life, his final visit with Saint Jane de Chantal and a summary of his final conference to the Sisters at Lyons.

Because the final reconstructed text for this translation of the *Spiritual Conferences* was drawn from many manuscripts, variants must be expected in various parts of the text. Not all the variants could be incorporated, but the principal ones from the 1629 and the 1933 editions of the *Spiritual Conferences* are offered following the Notes at the end of each conference. These are signaled by a "v" and a number within parentheses throughout the *Conferences*. Also end-notes are given for scriptural citations, biographical sources as well as corrections for the reconstructed text. These are signaled by the letter "n" and a number within parentheses throughout the *Conference*. A "Table of Correspondence" showing the use of various manuscripts to produce the final text is given at the very end of the work, as well as the new text's relation to the editions of 1629 and 1933.

Although this translation has been eight years in the making, it really has been an honor and a privilege to be a witness to the dialogs that existed between Saint Francis de Sales and the early Sisters of the Visitation. At times, it was like being there when Saint Francis de Sales gave the particular conference. I wish to thank Father André Ravier, S.J., and Monsieur Roger Devos for having given me permission to undertake this new English translation as well as for their support. I also wish to thank Mrs. Linda Gerstyle for her work on the early typescripts of the project and a special thanks to Mrs. Marianne Hanton for her perseverance in preparing the final typescript.

William J. Ruhl, O.S.F.S.
De Sales School of Theology
Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RECONSTRUCTED TEXT

The *Spiritual Conferences* is not a work written up in the quiet of a study; rather, as their title suggests, they are dialogs or conversations of Francis de Sales with the Daughters of the Visitation on spiritual topics and religious observances. On June 6, 1610, Madame de Chantal, Marie Jacqueline Favre, daughter of the President, and Jean Charlotte de Brécharde had begun a new religious congregation in a small house in the Perriere district of Annecy (1). In the beginning, Francis de Sales was consulted about the smallest problem that arose and he made himself available to initiate these beginners in their new life and to give the principles of this new religious institute in the form of practical reflections. Saint Jane de Chantal wrote: "Our holy Founder visited us often, heard our confessions every fifteen days and gave us short spiritual conferences to teach us about true perfection. He gave to each of us the practice of a particular virtue to be carried out in light of our personal need. Thus, the first year has passed with much growth in holy perfection" (2).

There are also the recollections of Mère Marie Adrienne Fichet (3) that are found in the *La Maison de la galerie* (4). These have allowed us to reconstruct the atmosphere of the early years of the Visitation and also to give the background of the *Spiritual Conferences*. She states: "On the Feast of Saint Lawrence in 1612, our holy Father came to see our venerable Foundress, always accompanied by his chaplain, Michael Favre. He would never visit without him. All the Sisters would come down to the orchard by the fountain. He would sit beneath the vine arbor on the side where the steps lead to the garden. The Sisters would sit on the ground around him" (5). Sometimes a thunderstorm would momentarily interrupt the conference, which he would continue "on the porch where the Sisters had followed him." In bad weather the small community would gather in Madame de Chantal's room. "Our holy Father gave several conferences there. At this very time he was writing his book on the love of God and our holy Mother would ask him what he had written from the time of his last visit. He would tell us about the chapters of the book and then give us several beautiful instructions.... It was in this room that he came to say goodbye before going to preach at Chambéry. He spoke to us about promptitude in obedience and the respect that was to be paid to our Superiors" (6).

The early conferences at the Gallery seem to have been frequent and numerous. Mère Fichet says: "What consoled the early holy Mothers (these became the first Superiors when the community made new foundations) were the frequent conferences by our holy Founder. When it rained or snowed..., he would visit two or three times a week and sometimes more often" (7). Likewise, he came even if it concerned a relatively small matter, like the *Conference on the Obligation of the Constitutions* and the *Talk on Obedience*, as well as some fragments given in Mère Fichet's account. The *Conference on the Obligation of the Constitutions* appears to have been given during the summer of 1611, a little

after the religious profession of the first Sisters because the saintly Bishop, who ordinarily spoke from the abundance of his heart, had written some notes, a fragment of which has come down to us, on the back of a letter dated July 28, 1611 (8). With reference to the *Talk on Obedience*, it should really be placed sometime in February, 1612. According to a confidence of Mère Fichet that is cited above, it should be placed before his leaving to preach the Lenten Sermons at Chambéry. On that occasion, the Saint spoke to the Sisters on *Promptitude in Obedience* and the *Respect Owed to Superiors* (9). The fact that only two *Conferences* have been preserved from this period can be explained undoubtedly by the reticence of Francis de Sales, who was not particularly overjoyed that his informal talks would be put down in writing. He says: "They are all to be found in [his] book on the *Love of God*" (10). Likewise, during this time the faithful narrator of the *La Maison de la galerie* included a portion of the conferences of the Bishop of Geneva.

When the small community left the house in the Perriere district on October 3, 1612, to occupy the house of Judge Nicollin within the walls of the city, the conferences would continue while waiting for the construction of the monastery. Because of her excellent memory, Mère Claude-Agnès Joly (11) de La Roche committed them to writing. Mère de Chauzy wrote on the death of this Sister: "Our most venerable Mère de Chantal admitted that she had been touched most deeply since our Congregation had lost one of its most worthy members. The community would be eternally obligated to her for having been so careful in recalling with such precision the conferences of our venerable Father and a great number of his sermons as well. God gifted her with such a wonderful memory. She repeated word for word what our good Bishop had preached even several days after having heard him. And the public is indebted to her caring concern in this work where all persons in the spiritual life can and should taste such pure devotion..." (12). We owe to her the *Third Conference* through the *Sixteenth Conference* of the present edition with the exception of the *Thirteenth Conference, On the Intention We Must Have on Entering Religious Life*, which was given at Paris. They were put in order in the neighborhood of the years 1615 through July, 1620.

