

THE OBLATES OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

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For this international colloquium, which commemorates the 400th anniversary of the death of St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622), by reflecting on his legacy, each Salesian congregation, institute, and society has been asked to share the initial article of its constitutions. The standard formula for this article is a succinct description of the origin and particulars of a religious congregation, institute, or society. The initial article of the Constitutions of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales is no exception, and I propose to organize my presentation around this article.

In our case, this initial article, formulated according to the advice of the canonical consultant who assisted us with the most recent revision and updating of our Constitutions, is subdivided into two sections to facilitate readability and intelligibility (**Slide 1**).

The Congregation of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales was founded in Troyes, France, in 1875, by Blessed Louis Brisson, under the inspiration of the Venerable Mother Mary de Sales Chappuis, V.H.M., known as the “Good Mother.”

It is a religious, clerical institute of pontifical right, dedicated to the Mother of God under the title of *Our Lady of Light* with St. Francis de Sales as its principal patron and St. Jane Frances de Chantal as its secondary patron.

My presentation will focus principally on the first section of this article, i.e., on the story and back-story of what is narrated here. Then I will turn to the second part and consider *grosso modo*—a favorite term of St. Francis de

Sales when he was short of time—its four constitutive themes.

I. The Story and Back-Story of the Founding of the Oblates

After co-founding, with St. Jane Frances de Chantal (1572-1641), the Visitation Order in 1610 (**Slide 2**), St. Francis de Sales had wanted to found a comparable congregation of priests animated by the Salesian spirit; however, he was unable to realize this project before his death. Jane and the Visitation Order kept alive this aspiration, which was taken up by Fr. Raymond Bonal (1600-53), a priest of the diocese of Rodez, who in 1632 founded the Priests of Holy Mary, a very small congregation that did not survive the French Revolution (1789).¹

Fast forwarding to the 19th century, Venerable Mother Mary de Sales Chappuis (1793-1875), the long-time Swiss-born superior of the Troyes Visitation, who is known in the Oblate and Visitandine families as the “Good Mother,” and Blessed Louis Brisson (1817-1908), who served as chaplain to this monastery for more than four decades, were well aware of this history (**Slide 3**).² At the same time, Chappuis and Brisson also knew that the initiative for their project of founding the Oblates had come not from themselves, but from the Lord. Ordinarily, the inspiration for initiating a new religious community comes through the founder; however, in the case of the Oblates, it came not from the founder—Brisson—but from Chappuis, and for this reason it is said that the Oblates were founded by Brisson, “under the inspiration” of Mother Mary de Sales.

So, how did this unfold? During her novitiate year (1815-16) at the Fribourg Visitation (**Slide 4**), Sr. Mary de Sales received a series of “lights” or revelations from the Lord about “His designs for her work” as an apostle of the Salesian spirit.³ For her part, Sr. Mary de Sales totally immersed herself in the writings of Francis de Sales, fully appropriating the Salesian

spirit. Her profound understanding of, and ability to communicate, Salesian spirituality was quickly recognized, and scarcely a year after her profession, she was sent to re-establish the Visitation Monastery in Metz. When she returned to Fribourg, she was appointed Novice Mistress, her youth notwithstanding. In 1826, she became superior of the Visitation of Troyes **(Slide 5)**, which was in urgent need of effective leadership.⁴

The "lights" or revelations which Sr. Mary de Sales received as a novice had a direct bearing on the situation that she would encounter in Troyes. In general, French Catholicism had developed what has been described as an "obsessional emphasis" on damnation, hellfire, and the small number of the saved.⁵ "In some ways this was part of the influence of Jansenist austerity, but Jansenists and bitter anti-Jansenists alike shared a vision of a judicial and even vengeful God, one to be feared, rather than of a loving God, an ever-present help in time of trouble."⁶ This was communicated in the pulpit by a "religion of fear" (*pastorale de la peur*), and in the confessional by moral rigorism, with absolution often being withheld or delayed.⁷ Simply stated, French Catholicism had lost sight of the Gospel's core message that "God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved" (Jn 3:17).

