



Jean-Pierre Camus (1584-1652) As Disseminator of the Salesian Spirit

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Camus' Credibility

As one generally known for his very close and long (14 years), intimate relationship with St Francis de Sales, it appears that he had some friendships that might be surprising. One of them, Guy Patin, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Paris and numbered among the foursome (*Tetrade*) of independent thinkers of his day,¹ boasted about having in his library the portrait of the Bishop of Belley and calls him his "good friend." and one of his mentors ("*dieux tutélaires*").² Camus also cited in some of his sermons some verses from the notoriously libertine poet Théophile de Viau, whom he defends in one of his novels.³ Do these associations and similar ones cast serious doubts about Camus' credentials as a reliable transmitter of the Salesian spirit or do they hint at the wide appeal that Salesian thought had in his day and beyond? It is the purpose of this study to try to answer these questions.

¹ Cf. René Pintard, *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle*. (Paris, Boivin, 1943),. and also by the same author *La Mothe Le Vayer, Gassendi, Guy Patin, Gabriel Naudé*. Paris, Boivin, 1943..

² Guy Patin, *Lettres de Gui Patin*, éd. Reveillé-Parise, t. II, p. 284. "Il y avoit encore trois autres portraits d'excellents hommes, de feu M. de Sales, évêque de Genève, M. l'évêque de Belley [Camus], mon bon ami, Justus Lipsius, et enfin de François Rabelais...Que dites-vous de cette assemblée?" (*Ibid.*, p. 571).

³ "Mais voici plus intéressant, Esprit Aubert...a signalé à la page 227 de *l'Alexis* de Camus, une apologie de Théophile. L'oeuvre est de 1621, postérieur à l'exil. Camus connaît personnellement Théophile. Il prête ces mots à son héro Florimond: 'Je dy cecy parce que je le connois et parce que je l'ay vu souvent, comme Socrate voyoit les gens à la parole où je n'ay rien remarqué qui approchost de la mauvaise odeur que ses envieux ont respondus sur sa renommée'.... Théophile, libertin par la pensée et l'oeuvre, savait du moins sauver les apparences" Antoine Adam, *Histoire de la littérature française au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Del Duca, 1962), I, 295.

In defending Théophile de Viau, Camus uses almost the same words that de Sales does in the chapter on Slander in the *Devout Life*, that is, by not labeling people for what they did in the past because from one minute to the next we do not know whether they have received God's pardon, e.g., Mary Magdalene. (Cf. *Oeuvres de Théophile de Viau*, ed. by Esprit Aubert, pp. 95- 98 de la III^e partie cited by La chèvre, *Theophile de Viau*,15).

L'abbé de Baudry, who had serious reservations about the reliability of Camus as a faithful witness to Salesian thought, writes: "The Jesuit [P. Sauvage in 1755] tears the Bishop of Belley thoroughly apart. He presents him as a deist, a leader of the Jansenists, an enemy of religious orders, an obscene author, in a word, a demon" ⁴ These epithets paint an unusually harsh picture of a bishop, who was generally admired in his lifetime for his austerity and devotion to Francis de Sales. One of the editors of the Annecy edition of the saint's complete works, sharing l'abbé de Baudry's position, does not believe Camus to be "a faithful interpreter of the saint's teaching."⁵ One would think that this judgment would have decisively exploded the "legend" of Camus' reliability in matters pertaining to Salesian teaching. But, as we shall see, the legend does not end there.

Along the same line, a recent article appears to espouse, by implication, the view that Camus did not consider himself to be the friend of St. Francis de Sales. I say by implication because he makes no attempt to refute that position and simply quotes it approvingly. The article is entitled "*Camus, Freund des hl. Franz von Sales*" (Camus, Friend of St. Francis de Sales). Fr. Wehrle accepts uncritically the reasons that Tietz gives concerning the relationship between the two bishops. Tietz claims, among other things, that Camus always looked upon the saintly bishop as a mentor and teacher and as an "angel" rather than a human being, that de Sales never permitted a deep intimacy between them, that Camus never uses the word "friend" when speaking of him and rejects the Salesian notion of a spiritual director as a friend.⁶

To accept this view is to completely undermine not only the nature of the relationship of de Sales and Camus, but also to cast serious doubts about Camus as a faithful disseminator of the Salesian spirit. To admit that Camus rejected the notion of friendship as expounded by the saint and so fundamental to his thought is to question whether Camus really understood the saint's teaching. It would have been more tantalizing and more accurate if Fr. Wehrle had put a question mark after

⁴ "Le jésuite [P. Sauvage in 1755], écrit l'honnête et paisible abbé de Baudry, 'déchire de toutes ses forces l'évêque de Belley: il le présente comme un déiste, un chef des jansénistes, un ennemi des religieux, un auteur obscène,' bref comme un démon." (*Le véritable esprit de saint François de Sales*, I, p. LXIV as cited by Henri. Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris, Bloud et Gay, 1916, I,158). Translations are the author's unless otherwise noted.

⁵ J.J. Navatel,S.J. " Eh bien! Il faut le dire, pour en finir avec une légende: l'écrivain [Camus], à cet égard, ne mérite pas tant de sympathie et de confiance, de la part surtout des historiens que le citent si complaisamment. Après le consciencieux travail de M. l'abbé de Baudry: *Le véritable Esprit de saint François de Sales* (Lyon, 1846) on ne peut plus regarder l'Évêque de Belley comme l'interprète fidèle de la doctrine du Saint et le peintre exact de son âme" (*Oeuvres de Saint François de Sales. Édition complète* (Annecy,: Monastère de la Visitation 1892-1964), XIV, pp. 140-141).(Hereinafter cited as OEA). Navatel produces as evidence the fact that Camus cites as the saint's thoughts his own, takes pride in telling us that he never rereads what he wrote nor erases what he wrote and cites from memory conversations that he had with the saint 17 years after his death.

⁶ Franz Wehrle. OSFS, "Camus,der Freund des hl. Franz von Sales," *Jahrbuch für salesianische Studien*, (band 33, 2001),80. The citations are from M. Tietz: "Der geistige Führer, dieser treue Freund, der unsere Handlungen lenkt". Freundschaft oder Führung nach Montaigne, Franz von Sales und J. P. Camus", in *Foi, Fidélité, Amitié en Europa à la période moderne 1955*, 533 ff.

the title. In any event, we will reserve for later a closer look at Tietz' position as expounded by Fr. Wehrl.

St. Jane de Chantal's relationship with Camus does not appear to be a very warm one. Although she admired him as a spiritual writer and a person of integrity, she lacked confidence in his judgement. She advises Mère Anne-Catherine de Beaumont in Paris on December 14, 1623: "Seek the advice of Father Binet on the matter of accepting young women without the knowledge of their parents. This can be done, but there are certain matters that must be considered. Likewise seek advice about the Bishop of Belley. He is a good prelate, but he has certain principles that are not appreciated by everyone."⁷ We can assume that Jane was among those who did not care for some of his positions.

What most disturbed Jane about Camus is that he wanted to change the way of life of the Visitation monastery in his diocese at a time when she was trying to obtain from Rome a bull preventing unwarranted incursions of local bishops into the internal government of the various monasteries.⁸ She rightly felt that without this protection, the order would be destroyed. So she was justifiably alarmed at the very idea.