Dom Mackey writes: "*The Conference on Renunciation* was composed from two distinct conferences according to the Rouen manuscript. The general tone allows us to catch a glimpse that the practices of the Institute are not yet strictly in place and the *Rule* was not firmly established. This phrase 'Indifference is a virtue that one cannot acquire in five years' would show that the first part of the *Conference* would have been given in 1615, five years after the foundation of the Visitation. The second part (*On the Love Toward Human Persons* according to the Rouen manuscript) must be pretty near the same time. The *Conference on Modesty* contains so many details without making mention of the *Constitutions*, which would have been determined much later rather than nearly the same time. It seems to date back to the time of the redaction of Mère de La Roche. The phrase 'Saint Bonaventure, whose feast we celebrate today', allows us to place it on July 14, 1616" (13).

Toward the end of 1615, Francis de Sales was overwhelmed with ecclesiastical and civil matters. He wanted to reserve all of his time for the completion of the *Treatise on the Love of God*. He cut down on the number of visits to the community which had had sufficient time for experimentation. There was no need for continual recourse to him. Jane de Chantal writes, "There is no need to trouble our dear Father to come for such trivial things. Moreover, we must call on him much less so

as to allow him the time for his book" (14). On August 1, 1617, she notes: "We have not had the consolation of seeing you for a year" (15). With this situation in mind, we can place the *Conference on Confidence* around 1615. It bears many similarities to Book Nine of the *Treatise on the Love of God*.

"Allusions are made either to this work 'printed recently' or to the distribution of books for a particular Sister's reading, which is done at the beginning of each new year, or finally the worries over construction (the monastery church was being built) would lead us to believe that the *Conference on Natural Dislikes* should be dated in the early days of 1617.... The *Conferences on the Five Degrees of Humility* should be placed in 1617 because of the reference that is made to the twenty-five or thirty Sisters, which is the number of Sisters in the Community of Annecy at that time" (16).

In retrospect, the year 1618 seems to have been a particularly fruitful one because it gives us the *Conferences on the Rule, On Heartfelt Love, On Condescension, On the Virtue of Obedience*. The Visitation has begun to flourish from the Holy Source (Annecy); Lyons, Moulins, Grenoble, Bourges have been founded between 1615 and 1618. Copies of the *Conferences* have begun to be circulated among the new monasteries. In a letter of 1618, which is the date of the *Conference on the Rule*, Mère de Chantal writes to Mère Jean Charlotte de Brèchard: "We are sending you all the *Conferences* that our Founder has given us since our return from Lyons; the one on the *Rule* is wonderful" (17). Dom Mackey points out: "The conferences *On Heartfelt Love* and *On the Virtue of Obedience* would have been given in the summer of 1618. The teachings that are presented there show that these *Conferences* were given after the approval of the Congregation. Moreover, Saint Jane de Chantal is present. She will leave Annecy in October, 1618, only to return in January, 1623 (18). The conference *On Condescension* is placed in 1618 for the same reasons. Before leaving for Annecy, Mère de Chantal pressured Francis de Sales to give some practical norms so that the new monasteries might share in them. She wrote to Mère Péronne-Marie de Châtel, "You will have all the *Conferences* that the Bishop has given us as well as those he will give us in the future. My dear Daughter, insofar as possible, I want him to use the time when he comes here for that, before our taking leave, so that all the monasteries may share this treasure. Those who are here will always have enough time to speak with him..." (19).

During his last stay in Paris in August, 1619, Francis de Sales gave the Sisters of the first monastery at Paris, which Mère de Chantal came to establish, the *Conferences on the Intention that we must have on entering Religious Life* (20). On his return, he wrote Mère de Chantal, who remained at Paris as the Superior of the new monastery:

Our Sisters here are doing very well and there is nothing to criticize except that they want to do too much so that our Mother on her return will find that all is well. That weighs them down a bit. Yesterday, we had a conference in which I put them at ease (21).

We are probably dealing here with the *Conference on Simplicity*, which can be dated precisely as December 12, 1619.

On July 6, 1620, Mère Claude Agnès Joly de La Roche left Annecy with some companions to found the Visitation monastery at Orleans. Saint Francis de Sales gave the *Conference On Foundations, On the Subject of Hope*. The faithful redactor of the *Conferences* had found a replacement worthy of the position in the person of Mère Marie-Marguerite Michel (22), then Novice Mistress. Mère de Chaugy spoke about this responsibility: "She took special care to gather all the advice and practices that the man of God gave them. She paid strict attention to all the exhortations that he gave them so frequently so that every word that he offered the Sisters would be taken up like a manna so precious and satisfying to nourish their spirit. After doing that, she put all these spiritual riches down on paper. Her memory, or rather the Holy Spirit whom she invoked in a special way for this work, would place all the exhortations in the same order that the Bishop had given them during his talk. This collection was finally read to the community so that each Sister could add what might have been forgotten. It never happened that something had to be added to what she had written" (23). We owe to her the *Conferences on the Vows, On Generosity*, and most probably *On the Sacraments*. The *Conference on the Vows* should be placed in the springtime of 1621, according to a letter of Saint Jane de Chantal to Sister François-Marguerite Favrot. The Foundress writes: "You will send us, I am assured, the *Conference* that our Founder gave you.... Yes, my dear Sister, there is certainly no more important an act among us than the reception of new Sisters. May God be praised! He has inspired the Bishop to teach us about this subject" (24). Dom Mackey tells us: "This would be toward the end of the same year in which the *Conference on the Sacraments* would have been given. Everything is well established: the obligation of the Office, the practice of the *Directory*, etc. The allusion to the community at Dijon, founded in May 1622, puts the *Conference on Generosity* in the summer of the same year" (25).