This was the ecclesial-pastoral context for the revelation to the young Visitandine novice, Sr. Mary de Sales, that "God has looked into Himself and He has decided to open up new sources of graces"⁸ by completing "the work of sanctification that [St. Francis de Sales] began on earth."⁹ As Brisson later expressed it, "St. Francis de Sales was a man of his time, but he is even more truly of our time than his own."¹⁰ While not officially declared a Doctor of the Church until 1877, Francis de Sales was acclaimed as the Doctor of Divine Love from at least the time of his beatification in 1661.¹¹ According to

the Doctor of Divine Love, holiness is accessible and adaptable for people in all states of life, and “God’s great mercy [...] is infinitely greater [...] than all the sins of the world,”¹² for the Savior “wishes ‘all to be saved’ [1 Tm 2:4] and none be lost.”¹³ Francis’s pastoral style was to attract and win hearts through gentle persuasion, never through fear or force. Thus, Francis’s spiritual doctrine and pastoral practice were uniquely suited to addressing the specific challenges confronting 19th-century French Catholicism.¹⁴

On her arrival in Troyes to become superior of the Visitation, Mother Chappuis “understood that this was the place that God had chosen for the accomplishment of His work.”¹⁵ As the papal nuncio in Paris later reported to the Vatican, “Troyes was a diocese full of problems, not easy to resolve by simple fiat.”¹⁶ These problems included: Jansenism and Gallicanism; widespread religious ignorance and indifference; prevalence of a religion of fear (*pastorale de la peur*) and moral rigorism that repelled the laity and depressed practice of the faith and reception of the sacraments; and neglect of the pastoral care of workers. Troyes was not an outlier. On the contrary, it was a microcosm of 19th-century French Catholicism. At the root of these problems was the deficient state of seminary education. Poorly educated and formed in the “Sulpician ideal” of the priest shut off from the world, the French clergy were unprepared and unequipped—intellectually, spiritually, and pastorally—to engage the contemporary issues facing the Church and to minister effectively to the faithful entrusted to their care.¹⁷

A sharply different view of the priesthood was articulated to Brisson—during the process of seeking papal approbation for the Oblate Constitutions (granted in 1887)¹⁸—by Cardinal Włodzimierz Czapki (1834-88), who had served as papal nuncio to France (1879-82) (**Slide 6**): “How do we reach the world, and attract it to us, to save it? We must jump in with both feet, even if

it means getting splashed with mud! Let's make it our responsibility to try to sanctify and cleanse it."¹⁹ In other words, the Church needed a "new breed of priests," who would "go out into the world in search of the lost sheep and bring them back into the fold."²⁰ In the cardinal's view, this was a pressing ecclesial need, to which he urged the Oblates to respond. Significantly, this aligns with the foundational vision of the Oblates revealed to Mother Chappuis: continuing "the work of sanctification that [St. Francis de Sales] began on earth,"²¹ the Oblates were to be the instrument through which "[t]he treasure of [the Savior's] charity will be lavished on the earth and given in all its fullness to the world,"²² in an era when the gospel of God's love and mercy had been eclipsed by a religion of fear and moral rigorism.

The founding of the Oblates in 1875 fulfilled Francis's unrealized desire, kept alive in the Visitation, to found a congregation of priests to continue his pastoral ministry. Brisson instructed the first Oblates that they were not simply "under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales, but also completely under the direction of his thought, his doctrine, his manner of acting and seeing."²³ The Oblate vocation was to "do what [Francis de Sales] did, and [...] [to] identify as much as possible with his person."²⁴ Being an Oblate meant a lifelong commitment to learning from Francis de Sales through diligent and close study of his life and spiritual doctrine, as well as of conformation to the saint through the practice of the short text known as the *Spiritual Directory of St. Francis de Sales* (**Slide 7**). For Chappuis and Brisson, the practice of the *Spiritual Directory* was the "trademark" of the Oblates, being indispensable for fulfilling "their special goal [...] to reproduce as completely as possible the interior and exterior life of St. Francis de Sales."²⁵

Composed for the Visitation Order toward the end of Francis's life, "[the]