Camus' penchant for polemics, especially with religious orders of men, earned him the hostility of both King Louis XIV and Richelieu. His harsh attacks against religious orders, led Jane to write him a stern letter telling him that his approach was causing great scandal, dissuading him from his attacks against religious and urging him to bear the attacks made against him as our Lord did and also with the gentleness and moderation that his saintly mentor used in similar situations. (Cf. OEA, XIV, 417-419). She clearly does not see him reflecting the Salesian spirit in these squabbles.

Jane notes in a letter to Mother Jacqueline Favre that one of Camus' books dealing with the interior life according to de Sales was not well received and should be squelched.⁹ It appears that Jane never saw the book and is just reporting what was told her, I imagine, by a reliable source. What is interesting or revealing is that she should report it in a negative light without having read it.

De Sales' Admiration for Camus

⁷ "Prenez le conseil du Père Binet pour la reception de ces filles qui veulent entrer à l'insu de leurs parents: cela se peut, mais il y a quelquefois des occasions qui doivent être considérées. De même, prenez avis pour M. de Belley: ce prélat est bon, mais il a certaines maximes qui ne sont pas goûtées de tous." Lettre 627, *Sainte Jeanne de Chantal Correspondance*, ed. Sr. Marie-Patricia Burns (Paris, du Cerf, 1985), II, 299-300.

⁸ "Or, ce n'est sans raison que les religieuses de la Visitation craignent ces changements, car déjà il est arrivé qu'un prélat voulut changer tout à un coup, toute leur manière de vie" (*Ibid.*, Letter 743 to Dom Juste Guérin, December 1624, II, 476-479)

⁹ "L'on m'a écrit que ce livre que M. de Belley a fait de l'intérieur de notre Bienheureux Père est très mal reçu et qu'il serait à désirer qu'il fût étouffé (Sr. Burns, Dec 12, 1631, vol IV, p. 247), The book referred to is the *Traité de la réformation intérieure, selon l'esprit du B. François de Sales. Evêque et Prince de Geneve, Instituteur de l'Order de la Visitation de S. Marie.*(Paris:Huré,1631).

This not too flattering picture that emerges of Camus stands in stark contrast with the great admiration that St. Francis de Sales had for him. In his preface to the *Treatise on the Love of God*, the saint is effusive in his praise of Camus:

I will say nothing of the *Parenetic* of that river of eloquence which now flows through all of France by reason of the multitude and variety of his sermons and splendid writings. A close spiritual consanguinity has been contracted by my soul with his, since by the imposition of my hands he has received the sacred character of the episcopal order to the good fortune of the diocese of Belley and to the honor of the Church. Along with the thousand ties of sincere friendship that bind us together. ..¹⁰

We note that the saint describes his relationship with Camus as one that is marked by "a thousand ties of sincere friendship." Francis does not use the word "friendship" in a casual manner but with the full meaning that he gives it both in this work and in the *Introduction to a Devout Life*. (Cf. III, chp. 17-22). This should be kept in mind with regard to the opinion calling this friendship into question. De Sales says that he has a "sincere dilection" for Camus.¹¹ In the Salesian vocabulary the word "dilection" is very telling and expresses for the saint a preferential spiritual friendship. (Cf. *Treatise*, I, chp. XIII). Camus himself wrote a work on "Pure Dilection."

Evidently, Francis assiduously read the books that Camus authored. He tells his friend that he is still waiting for the books he promised to send, books which he will greatly treasure because of the special affection he has for him.¹²

In a letter to Camus' vicar general, Chanoine Honorée des Echelles, Francis makes reference to Camus, who, in what is considered to be his first pious or devout novel, *La Memoire de Daire* (composed around 1618 but published in 1620) alludes to the saint under the name of *Theophile*, a lover of God. The saint comments:

"Oh! If I truly were *Theophile*, as your distinguished prelate calls me (more in accordance with the magnanimity of his charity than in keeping with the knowledge that he has of my weaknesses)... But if you can love me because I am not a *Theophile*, love me so that I can be one, asking our great *Androphile* [lover of men] that he make me by his prayers his *Theophile*."

¹⁰ *Treatise on the Love of God*, trans. J.K. Ryan (Rockford, IL: Tan, 1975), 39

¹¹ "Je croy que quant a Monsieur de Belley, je n'en auray parlé qu'avec le compas de la sincere dilection avec laquelle je l'honore, car je sens bien en mon ame que j'ay de l'affection a son estime" (OEA, XIV, 205).

¹² "J'attendray cependant les livres qu'il vous plaist me promettre, qui tiendront en mon estude le rang convenable a l'estime que je fais de leur autheur, et a l'amour parfait avec lequel je luy porte et porteray toute ma vie honneur, respect et reverence" (OEA, XV, 29, March 7, 1611). In the first part of this letter, Francis is obviously responding to Camus' remark about how some people do not profit very readily from his preaching. The saint consoles him by saying that we have to be a bit indulgent with very little children "even if, at times, they bite the nipple that feeds them" (*Ibid*, p. 28)

The saint goes on to say that he will be spending several days of relaxation with the Camus and mentions that the latter is writing an "*histoire*" (pious novel) that describes the properties of sacred love. So this letter not only reveals the high regard in which he held Camus, but also his awareness of Camus as a novelist. *La Memoire de Darie* relates in fictional form the life and death of the wife of the saint's brother Bernard de Sales, Marie-Aimée de Chantal, who is referred to under the name of Darie.

Camus, Controversial Figure

From what we have seen thus far, it seems that we are dealing with two different persons. (Cf. Wehrl 80). These contradictory views of Camus can be partially explained by the many hats he wore and his extremely prolific pen (having written over 200 books). In addition to being admired as a very close associate of Francis de Sales, Camus was known as an excellent preacher, a fierce and combative polemicist, a respected spiritual writer, and a talented novelists (over 40). His numerous writings and the fact that he took pride in never reviewing what he wrote make it challenging to come to an accurate assessment of his reliability as a faithful transmitter of the Salesian spirit.

Camus' on-going battle with religious orders was prompted primarily by the scandalous lives that some of them led and also because they refused to recognize the bishops' legitimate authority over pastoral matters, going so far as to reject the decrees of the Council of Trent on the flimsy reason that because this Council was made up only of bishops, they were not applicable to exempt religious. A number of his attacks against them were written in a bitter and biting tone and elicited similar responses. One response entitled *Le Rabelais des évêques* particularly got his goat. The squabbles became so scandalous that even Cardinal Richelieu intervened to get Camus to desist. But to no avail.¹³

St. Jane, as mentioned above, tried to convince Camus to stop these attacks by reminding him that he should go about trying to reform those religious orders in the way his mentor did, quietly, unobtrusively and behind the scenes.¹⁴ He did stop for a while but then took up the cudgels with as much gusto as ever. This trait of his character is all the more surprising since he was well aware of how much de

¹³ . And here's what Richelieu wrote to him:

"Je ne trouve, lui disait Richelieu, aucun défaut en vous que cet acharnement contre les moines sans cela je vous canoniserais."

