DEDICATION

To all, past and present,
who have been part of the
Christian Spirituality Program (CSP)
at Creighton University,
with my gratitude and esteem.

CHARLES J. HEALEY, SJ
and national temperaments played a part in creating schools of spirituality that were associated with particular countries. France would come into its own politically, nationally, and religiously in the seventeenth century and would be the scene of many rich and important developments in spirituality. It is to the spirituality of seventeenth-century France that we will now turn.

For Further Reading


French Spirituality in the Seventeenth Century

1. Spiritual Revival in France

During the second half of the sixteenth century, France was torn by the violent religious wars between Catholics and Protestants that left the country broken and devastated. Peace finally came to the troubled country with King Henry IV embracing Catholicism and later issuing the Edict of Nantes in 1598 that extended religious tolerance. France gradually began to recover, politically, economically and spiritually.

France had survived the threat of Calvinism, but the overall religious condition of the country called for much needed reform and renewal. The system of Church benefices for the clergy had led to many abuses. Most sought the benefices of bishoprics, monasteries, parishes, and other religious institutions only for material gain with no spiritual motivation or pastoral interest. It was a rare bishop who resided in his diocese, and the lives of the clergy for the most part were marked by ignorance and immoral living. The state of the religious houses was scarcely better, and most of the Christian faithful, lacking any pastoral leadership, were ignorant of the faith and were steeped in superstitious practices.

Although there were earlier traces of reform even in these conditions, the dawn of the seventeenth century witnessed the rapid development of spiritual renewal in France. The decrees of the
Council of Trent were received and put into effect. The Jesuits returned from exile in 1603 and the Teresian Carmelites were introduced into France a year later. The Capuchins continued the reforming activity they had started in the late sixteenth century. Practically all of the established orders of men and women underwent significant renewal and development during this time. A number of saints, leaders, and founders of new religious communities arose, who sought to meet the spiritual needs of both clergy and laity. For example, Cardinal Bérulle and his disciples directed much of their energy and labor to the education and renewal of the clergy. A number of the new religious congregations devoted themselves to the preaching of parish missions, particularly in the rural areas.

Religious books soon came to abound. Pseudo-Dionysius and other writers from northern Europe were known through the Latin translations of the Cologne Charterhouse. The writings of earlier mystics such as Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Genoa, Tauler, Suso, and Ruusbroec were all translated into French. In the latter part of the sixteenth century, spiritual writings from the Spanish school began to be translated. The works of Teresa of Avila became available in French in 1601, and two decades later the writings of John of the Cross appeared in translation. These and other writings did much to nourish the mystical tendencies that were present in many circles. They helped to foster the mystical movement that was to flourish in France in the seventeenth century.

These and other factors led to a spiritual revival in France that would bring forth a rich harvest and have a vast influence. Indeed, the seventeenth century is the golden age of spirituality in France. It is to an investigation of some of the key persons and movements connected with this period that we now turn.¹


² The Abstract School of Mysticism

Madame Barbe Acarie (1566-1618) was a central figure in the early stages of the revival of mysticism in France. She was a wife, mother and mystic who had great influence on people from all walks of life. She was instrumental in introducing the Teresian Carmelites into France, and she herself died as a Carmelite under the name of Marie of the Incarnation. It was by this name that she was beatified. Because of her reputation as a mystic and the holiness of her life, she gathered around her a group of influential people. This group of spiritual leaders that met at her home in Paris included the Capuchin Benet of Canfield; the famous Carthusian spiritual director, Dom Beaucousin; the Sorbonne professor, André Duval, who later wrote a biography of Madame Acarie; the Jesuit, Father Pierre Coton, the confessor to the French King; holy secular priests such as Gallemant, Jean de Bretigny, and the young Bérulle; and devout lay persons such as the future Chancellor Michel de Marillac and the Marquise de Maignelay, the sister of the bishop of Paris. François de Sales also had contact with the group when he visited Paris.

This group that gathered around Madame Acarie did much to revitalize Catholicism in France. The members played a key role in social and charitable activities, monastic reform, renewal of the diocesan clergy, the introduction of the Spanish Carmelites of St. Teresa to France, and the foundation of new religious congregations. There was also a distinct mystical orientation to the group. They read and discussed the classical mystical works, particularly those in the tradition of Pseudo-Dionysius and the Rhineland mystics, and as a group they gave birth to a synthesis of mysticism that emphasized a way of emptying and negation of created things that
led to a union with the divine will. Its main theorist was the Capuchin, Benet of Canfield, and it is usually referred to as the abstract school of mysticism.

Benet of Canfield (1562-1610) was born in the village of Canfield in Essex, England under the name of William Pich. He was converted from Puritanism as a young man, and then crossed over to France where he entered the Capuchins in 1587. As a Capuchin, he served as master of novices in his own religious community and as a spiritual director and guide for many others. As noted earlier, he was very active and influential in Madame Acarie’s circle. His main work, the Rule of Perfection, was published in French in 1609, although an English version was in existence earlier, and copies of the work were circulated in manuscript form to those he directed. Louis Cognet writes of this work: “Canfield only lacks style to be one of our greatest spiritual writers, but in spite of clumsy and inaccurate language, the Rule of Perfection was read all through the seventeenth century, and all the mysticism of the age was nurtured on it.”

The Rule of Perfection is a highly developed, systematic presentation of the spiritual journey that focuses on the conformity of the human will with the divine will. It seeks to bring about a total and generous abandonment to the will of God through an emptying process. A surrender to the will of God is at the heart of a process that is described in three stages. The first part of the book focuses on the external will of God that is revealed in Revelation and

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5 See Cognet, Post-Reformation Spirituality, op. cit., p. 69. Bremond writes of him: “One thing prevents his being a great writer: he is a man of mixed speech, oscillating between English, French and Latin.” A Literary History, op. cit., vol. II, p. 117. Bremond also writes of Canfield: “Master of the masters themselves, of Bérenger, Madame Acarie, Marie de Beauvilliers, and many others, he, in my opinion, more than anyone else gave our religious renaissance this clearly mystical character which we see already stamping it and which was to last for the next fifty years.” Ibid., p. 115.