There is no question raised about the date for the *Collection of Questions* and the *Last Conference*. They had been given at Lyons a little before the death of Saint Francis de Sales, somewhere between November 29 and December 26, 1622. The *Collection*, as the title indicates, does not constitute a fragment drawn from a single event but a compilation of conferences given to the community on questions raised either by the Superior or an individual Sister, which explains the passing from the plural to the singular in the questions and the responses (26).

From what has been said so far, the reader will readily understand that the history of the text of the *Conferences* and that of the subsequent editions are fairly confusing. From the very beginning we should remember that we are in the presence of a particular literary genre and that we will never have more than probabilities on the material exactitude of the words spoken by Saint Francis de Sales, even though the scrupulous fidelity of the Visitandines to collect even the smallest remarks of their founder guarantees the Salesian genuineness of the thought. Saint Francis de Sales spoke in a familiar style, improvising most of the time, without notes. Above all, only a single page dealing with the *First Conference* has been preserved in his works (27). It is also possible that he himself reviewed certain texts before they were put in their final form. But we have no proof of it. In addition, we do not have the original redaction of Mère Claude-Agnès Joly de La Roche and Mère Marie-Marguerite Michel.

We must now proceed to examine the text of the *Conférences* in the varied manuscripts of the seventeenth century which are impossible to date with any precision:

1. The Manuscript of the Visitation of Rouen (173ff, 235 x 185) is by far the most complete and important text. It is entitled: *A Collection of the Particular Conférences of the then Most Reverend Bishop of Geneva, Our Holy Father and Founder, given in our First Monastery at Annecy.*
2. The Manuscript of the Visitation of Mans (99 pp., 290 x 220) is really in poor condition, saved from final disaster, since what remains begins on page 237.
3. Manuscript #113 of the Public Library at Bourges (petit in quarto of 152 leaves) appears to be a compilation made by a Sister for a particular purpose, for it contains several extracts from the *Custom Book* and *Responses* of Saint Jane de Chantal, etc.
4. The Manuscript (Case X 3no 2) of the First Monastery of the Visitation of Paris, 43 written pages, is a notebook entitled: *A Collection of Questions presented to Our Blessed Father in our monastery at Lyons with the Last Conference that he gave to the Sisters on the feast of Saint Stephen, 1622.* It also includes the personal Conference given to Sister Claude-Simplicienne Fardel. This manuscript, despite its limited content, is of great importance because it is the only one that offers the *Collection of Questions* given at Lyons.
5. The Manuscript of the Visitation of Caen (in folio - 870 pp) is entitled the *Advice and Instructions of our Father Saint Francis de Sales drawn from the Handwritten Conférences.* This is a vast and unusual compilation done by Sister Ann-Thérèse de Matignon, who died at the monastery in this city in 1694. With reference to the *Conférences*, it contains only fragments, which do not appear in the edition of 1629 (28).

Mère de Chantal conceived the project of one day publishing an edition of the *Conférences*. She writes to Mère de Blonay on June 22, 1625, "Father (Binet) (29) who has seen the *Conférences* thinks that this book will be very useful and worthy of the author" (30). She does not follow through immediately with the project because she was concerned with foundations, which were multiplying at such a rapid rate as well as with the depositions to be given for the beatification of Saint Francis de Sales. However, in May, 1628, a book appeared entitled *The Spiritual Conférences and Conversations of the Blessed Francis de Sales, Prince-Bishop of Geneva, Founder of the Ladies of the Visitation. At Tournon. For Pierre Dobret, Marchand Library of Lyons.* This edition was done by Alexander de Clostre, printer of the University of Valence. What happened? Dom Mackey writes: "Charity and prudence have placed a thick veil over this matter which time has not removed. It is a difficult matter if only the correspondence of Saint Jane de Chantal would have addressed it sufficiently to allow some conjectures. We will try to do so by quoting Saint Jane de Chantal. On April 14, 1628, she tells Mère de Blonay that 'the *Conférences (Colloquies)* have been printed with the approval of the Parliament of Grenoble...' 'I have put in writing for you' she adds, 'the name of Cordelier whose brother printed them for the library'" (31).

A very indelicate situation existed that leaves the impression that Mère de Chantal considered the *Conférences* rightfully as the treasure of the Visitation. She was so dismayed, more than she ever thought she would be. One can understand it if one places oneself in the circumstances in which she found herself. It was impossible to entrust to the public these familiar and intimate conferences without some clarification and preliminary corrections. She was far from allowing herself to become depressed. She immediately took the offensive in order to withdraw from sale all copies of the edition of 1628 (32). Her action was well taken, since the book has very rarely appeared in our times. Then she took action to obtain an exclusive title for the Visitation. Finally, she began to prepare an authentic edition immediately after revising the *Conférences* (33).

Father Binet (34), provincial of the Society of Jesus, participated in this work and the Saint herself became involved in the important editing. She writes to Mère Catherine-Charlotte de Crémaux, Superior of the First Monastery of Lyons:

For our *Conférences*, I beg you to send us the two copies that our Sisters at Paris have forwarded to you; we would like to go over them again so that they are most exact. There can be nothing resembling the slightest gloss since they will be available to the general public (35).