Spiritual Directory represents a distillation, into a brief and compact form, of the fruits of Francis's many years of experience and wisdom in living the Christian life and in guiding and directing others in that same endeavor. It provides a privileged access to the style and method of this great spiritual master."²⁶ In rebuilding the Troyes Visitation in the wake of the French Revolution and persistent Jansenist tendencies, Mother Chappuis found the *Spiritual Directory* to be an extraordinarily effective resource for restoring the authentic Salesian spirit to the community.²⁷ Brisson later adopted the *Spiritual Directory* for use by the Oblate Fathers and Brothers,²⁸ as well as the Oblate Sisters. He also strongly encouraged both congregations to incorporate the *Spiritual Directory* into their apostolic works and ministries and to disseminate it among the laity and secular clergy.²⁹

The Oblate vocation is a specification of the Christian baptismal vocation (**Slide 8**): the Oblate follows Christ by imitating Francis de Sales, who, in the estimation of his contemporaries, was a "true image [*vraie image*] of the Son of God."³⁰ Closing the circle, Mother Chappuis believed that "Through [the Oblates], the Savior [...] will be seen walking again upon the earth."³¹ In her mystical experiences, Chappuis learned "what the Savior wished to do for the world, and how He wished to employ the Oblates to effect this new Redemption."³² Subsequently, she insisted: "to respond to their vocation," the Oblates, "must strive to efface themselves and leave place for the Savior in themselves and in their ministries; they must identify themselves with Him and assume His divine inclinations,"³³ following the Pauline injunction to have the mind of Jesus Christ (cf. Phil 2:5).

II. Two Signature Themes

In further articulating what they saw as the identity and mission of the Oblates in light of the "signs of the times,"³⁴ Brisson and Chappuis also

retrieved and contemporized other aspects of Francis's spirituality to respond to the needs of the Church and society. We will now briefly consider two signature examples.

First, re-imprinting the Gospel. One of the most daunting problems facing the Church in the aftermath of the French Revolution's policy of dechristianization was widespread ignorance, even among educated Catholics, of the most basic tenets of faith and particularly of Sacred Scripture.³⁵ The situation among the clergy was hardly more encouraging: there was a vast "gap between the standards expected in the secular schools and universities and [...] in the seminaries," and those ordained priests were deficient even "in the academic subjects in their own professional sphere, ecclesiastical history, canon law, and biblical criticism."³⁶ This was the context for the importance and urgency that Chappuis and Brisson gave to their distinctive imperative, "to re-imprint the Gospel" (*réimprimer l'Évangile*), which they define in a very specific way (**Slide 9**).

Akin to the ancient Christian practice of *lectio divina*, "to reimprint the Gospel" is understood by Chappuis and Brisson to be a highly active and dynamic process which is comprised of: slow, thoughtful reading of Scripture; in-depth knowledge and understanding (aided by resources such as Scripture commentaries); prayerful rumination, interior assimilation and appropriation; and adaptation to the needs of the present-day world and the souls encountered in ministry. The prototype for re-imprinting the Gospel was Francis de Sales, whose sustained practice of *lectio divina*³⁷ made him, in the eyes of his contemporaries, "the Gospel speaking [*l'Évangile parlant*], because it was completely integrated into his life."³⁸

Second, the sacredness of work. With its uncompromising emphasis on sin, eternal damnation, and the small number of the saved, French

Catholicism presented a grim picture of the afterlife. Its view of this life was no less stern. Idleness was a sin, but work was regarded as a penance and punishment for original sin.³⁹ As a result, most French clergy were unsympathetic to the working class and found it difficult to relate to workers. This was exacerbated by the fact that most priests came from rural backgrounds and harbored a deep suspicion of the urban environment.⁴⁰