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3. St. Francis de Sales — Salesian Spirituality

St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622) enjoys a well deserved reputation as one of the most attractive saints and spiritual writers in the history of Christian spirituality.6 As the bishop of Geneva, his spiritual writings exercised great influence during his own lifetime, and they have continued after his death to enjoy a popularity that has rarely been equaled. His two major works are the Introduction to the Devout Life and the Treatise on the Love of God, but his spiritual legacy also contains numerous sermons, letters, conferences to religious, and some minor works.

Francis de Sales was born in 1567 of a noble Catholic family in Savoy, a region that was then largely Calvinist. He received his early education at the Jesuit College of Clermont in Paris and then studied law and theology at the University of Padua in Italy. Ordained to the priesthood at Annecy in December of 1593, he labored...
as a young priest to restore Catholicism in the Calvinist area of Chablais, south of Lake Geneva. He was appointed coadjutor to the bishop of Geneva in 1599 and three years later succeeded him. He remained the bishop of Geneva for the rest of his life, maintaining his residence at the Alpine village of Annecy in the duchy of Savoy. He was canonized by Pope Alexander VII in 1665 and declared a Doctor of the Church by Pius XI in 1923, the centenary of the saintly bishop’s death.

Certain characteristics emerge clearly in the life, spirituality, and writings of Francis de Sales. By nature he was kind and sensitive of heart, and endowed with many human and social qualities that drew people to him. God’s grace built on these natural gifts: The love of God was the foundation of his own life, and he sought to bring that love of God to life in the hearts of the people he encountered from all walks of life. There is a strong spirit of optimism in his entire outlook; he was well aware of human weakness and frailty, but his emphasis was much more on our restoration in Christ. From his studies he derived a strong humanistic bent, and he is always included among the French writers of this period who are known as “the devout humanists.” Above all there is that personal quality that is so much a part of his life and writings. This is nicely summed up in a passage from one of his letters where he discusses the practice of preaching. He writes:

We should speak candidly and trustfully, really be in love with the doctrine we’re trying to teach and get people to accept; the great art is to be art-less. The kindling power of our words must not come from outward show but from within, not from oratory but straight from the heart. Try as hard as you like, but in the end only the language of the heart can ever reach another heart while mere words, as they slip from your tongue, don’t get past your listener’s ear.¹

¹ Bremond’s first volume in his Literary History of Religious Thought in France is entitled “Devout Humanism.” The third chapter treats Francis de Sales.


tion. He sought to lead ordinary Christians to a full and fervent interior life that would manifest itself in all aspects of their lives.

True devotion for Francis is simply the true love of God that has reached such a degree of perfection that “it not only makes us do good but also to do this carefully, frequently, and promptly.” This life of devotion is possible for a person in any vocation or profession, but it is exercised in different ways by “the gentleman, the worker, the servant, the prince, the widow, the young girl, and the married woman.” It must also be adapted to the strength, responsibilities, and duties of each person.

The Introduction to the Devout Life, as we have it today, is divided into five parts. The first part is concerned with the purgative way and corresponds in general to the first week of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. The second part gives various instructions on the exercises of piety that are recommended. The Salesian method of mental prayer is described with its stages of preparation, considerations, affections, resolutions, and the spiritual bouquet (a devotional thought from the morning prayer that one can call to mind during the day). The last three parts of the book provide guidance and instruction on the practice of the virtues, counsels on overcoming the most frequent temptations, and exercises for renewing and confirming a person in the pursuit of true devotion. Central to all of this is growth in union with Christ. As Francis writes in his prayer at the beginning of the book: “Live, Jesus! Live, Jesus! Yes, Lord Jesus, live and reign in our hearts forever and ever. Amen.”

St. Jane Frances de Chantal (1572-1641) was an important friend and collaborator of Francis de Sales. Their paths first crossed when the young Baroness de Chantal heard him preach at Dijon in 1604. She was a thirty-two year old widow at the time with four children. Her husband had died three years earlier as a result of a hunting accident. Six months later Francis de Sales became her spiritual director and began guiding her during a critical time in her life when God’s grace was working in a powerful way. The spiritual friendship that grew and developed between these two saints remained strong until Francis’ death in 1621, and it was the occasion for many of his important letters of direction.

In June of the year 1610, Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal established a new religious congregation for women at Annecy. It became known as the Visitation of Holy Mary, and Jane de Chantal was the first superior. It incorporated many of the new ideas for a religious community that Francis de Sales had earlier shared with Madame de Chantal. The new congregation was opened to women who were not strong enough physically to cope with the external austerities that were common to such established religious Orders for women as the Carmelites and the Poor Clares. Another innovation allowed the women to leave the enclosure of the convent during the day in order to visit the sick and the poor. This latter element soon gave way to a more strictly contemplative way of life, but the other aspects of Francis’ vision took form and the new community began to flourish. He often gave talks about the religious life to the first members of the Visitation. They were later published as his Spiritual Conferences and they reflect the spirit and charism of the new congregation.

Francis de Sales’ awakened interest in mysticism was due in no small measure to Jane de Chantal. Drawn to a prayer of simplicity and the ideas of the abstract school of mysticism, she had been in touch with the Carmelite Sisters at Dijon since 1606. She sought the counsel of her spiritual director about the suggestions of the Carmelites that she give up the normal imaginative and conceptual

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19 Ibid., p. 40.
20 Ibid., p. 43.
forms of meditative prayer. At first Francis was cautious about her leaving the more ordinary and surer ways of prayer. Gradually, however, he left her more freedom in this area, noting the extraordinary work of God in her. He was also led to adopt this prayer himself, and he began a serious reading of the mystical authors. Drawing on these readings, as well as his own experience in prayer and his experience of directing many of the Visitation sisters, Francis de Sales began working on his own synthesis of mystical prayer. It culminated with the publication of his *Treatise on the Love of God* in 1616.13

The *Treatise on the Love of God* is a carefully constructed and written study of divine love. Francis's purpose in the twelve books that compose the treatise is to represent "the history of the birth, progress, decay, operations, properties, advantages and excellences of divine love."14 Such a lofty and somewhat complex study cannot be summarized easily, and here only a few key points can be mentioned. For Francis, love expresses itself through the will. He teaches that our love of God is mainly expressed in two ways: an affective way and an effective way. The first is the love of willingness and goodwill (the love of compliance), and it unites us with God's goodness. The second (effective love) is the love of obedience and submission and it urges us to serve God and to carry out his will. Since we show our affective love for God primarily through prayer, Francis devotes Book Six and Book Seven of the *Treatise* to an investigation of prayer, its various manifestations, and the union with God that is brought about through prayer. It is interesting to note that Francis describes the deepest union in terms of a union of person with person. The symbol which is central for him is that of a child in its mother's arms.