Intimate details, allusions to people still living, precisions concerning the *Rule* and the Customs of the Visitation are cut out. The familiar style and any redundant expressions are modified. Some points of humor are willfully removed in order to give Saint Francis de Sales the noble demeanor that must be present in the writings of a Saint. The *Conférences* were grouped in a logical order without any concern for chronology. Three sermons preached in the Church of the Visitation were added: "On Constancy," "On Three Spiritual Laws," "On the Virtues of Saint Joseph." Also, several fragments of sermons and of correspondence relating to the subject were inserted. However, the *Collection* and the *Last Conference* were removed. Saint Jane de Chantal wrote to Mère de Blonay:

With reference to the *Collection* that you made from what our holy Father spoke to your Daughters about on the feast of Saint Stephen, those who have seen the *Conférences* (They are several very capable persons) have made a judgment that these can and should not be placed in the edition in this state because they are not well connected nor do they follow from one another (36).

In the summer of 1629, the authentic edition appeared: *The True Spiritual Conférences of Blessed Francis de Sales, Prince-Bishop of Geneva, Teacher and Founder of the Order of the Religious of the Visitation of Holy Mary*. At Lyons, by Vincent de Coeursilly, Marchand Library, on Tupin, under the Standard of the Fleur-de-Lis 1629. With the Approval of the King.

If we compare the two editions to the manuscripts cited above, we must acknowledge that despite enormous defects, the text most faithful to the first redaction is found in the *Colloquies* (1628 edition) and not in the *True Conférences*. Dom Mackey himself, even though he defends the text of 1629,

recognizes the fact: "Nevertheless, one cannot deny that the *Colloquies* reproduce more exactly the first redaction for the totality of the teachings and for the distribution of materials" (37). While totally understanding the indignation of Mère de Chantal, we can no longer share it within the demands of modern criticism. She wrote to Mère de Crémaux in February, 1631:

We have put in for reading at table the book of the *False Conferences* in order to see what it was. We have been wholly scandalized at it, seeing the boldness of misrepresenting totally the spirit of our holy Founder and the demands made on him. Likewise, I beg you to burn all of them or better help bind them together in packets or glue them together. It is a book that has no merit and one that should never be read (38).

Certain of the *Colloquies* are full of printing errors and mistakes, which sometimes results in a misreading or a meaningless sentence. The editor has not resisted, nor does he avoid, the temptation of improving on the style that he judges too simple or very naïve. He has done it in a very stilted and arbitrary way. On our part, he deserves praise for having been substantially faithful to a good manuscript.

Editions of the *True Conferences* multiplied in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (39). The edition of the *Complete Works of Saint Francis de Sales* by Herissant (Paris, 1768) gives for the first time among the *Opuscula* (Shorter Works) an extract of the *Last Conference of December 26, 1622*. Blaise, Vives, Migne have published this fragment as a *Twenty-Second Conference* (40). The Bethune edition (Paris, 1833) published for the first time several additions to the edition of 1629 in the Fifteenth and Final Tome under the title *Collection of some points taken from the Manuscripts of the Conferences*. Migne inserted these extracts into the same text as the *Conferences*, Vives placed two at the end of the Volume and inserted the other in the middle of the *Sixteenth Conference* (41).

In 1895, the sixth volume of the great Annecy edition of the *Complete Works (Oeuvres) of Saint Francis de Sales* appeared. Out of respect for Saint Jane de Chantal, Dom Mackey felt himself obligated to give as the text the edition of 1629, while correcting only misprints. There is no doubt that he placed in the variants and appendices a great number of fragments of the *Colloquies* and other manuscripts, enriching considerably the principal text. But he did not publish all of them. He wrote: "It is in light of their purpose while reviewing all of the very interesting variants of the manuscripts and the *Colloquies* for the present edition, some were eliminated because they might be possibly taken in the wrong way" (42). In our estimation, he was wrong in not distinguishing clearly enough the text of the *Colloquies* with his stylistic revisions from the text of the manuscript while giving often enough in the variants and appendices a text that is in reality an amalgamation of the two.

For a time the *Complete Works (Oeuvres)* fell short of the greatness that one would expect to find there. Tome Six deceived scholars and stirred up protests. Furthermore, the Visitation at Annecy, by publishing in 1933 a popular edition of the *Conferences*, was not content to simply reproduce the

text of 1629. The preface of the new edition stated: "The text of 1629 was not absolutely authentic but included some fragments of the letters and sermons of the Saint that had been added to the familiar talks given at the Visitation in order to give them more stature and to render them more in line with the thought that should be contained in a book of spirituality" (43). The text also recognized that there was no longer any reason to suppress certain passages that are, moreover, perfectly innocent. Truthfully, the edition of 1895 had already started the work of restoration by giving in the appendices or in the variants the many fragments suppressed in 1629 and later editions. There remains one last step to be taken. This means making some of the small secrets publicly known. Oh! A much smaller number than previously believed and discussed. And how innocent! One will judge them by the charming morsel about the cold or warm broth (p. 80) (44) which seems in fact most characteristic of the passages that were cut out and appear here for the first time. Crumbs falling from the table! All have been collected. No detail can be neglected if it would make Saint Francis de Sales better known and if it would shed a little more light on this great figure and offer new light on the intimate life of his dear Visitation. It goes without saying that this new edition has revealed the spurious fragments drawn from the *Letters* and the *Sermons* that were added to the *Conferences* so as to give them a more heavenly quality. Now all the *Conferences* would be had, not merely the Conferences.

Unhappily, this edition was acclaimed too quickly as complete and definitive (46). It laid itself open to certain criticisms. It is always possible to find fault with such a work by listing corrections and other details. It continued to ignore chronology. It presented three sermons, *On Constancy*, *On Three Spiritual Laws* and *For the Feast of Saint Joseph* as *Conferences*. It omitted some passages from manuscripts for which there was no valid reason to suspect their authenticity. This time, important fragments would certainly not be in question. But why omit in the *Conference On the Virtue of Obedience* the example of Jacob, who in the Rouen manuscript is so intimately a part of the whole text? On the contrary, in the editions which suppress this passage, the example of Naaman is inserted in a very abrupt manner, after a series of positive examples illustrating blind and loving obedience. Just because it lacks an introductory phrase! In return, the story of Jacob is often found in the *Colloquies* with some variations in style, but an absurd conclusion is reached which completely distorts the idea that Francis de Sales wanted to inculcate in his audience. "Consider, I pray you, how deeply he thought about how dearly this maternal love would cost him and in what extremes he would find himself if Isaac were to recognize him as they approached, besides what if Esau were to surprise Rebecca and Jacob" (47). We have there, so to speak in passing, a striking example of the way the editor of the *Colloquies* worked.