And Camus' response was:

"Plût a Dieu, Monsieur, que cela pût arriver; nous aurions l'un et l'autre ce que nous souhaitons: vous seriez Pape et je serais Saint." (J.-P. Nicéron, *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres dans la république des lettres...*, 1736, t. XXXVI, 93 as cited by Gabriel Joppin, *Une Querelle autour de l'amour pur: Jean-Pierre Camus, Évêque de Belley* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1938), 21.

¹⁴ "Je vous supplie et vous conjure, lui écrivait-elle, avec toute la révérence qu'il m'est possible, par la pure dilection, que vous avez à notre divin Sauveur, et par l'amour que vous portait et que vous portez à notre Bienheureux Père, de vous déporter d'écrire contre les Religieux, et de prendre garde aussi de ne heurter personne, ni en général ni en particulier, pour chétive qu'elle soit, dans vos livres, ni d'y rien dire qui puisse émuouvoir des contentions ou réfutations; car tout cela ne fait qu'engendre beaucoup d'offenses contre notre bon Dieu." She even insisted on the danger and scandal of such a vitriolic campaign: Ce mépris que l'on donne des Religieux peut aussi grandement diminuer la piété des peuples" (Sainte Jeanne de Chantal, *Oeuvres complètes*, (Paris, du Cerf, 1875), (lettre à J.-P. Camus, 1632, t. IV, 121-122), as cited by Joppin, 22).

Sales abhorred all controversies and runs counter to his professed desire to imitate the saint . In Francis' view, they generally generated much more heat than light. Camus records the following exchange:

The Bishop thoroughly disliked controversy of any kind. In fact, he would not permit religious arguments to be carried on at table, or after meals, claiming that they were not bottle topics. But I once countered him by saying that if we broke these bottles it was only to let out the flames of truth. "You mean the flames of anger," he replied, "and in them you will find smoke and darkness rather than light."¹⁵

In passing, I would like to point out the tone of free exchange that is characteristic of Camus' relationship with the saint that betrays a very close and intimate friendship. So even though Camus looked upon his friend's sayings as oracles, he felt quite free to question them on occasion. The word "countered" readily captures this spirit.

Camus tells us that the saint even admonished him on how to deal peacefully with unjust attacks. One day, Camus complained to Francis de Sales about a serious wrong that someone did to him. And the saint while completely agreeing with the rightness of his cause replied: "In this matter, I only find one thing to your disadvantage. 'What is that?', I said. 'It's up to you to be the more prudent one and to remain silent.'"¹⁶ Evidently, Camus did not follow this advice in his battles with religious orders.

Camus as Spiritual Writer and Director

Not all of Camus' polemic writings, however, were as contentious and as confrontational in tone as those with the monks and religious. He showed himself to be much more balanced in his views and moderate in his explanations in defending the concept of "pure love, " perhaps being mindful of the saint's saying that "You can catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than you can with a barrel of vinegar" (Kelley 23).

However, the tendency to be combative and contentious does occasionally rear its ugly head even in these writings. In his *Défense du pur amour*, Camus established the orthodoxy of his position by referring his readers to specific chapters in the *Treatise on the Love of God* and asks them to consider these very carefully. By doing so, they will find the basis for all of the statements that he puts forth in defending the concept of pure love. Even while making this defense, the spirit in

¹⁵ Jean-Pierre Camus, *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, ed. and trans. C.F. Kelley (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 201. The saint's letter to his friend B. Milletot strongly corroborates this aversion to controversies: "Je hais par inclination naturelle, par la condition de ma nourriture, par l'apprehension tirée de mes ordinaires considerations et, comme je pense, par l'inspiration celeste, toutes les contentions et disputes qui se font entre les Catholiques, desquelles la fin est inutile, et encor plus celles desquelles les effectz ne peuvent estre que dissensions et differens, mais sur tout en ce temps plein d'espritz disposés aux controverses, aux mesdisances, aux censures et a la ruyne de la charité" (OEA, XXV, 95, September 1-5, 1611).

¹⁶ "je ne trouve en toute cette affaire qu'une seule chose à votre désavantage: et quelle, lui dis-je? C'est qu'il ne tient qu'à vous d'être le plus sage et de vous taire" (*L'Esprit de saint François de Sales*, partie III, section VIII, t. I, p. 159) as cited by Joppin, 23).

which he states his conclusion is at odds with the way and the spirit in which his saintly friend would have handled those who disagreed with him. Camus impugns the personal motives of those who are at odds with him when he states that his adversaries are "more in love with themselves than God and his glory."¹⁷

Not everyone looked kindly on his spiritual writings. Bossuet once remarked: "Concerning the Bishop of Belley, he is an author so confused and whose theology is so imprecise that we shouldn't trouble ourselves about what he says."¹⁸ This dismissive remark does not stand up under close scrutiny. It is true that he was not an original thinker, but his talent was to enrich and elaborate on the writings and thoughts of others, especially St. Francis de Sales, and to present them in a very attractive and interesting way.

After quoting a passage from Camus' *La Défense du Pur Amour*, pp. 500-522, Bremond states: "These words are truly memorable, which I cite with a double joy since ... they splendidly summarize the Salesian and berullian philosophy, better yet the evangelical philosophy of prayer ... "¹⁹ The citation deals with not teaching all Christians regardless of age, gender, capacity that we should perform all of our actions out of love for God as our final end.

Bremond notes the same fidelity to the thought of Francis de Sales in Camus' work, *Carité*. On almost every page Camus cites the *Treatise on the Love of God* so much so that Bremond calls him the saint's double. He also notes that Camus uses quotation marks sparingly and does not go over what he has written. (Cf. Bremond, II, 206).

Although one commentator believes that Camus needed better balance in his treatment of the relationship between the theological virtue of hope and a disinterested love of God, he renders this judgment on Camus' prudence in theological matters:

Moreover, this unrepentant chatterbox is a very prudent person. Particularly in the areas of theology and spirituality, he moves with a thousand precautions. He is aware, we would say, that his originality consists not in priding himself of its depth, but of presenting in an agreeable manner the ideas of others. His theology consists in the translation of the great masters such as Suarez, Bellarmine, seasoned with edifying traits and pleasant images. His spirituality draws on the authoritative writers of his day, in particular St. Francis de Sales." (Joppin 57).

St. Jane herself recognized his considerable talents as a spiritual writer. In her letter urging him to end his acrimonious attacks against monks and religious

¹⁷ "Je supplie affectueusement, dit-il, celui qui prendra la peine de passer la vue sur cet écrit, de voir les 13e et 14e chapitres du Livre II de *l'Amour de Dieu* du Bienheureux François de Sales, et les considérer attentivement. Il y trouvera la justification de toutes les propositions avancées en cette défense du pur amour que j'ai faite pour re-jeter les accusations d'un écrit fait par concert des esprits intéressés, plus amoureux d'eux-mêmes que de Dieu ni de sa gloire. (J.P. Camus, *La Défense du Pur Amour*, conclusion, sect., CCXLVIII, p. 622, as cited by Joppin, 65).

¹⁸ "Pour ce qui est de M. l'évêque de Belley, c'est un auteur si confus et dont la théologie est si peu précise qu'il n'y a point à s'inquiéter de ce qu'il dit." Lettre de Bossuet à son neveu October 12, 1698 (*Bossuet, Correspondance, Collection "Les Grands Écrivains de la France"*, Hachette, 1916, t. X, p. 250), as cited by Joppin, 28).