If affective love is true, it becomes effective love, that is a love that is in conformity with God's will. Books Eight and Nine of the *Treatise* focus on the love of God that is shown through the conformity of our will with the divine will. It is a love that seeks to be obedient to God. Francis speaks of a loving obedience to two aspects of God's will: the "will that is signified" and the "will of good pleasure" or permissive will. The first is made known by the ten commandments, the evangelical counsels, and the inspirations of grace. In the second, the love of God is shown by submission to the divine good pleasure as manifested in the events of one's life, including the suffering and trials that are difficult. This love is marked by a spirit of resignation and holy indifference in which the will submits to God with a wholly pure and disinterested love.

4. Bérulle and the French School

The influence of St. Francis de Sales was considerable both during his lifetime and after his death in 1622. His influence, however, great as it was, would not be as widespread in France as that of Bérulle and the French School. The term, *French School*, was first used by Henri Bremond in speaking about Bérulle and his many disciples. Perhaps the *Bérulle School* would be a more apt term, since French spirituality in this period is broader than the French School. But there is no doubt that the French School is the dominant influence, for many great saints, founders of religious congregations, and spiritual writers were connected with this school that had its beginnings with Bérulle. It is a school of the interior life and its spirituality is a lofty one.17

Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629) is the major figure in


14 See preface to the *Treatise* in Mackey's translation, op. cit., p. 6.

the origin and teaching of the French School. For all his greatness as a Church leader and writer, however, he is not so well known as many others of this golden age of French spirituality. The future diplomat, theologian, mystic, spiritual writer, and founder of the French Oratory was born of an old and distinguished family and brought up in a deeply religious environment. As a young man he studied with the Jesuits at the College of Clermont and later at the Sorbonne in Paris. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1599 and then devoted himself energetically to various religious activities. He worked zealously for the conversion of Protestants, devoted himself to spiritual direction, and was a strong advocate for the reform of religious communities. As a young priest he played a prominent role in the circle that formed around Madame Acarie. He was a key figure in establishing the Teresian Carmelite Sisters in Paris in 1604. The Carmelites flourished in France and by 1660 there were sixty-two Carmelite monasteries in the country. Bérulle, along with André Duval and Jacques Gallemant, was appointed the ecclesiastical superior of the Carmelite nuns in France by Pope Paul V.

Gradually Bérulle came to see that his special vocation was to work for the education and sanctification of the diocesan clergy. In 1611 he founded the French Oratory at Paris, a congregation of priests that was modeled after the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. The Oratorians quickly grew in France and within eighteen years there were forty-four houses of the Oratory, and they were operating a number of colleges. Foremost in the doctrinal mission of the Oratorians was the restoration of the dignity and grandeur of the Catholic priesthood. Bérulle was convinced that the vocation to holiness was one of the noblest legacies of the diocesan clergy, "the Order of Jesus Christ." Unfortunately, this had been forgotten over the course of history, and it was to this restoration that he devoted himself for the rest of his life.26

During the course of his life of prayer and study, Bérulle also developed many of the ideas that led to his synthesis of theology and spirituality. He was indebted to many of the classical theologians and spiritual writers, particularly St. Augustine, but his own writings bear witness to a very remarkable and original integration of doctrine and piety. Central to Bérulle's thought is the greatness and goodness of God. A realization and acknowledgment of this should lead a person to an ongoing spirit of adoration of God that comes from the depths of one's heart. Bérulle's great sense of God's transcendence and grandeur led to his high regard for the virtue of religion. It is to God that we must look, not to ourselves. This emphasis is usually referred to as the theocentricism of Bérulle and the French School.

Intimately connected with this theocentricism is Bérulle's exalted teaching on the Incarnate Word and the mystery of the Incarnation. This is so fundamental to his thought that Pope Urban VIII is said to have given him the title of "Apostle of the Incarnate Word." It is only in union with Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, that we can adore God in a spirit of humility and love. Only Jesus is the true and perfect adorer of God the Father. Thus, the theme of "adherence" to Christ takes on great importance in Bérulle's thought. A Christian adheres to Christ by seeking consciously to conform one's whole life to the interior life of Jesus, to what Bérulle calls the "states" of the Incarnate Word. For Bérulle, each event or mystery in the historical life of the Incarnate Word involves an action that is finished and will not be repeated, and also a "state" which manifests the feelings and inward dispositions of Christ. Speaking of these mysteries of Christ, Bérulle writes: "They are past in execution, but they are present in their virtue: and neither will this virtue ever pass nor the love with which they were fulfilled. Therefore the spirit, the state, the virtue, the merit of the mystery remain

26 Bremond writes: "For Bérulle, at first sight, is not impressive: not one of those who capture the imagination, touch the heart, or master us utterly, as do St. François de Sales, Pascal or Fénelon." See A Literary History, op. cit., vol. III, p. 5.
27 For the early history and particular charism of the Oratorians in France see Bremond, vol. II, pp. 133-192.
28 Ibid., p. 136 ff.
were also running schools. Conflicts even arose with his beloved Carmelites over his insistence that they adopt the practice of the vow of servitude. This caused tensions between him and his longtime associate, André Duval, and even with Madame Acarie, who was now living as a Carmelite nun. Later, the vow of servitude was attacked by the Carmelite friars and some theologians. In response, Bérulle composed his most famous work, the Discourse on the State and Glories of Jesus. It was published in 1623 and it brilliantly provides the theological and doctrinal foundation for the vow of servitude.22