Occasionally, the editors of the 1933 edition have allowed themselves to be intimidated by written material which seems to put blame on the conduct of certain religious or Superiors, in fact even of certain confessors, and have removed them (48). At other times, they seem not to have understood the humor of Saint Francis de Sales (49). Or it may even have been a doctrinal inaccuracy which made them suppress one or two sentences. Further, in the *Conference* cited above on page 121, the edition of 1933 restores a long passage omitted in the edition of 1629 but it suppresses a phrase which is found in the manuscript. "The commands of the Pope, even when they concern small matters, do not oblige under pain of sin, except if one would break them through contempt or more

through total neglect which reveals that one does not want to be subject to them at all." It is concerned there with a simple reflection of good sense which would not involve committing an offense against the authority of the Holy See.

We must point out an important omission because it concerns a small sentence contested in the famous Quietist controversy between Fenelon and Bossuet. This is not the place to rehash the history of the conflict (50), but it is known that M. De Cambrai cited numerous passages from Saint Francis de Sales, borrowing notably from the *Conferences* in his *Explanations of the Maxims of the Saints on the Interior Life*. Bossuet accused his opponent not only of having misunderstood the meaning of certain passages but also of having cited them incorrectly. This sentence is not found in the edition of 1629: "The desire for eternal life is good but it is only necessary to desire the will of God." Fenelon had no trouble in explaining this: "This passage is taken exactly from the collection made in 1628, six years after the death of the Saint in the place where he died and where he had given several spiritual conferences. This collection was dedicated to the Bishop of Belley, an intimate friend of the author and knowledgeable in Francis' truth-filled maxims and very zealous about his teaching. It was approved by two theologians and by the Vicar General of Valence. It is true that the Daughters of the Visitation of Annecy published an edition of the *Conferences* as the true ones, complaining that any other edition that they do not mention is defective. With reference to exactness, when the edition of Lyons was in fact reviewed, it did not show that this edition contained some errors directed against the teaching of the Saint. Furthermore, even if this edition would serve no other purpose than to deprive you of any possibility to claim that the Saint is on your side, i.e., when you assert that if God were not to grant us happiness, we would not have reason enough to love him—such an edition would truly deserve to be approved and kept for serving such a useful purpose" (51). Fenelon was right here to defend the teaching of the *Colloquies* because the incriminating sentence is in fact found in the manuscript of Paris.

In light of this, it was impossible to return purely and simply to one of the previous editions. We have constructed a new text directly from the manuscripts themselves, primarily from that of Rouen, which contains the greatest number of *Conferences*. It is the Rouen manuscript that we have followed with a preference for the parts that the manuscripts have in common and for those parts that are only presented as variants, without concern for the meaning of the text. In the case of gaps, we point out in notes the manuscript we have used. There can be no question of giving all the variants, but we have believed it useful to point out those of the edition of 1629, reproduced in the 1895 Annecy edition and those of 1933, when they modify the meaning of the text. We have suppressed the three sermons kept up to this time in the text of the *Conferences*, so as to maintain a respect for their true character (52). We have classified them according to the chronological order proposed by Dom Mackey. Certainly, the learned Benedictine did not hide the conjectural nature of his work but by verifying his arguments, we do not believe that we can do any better than he did. A table of correspondence of the present edition with the preceding ones will permit the reader, moreover, to recover the order of the *Conferences* in the previously different classification (53).

We give in Appendix I five texts which are connected to the literary genre of the *Conferences*. The first is a particular conversation with Sister Claude-Simplicienne Fardel; the second constitutes in reality

an artificial collection of thoughts of Saint Francis de Sales, and the third is a short exhortation of farewell which had been given at the monastery in Paris. The fourth and fifth are from short extracts drawn from the unpublished History of the Foundations of the First Monasteries in Paris and Grenoble. In Appendix II, one will find in part large extracts from two unpublished texts that contain some fragments of *Conferences* and constitute a precious witness to the manner in which Saint Francis de Sales delivered his improvised conferences and about the spiritual milieu of the origins of the Visitation. The first is the account known by the name of the *La Maison de la galerie*. The Archives of the Visitation at Annecy conserves several ancient copies that reveal sufficiently great divergences among them. This is explained no doubt by the fact that the question is not the writings of Mère Fichet but the *Conferences* about the origins of the Visitation collected later by the Sisters (54). The second is the *Account of the Foundation of the First Monastery of Lyons*, due in part to Sister Louise Gasparde of Saint Paul, an eyewitness to many of the facts she recounts.

With reference to the spiritual teaching of the *Conferences*, we are content to direct the reader to the General Introduction (written for the Pleiade edition) by Andre Ravier, S.J. (55). One finds in effect in these improvised conferences the same fundamental teachings that give form to Salesian Spirituality. Moreover, they are found adapted to a very precise situation, that of extremely fervent religious women who for the most part are still lacking in experience but are opening themselves to a new way of life.