¹⁹ "Paroles vraiment mémorables, que je ne cite pas sans une double allégresse, puisqu'enfin elles résument splendidement la philosophie évangélique de la prière que veulent illustrer, rajeunir, hélas! Et défendre, mes propres écrits" Bremond, vol.II, 199-200).

orders, she suggests that he turn his attention to writing about such things as "pure dilection." (Cf. OEA, XIV, 417-418).

His very close friendship of 14 years with the saint, helped Camus to become very familiar with his thought. This is why in the thirty years that he survived his saintly friend, he considered himself to be the valid interpreter of his thought. His aim and purpose in writing was to explain and complement Francis' work.²⁰ However, he should not be considered as the simple "epigone of his model" (Cognet 306). He favored the abstract school of spirituality in his *Direction à l'oraison mentale*. However when Canfeld's thought fell into disfavor, beginning with his *Devotion civile*, Camus reconsiders his position, becomes uneasy with it and later disavows in *Théologie mystique* (1640) the passivity espoused by Canfeld and the Northern mystics. (Cf. Cognet, 307-309). He shows in his defense of pure love that he is faithful to the teachings of his saintly mentor. (Cf. Cognet 307-309).

In ecumenical matters Camus seems to have followed the spirit of the saintly bishop. Initially, he wrote some very vicious tracts against the Protestants. But in 1640, he published a work with a much more conciliatory and ecumenical tone entitled, *L'avoisinement des protestans vers l'Eglise Romaines*, which attempted "to demonstrate that divisions among protestants and Catholics are often based on misunderstandings and a question of terminology rather than on the substance of things. They are often very close to one another." Here Camus sounds like he has inspired the recent dialogue between Catholics and Lutherans. Richard Simon, considered to be the father of modern biblical criticism, liked this work of Camus so much that he edited a new edition giving it the title *Moyens de Réunir les Protestans avec l'Eglise* (Ways of Reuniting Protestants with the Church).²¹

As we have seen above, the claim is made by one writer that Camus distanced himself from Francis by rejecting the notion of friendship as a constitutive element of spiritual direction. If this is so, then how do we explain the fact that the saint confided to his spiritual guidance in 1619 Mademoiselle Le Gras (St. Louise de Marillac)? Camus was her spiritual director at a particularly difficult period in her life when her husband was ill and died. "The letters they exchanged testify to the saint's confidence in her director...."²²

Camus as Novelist

Camus repeats with insistence that he began to write pious novels, which he called "*histoires*" at the suggestion of St. Francis de Sales. "Our Blessed Father gave me

²⁰ Cf. L. Cognet, *La spiritualité moderne*, Paris: Aubier, 1966, 305.

²¹ " Dans cette voie de la conciliation, [Père Veron] avait été précédé par Jean-Pierre Camus, évêque de Bellay, l'intime ami de François de Sales. De sa plume étonnamment féconde étaient sortis des écrits polémiques assez violents. [En 1638, *Reperties succinctes... et Antithèses protestantes* (Caen). En 1639, *La Démolition des fondemens de la doctrine protestante et Confrontation des Confession de foy de l'eglise Romaine et de la protestante avec l'Escriture sainte* (Paris); mais en 1640, il fit paraître *L'avoisinement des protestans vers l'Eglise Romaine*. Il s'attache à montrer que les divisions entre protestantes et catholiques reposent souvent sur des malentendus et sur des question des mots, et qu'à regarder le fond des choses, ils sont souvent très près les uns des autres. Richard Simon a trouvé cet ouvrage si fort de son goût, qu'il en a fait en 1703 une nouvelle édition avec des notes de son cru, sous le titre *Moyens de Réunir les Protestans avec l'Eglise*. Il félicite Camus d'avoir être l'un des premiers qui ait travaillé avec application à bréger les controverses" (Baroni, *Bible et Controverses*. 123).

²² Joppin, 25. He cites as his referencess P. Coste, *Le Grand Saint du Grand Siècle, Monsieur Vincent*, (Paris, 1932), t. I, 228 and also E. de Broglie, *La vénérable Louis de Marillac*, Collection "Les Saints."

the charge as coming from God to write these devout stories."²³ In fact, the very first novels that he wrote -- *Agathonphile*, *Parthénice*, *Elise*, *Dorthée*, *Alexis* were reviewed by Francis. We have already seen above that the saint was familiar with Camus' first novel, *La mémoire de Darie*. Jean Descrains notes that Camus wrote 21 collections of short stories from 1628 to 1644 and thirty some novels . There are two hundred and sixty titles listed. In six years, he wrote about 1,000 short stories!²⁴

Camus wanted to counteract the devastating moral and spiritual effect of the secular novels of his day, in particular *l'Astrée* d'Urfé, a friend of Camus, by using his not inconsiderable writing talent to demonstrate the inanities and emptiness of a purely romantic or illicit love and to lead his readers to make the resolution to embrace the love of God. Here is the way Camus enunciates this goal: "For always [read often] one or the other lovers, or both of them together, having considered the emptiness of the things of this world, the malice of mankind, the risk one ceaselessly runs regarding his salvation by walking in the ways of the world, resolved to give themselves completely to God."²⁵

In *Agathonphile*, which Camus states the saint read in manuscript form and approved before and after it was published, this goal is exemplified. (Sage xxv-xxvi). He tells us that he wrote this novel to try to accomplish in fictional form the plan of St. Francis de Sales to write a treatise on the love of neighbor, which the saint mentions in the *Treatise on the Love of God*.²⁶ Camus believed that this genre would permit him to show the attractiveness of true love .

In the story of *Philargyrippe*, which forms an important part of *Agathonphile*, we see the teachings of his saintly mentor incorporated. Just as in Francis' thought, so in this and other novels of Camus, love has the primacy of all the passions. Camus explains this primacy in words reminiscent of the saint's in the *Treatise on the Love of God*.²⁷

²³ "Car c'est un zèle d'apôtre qui lui a inspiré de s' 'addoner' a ce 'genre d'ecrire'. Même, à l'en croire, -- et il faut l'en croire -- il ne s'est engagé dans cette carrière que sur l'ordre exprès de François de Sales. Comme il lui découvrirait son dessein: 'Mon fils, lui a dit le saint évêque, Dieu me l'avoit fait concevoir; mais je l'enfante sur vos genoux et de sa part je vous en donne la charge' [*Deffense de Cleoreste*, en post-face de *Cleoreste*, t. II, p. 712]. Camus revient avec insistance là dessus, 'Nostre bienheureux Père (...) me donna comme de la part de Dieu la commission d'ecrire des histoires dévotes' [*Esprit de S. François de Sales*, édition Migne, *Oeuvres complètes* de S. F. de S., Paris, 1861, t. II. Col. 1074] 'C'estoit un dessein nouveau et inoui que ce saint evesque avoit projeté, conçu et roulé, plus de vingt-cinq ans durant, dans son esprit' [*Le Voyageur inconnu* (1630), préface (non chif.)]. "J'ai cette commission d'un saint de Dieu et, par son entremise, ainsi que je croy, du Dieu des saints" [*Evenement singuliers* (1628) préface] Jean-Pierre Camus, *Agathonphile*, *Récit de Philargyrippe* publié par Pierre Sage (Genève: Droz, 1951), xxv-xxvi.