Pope Urban VIII named Bérulle a cardinal in 1627. Two years later he died at the age of fifty-four while he was celebrating Mass. His Complete Works were edited and published with an introduction fifteen years later by one of the early Oratorians, Francis Bourgoing. The writings themselves did not enjoy any widespread influence after his death for a number of reasons. In speaking of Bérulle’s legacy, Louis Cognet writes: “No one denies his importance. Nevertheless, reactions to Bérulle and his spirituality have been varied, divided, and long-standing. Bérulle was never uncontested neither during his lifetime nor after his death.”23 However, it was through the writings of his disciples that Bérulle’s teaching would have a profound influence on French spirituality. It can be said that the writings of the disciples achieved a greater popularity than those of the master.

5. The French School After Bérulle

Charles de Condren (1588-1641), Bérulle’s immediate successor as Superior General of the Oratorians in France, was a renowned spiritual teacher and mystic.24 Born of a noble family at Vauuin

22 For some selections in English of this work, see Bérulle and the French School, Selected Writings, op. cit., pp. 109-157.
near Soissons, he studied theology at the Sorbonne and was ordained to the priesthood in 1614. After he received his doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1615, his professor, André Duval, hoped that Condren would succeed him in his chair of theology, but the young priest chose to enter the Oratory. His early years as an Oratorian were devoted to preaching, teaching, and administrative activities for the community. He apparently had great gifts for directing others and he was held in high regard as a spiritual director. He was elected Bérrule’s successor in 1629 and served as Superior General of the Oratorians until his own death in 1641. Condren published nothing during his own lifetime, but the year after his death his Letters and Discourses were published and enjoyed wide circulation. Some of his teaching on the priesthood and sacrifice were incorporated later in the book, Idea of Priesthood and the Sacrifice of Christ, published by Fr. Queensel in 1677. His teaching is also reflected in the writings of Jean-Jacques Olier and St. John Eudes.

Condren followed Bérrule with his teaching on abnegation and adherence to Christ, the Word Incarnate. Condren, however, placed great emphasis on the aspect of Christ’s sacrifice and immolation of Himself. Jesus is the supreme priest and perfect victim who offered to God the only sacrifice worthy of the Creator. While Bérrule speaks of a general adherence to the states of the Word Incarnate, Condren focuses more directly on Christ’s victim state. One must adhere to Christ in this state of sacrificial victim through a process of self-annihilation and total abandonment to God. As Pourrat writes of Condren’s spiritual doctrine: “The state of victim, the condition of inward annihilation is everything with Fr. Condren; it is also a summing up of everything he taught.”

Thus, for Condren, adoration of God is expressed primarily through sacrifice. In one of his letters, Condren writes:

You must seek and find in Jesus Christ the spirit and grace that God wills to give you, so that you may carry this out..."%


Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657) is much better known than Condren because of his extensive writings and the fact that he is the founder of the Sulpicians, the society of priests that have specialized in the preparation and formation of seminarians for the priesthood for over three hundred years. Bremond considers Olier the poet of the French School. He writes that his “special grace and mission was, not exactly to popularize Bérruleism, but to present it with such limpidity, richness of imagination and fervor that its apparently somewhat difficult metaphysics are placed invitingly in the reach of most readers.”

Destined for an ecclesiastical career, Olier was the recipient of a number of benefices when he was still a young man. After a conversion experience, occasioned by a pilgrimage to Loreto in Italy, he returned to Paris and placed himself under the spiritual direction of St. Vincent de Paul. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1631 and attached himself to the missionaries who were being sent by Vincent de Paul to preach parish missions throughout France. Later he came under the spiritual guidance of Fr. Charles de Condren for whom he always had the highest regard. It was through Condren that he came to know and appreciate the spiritual doctrine of Bérrule. After passing through a period of intense spiritual trial, he moved on to a new stage in his life. With a small group of priests he took up residence in 1642 at the parish of Saint-Sulpice in Paris with the intention of founding a seminary for priests. Here...
he devoted himself for the next ten years to the work of parish renewal and the spiritual formation of the seminarists. Here he founded the Society of the Priests of Saint-Sulpice (Sulpicians) in 1642, and from this center he sent his priests to assist bishops in the foundation of seminaries in various parts of France.

It was during his last years that Olier wrote such works as the Introduction to the Christian Life and Virtues and The Christian Day. Very much in the general tenor of the French School, he reflects the same pessimism about human nature that is found in Bérulle and Condren. From the teaching of Condren he emphasizes the need of self-effacement, sacrifice, and self-annihilation, so that the Holy Spirit might work more directly within a person. He also follows Bérulle and Condren in stressing the need of adhering to the states of the Incarnate Word. Olier, however, places a particular emphasis on Christ's Eucharistic state. Devotion to the Eucharist and the Blessed Sacrament are very important in Olier's spiritual thought. Given the context of his writing and the audience to whom it was directed, one also finds a practical and pastoral dimension to his works. For example, he suggests a simple method of meditation that "consists in having our Lord before our eyes, in our heart and in our hands." This later developed into the influential and well-known Sulpician method of prayer with its threefold division of adoration, communion, and cooperation.

We can end this brief treatment of Olier with his well-known prayer that sums up so much of his spirit. He slightly amplified the version he received from his revered spiritual director, Charles Condren, and it always was a favorite of his.

O Jesus living in Mary,
Come and live in thy servants,
In the spirit of thy sanctity,
In the fullness of thy strength,

In the reality of thy virtues,
In the perfection of thy ways,
In the communion of thy mysteries,
Be Lord over every opposing power,
In thine own Spirit, to the glory of the Father. Amen.30

St. John Eudes (1601-1680) was the fourth great master of the French School. He became an Oratory in 1623 and was ordained to the priesthood two years later in Paris. Both Bérulle and Condren were his teachers; thus, his spirituality was shaped and formed by Bérullism. As a member of the Oratory in Caen, he first worked with the plague stricken, and then in 1632 he began his missionary work in various parts of France with the preaching of the parish missions that did so much for the renewal of the faith. This missionary work and his ministry of spiritual direction led him to write a number of practical spiritual books that furthered his influential preaching. One of his best known, The Life and Kingdom of Jesus in Christian Souls, was written during the course of this missionary work in 1637.