Without repeating here the whole history of the origins of the Visitation, it is important to remember from it the more important sections for a good understanding of the text of the *Conferences*. Saint Francis de Sales had no intention of founding a true religious order but a simple congregation without solemn vows and the enclosure which would allow for the visiting of widows, the sick and persons in poor health (56). The New Institute would dedicate a part of its activity to serving the poor who were sickly but in their homes:

"On the upcoming feast of Pentecost," the founder wrote, "a congregation of women of great virtue and good reputation will come into existence. They will perform many works of charity especially for the poor and the sickly. It is these blessed women who want to dedicate a portion of their time in service to these people. They want to follow the custom in this area of rugged country in which women minister to the sick and the poor" (57).

This union of the contemplative and the active life in a congregation was still a novelty in France, but Saint Francis de Sales was inspired from the examples that he had seen in Italy. On his journey to Rome in 1599, he had visited la Torre Specchi founded by Saint Frances of Rome where some widows banded together under the name of Oblates but attached to the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Mary of the Snows and were living out the contemplative and active life wearing a distinct habit but without vows and without the enclosure. Much later he met André Valladier, author of a life of Saint Frances of Rome (58). He told me, "Among other things, Saint Frances, just canonized (59), had been one of the greatest saints that it is possible to imagine." He had written her life in Latin by order of the Pope and he would go to Paris to have it printed. On my inquiring about the particulars of this

life, he told me that she had been married for forty years and that in her widowhood she began a congregation of widows who lived together in community observing a form of religious life. No one enters their house except for good reasons. But they go out to serve the poor and the sick, which is their particular ministry. This community is bearing fruit and sets a good example in Rome (60). The congregations established at Milan by Saint Charles Borromeo are a similar example.

The founder has left us in a letter a description of the initial intention of the Visitation: "This congregation receives women, widows and young girls without distinction.... They serve a year of initiation.... After the novitiate, they are received solemnly into the community, not by vows, for solemn vows are not made, but more in terms of membership or dedication. Blessed Cardinal Borromeo set up the Ursulines along this line with a few changes.... Men are not permitted to enter this convent; the same for women, unless they have written permission. New members go out to serve the poor but with a guardian like the Ladies of la Torre di Specchi. They sing the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary with a very devout chant. They rise at 5:00 a.m. and retire at 10:00 p.m. In the summer, they rise at 6:00 a.m. and retire at 10:30 p.m. They have one hour of mental prayer in the morning and in the evening. In the community there is a personal dedication to work, silence, obedience, humility and a most strict renunciation of property, very similar to monasteries of women around the world. They receive Holy Communion on all feasts and Sundays. They observe the ordinary fasts of the Church, except on Fridays and Vigils of Our Lady. In a word, it is a simple congregation founded for women and young ladies who would not be admitted to religious orders as they are presently constituted, because of bodily infirmities or a lack of desire to undertake a great number of physical austerities. They have there a gentle and grace-filled place of refuge where one finds the practice of the essential virtues of devotion" (61).

According to the redaction of the *Rule and Constitutions* in 1613, the union of contemplation and action is well noted in fact, in the name of the new congregation. "This Congregation has two principal exercises: first contemplation and prayer, which are practiced mainly in the environs of the community; the second, in the service of the poor and the sick, principally of women. The Congregation has most fittingly chosen for its patron, Our Lady of the Visitation. In this mystery the most glorious Virgin performed the noblest form of charity toward her neighbor by going to visit and serve Saint Elizabeth in her pregnancy. Moreover, she composed the canticle of the Magnificat, which is the sweetest, most exalted and most contemplative prayer ever written" (62). However, Saint Francis de Sales would never have considered the visitation of the sick as one of the constitutive activities of the Visitation, because in 1613, he noted:

If the congregation would be established in some large city in which going to visit the sick would be particularly dangerous, it would be the bishop's prerogative either to cut it out entirely or to limit it (63).

But, more specifically, if his original plan was not to found a true religious order, it was to allow for the possibility of adaptation flexible enough to apostolic needs. "...For it is one of the most desirable advantages of a simple congregation," he declares, "that they can be used in many different ways in accord with a diversity of places, times and circumstances" (64). Furthermore, the way of life of the

Visitation must also have as one of its primary goals the entrance of women of the world to make some spiritual retreats there on condition that the life of the community is not disturbed:

The Congregation, while obligated to the service of the poor and possessing no poverty greater than a poverty of spirit, is to be allowed to receive into the community women who have need of a small retreat. They may need to be consoled or firmly establish the amendment of their life. This may be for several days and is always based on the condition that they obey the Superior (65).

It is well known how the foundation of a Monastery of the Visitation at Lyons (66) led Archbishop Denis-Simon de Marquemont to draw up very serious objections to the new Institute and demand enclosure for the establishment of the Visitation in his diocese (67). For the sake of peace, Saint Francis de Sales gave in very humbly while sacrificing his own personal view. He accepted the enclosure and the establishment of the Visitation as a religious order according to the *Rule* of Saint Augustine "without changing the principal goal of the Congregation." He held firmly to the recitation of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary in place of the large Office and to the possibility of admitting widows who were well disposed for religious life, once their affairs were in order, and women of the world for a few days of retreat (68). With this in mind, he wrote to Cardinal Bellarmine on July 10, 1616, to obtain these concessions from Rome:

The first point is that they not be bound to the Office of clerics, i.e., the great Office, but only to the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin.... A second point is that permission be granted that widows might come for some time during the year and live with them in very modest secular dress, so as to undertake the pious exercises of the Congregation.... The third point is that, besides the widows we have spoken about and those who propose to renounce the world, married women be admitted who, while desirous of undertaking a new life in Christ and making what we call a general confession prepared for by some spiritual exercises, have need to withdraw for several days in some place removed from the clatter of the world (69).

However, it was necessary to abandon these last two points, in fact. In effect, Pope Paul V, in a Papal Letter on April 23, 1618, erected the Visitation as a religious order with perpetual enclosure and solemn vows, but the permission for the Little Office was only for seven years. The other innovations that the founder would have liked to introduce were no longer considered.