²⁴ Jean Descrains, *Bibliographie des oeuvres de Jean-Pierre Camus*, (Paris, Publications de la Société d'Études du XVIIe siècle, 1971).

²⁵ "...car toujours (lisez: souvent) l'un ou l'autre des amants, our tous les deux ensembles, ayant considéré le néant des choses du monde, la malice des hommes, le péril que l'on court sans cesse de son salut en marchant dans les voies du siècle, prenaient la résolution de se donner entièrement à Dieu..." (Camus, *Les hommes illustres*, as cited by Bremond, I, 174).

²⁶ 'Sous le rideau d'une Histoire Sainte et de Martyrs', cet ouvrage 'cache industrieusement le traité d l'Amour du prochain ' que le bienheurex François de sales appelle de ses voeux 'au chapitre second du dixième livre de son traité de l'Amour de Dieu' [*Les Eclaircissemens de Meliton* (635), t. II, 269] (As cited by Sage, p. xxii).

²⁷ "L'amour est en nous le suprême don de Dieu, et l'âme de notre âme; 'L'amour est la Royne de nos passions, c'en est le premier mobile, toutes les autres vont son branle [Note. 5 "C'est-à-dire 'suivent son mouvement': l'amour est le corphyé de nos 'passions'"] (...) Tout ce que Dieu a facit est bon (...) les passions ne sont mauvaises qu'autant qu'elles ont un mauvais object, mais elles, sont renduës bonnes par un bon'" (As cited by Sage, p. xvii).(See *Treatise*

The Salesian ideal of friendship which Camus sets forth in the story of *Philargyrippe* demonstrates how deeply he understood and appreciated the saint's teaching on personal relations. Philargyrippe describes his relationship with the parents of Deucalie, his intended bride who had died, in terms of a spiritual friendship which faithfully echoes what de Sales says in the *Devout Life* regarding friendships. He says that he looked upon them as his own parents, even though death took away the basis of that relationship. Deucalie's mother remarked to him that when she looks at him, she sees her daughter in his face and that their friendship is a great consolation to her. Philargyrippe replies:

Mother, I called her (for her graciousness permitted to address her this way), you are quite right in saying that your daughter appears in me as my parents tell me that I look half dead in your daughter. For it is true that the perfect union of an all holy and sacred love formed in our hearts causes me to take in her tomb half of her death and makes her take on in me half of my life and if true friendship is nothing else than one soul in two bodies... why couldn't the lovable Deucalie not be able to come alive in me as I go dying in her. And if love is a transformation of the lover and the thing loved, you can certainly see your daughter in me since my soul is filled with the idea of her perfections.²⁸

Camus expresses several ideas on friendship that evoke those of Francis de Sales. The idea of one soul in two bodies (Aristotle), love makes us like the one we love, and also the immortality of friendship. "Your daughter lives on in me." This is not exactly the immortality that Francis espoused, but, nonetheless, one that he would find acceptable.²⁹

The above citation gives us a flavor of Camus' writing that might appear a bit too precious for our tastes. Nonetheless, he was very widely read in his day, judging from the large number of reprints of his novels. Sage believes that some of the mishaps of *Philargyrippe* are not credible. Furthermore, his work appears too

on the Love of God, Bk. 1, chp.4). For a more nuanced treatment of the similarities and differences in the concept of the passions as understood by de Sales and Camus, see Anthony Live, S.J., *French Moralists: The Theory of the Passions 1585-1649*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1964 pp.126-135).

²⁸ "Ma mere, luy dis-je (car sa grace me permettoit de l'appeller ainsi) vous avez grande raison de dire que vostre fille vous apparoist en moy, comme mes parens me disent que je parois demy mort en vostre fille; car c'est la verité, que la parfaite union qu'une Amour toute sainte et toute sacree avoit formée en nos coeurs, me faict prendre dedans sa tombe la moitié de sa mort, et fait qu'elle reprend en moy la moitié de la vie; [In a footnote, Sage cites a verse from Corneille's *Le Cid*, (II, 3) expressing the same idea] et si la vraye amitié n'est autre chose qu'une ame en deux corps, et si le lien conjugal fait que deux corps n'ont qu'une mesme chair, pour quoy l'aimable Deucali ne pourrat-t-elle revivre en moy, comme je vay mourant en elle? Et si l'Amour est une transformation de l'Amant en la chose aymée, vous pouviez bien voir vostre fille en moy, puisque mon ame est si remplie de l'idée de ses perfections...(Sage, pp. 13-14).

²⁹ Here's what SFS has to say about the immortality of true friendship: "encore que mes amis meurent mon amitié ne meurt point, ains s'il s'y fait quelque changement, c'est pour une nouvelle naissance qui la voit plus vive et vigoureuse entre leurs cendres comme un certain phoenix mystique; car bien que les personnes que j'ayme soyent mortelles, ce que j'ayme principalement en elles est immortel., et j'ay tous-jours estimé cet axiome fondamental pour la conoissance des vrayes amitiés, qu'Aristote, saint Hierosme et saint Augustin ont tant solennisé(praised so much): *Amicitia quae desinere potuit, nunquam vera fuit* (A friendship that can end was never a true friendship." (OEA, 15, 94). He goes on to say in this letter to Bénigne Milletot "the good man President [Frémyot] still lives in my heart..."

hurried, certain aspects are not sufficiently elaborated, and it lacks cohesiveness and harmony. This being said, Camus shows himself to be "a master of the spiritual life" and an inexhaustible source of "optimism and human tenderness" that distances him from the pessimism of Jansenism.³⁰

One of the foremost French literary critics was not so kind to Camus. Sainte-Beuve remarks, "It is either in an error of taste or in a rather too artificial game to claim to make something out of nothing and to think that you can revive something that never had life"³¹ Bremond takes issue with this very harsh criticism. He believes that, in this regard, Sainte-Beuve let his heart run away from his head, or allowed his judgement to be affected by the prejudices of his friends.

Over all, his novels had a very beneficial effect; otherwise Camus would not have spent so many years in writing them. (Sage xx-xxii) Essentially they demonstrate that "goodness is the true beauty of the soul" ("*La bonté et la vray beauté de l'âme*") to use Camus' expression.³² This expression succinctly sums up chapter 1 of Book 1 of the *Treatise* and is a major theme of de Sales' two spiritual masterpieces.

Camus and *L'Esprit*

Camus is primarily known and appreciated as the author of *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales (L'Esprit du Bienheureux S. François de Sales)*. The original version was in six volumes and appeared from 1639 to 1641. One commentator notes, "Camus is not the author of this work, which is only a collection of sayings attributed to him. The whole work was written by one or two compilers under circumstances that we would like to know more about and which do not inspire complete confidence" (Cognet 305).³³ Pierre Collot made an abridged version of it in 1727. Jean Descrains has discovered at least 38 re-editions or adaptations of this version.³⁴

³⁰ "Mais on y trouve des analyses déliées et pénétrant qui révèlent un maître de la vie spirituelle, un connaisseur avisé des âmes... 'On est touché par ce débordement intarissable d'optimisme et de tendresse humaine" (Sage, pp lxxii and. lxxiii).