The many years of preaching parish missions convinced John Eudes of the importance of priestly preparation and the need of establishing seminaries for this purpose. Since the Oratorians were not moving in this direction at the time, John Eudes left the Oratory in 1643 and became the founder of the Society of Jesus and Mary (the Eudists), established explicitly for the work of seminaries and parish missions. Earlier, in 1641 at Caen, he had established the women's congregation, first known as Our Lady of Refuge and later as Our Lady of Charity (1651). From his missionary work he had also come to recognize the need of assisting young women who were experiencing serious difficulties, and this new congregation sought to meet this need by providing places of refuge. At a much

later period, this group evolved into two separate religious communities for women: Our Lady of Charity of Refuge and Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd.

St. John Eudes is also recognized as the apostle for the devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. He composed two Offices, one in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1648, and one in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1672. The last book he wrote was entitled The Admirable Heart of the Most Holy Mother of God.32

In spite of the opposition he suffered from many sides, particularly from the Jansenists, John Eudes continued his many faceted activities until his death on August 19, 1680. He was beatified in 1909 and canonized in 1925. It was only in the twentieth century that St. John Eudes was in a sense rediscovered. Biographies of him appeared and critical editions of his extensive writings were published in twelve volumes.33

St. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) was also a significant and influential figure during this period of religious revival in France. The great Apostle of Charity is known more as an initiator of extensive pastoral undertakings than as a spiritual writer. Ordained a priest in 1600, he later underwent a conversion process in which Bérulle played an important role. He then devoted himself with great generosity to the preaching of parish missions, priestly renewal, spiritual direction, and serving the poor. In 1625 he established the Congregation of the Missions (usually known as Vincentians or Lazarists) for the purpose of preaching missions to those living in rural areas. In 1633, together with St. Louis de Marillac, he founded the Daughters of Charity.

Vincent de Paul was influenced in his own spirituality by Cardinal Bérulle, but there was also the influence of St. Francis de Sales, whom he knew well. Vincent published nothing during his own lifetime. After his death, however, the spiritual conferences that he gave to the Daughters of Charity were published as well as his numerous letters of direction.34 Vincent de Paul was beatified in 1729 and canonized in 1737. One writer succinctly captures the saint and his many contributions with the words:

Vincent de Paul was neither a profound nor an original thinker; yet few have accomplished as much. His success was a result of natural talent and a tremendous amount of work, but above all of a profound spiritual life. In this he was deeply influenced by Bérulle and Francis de Sales, but he modified their ideas according to his own insights. The piety that he practiced was simple, non-mystical, Christocentric and oriented toward action.35

Two later religious leaders and canonized saints who had close ties with the French School were St. John Baptist de La Salle (1651-1719) and St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716). Both prepared for the priesthood at the seminary of Saint-Sulpice, and both were founders of new apostolic congregations. St. John Baptist de La Salle’s apostolic spirit was focused on the ministry of Christian education. He was the founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, whose members dedicated themselves to the work of catechizing and educating the poor. He also composed books on prayer and meditation for the members of his community.36 The life of St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort was marked by a strong apostolic and missionary spirit and a fervent devotion to Mary. During the course of his missionary work, he founded the

33 See Oeuvres complètes du vénérable Jean Eudes, 12 vols., introduction and notes by Joseph Dauphin and Charles Lebrun (Vannes or Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1905-11). With this renewed interest in the writings of St. John Eudes, a number of English translations have appeared. See the bibliography in Bérulle and the French School, Selected Writings, pp. 342-343.
Daughters of Wisdom and the Missionaries of the Company of Mary (Montfort Fathers). He did much to further devotion to Mary through his *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* and the shorter summary of this work, the *Secret of Mary*. These writings were very influential in popularizing his vow of slavery to Jesus through Mary.

Before leaving the French School, mention should be made of the important role women played in the development of its spiritual tradition. Madame Acarie’s central role as an initiator and her influence upon Bérulle has already been noted. Jean-Jacques Olier received much support and encouragement from Mother Agnes de Jesus, prioress of a monastery of contemplative Dominicans, and from Marie Rousseau, a widow and mystic. St. John Eudes always valued the advice and counsel of the mystic, Marie des Vallées. With St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise Marillac played a pioneering role in the formation and apostolates of the Daughters of Charity. Mention will be made later of some religious women who labored as missionaries in the New World. Here we will focus for a moment on the Carmelites, Madeleine de Saint-Joseph.

Venerable Madeleine de Saint-Joseph (1576-1637) was the first French prioress of the great Carmelite monastery in Paris. She entered this Carmel shortly after its historic founding when the first Carmelite Sisters came to Paris from Spain, and she later was active in the growth and expansion of the Carmelites in France. Serving as prioress of the Great Carmel in Paris for the second time during the years 1624-1637, she came to know Bérulle and his spiritual teaching quite well. Bérulle was deeply impressed by her holiness of life and her mystical experiences, and she, on her part, was a positive influence upon the development of his spirituality. After Bérulle’s death she remained devoted to his spiritual teaching and did much to spread Berullism among the Carmelite nuns in France. During her lifetime, she wrote a biography of the Carmelite mystic, Catherine of Jesus. Her numerous letters also provide solid information about her spirituality which integrates the teachings of St. Teresa and Bérulle.

6. Jansenism and Quietism

Much has been written about the Jansenists and Quietists of seventeenth-century France. Historians have carefully studied and analyzed the complex events and controversies that surrounded these two religious movements. Although our remarks here can only be relatively brief, it has always been recognized that both movements cast large shadows over religious developments in France and involved a number of people in ongoing disputes.