In suchwise, the Visitation held onto its originality. The definitive redaction of the *Rule* and the *Constitutions* declared:

This Congregation has been raised up so that no great severity would be able to divert the weak and the sickly from finding a place where they can devote themselves to the perfection of Divine Love (70).

In a time when monasteries were either too lax or too ascetical for older persons or those in poor health, the new order responded to a real need. This explains the increase of foundations at a very fast rate during the first-half of the seventeenth century (71). The relative gentleness of the *Rule* was compensated for by the insistence placed on the necessity of interior mortification, the battle with egoism, and proper self-love in light of freeing the human spirit from its attachments and making it open to divine action. Francis de Sales wanted to lead his spiritual daughters of the Visitation to the highest summit of union with God by a pure disinterested love, rooted in confidence, abandonment and holy indifference. Moreover, he mistrusts some manifestations of false fervor that could hide many real imperfections. This is why he insists on the practice of the ordinary virtues, heroism in small things where generosity can be given reign without endangering humility and gentleness. There are many allusions to the common observances of the Visitandine life that fill the *Conferences*. Father Lajeunie writes:

In this spirituality, one finds the expectation of giving away greatness. The meticulous austerity exhausts no one. It re-orientes the direction of one's initiative, one's ability to risk and one's heroism. What an error it would be to miss the point of its severity! The battle that the Visitandine wages is basically that of nature and grace amid the inconstancy of this world. It is concerned with conquering the constancy so dear to stoicism through the way of the Gospel (72).

From now on, the cloistered Sisters of the Visitation will exercise the love of neighbor, which is inseparable from the love of God, in the restrained but ever so-demanding framework of the monastery. In fact, the *Conferences* insist on the practice of the virtues of respect, heartfelt love, affability and condescension. Their exercise is indispensable in Visitandine community life. They offer each Sister the opportunity of reforming her person and immolating her own self-love. In this area, Saint Francis de Sales becomes the *connoisseur* of the human heart. He knows how to denounce with a gentle unwavering irony the subtle tricks of egoism. The skill of his psychological analysis gives a lasting appeal to the *Conferences*, while the firm evangelical foundation of the spiritual teaching they reinforce firmly grounds an obedience that reaches beyond the walls of the cloister where they were originally given.

We add only that you may rest assured that the research of the manuscripts of the *Conferences* has been guided by the spirit of Dom Mackey and the Visitandines of Annecy with a very strict exactness. As a consequence, there is nothing pointed out in our work that has not been recognized by Dom Mackey.

END NOTES

1. This house still exists on Rue de la Providence, within the confines of the convent of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. It was called *Maison de la Galerie*, either because of a hidden entrance above street level or because of the wooden porch that ran the length of the front of

- the house. Cf. C.M. Rebord, *La Maison de la Galerie, beceau de l'ordre de la Visitation à Annecy*, Annecy, J. Abry, 1911.
2. *Livre des Voeux du Première Monastère de la Visitation d'Annecy, Oeuvres VI, IX.*
 3. Marie Adrienne Fichet is a distant relative of Guillaume Fichet, rector of the University of Paris (1467) who introduced printing into France. She entered the Gallery on January 6, 1611, became the first Superior of the Visitation at Rumilly, then of Crémaux. She died at Annecy on November 5, 1681.
 4. For details see the text, pp. 13-14.
 5. Cf. Appendix II, p. 299, a slightly different version of the same fact.
 6. Cf. Appendix II, p. 299 and *The Second Conference*.
 7. Cf. Appendix II, p. 299.
 8. Cf. *Oeuvres VI, III*, the facsimile of this signed page.
 9. Cf. Appendix II, p. 299.
 10. Cf. Appendix II, p. 299.
 11. Claude Agnès Joly de La Roche, daughter of an advisor to the Senate of Savoy, entered the Gallery on January 25, 1612. A co-worker with Mère de Chantal, she founded the monastery of Orleans (1620), then of Rennes (1628), where she died December 30, 1630.
 12. Françoise-Madeleine de Chaugy, *Les Vies de IV des premières Mère de la Visitation Sainte Marie*, par Jacques Clerc, 1659. Re-edition, Paris, Poussielgue, 1892, 538-39.
 13. *Treatment of the Chronology of the Conferences, Oeuvres VI, 473.*
 14. *Sainte Jeanne-Françoise Fremyot de Chantal, sa Vie et ses Oeuvres*, Paris, Plon (1877-80), 8 vols., IV, p. 43. It is this edition we will cite hereafter as the *Oeuvres of Sainte Jeanne de Chantal*.
 15. *Ibid.*, IV, 208.
 16. *Treatment, op.cit.*, *Oeuvres VI*, 473-74.
 17. *Oeuvres of Sainte Jeanne de Chantal*, IV, 240.

18. *Treatment, op. cit., Oeuvres VI, 473-74.*
19. *Oeuvres of Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, IV, 271.*
20. *Archives de la Visitation d'Annecy, serie Visitation, sous-serie Foundations, #03, Vol. XI.*
21. *Letter 1577, Oeuvres XIX, 73.*
22. Marie-Marguerite Michel took the habit of the Visitation on August 13, 1618, and founded numerous monasteries: Besançon, Fribourg, Dosle, Salins, Soleure, Gray, Gruyère. She died as Superior of Arone on August 28, 1662.
23. *Les Vies de plusieurs Supérieures de l'Ordre de la Visitation Sainte-Marie, à Annecy, chez Humbert Fontaine, 1693, 150-51.*
24. *Oeuvres of Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, IV, 517.*
25. *Treatment, op. cit., Oeuvres VI, 474.*
26. Appendix II, p. 305 ff.
27. Cf., pp. 5-6.
28. Cf., pp. 9-10 for details of this edition.
29. It is probably Father Binet, cf. note 34 below.
30. *Oeuvres of Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, V, 448.*
31. *Ibid., VI, 139.*
32. *Ibid., VI, 148-9.*
33. *Ibid., VI, 154-5.*
34. Stephen Binet, S.J. (1569-1639) played a great role in the affairs of the Jesuits in France. A friend of Francis de Sales and advisor of Saint Jane.
35. *Oeuvres of Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, VI, 254.*
36. *Ibid., VI, 467.*
37. *Oeuvres VI, XXII.*