Acutely aware of the gulf between the clergy and the working class, Chappuis and Brisson sought to bring about a basic shift in how priestly ministry was exercised by recovering the pastoral style of Francis de Sales, who “received all comers with the same expression of quiet friendliness, and never turned anyone away, whatever his station in life.”⁴¹ Thus, the new Salesian model did not shy away from openness to and interaction with all, especially the working class. As Brisson’s explains, “[T]he thought of the Good Mother was that the Oblates, brought into existence at this time, [...] have a role to play in that great question of work and workers. They are to exercise a healthy influence, [...] and to usefully serve holy Church in these times, we have to be in contact with workers.”⁴² **(Slide 10)**

In reflecting on work, Chappuis and Brisson retrieved another seminal idea from Francis de Sales. Drawing on the Hebraic notion of being as dynamic rather than static, Francis de Sales held that “God is constantly creating and speaking ceaselessly through His creation,” and that by “our free, loving choices, we cooperate and continue this act of creation.”⁴³ In Brisson’s words, “in that it comes from God, all work is excellent, and St. Francis de Sales and the Good Mother Mary de Sales desire that all that emanates from God be received with very great respect, with deep gratitude and love. By steeping ourselves in this doctrine, it will come to pass that our work of each day, whatever it may be—whether manual or intellectual—will

take on a character so elevated, so complete in its union with God that we will treat all things as holy and sacred and as requiring our attention, our care, and our devotion.”⁴⁴ **(Slide 11)** These ideas, as well as the initiatives undertaken on behalf of workers by Chappuis and Brisson, were part of developing Catholic social thought about the dignity of labor and of the Church’s pastoral outreach to the working class during the 19th century,⁴⁵ which culminated in Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum / On the Condition of Labor* (1891), the first of the great encyclicals of modern Catholic social teaching.

III. Fathers and Brothers, Marian Advocation, Salesian Patrons

We will now turn our attention to the second section of the initial article of the Oblate Constitutions, and to its four constitutive elements in sequence. First, the Oblates are “a religious clerical institute” which includes both priests and brothers, who collaborate in Oblate-Salesian ministry. From the outset, Brisson was insistent that “the Brothers enjoy exactly the same privileges as the Fathers, and they [...] are treated exactly like the Fathers. [...] There are not two different classes of Oblates, but one and the same for all.”⁴⁶

Second, St. Francis de Sales had a fervent devotion to the Mother of God, and Brisson wanted each Oblate to cultivate this as well. In view of the tradition of each religious order and congregation invoking Mary’s intercession under a particular title, Brisson specified that the Oblates do so under the advocation, “Our Lady of Light.” **(Slide 12)** To explain his choice, Brisson appealed to his own first devotion as a school boy to Mary, who helped him to learn his lessons: “The Blessed Virgin was truly my light and for that reason I should like to call her by that name.”⁴⁷ This advocation may be further explained as follows: “Our Lady of Light is not *the* Light. God is *the* Light. Our Lady is the dispenser of the Light of God, which she receives in

abundance from the Holy Spirit. The [dove of the] Holy Spirit hovering over the womb of Mary is meant to depict the Holy Spirit forming the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, the Light of the world, in the womb of Our Blessed Mother."⁴⁸

Third, all that has been said about the primary place and vital and formative presence of Francis de Sales in the Oblates makes abundantly clear his designation as the congregation's principal patron.

And, fourth, more needs to be said about St. Jane de Chantal as the congregation's secondary patron. **(Slide 13)** Francis de Sales's death called Mother de Chantal forth to exercise her maternal role as nurturer in a new and unprecedented way for the Visitation Order and the Salesian tradition. Jane unstintingly and tirelessly dedicated herself to preserving Francis's memory, written and spoken word, and spiritual doctrine for the benefit of the Visitation Order, the wider Church, and posterity. She also kept alive Francis's intention to found an order of priests formed in his spirit and method to continue his ministry. In this connection, during his visit to Annecy in April 1869, Brisson had an apparition of St. Jane in the chapel of the Visitation Monastery. She communicated, among other things, how pleased she was by the founding of the Oblates since that had been the ardent desire of her life.⁴⁹

To conclude: Mother Chappuis and Blessed Brisson were extraordinarily adept in *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* of Francis de Sales and his spiritual doctrine to meet the ecclesial and social challenges of their age. Today the living legacy of their collaboration is the Oblate Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters and their ministries on five Continents.