Jansenism

The context of what is known historically as Jansenism is found in the theological controversies over predestination and the relationship between God’s grace and human liberty that dominated Catholic theology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The seventeenth century witnessed a reaction against the optimism of the devout humanists towards human nature and against the theological position known as Molinism that gave weight to the exercise of human freedom. There was a greater attraction to

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36 See *True Devotion to Mary*, translated by Frederick Faber (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1985).

37 For background on Madeleine de Saint-Joseph, see the introduction to *Bérulle and the French School, Selected Writings*, op. cit., pp. 22-26.

38 For some selected letters, see ibid., pp. 189-214.


40 For a concise summary of the theological issues involved, see Pourrat, op. cit., vol. IV, pp. 1-8.
the teachings of St. Augustine that emphasized God's grace and a pessimistic view of human nature. This was true of the Bérulle School that interpreted and emphasized Augustine's teaching in a moderate and orthodox way. Jansenism, however, took Augustine's teaching to an extreme and even heretical position.

Jansenism takes its name from Cornelius Jansen (1585-1636), a theology professor at Louvain and bishop of Ypres in Flanders for the last two years of his life. Shortly after his death, the work that occupied much of his scholarly life, *Augustinus*, was published. It met with a strong reaction, and in the midst of much controversy over the ensuing years, the study was the object of several papal condemnations. Among the points condemned were his teaching on the irresistibility of interior grace and his claim that Christ had not died for all people, but only for some. In all probability, his teaching would not have continued to generate so much subsequent controversy if it were not for the support of a number of strong personalities. Foremost among them was Jean Duvergier de Hauranne.

Jean Duvergier de Hauranne (1581-1643) is usually known historically as Saint-Cyran, since he had been named the comendatory abbot of Saint-Cyran in 1620. Thirteen years later he became the spiritual director of Port-Royal just outside of Paris, and it soon became the center for Jansenism. There was a large monastery of Cistercian nuns at Port-Royal at the time, under the leadership of the young, reforming abbess, Angélique Arnauld. She was one of many from the Arnauld family who had close ties with Port-Royal over the years. Later, a number of educated and professional men came to settle around Port-Royal. Withdrawal from the world was central to their spirituality, and they devoted themselves to a life of prayer and manual and intellectual work. They became known as the *Soliitaires*, or *Messieurs de Port-Royal*.

Saint-Cyran emerges as an enigmatic person. There always seemed to be an air of mystery about him, and historians in general have not painted him in flattering terms. He must have been an effective spiritual director and leader, however, for he was held in high regard by the members of the community. Under his leadership, Port-Royal became a center for a rigorous and penitential religious reform and for the strong defense and support of Jansenist teaching. Port-Royal also propagated a rigorous moral system; this brought about many clashes with the Jesuits whose humanistic tendencies they deplored. Saint-Cyran opposed Cardinal Richelieu on many of his policies and this led to Saint-Cyran's imprisonment in 1638. He was released after Richelieu's death but died shortly afterwards in 1643. With Saint-Cyran's death, the leadership at Port-Royal passed to Antoine Arnauld, the younger brother of Abbess Angélique Arnauld.

If Jansen can be considered the theologian of Jansenism and Saint-Cyran its inspirer, Antoine Arnauld is best described as the popularizer of the movement. Disillusioned by the present state of the Church, he looked backwards and sought to reestablish the practices of the past. He continued the spirit of rigorism that Saint-Cyran had set in motion and he likewise courted constant controversy. This was particularly apparent with the publication of his book, *Frequent Communion*, in 1643. He sought to counter what he considered a spirit of laxity by recommending that one refrain from receiving Holy Communion as a penitential practice. The book did much to encourage many to abstain from Holy Communion for long periods of time. Ultimately, his persistent refusal to accept the condemnation of five propositions from the *Augustinus* led to his own fall from favor and a self-imposed exile.

Another important personality connected with Port-Royal was Blaise Pascal (1623-1662). A prominent mathematician and scientist of his day, he was drawn to the spirituality of Port-Royal and became a supporter of the Jansenist cause. During the years 1656 and 1657 he composed the *Provincial Letters*, a defense of the Jansenist teaching on grace and an attack on the Jesuit moral teaching that the Jansenists considered lax. He tended to oversimplify many complex issues and his polemical methods were not always fair, but the witty and satirical style of the *Letters* brought them a widespread popularity. Another book that was published after his death, the *Pensées*, established Pascal's reputation as an important
in mysticism that occurred in France in the latter part of the seventeenth century and culminated with the public and acrimonious debate between two prominent bishops, Francis Fénelon and Jacques Bossuet. Speaking in general terms, we can describe it as a tendency in prayer that emphasizes the pure (disinterested) love of God, a complete abandonment to the divine will, and a stance of passivity in prayer. It is important to note that Quietism was not a completely new and foreign element that was introduced into the Christian mystical tradition in the seventeenth century. It must be seen rather as the exaggeration of an existing and perfectly orthodox tendency in the development of mysticism. As Ronald Knox writes: “It was the error of a few incautious souls, trying to repeat the lesson they had learned from the saints of the Counter-Reformation, and getting it wrong.”

As was the case with Jansenism, historians have written at great length on the complex and drawn-out doctrinal controversies surrounding this issue. The modest aim here is to summarize briefly the main points of this crisis that brought about such a negative reaction to mysticism in France.

The famous trial in Rome involving the Spanish priest, Miguel Molinos (1628-1696), brought the issue of Quietism to public attention in a dramatic way. Molinos came to Rome in 1663 to promote the canonization process of a Spanish priest. He remained in Rome and soon became an influential spiritual director and teacher. There was a strong interest on the part of many at the time for contemplative prayer, particularly the prayer of simple regard, and Molinos became a revered guide and teacher in this movement. In 1675 he published his Spiritual Guide, a work that became very popular and went through many editions. His teaching moved away from the usual ascetic practices and ordinary forms of prayer and emphasized a passive prayer of quiet and abandonment to God. For reasons that are still not clear, Molinos was arrested in 1685.