³¹ "C'est, dit-il, dans une erreur de goût, ou un jeu par trop artificiel, de prétendre faire quelque chose de rien, de croire qu'on peut ressusciter ce qui n'a jamais eu vie" (*Port-Royal*, I, p. 242 as cited by Bremond, I, 277).

³² "Fréquemment chez Camus, c'est le charme de la vertu des personnages qui éblouit les héros ou les héroïnes. Ces exigences sont conforme à l'esprit de Camus, pour qui 'l'Amour est le fils de la bonté; 'la bonté est la vraye beauté de l'ame' (*Alexis*, VI,157). as cited by John Costa. *Le Conflit Moral dans l'Oeuvre Romanesque de Jean-Pierre Camus (1584-1652)* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1974,18).

³³ Since it is a compilation, we must be careful not to accept the contents as being the thought of Camus during this period. It is true that Camus accepted tacitly the "paternity" of this compilation. So we should be cautious about accepting it as his thought. (Cf. Raoul Heurtevent, "Jean-Pierre Camus," Dictionnaire de la spiritualité, t. II, Part I, col. 74

³⁴ "J'a déjà relevé(p. 64-65) 23 rééditions ou adaptations de l'abrégé que Pierre Collot avait tiré, en 1727, de cet ouvrage.... Je suis maintenant en mesure d'en ajouter une quinzaine:" Venice, 1741; Augsburg, 1745; Augsburg and Innsbruck, 1758; Augsburg, 1773; Padua, 1777; Augsburg and Munich, 1832; 4 editions at Vienna, 1830-34; Munich, 1851; Augsburg(Stasbourg), 1872; Ratisbonne, 1877; Ratisbonne, 1927, Olten, 1949 (Cf. Jean Descrains. *Essais sur Jean-Pierre Camus*. Paris:Klincksieck, 1992,159).

Although Camus might not be the author of *L'Esprit* in the strict sense, it cannot be easily denied that the work accurately contains, for the most part, Camus' views and his exchanges with Francis de Sales. The objections raised by l'abbé de Baudry have been, in this writer's view, effectively answered by Bremond. In critiquing the indictment of l'abbé De Baudry's "*Des doctrines fausses et des récits faux que Pierre Camus met dans la bouche de saint François de Sales,*" Bremond, after having treated each of the accusations, admits that there are certain excessive statements on some very specific matters and that Camus gets carried away, but these should not cause us to get in a dither.³⁵ After examining the other criticisms of l'abbé De Baudry, Bremond writes:

Nineteen corrections in a work of six volumes... We have seen, I think, evidence that the critical sense of our censor does not match the depth of his zeal. Several of his criticisms are unimportant. Let us put the worst face on it. Let us say that he is right on all of these points. Let us tear out from Camus' book thirty or fifty pages. What is left [of the] the entire book remains more solid than brass.³⁶

The views and anecdotes that are given in *l'Esprit* give us precious insights that have fixed in the Catholic imagination the charmingly human and tender personality of the saint as no other work has done. It reminds us that we are known by the company we keep. In revealing Francis to us, Camus reveals himself. The personal ties that bind us count for a great deal in Salesian spirituality, which sees spiritual friendships as necessary for growth in the spiritual life. "The emphasis on the personal is not just a charming detail of Salesian spirituality; it lies at its heart in a way that few spiritual classics could match. Francis' experience was a world in which admiration, affability, and a gentle understanding grew into friendships, and to know his friends is to understand his works and to know the major influences on them."³⁷

Free and open communication is for Francis de Sales at the heart all friendships. The nature of the communication determines the nature of the friendship. Francis says that he opens his heart to Camus: "I will tell you this little word, but a word of a friend, [spoken] to the ear of your heart."³⁸ This reveals the nature of their intimate friendship. What we see communicated in page after page between these

³⁵ "Et voilà terminée la série des graves erreurs. A chacun d'apprécier. Quelques outrances de pensée sur des problèmes très spéciaux, quelques formules malheureuses, quelques emportements de plume, on a certes bien raison de redresser ces faux pas, mais il n'y a pas la matière à s'indigner. Encore est-il que sur plusieurs de ces huit points, les critiques de M. de B. me paraissent porter dans le vide" (Bremond, I, 530).

³⁶ Dix-neuf corrections et l'ouvrage a six volumes in -8o.... On a vu, je crois, jusqu'à l'évidence que le sens critique de notre censeur n'était pas à la hauteur de son zèle. Plusieurs de ces critiques n'ont pas d'importance, quelques-unes sont insoutenables... Mettons les choses au pire. Donnons-lui raison sur tous ces points. Déchirons, du livre de Camus, trente ou cinquante pages. Ce qui reste, c'est-à-dire, en somme, le livre entier demeure plus solide que l'airain" (*Ibid.*, 531).

³⁷ *Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern*, ed. Louis Dupré and Don. Saliers. (New York: Crossroads, 1991), 33.

³⁸ "Je vous dirai ce petit mot, mais mot d'ami et à l'oreille du coeur ..." *L'Esprit de Saint François de Sales, évêque et prince de Geneve, recueillis de diverse écrit de M. Jean-Pierre Camus, évêque de Belley, ouvrages qui contiennent les plus beaux endroits de ses écrits, et qui renferme des Instructions propres à toutes sortes de personnes*. Par M.P.C. Docteur de Sorbonne, Nouvelle édition (Paris: les Frères Estienne, 1747), p. 88..

two friends is the whole range of the devout life, viz., prayer, the virtues, love of God and neighbor, even the nature of true friendship itself. Following an important principle regarding faults in our friends, Francis admonishes Camus:

François would often admonish me for my many faults, saying: "I expect you to be very grateful to me for this. It is the greatest proof I can give of my friendship, and I would be more sure of yours if you would do the same. You are much too cautious...The love I have for you is so great that I cannot endure the least imperfection in you."³⁹

Although Camus greatly admired the saint and almost always refers to him in this work as "*notre Bienheureux Père*," he does speak of Francis as his friend. "François' devotion to our Blessed Lady was eminently judicious. Indeed, we should expect nothing else from one so sincere and single-minded as our dear friend"(emphasis added) (Kelly 222).

There are occasions when Francis gives confidences to Camus that he did not think advisable to make generally known because of the misunderstandings that might easily occur. One of the very interesting chapters that Collot saw fit to exclude from his condensed version had to do with the number of people who are saved. This was done, as a foreword of a later edition of the *L'Esprit* notes, because of the rigorism of that period, alluding no doubt to the enduring influence of Jansenism in France.⁴⁰ Camus records it in the following way:

His extreme gentleness always inclined him to the less severe opinions as long as they were probable. I was talking to him about the fearful passage of the Gospel, "Many are called but few are chosen [Mt. 20, 16; 22, 14]. I was saying that the number of elect had been called a little flock, and that...those of the damned was infinite....He responded that he thought there would be very few Christians (he meant of those who are in the true Church, outside of which there is no salvation)who were damned 'because having the root of true faith, this root ordinarily produces fruit sooner or later, that is to say, salvation, and being dead, it would come alive, operating through charity.