 NOTES

Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations are from the original French texts by the author, who is grateful to Dr. Suzanne Toczyski for her advice and suggestions for improvement.

¹Yvon Beaudoin, O.M.I., *Father Louis Brisson (1817-1908): A Documented Biography*, trans. several De Sales Oblates and ed. Alexander T. Pocetto, O.S.F.S., and Daniel P. Wisniewski, O.S.F.S. (Wilmington, Del.: Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, 2008), 93 (hereafter Beaudoin)

²See Brisson's "Notes to show that the Institute of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales is not a new idea," in the archives of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in Rome (Beaudoin, 123n5).

³Louis Brisson, *Vie de la vénérée Mère Marie de Sales Chappuis* (Paris: chez M. l'Aumonier de la Visitation, 1891), 9, 35-36, 61-64, 70, 78-79; quotes at 78-79 (hereafter Chappuis Biography). Marie-Thérèse initially entered the Fribourg Visitation in 1811, but only remained a few months, suffering from a severe bout of homesickness. After remaining at home for three painful years, she again entered the monastery, but hesitated at the doorway because she experienced the same repugnance as before. However, her brother and sister, who had accompanied her, convinced her to try it out for three days and, if she still felt homesick, they would take her home again. Her apprehension immediately dissipated as soon as she heard the monastery door bolted behind her.

⁴Chappuis Biography, 86-107. Also see Alexander T. Pocetto, O.S.F.S., "Mary de Sales Chappuis (1793-1875): Apostle of the Salesian Spirit," *Salesianum* 71 (2009): 321-40, esp. 322-23, 325, 327 (hereafter Pocetto 2009). Chappuis's life is best understood in the context of the ecclesial tradition of female mystics-apostles, who "mediate glimpses of God's mysteries intended to expand mankind's knowledge of his plan for salvation history," thus "fulfilling a thoroughly prophetic mission, for the benefit of many people" (Wolfgang Riehle, *The Secret Within: Hermits, Recluses, and Spiritual Outsiders in Medieval England*, trans. Charity Scott-Stokes [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014], 211). This was certainly how Chappuis saw herself: "I am being called to be an apostle and to contribute to the work that God will establish in order to communicate His graces and to expand the diffusion of His divine charity" (Louis Brisson, O.S.F.S., *Chapîtres, Retraites, Instructions et Allocutions*, 7 vols. [Tilburg (The Netherlands): Maison "Ave Maria," 1966-68], 4:126 [hereafter Brisson]). Brisson's retreat conferences, allocutions, and chapter instructions are also available electronically, in unpaginated format, in the millennium edition [2000] of Brisson's *Œuvres*, ed. Roger Balducelli, O.S.F.S., assisted by Jean Gayet, O.S.F.S., and the Oblate Sisters of the Motherhouse in Troyes: www.louisbrisson.org. Due to ease of reference by volume and page, here the Tilburg edition is cited throughout. When there is a discrepancy between the Tilburg edition and the millennium edition, priority is given to the latter in translating the French text.) Chappuis was absolutely convinced that this mission was "her very *raison d'être*" and the work to which the Lord had called her, and accordingly "she speaks [of it] with all of the confidence and certainty of an Old Testament prophet" (Pocetto 2009, 338-39).

⁵Ralph Gibson, "Hellfire and Damnation in Nineteenth-Century France," *Catholic Historical Review* 74/3 (1988): 383-402, at 385 (hereafter Gibson 1988).

⁶Gibson 1988, 385. On the emergence and dominance of rigorism in early modern French Catholicism, see Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief: Cultural and Social Tension in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁷Gibson 1988, 385. Also see Ralph Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism 1789-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1989) (hereafter Gibson 1989); Jean-Louis Quantin, *Le rigorisme chrétien, Histoire de Christianisme* (Paris: CERF, 2001); and Alexander T. Pocetto, O.S.F.S., “Blessed Louis Brisson (1817-1908), the Laity, and the Social Dimensions of the New Evangelization,” *Salesianum* 76 (2014): 121-40, esp. 127-28, 132 (hereafter Pocetto 2014), who examines how Brisson greatly contributed in his ministry to moving away from the religion of fear by consistently focusing on the love of God.