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47 Knox, p. 299.
After a long and careful investigation of his teaching and his numerous letters of spiritual direction by the Holy Office and a subsequent trial, he was found guilty of immoral conduct and doctrinal errors. Molinos confessed his guilt and was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1687. He still remains an enigmatic figure and somewhat of a puzzle for historians, and they have continued to speculate on the exact reasons for his condemnation and his actual guilt in the whole affair. 48

In France, an anti-mystical spirit began building up in the latter part of the seventeenth century, rising to its climax with the events of the Quietist controversy. 49 Madame Jeanne-Marie Guyon (1648-1717) played an important role in the early stages of this crisis. Left a widow at a young age, she was drawn to the practice of mystical prayer and later devoted herself to an apostolate of teaching about prayer. Her ministry involved her in a great deal of travel, and she also became a prolific writer. Her two main works on prayer are the Short and Easy Method for Prayer, and The Spiritual Torrents. In these works she emphasizes the prayer of quiet and "invites the soul to turn and collect itself in its interior, in order to remain in continual adherence to God. ... The soul must keep silence in itself, suppressing all its own activity, in order to live in the presence of God, in abandonment and faith." 50

Francis Fénelon (1651-1715) was a young priest when he first met Madame Guyon in 1688. He was greatly helped by her in his own life of prayer, and he in turn always remained a strong supporter of hers, even at no small cost to his ecclesiastical career. 51 When her views began to be attacked, Madame Guyon, at Fénelon's suggestion, requested that her writings be officially investigated. This was done at the Isny Conference by Bishop Bossuet and two others. They drew up thirty-four articles on various issues of prayer in 1695 and Madame Guyon submitted to them. In all probability, the matter would have rested there had not the controversy moved to another level, that of a direct confrontation between Bossuet, the bishop of Meaux, and Fénelon, now the archbishop of Cambrai. The disagreement centered primarily on pure (disinterested) love and the passive state. Fénelon presented his case with the publication of Explanations of the Maxims of the Saints on the Interior Life. In expounding his teaching on pure love, he analyzed five states of love that were distinguished by their degree of disinterestedness. Bossuet countered with his Instruction on the States of Prayer. His later document, Relation on Quietism, was more polemical in tone and he sought to discredit Fénelon by a more personal attack. In response to Fénelon's appeal to Rome and in a highly charged political atmosphere in which individuals and groups took sides, twenty-three propositions taken from Fénelon's Maxims of the Saints were condemned (in terms as mild as possible) in a papal brief of Innocent XII signed on March 12, 1699. 52 Fénelon submitted unreservedly to the decision. Innocent XII's own regard for Fénelon was shown by the fact that he raised him to the cardinalate in October of the same year. Thus, the unfortunate affair came to its conclusion, having played no small part in creating a distrust of mysticism in France and leading to its definite decline in the eighteenth century.

7. French Jesuit School

When Louis Cognet traced the revival of mysticism in France in the early part of the seventeenth century, he divided his investigation into four main divisions: Benet of Canfield and the abstract school; St. Francis de Sales; Cardinal Berulle; and the Society of Jesus. 53 The Jesuits came to France in 1556, the year their founder,
St. Ignatius of Loyola, died. By 1610 there were more than fourteen hundred French Jesuits working as educators, preachers, spiritual directors, confessors to the king, missionaries, and spiritual writers, and their influence would continue to grow. Associated more with the school of the devout humanists, most of the many Jesuit spiritual writers focused on the ordinary forms of prayer and meditation with a strong emphasis on devotion to Christ. There was, however, a mystical current among the French Jesuits, just as there had been with such earlier Spanish Jesuits as Baltazar Alvarez and Luis de la Puente. The most influential mystical writer among the French Jesuits was Louis Lallemant.

Fr. Louis Lallemant (1587-1635) did not publish anything during his own lifetime. The spiritual conferences, however, that he gave as tertian instructor at Rouen to young Jesuit priests during their final year of spiritual formation were taken down by some of the Jesuits. These notes were preserved and handed on until they were ultimately edited and published in 1694 by Fr. Pierre Champion under the title of The Life and Spiritual Doctrine of Father Louis Lallemant. In addition to his own Ignatian tradition, Lallemant was familiar with many traditional mystical sources, since he lived at a time when they were being read widely in France. These would include the Spanish and earlier Rhineland mystics.

Various attempts have been made to summarize the main teaching in Lallemant's Spiritual Doctrine. Bremond emphasizes four points: the second conversion, the critique of action, the guard over the heart, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Lallemant himself focuses it even more, highlighting two elements of the spiritual life: purity of heart and docility to the Holy Spirit. He writes:

The two elements of the spiritual life are the purification of the heart and the direction of the Holy Spirit. These are the two poles of all spirituality. Through these two ways, one comes to perfection: according to the degree of purity which one has acquired and in proportion to the fidelity with which one has cooperated with the movement of the Holy Spirit and has followed his guidance.

For Lallemant, one must be open to the Holy Spirit through purity of heart, and sensitive to the Spirit's guidance through discernment. The gifts of the Holy Spirit also play an important part in his spiritual teaching, as does the importance of contemplative prayer for those involved in apostolic activity.

Jean Joseph Surin (1600-1665) was an important disciple of Lallemant. He was a Jesuit tertian under Lallemant at Rouen during the year 1629-30, and he went on to write a number of spiritual books such as his autobiographical Spiritual Catechism and his Foundations of the Spiritual Life. He became well-known for the part he played as one of the exorcists at the Ursuline Convent at Loudon during the years 1634-1637, an experience that was ruinous to his own health. In his writings he also emphasized purity of heart and docility to the Holy Spirit, along with a detachment from and complete renunciation of anything that would hinder embracing God's will in all things.

A later Jesuit who was an heir of this mystical tendency among the French Jesuits was Jean Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751). He was the most outstanding representative of the spirituality of abandon—


2 For an English translation from the French see The Spiritual Doctrine of Father Louis Lallemant of the Society of Jesus preceded by an account of his life by Father Champion, edited by Alan McDougall (Westminster, MD: Newman Bookshop, 1946).