And when I asked him what the Gospel passage of the small number meant, he said that by comparison to the rest of the world, and of the infidel countries, the number of Christians is very small, but that of this small number, very few would be lost according to this noteworthy saying: "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"[Rom. 8, 1]. This is to be understood...of justifying grace, but this grace is not separated from a living faith and animated by charity. Moreover, the one who gives the grace to begin, also gives the grace to finish well. The Christian

³⁹ Jean-Pierre Camus, *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, ed. and trans. C.F. Kelly (New York: Harper & Brothers 1951), 202

⁴⁰ St. François de Sales. *L'Esprit de Saint François de Sales* (Paris: Société de St. Jean l'Evangéliste, Paris: Desclée, 1908), 5-6). The title page gives Francis de Sales and not Camus as the author. This indicates in the mind of the editor that the work was authentically that of Francis as recorded by Camus. The edition was purposely printed in the format of a small book to serve as handy a prayer book for the faithful.

vocation, which is a work of God, is also a perfect work and one which leads finally to total consummation, that is, to glory.

Camus' comment that follows shows that he is a bit uncomfortable with this opinion and finds it necessary to remind his readers that we still have to live holy lives if we expect to be saved.⁴¹ This is a good example of how Camus was faithful in reporting the saint's teaching even when he appears to be inclined to disagree with it.

What accounts for the popularity that the *l'Esprit* has had down through the years and in many different countries is the way Camus brings to light the spirit of freedom that Francis so cherished. As a young Bishop, Camus frequently sought the advice of his saintly neighbor on pastoral matters and employed a special courier to carry his questions to him. On one occasion, he was asked by the officers of the soldiers billeted in his diocese about allowing them to eat eggs and cheese during Lent. Camus felt that the people of his diocese would be greatly scandalized if he gave permission. Francis replied that he would not only give them permission to eat eggs and cheese, but also meat. "God grant that they do nothing worse than eat eggs or beef, cheese or cows..." (Collot 160-161). When one considers that in the eyes of many of the faithful and clerics as well, to break the Lenten fast in those days was considered to be almost tantamount to denying one's faith, Francis' response is all the more remarkable.

The Salesian spirit of freedom is exemplified in his well known saying: "Do all through love and nothing through constraint." Camus gives us a deeper insight into the saint's understanding of this motto, and of the relationship between love and freedom, when he says:

Perhaps the most favorite of François de Sales' mottoes was: "Do all by love and nothing by constraint.' Indeed, it was the main spring of his rule for directing others. I have heard him say many times that it is a tyranny abhorrent to both God and man to force the human will. He could not tolerate that absolutism which

⁴¹ "Son extrême douceur le portait toujours aux opinions les plus suaves, pour peu qu'elles eussent de probabilité On parlait une fois devant lui de cette redoutable parole de l'Évangile: *Il y en a beaucoup d'appelés, et peu d'élus* [Mt. 20, 16, 22, 14]. On disait que le nombre des élus était appelé petit troupeau, que celui des insensés, c'est à dire des réprouvés, était infini, et semblables choses. Il répondit qu'il estimait qu'il y aurait fort peu de Chrétiens (il entendait de ceux qui sont dans la vraie Eglise, hors de laquelle il n'y a point de salut) qui fussent damnés; 'parce qu'ayant la racine de la vraie foi, celle-ci poussait ordinairement son fruit tôt ou tard, c'est-à-dire le salut, et de morte elle devenait vive, et opérante par charité."

"Et quand on lui demanda ce que signifiait donc cette parole évangélique du petit nombre des élus; il dit qu'à comparaison du reste du monde, et des nations infidèles, le nombre des Chrétiens était fort petit, mais que de ce petit nombre il s'en perdait fort peu, selon cette remarquable sentence: il n'y a point de damnation pour ceux qui sont en Jesus-Christ [Rom. 8, 1]. ce qui s'entend, à la vérité, de la grâce justifiante; mais cette grâce ne se sépare point de la foi vive, et animée de charité. De plus, celui qui donne la grâce de commencer, donne aussi celle de bien finir: la vocation au Christianisme, qui est une oeuvre de Dieu, est une oeuvre parfaite, et qui conduit à la fin de toute consommation, cest-à-dire, à la gloire.

Cette doctrine est de grande consolation, pourvu qu'elle ne nous rende pas négligents à bien faire. Car ce n'est pas assez de dire comme ces anciens: Le temple du Seigneur, let temple du Seigneur [Jerem. 7,4]; l'église, l'Eglise; je suis dans le sein de la vraie Eglise, je crois tout ce que Dieu me propose par la sainte Eglise. Puisque c'est à nous de vivre saintement, comme de croire véritablement; car de commettre des crimes dans la maison de Dieu, c'est comme souiller le sanctuaire, et se rendre doublement coupable. Et qui ne sait que le serviteur qui connaît la volonté du maître, et ne se soucie pas de l'accomplir, mérite une double punition?" (*Ibid.*,729-731).

insists on obedience, willing or unwilling. "Those who love to be feared, fear to be loved, " he said, "and they themselves are more afraid than anyone, for whereas other men fear only them, they fear everyone."

How often I have heard the Bishop say: "There are no galley slaves in the royal vessel of divine love - every man works his oar voluntarily!" (Kelly 63).

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to determine whether Camus was a reliable transmitter of the spirit and teaching of St. Francis de Sales. The views on this subject have been varied and even contradictory. What makes the task so difficult is the sheer volume of his writings and the difficulty of obtaining many of them. There is little doubt that in his battles with religious orders, the spirit which animated his attacks went directly contrary to the irenic and non-contentious approach that characterized the method of St. Francis de Sales, a spirit with which Camus was very familiar, having experienced it first hand and having enunciated the saint's abhorrence of controversies. So it is puzzling to know why he gave into a combative temperament even after St. Jane strongly urged him to desist and reminded him how contrary it was to the mind of his saintly model. Camus so admired Francis de Sales that, as he himself informs us, he tried to imitate the manner of the saint's preaching with artificial and sometimes laughable results, but, curiously, he did not strive to imitate his gentle and conciliatory manner in his criticisms of monks and religious. So in these conflicts, he certainly did not succeed in transmitting the saint's spirit. In fact, his penchant for polemics made him less effective in his professed goal of being faithful to the saint's teaching, a teaching that not only involved content but also the manner and spirit in which it is communicated.

In his controversies on the question of pure love, Camus was very careful to navigate perilous theological shoals and succeeded in articulating with clarity, charm and precision the saint's teaching. Camus showed himself here to be much more restrained in opposing the views of others, but, on occasion, he does not refrain from making some personal attacks. The spirit that Camus evinces in his work published by Richard Simon on ways of seeking a rapprochement with Protestants is characterized by an ecumenical approach that Francis de Sales would have happily endorsed.

As a prolific novelist, Camus used this medium to incorporate in creative and engaging ways the teachings of the saint. It is an interesting study of how an ecclesiastic tried to grapple with the secular culture of his age and to use one of its tools, the novel, to negate or rather counterbalance the pervasively pernicious influence of the secular novel. Camus explores in these writings the meaning of true love and friendship and how God's love must permeate and transform human love. Given the wide readership that he had during his lifetime, it is safe to assume that he was able to reach and touch the hearts of many with the Salesian spirit. An intriguing question is what influence through these pious novels and other writings did Camus have on how Corneille portrayed the passions of his characters. A

recent study attempts to show the influence of Francis de Sales on Corneille's conception of man's grandeur.⁴² In analyzing Camus' theory of the passions, one writer believes Camus prepared the way for Corneille. (Levi 133). Additional research in this area could further elucidate Camus' influence as a faithful disseminator of the Salesian spirit since his reliance on the saint's teaching about the passions is evident.