⁸Chappuis Biography, 254.

⁹Louis Brisson, draft of letter of October 14, 1867, to Fr. Claude Perrot, O.S.B., in the Archives of the Oblate Generalate in Rome, box 30, Einsiedeln Collection (hereafter Perrot letter). I thank Fr. Barry R. Strong, O.S.F.S., Superior General of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, for retrieving and scanning this document.

¹⁰Brisson, 2:152.

¹¹Agnès Guiderdoni, “Exegetical Immersion: The Festivities on the Occasion of Francis de Sales’s Canonisation (1665-1667),” in *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400-1700*, ed. Walter S. Melion et al., *Intersections* 33 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014) 855-84, at 876. Pope Alexander VII signed the brief of Francis’s beatification on December 28, 1661, with the formal ceremony following in St. Peter’s Basilica on January 8, 1662. Francis’s designation as the Doctor of Divine Love is now commonplace in papal documents: see, e.g., Pope St. Paul VI, *Sabaudiae gemma* (Gem of Savoy): *Apostolic Letter Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of the Birth of St. Francis de Sales, Doctor of the Church*, trans. Neil Kilty, O.S.F.S. (Hyattsville, Md.: Institute of Salesian Studies, 1967), 4, 8; and Pope St. John Paul II, *Letter on the Fourth Centenary of the Episcopal Ordination of St. Francis de Sales* (Nov. 23, 2002), n. 3 (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/letters/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii LET_20021209; accessed 14 Apr. 2016). Earlier John Paul referenced Francis as the “Doctor of Love” in a homily given in Annecy, Oct. 7, 1986, during his apostolic pilgrimage to France (available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/fr/homilies/1986/documents/hf_jp-ii HOM_198610; accessed May 3, 2016).

¹²Francis de Sales, *Avertissements aux Confesseurs* (1603 or 1604), in *Œuvres de saint François de Sales*, Édition complète, 27 vols. (Annecy: J. Niérat et al., 1892-1964), 23:279-97, at 284 (hereafter Annecy edition).

¹³Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, in Saint François de Sales, *Œuvres*, ed. André. Ravier – Roger Devos, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 433 (Book 2, chap. 8) (hereafter *Œuvres*). Francis’s teaching stood in stark contrast to that of rigorist proto-Jansenist, militant Catholic preachers of the Wars of Religion (1562-1629), as well as later purveyors of a religion of fear. This contrast was salient, e.g., during Francis’s 1602 visit to Paris: “His sermons captivated [his listeners] by their direct and simple pronouncements about God’s love for man. In elegant French, [he] would exhort his listeners to recall the sufferings of Christ, His compassion for the unfortunate, and the beauty of the love of God for those whom He has created. This seemed like poetry to the Parisians, who for decades

had heard nothing but invective and hellfire” (Orest Ranum, *Paris in the Age of Absolutism: An Essay*, revised and expanded edition [1968; University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002], 174). For an examination of the contrast between Francis and militant Catholicism, see Thomas A. Donlan, *The Reform of Zeal: François de Sales and Militant French Catholicism*, St Andrews Studies in French History and Culture (St Andrews: Centre for French History and Culture of the University of St Andrews, 2018).