38. *Oeuvres of Sainte Jeanne de Chantal*, VI, 579.
39. *Oeuvres* VI, XXV-VI.
40. Older editions contain Twenty-One Conferences. Cf. The Table of Correspondence, p. 312 ff.
41. *Oeuvres* VI, LVIII.
42. *Ibid.*, LXI.
43. Saint François de Sales, *Entretiens d'après les anciens manuscrits publiés par la Visitation d'Annecy*, Annecy, 1933, VIII-IX.
44. P. 117 of the present edition.
45. *Entretiens, op. cit.*, IX-X.
46. *Ibid.*, X.
47. *Colloquies, op. cit.*, 195.
48. Cf. 392, 397, 399, 400, 440, 441 (1933 edition).
49. Cf. 399, 433 (1933 edition).
50. L. Cognet, *Crépuscule des mystiques, Le conflit Fénelon-Bossuet*, Paris 1957; J.L. Goré, *L Itinéraire de Fenelon: humanisme et spiritualité*, Grenoble, 1956; *Id.*, *La Notion d'indifférence chez Fénelon et ses sources*, Paris, 1956, etc.
51. Fénelon, *Oeuvres*, editées par Aimé Martin, Paris, 1835, t. II, 97-8.
52. Cf. Table of Correspondence of the *Editions of the Manuscripts*. These are Conferences III, VII, and XIX of the edition of 1629; III, VII and XX of the edition of 1933.
53. Cf., p. 312 ff.
54. *Année Sainte des Religieuses de la Visitation Sainte-Marie*, Annecy, 1870, t. XI, 27-8. The Gallery, returned to its owners after the departure of the first Visitandines, was bought by Mère Françoise-Agnés Flocard in 1658. On May 1, Charles-Auguste de Sales reintroduced the community of the second monastery established nearby by Mère de Chantal in 1634.

Sister Marie-Adrienne Fichet, being the only one of the first Mothers still living, passed some time there and told of their memories.

55. In the preface to the Pleiade edition, Father Ravier states: "We think that despite their differences in nature, these three works (*The Introduction to the Devout Life*, the *Treatise on the Love of God* and the *Spiritual Conferences*) form a whole which cannot be easily separated and allows us, independently of the works of *Controversies*, the *Opuscula*, the *Sermons*, and even of the inestimable correspondence, to know in its traditional and original context the thought of the person that Pius IX presented to the Christian world as the Doctor of Love.

...The *Spiritual Conferences* appeared in a pirate edition in 1628 and an official edition in 1629. In reality, they were drawn up between 1611 and 1622. Also, the three works (*The Introduction to the Devout Life*, the *Treatise on the Love of God* and the *Spiritual Conferences*) cover the whole time of Francis de Sales' episcopacy.

...With reference to the *Conferences*, their name points to their origin. Whether at Annecy or a little later in other cities, Francis loved to talk very simply with his Daughters of the Visitation. He answered the impromptu questions they posed to him and the ones he raised to them from their experience. These conversations of a Father with his Daughters were recalled at once and written down spontaneously by some of the Sisters who had most faithful memories or the ability to write. These were collected immediately after his death under the title of *Conferences*. They reveal Francis de Sales in a more familiar way, giving a sort of communal spiritual direction to his Visitandines, expressing aloud what ordinarily is only whispered with only a bit of confidence characteristic of the confessional.

...(The three works) are three perspectives rather than three stages (of Francis de Sales' thought). Or, if one prefers, they are three formulations of the same thought which are different because of the person or groups of persons that Francis addresses. ...In the *Conferences*, Francis is having a dialog with the Daughters of the Visitation, this new type of religious community with which he endows the Church.

...We note, however, that the *Conferences* share in their own way the marvelous familiarity of the *Letters*.... In the case of the *Conferences*, he speaks at first through a duty of state, of office, under the pressure of apostolic affairs according to the demands of events and situations. Preface to the *Pleiade Edition*, 1969, IX-XI.

56. Cf. E. J. Lajeunie, O.P., *Saint François de Sales. L'homme la pensée, l'action*, Paris, 1966, II, 236-80.

57. *Letter 597, Oeuvres XIV*, 299.

58. Andre Valladier, *Speculum sapientiae matronalis ex vitae Sanctae Franciscae Romanae, fundatricis Sororum Turris Speculorum, panegyricus*, Paris, Richer, 1609.
59. May 29, 1608.
60. *Letter 480, Oeuvres XIV*, 69.
61. *Letter 410, Oeuvres XIV*, 328-32.
62. *Oeuvres XXV*, 214.
63. *Ibid.*, 226-7.
64. *Ibid.*, 227.
65. *Ibid.*, 220.
66. Cf. *Lajeunie, op. cit.*, II, 268-79.
67. *Oeuvres XXV*, 322-32.
68. *Ibid.*, 332-42.
69. *Letter 1219, Oeuvres XVII*, 242-45.
70. *Oeuvres XXV*, 51-2.
71. Of the 149 monasteries founded in the seventeenth century, 129 were founded between 1610 and 1660.
72. *Lajeunie, op. cit.*, II, 259.