Attempts to minimize or even deny that Camus had a very close, intimate friendship with the saint have as their purpose to undermine Camus' reliability and cannot stand up under close scrutiny. Navatel based his position primarily on the objections of l'abbé Baudry, which Bremond masterfully counters, and St. Jane's letter urging Camus to stop his bitter attacks on religious orders. In this letter, Jane does not deny the existence of this friendship but rather assumes it and makes an appeal to Camus to do what his dear friend would have done in similar circumstances. The more telling argument for the intimate nature of this relationship is one based on a close analysis of *L'Esprit* itself and on Camus' other writings, especially his pious novels. As we have pointed out, the nature and spirit of the exchanges recorded in *L'Esprit* reveal an openness and an intimacy that most friends would greatly envy. Their relationship has all of the traits of a deep spiritual friendship, which the saint highlights in his *Introduction to a Devout Life*, viz., a relationship in which "two, three, or more souls share with one another their devotion and spiritual affections and establish a single spirit among themselves" (Ryan, III, 175). To claim as Tietz does that Camus looked upon the saint as an "angel" rather than a man and hence could not be friends with him runs counter to everything we know about this relationship. Admittedly, Camus was in awe of his mentor and considered him to be far above himself.⁴³ But in the Salesian conception of friendship this is not necessarily an obstacle to establishing such a relationship. . After all, the saint clearly points out that true friendship can exist between human beings and God.(Cf. *Treatise*, Bk. 1., chp. 13). If this is so, then, no matter how highly Camus regarded his idol, this does not prevent him from developing a deep and lasting friendship with the saint.

The most extensive, enduring and effective way in which Camus showed himself to be a faithful and reliable interpreter of the Salesian spirit was by means of *L'Esprit de St. François de Sales*. As we have seen, the best known version, that of Collot, has gone through numerous editions not only in French, but also in German. There are also translations in Italian and several in English. This compilation was looked upon as practically being the work of the saint. For example, it was included in the final volume of the complete works of the saint published by Bethune.⁴⁴ At least one edition mentioned above attributes

⁴² Claire Cerasi. *Pierre Corneille à l'image et semblance de François de Sales* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2000).

⁴³ "Vous pouvez sur moi tout ce que vous voulez; vostre jugement a un tel ascendant sur le mien et vostre volonté regente si absolument la mienne, que je rumine vos paroles comme des oracles; je remache vos escrits comme des feuilles Sibyllines, sur quoy je ne peux faire des gloses qui ne me satisfacent, pourveu qu'elles soient conformes à ses textes. Ne dittes pas que je vous en conte, je dis la verité de mon sentiment: *Oratio mea tantum abest à mendacio à necessitate*. (OEA, XVI, 390. Response to the saint's' letter written in 1613).

⁴⁴ Collot's edition of *L'Esprit de Saint François de Sales*, along with the other pieces that were published with this edition, appears, in the 15th volume of *Oeuvres complètes de Saint François de Sales* (Paris: Bethune, 1832). In the eyes of the editors of this edition of the saint's work, *L'Esprit* was considered to be practically a work of St. Francis

authorship to the saint. Furthermore, so many of the pithy sayings that are attributed to Francis are found only in this work. Among some of the most notable are: "You can catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than you can with a barrel of vinegar"(Collot 4). "The truth which is not charitable springs from a charity that is not true" (*Ibid.* 21-3). "We must fear God out of love and not love him through fear"(*Ibid* 110). It is true that, at times, they might not be the exact words of the saint, but they certainly convey and capture the essence of the saint's thought and spirit.

C. F. Kelly in his edition of *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales* has numerous notes that are frequently long citations from St. Jane's Deposition in the canonization process of the saint. These corroborate and/ or expand upon the sayings found in this work. In his preface to the third edition of Chanoine F. Vidal's book, André Ravier, whose credentials as one of the foremost Salesian scholars of the past century are impeccable, states: "*Tout le livre est d'une sonorité salésienne.*"⁴⁵ This judgment is made not only on the basis of the grouping of appropriate texts from the works of the saint, but also of the numerous selections from the *L'Esprit de Saint François de Sales*. Obviously in the mind not only of Chanoine Vidal, but also in Ravier's judgment, *l'Esprit*, over all, is a reliable source that reflects the true spirit of Francis de Sales.

Despite his reputation for leading an austere life, Camus had a surprising influence on some of the leading intellectuals of his day, especially among the famous foursome -- Guy Patin, Gabriel Naudé, François La Mothe Le Vayer and Pierre Gassendi -- known in French as *libertins érudits*. These men were not libertines in the sense of leading loose lives, but rather intellectual liberals that critically examined certain religious practices and commonly accepted beliefs, which, in their judgment, bordered on superstition. No doubt, they relished Camus' intellectual agility in his polemic writings and the *liberté d'esprit*, which he learned from his saintly mentor. Naudé was so charmed by Camus that he wrote a very favorable study on him and even published one of his novels.⁴⁶ The incisive insights into human nature, which Camus gives in *L'Esprit* and his many other writings that have a Salesian flavor were, no doubt, a source of inspiration to Gassendi.⁴⁷ The liberal foursome were also very familiar with the writings of the

de Sales because of the numerous oral quotations of the saint cited by Camus. This is a good indication of how closely the people of that period linked Camus' recollections with the true spirit and thought of the saint.

⁴⁵ *Aux Sources de Joie avec Saint François de Sales*, 3e édition présentée par le R.P. André Ravier (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie, 1974), 8.

⁴⁶ [Naudé] écrivit sur Camus une longue étude très affectueuse; il publia même un de ses romans: *Palombe ou la femme honorable*" (Bremond, I, pp. 276-277).

⁴⁷ " 'La vraie science et la vraie estude de l'homme, c'est l'homme,' dit Charron, un autre de ses inspireurs, auxquels il faut joindre J.-P. Camus, du Vair, Pic de la Mirandole, Ramus..." (Bernard Rochot. *Pierre Gassendi, sa vie et ses oeuvres*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1955, p. 102)

saint, whom they greatly admired.⁴⁸ Pascal and very likely La Bruyère read Camus because he embodied for them the ideal of Christian humanism.⁴⁹

In his own day, Camus' appeal was extensive, including not only the pious but those particularly known for their intellectual prowess. This is a revealing aspect of the attractiveness of the Salesian spirit, which Camus faithfully and successfully worked to promote and propagate.

Alexander T. Pocetto, OSFS
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⁴⁸ Alexander Pocetto. "St. François de Sales et les libertins érudits" (unpublished thesis, Québec, Université Laval, 1970).

⁴⁹ "Camus a été lu par Pascal, par Bossuet et par le curé Meslier. Il me semble évident que La Bruyère ne l'a pas ignoré. Certes, les temps ont changé, les réalités ne sont plus tout à fait les mêmes, mais ils sont tous deux aussi incisifs à l'égard de la société où ils vivent, et Camus apparaît souvent comme un prêtre qui serai, déjà, honnête homme, accomplissement de l'humanisme dévot" (Jean Descrains, p. 33).