¹⁴Only Francis de Sales appeared to be equal to the challenge. The moral theology of St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787), who was influenced by Francis, had aimed to steer a middle course between laxism and Jansenist rigorism by winning back sinners through patience and moderation. However, Liguori’s message was inconsistent, as he counseled his Redemptorists “to be lions in the pulpit but lambs in the confessional” (Patrick W. Carey, *Confession: Catholics, Repentance & Forgiveness in America* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2018], 128). This fell well short of the Salesian principle of all through love, nothing through fear: see Francis de Sales, letter of October 14, 1604, to Madame de Chantal, in Ancey edition, 12:352-70, at 359. In fact, the Redemptorists had the reputation of being “the leading specialists in hellfire preaching,” sometimes even being described as “Redempt-terrorists” (Gibson 1988, 387). It has recently been noted that after Liguori’s death, “the Redemptorists somewhat distorted the heritage of their founder [...], and they also forgot much of his message” (Ulrich L. Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment: The Forgotten History of a Global Movement* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2016], 173). Also see Wendy M. Wright, “The Doctor of Divine Love and Fear of the Lord,” in *Saving Fear in Christian Spirituality*, ed. Ann W. Astell (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2020), 182-208. Chappuis and Brisson welcomed introduction of Liguori’s moral theology to the seminary of Troyes. See Beaudoin, 25, 252, 334; Wendy M. Wright, *Heart Speaks to Heart: The Salesian Tradition*, Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004), 144 (hereafter Wright 2004); Pocetto 2009, 337-38.

¹⁵Brisson, 4:127.

¹⁶Austin Gough, *Paris and Rome: The Gallican Church and the Ultramontane Campaign 1848-1853* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 171 (hereafter Gough). This was the assessment of the papal nuncio in Paris, Archbishop (later Cardinal) Raffaele Fornari (1788-1854, nuncio 1843-50).

¹⁷Gibson 1989, 80-87, 98-99; Gough, 1-21.

¹⁸“A Salesian / Oblate Chronology,” in *The Constitutions, the General Statutes, and the Spiritual Directory of the Oblates of Saint Francis de Sales*, American Centenary Edition (Wilmington, Del.: De Sales Publishing, 1991), 266-78, esp. 272.

¹⁹Brisson, 3:16.

²⁰Gibson 1989, 98-99; Pocetto 2014, 140.

²¹Perrot letter.

²²Brisson, 4:126.

²³Brisson, 1:120.

²⁴Brisson, 1:120.

²⁵Brisson, 3:10.

²⁶Anthony R. Ceresko, O.S.F.S., “St. Francis de Sales’s *Spiritual Directory* for a New Century: Re-interpreting the ‘Direction of Intention,’” in his *St. Francis de Sales and the Bible* (Bangalore: SFS Publications, 2005), 110-27, at 111-12 (originally published in *Indian Journal of Spirituality* 14 [2001]: 377-91) (hereafter Ceresko).

²⁷Wright 2004, 140-41; Pocetto 2009, 328-31.

²⁸Brisson, 1:14-16.

²⁹See, e.g., Brisson, 3:250-58.

³⁰*St. Francis de Sales: A Testimony by St. Chantal*, newly edited in translation with an introduction by Elisabeth Stopp (Hyattsville, Md.: Institute of Salesian Studies, 1967), 96 (hereafter *A Testimony by St. Chantal*). For further testimony on this topic, see “Letter of December 1623 from Jane Frances de Chantal to Dom Jean de Saint-François,” in *A Testimony by St. Chantal*, 165-72, esp. 172; and Vincent de Paul, “Deposition at the Process of Beatification of Francis de Sales (April 17, 1628),” in Saint Vincent de Paul, *Correspondance, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. Marie Poole, D.C., et al., 14 vols. (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 1985-2014) 13a: 91 (Article 38).

³¹Chappuis Biography, 445. Brisson frequently attests to this conviction of Chappuis: see, e.g., Brisson, 1:19, 58, 192, 254; 2:39, 330; 3:96, 220, 352, 421, 490, 531; 4:63.

³²Chappuis Biography, 444.

³³Chappuis Biography, 445.

³⁴This term was incorporated into the papal and ecclesial magisterium by Pope St. John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council. See M. Heath, “Signs of the Times,” *Encyclopedia.com* (retrieved 23 Oct. 2022). Also see Massimo Faggioli, “Reading the Signs of the Times through a Hermeneutics of Recognition: *Gaudium et Spes* and Its Meaning for a Learning Church,” *Horizons* 43 (2016): 332-50.

³⁵Gibson 1989, 161; Pocetto 2014, 127.

³⁶Gough, 1. Also see Gibson 1989, 80-87.