3 For a helpful treatment see Buckley, "Seventeenth-Century French Spirituality: Three Figures," op. cit., pp. 53-64; he writes of Lallemant's teaching: "The doctrine charts a journey, one that begins with the experience of human emptiness and terminates with union with God in Christ — and all under the direction of the Holy Spirit" (p. 50). See also De Guibert, op. cit., pp. 353-358.

4 Cited in Buckley, p. 57.


6 See Pourrat, vol. IV, p. 72 ff.
ment to Divine Providence. The little spiritual classic that is associated with his name derives from the time he was spiritual director for the Sisters of the Visitation convent at Nancy. The Sisters preserved the letters of direction that he sent to them and the notes taken down from his spiritual conferences. Many years after his death the material was gathered together and edited by the Jesuit, Henry Ramlière, and was published in 1681 under the title, *Abandonment to Divine Providence.* This work has enjoyed great popularity since its first publication and has been translated into several languages. Many have been helped by its message of trusting abandonment to God and its focus on the sacrament and duty of the present moment.

The Jesuit, St. Claude de la Colombière (1641-1682), was of great assistance to St. Margaret Mary in spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690) was a nun at the Visitation convent at Paray-le-Monial when she was favored with visions of Christ that revealed the treasures of love in the Sacred Heart. In these revelations that took place between 1673 and 1675, she was commissioned to spread devotion to the Sacred Heart throughout the world. Claude de la Colombière was rector of the Jesuit College at Paray-le-Monial when he was chosen to be Margaret Mary’s director. He assured her and her superior of the divine origin of the revelations, and when his *Spiritual Retreat* was published two years after his death in 1684, it did much to make known the revelations to the Christian world. Public and private devotion to the Sacred Heart would grow and spread far and wide in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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99 To avoid any charge of Quietism, the editor points out that Caussade looks at abandonment in two ways: “as a vice incumbent on all Christians, and as a particular state, which God puts certain souls for whose special guidance He provides.” Ibid., p. 277. Among English translations are *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence,* translated by Algar Thorlak, revised by Father John Joyce, S.J. (London: Collins, 1971), and *The Sacrament of Every Day,* translated by Kitty Muggeridge (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984).

100 For English translations see *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents,* edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites, 73 volumes (Cleveland: 1896-1903).
to us through the work of her son, Dom Claude Martin, who had become a Benedictine in France. 61

Another pioneering woman in Canada was St. Marguerite Bourgeoys (1620–1700). She migrated from France to Montreal in 1653, twelve years after this frontier garrison was established in New France. She established the first school in Montreal and this was followed by a school for Indians, an Indian mission, a school for the poor, and a boarding school for the daughters of the French colonists. She was joined in her apostolic undertakings by other women, and the group eventually evolved into a new type of religious congregation. As religious women who were not bound to the cloister, they were able to travel as the needs of the mission required. Their particular charism was “the life of a wayfarer, in dialogue with the neighbor.” Their model for this type of life was Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and Mary’s Visitation to her cousin Elizabeth was an inspiration for their service to others. The religious community she founded, the Congregation of Notre Dame, received ecclesiastical approval in 1698, two years before her death. Margaret Bourgeoys was beatified by Pius XII in 1950 and canonized by John Paul II in 1982.

Before concluding this chapter, we can return to France itself and briefly mention some significant reforms that took place there in monasticism. The Congregation of St. Maur (Maurists) was a French congregation of Benedictine abbey that was founded in 1618 as part of a reform movement among the Benedictines. By 1675 there were 178 monasteries in the congregation and the Maurist movement continued to flourish until the time of the French Revolution (1792). The Maurists became famous for their historical scholarship and learned studies, for they had a high regard for the value of scholarly work for monks. One of their great scholars was John Mabillon (1632–1707). 62

This same concept of the monastic life was not shared by Armand Jean de Rancé (1626–1700). After a significant conversion experience in 1659, this learned ecclesiastic embraced the monastic life with great generosity and zeal. He later became the abbot of the Cistercian Abbey at La Trappe in Normandy and under his reforming leadership it became a very fervent center. His rigorous and penitential concept of monastic life was somewhat controversial, particularly his insistence that scholarly activity was incompatible with the life of a monk. In place of intellectual and scholarly pursuits, he strongly advocated for the monk a life of demanding manual labor. When the Cistercians of the strict obser vance became a separate branch in the nineteenth century, it was the spirit of de Rancé that was the dominant influence.

Conclusion

With its saints, reformers, founders of new religious communities, mystics, missionaries, dynamic leaders, and spiritual writers, the seventeenth century was indeed the golden period for French spirituality. France itself benefited greatly from this spiritual revival of such mighty proportions. The rich harvest that was produced, however, had a significance far beyond the confines of France. For the influence of French spirituality was a pervasive one throughout the world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is true that it is a spirituality that has its strengths, limitations, and exaggerations. But there is no question that its overall contribution to the history and development of Christian spirituality has been a vast one.

61 For selections from her writings and informative background material, see Marie de l'Incarnation, Selected Writings, edited by Irene Maloney, O.S.U. (New York: Paulist Press, 1989).

62 For interesting material on the reforms that took place in the Benedictine monasteries for women, see Beunard’s chapter “The Reforming Abbesses” in his Literary History, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 292–393.
Significant developments had also taken place in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it is primarily to an investigation of these movements and trends that we will turn in the next chapter.

For Further Reading


The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought forth profound changes in the religious configuration of England. The Reformation came later than it did on the continent, but once it did come it ushered in a period of political and religious turmoil and unrest. After many struggles and fluctuations, Anglicanism emerged as the established state religion and became the dominant spirituality; but there were also present other currents of religious thought and practice such as Puritanism, Quakerism, and much later, Methodism. The rich heritage of England’s past was not forgotten and certain aspects were incorporated into the newly established groups. England’s monastic tradition was a rich one, and even though the monasteries themselves were suppressed at the time of the Reformation, the influence that remained was a subtle and implicit one. The English mystics of the fourteenth century also continued to have a distinct influence. For example, Walter Hilton’s Scale of

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