³⁷Wright 2004, 182n15; Joseph F. Chorpenning, O.S.F.S., “*Lectio divina* and Francis de Sales’s Picturing of the Interconnection of Human and Divine Hearts,” in *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400-1700*, ed. Walter S. Melion et al., *Intersections* 33 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), 449-77, esp. 456-59. In the post-Vatican II era, there has been a burgeoning literature on *lectio divina*, attesting to the growing interest in and popularity of this slow, meditative approach to the sacred text. One of the most influential contemporary promoters and practitioners of *lectio divina*—the Jesuit biblical scholar Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini—looked to Francis de Sales as a guide for this prayerful approach to Scripture. See Carlo Maria Martini, S.J., *The Gospel Way of Mary: A Journey of Trust and Surrender*, trans. Marsha Daigle-Williamson (Frederick, Md.: The Word Among Us Press, 2011), 31-35.

³⁸Terence McGoldrick, “The Living Word: Francis de Sales, A Humanist Biblical Theologian of the Renaissance,” in *Love is the Perfection of the Mind: Salesian Studies Presented to Alexander T. Pocetto, O.S.F.S., on the Occasion of His 90th Birthday*, ed. Joseph F. Chorpenning, O.S.F.S., Thomas F. Dailey, O.S.F.S., and Daniel P. Wisniewski, O.S.F.S. (Center Valley, Pa.: Salesian Center for Faith and Culture, 2017), 83-101, at 92. The description of Francis as the “the

Gospel speaking” is found in “Déposition de M. Vincent au procès de béatification de saint François de Sales, version française, 1628,” in John Rybolt, C.M., *Saint Vincent de Paul / Correspondence, Conferences, Documents, Unpublished Documents, Part 1* (2020), 174-87, at 178 (https://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_en/3, accessed May 14, 2020). The word *parlant* can also be translated as “revealing” (as in, he revealed the Gospel), as well as “speaking” or even “eloquent.” I am grateful to Dr. Suzanne Tocyski for this observation.

³⁹Gibson 1989, 23.

⁴⁰Gibson 1989, 221.

⁴¹A *Testimony by St. Chantal*, 138 (Article 46).

⁴²Brisson, 5:268.

⁴³Eunan McDonnell, S.D.B., *The Concept of Freedom in the Writings of St. Francis de Sales* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 265.

⁴⁴Brisson, 5:106-7.

⁴⁵Faced with a changed economic reality, the Church’s approach to the new circumstances was twofold: direct assistance and the formulation of ethical norms. As Matthew E. Bunson has indicated, “Direct assistance was provided through hospitals and schools, as epitomized in Italy by St. John Bosco and the Salesians and in France by Frédéric Ozanam and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. There were as well the efforts of Christian industrialists, such as Léon Harmel in France, who lived with his own employees. Bishops around the world provided leadership, including Bishop (Cardinal from 1890) Mermillod of Geneva and Lausanne, Cardinal Manning of Westminster, Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, Bishop Ireland of Minneapolis, and Cardinal Moran of Sydney” (“Pope of the Worker,” Dec. 1, 2007 at: <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/pope-of-the-worker> [retrieved Sept. 28, 2018]). In tandem with these efforts, an original body of Catholic teaching was developed that sought to understand the new social problems and to formulate solutions based on the Gospel. “In France, Villeneuve de Bargemont wrote an 1834 treatise on political and Christian life, while in Germany, Bishop Wilhelm E. von Ketteler of Mainz helped launch a Catholic social movement that expanded swiftly across Europe after 1870. [Pope] Leo [XIII] later called von Ketteler ‘our great predecessor from whom I have learned.’ [...] Finally, the Fribourg Union, founded in 1884 and headed by Mermillod, brought together various leaders in the nascent Catholic social movement” (Bunson).

⁴⁶Brisson, 2:69.

⁴⁷Joseph E. Woods, O.S.F.S., *Our Lady of Light* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Holling Press, 1953), 26 (hereafter Woods). Cf. *Vie du T.R. Père Louis Brisson* (Vatican City: Imprimerie Polyglotte Vaticane, 1932), vol. 2, 163-64.

⁴⁸Woods, 29.

⁴⁹Beaudoin, 343-44.