Constitutions of the Florimontane Academy**

erected at Annecy

by Francis de Sales & Antoine Favre (president of Geneva)

Oeuvres de St. François de Sales

Édition complète, Annecy, tome XXIV, pages 242-247

(translated by Thomas F. Dailey, OSFS)

The aim of the Academy will be the exercise of all the virtues, the sovereign glory of God, the service of the most serene Princes, and public usefulness.

Only good and learned persons will be received therein.
Whoever is to be received will be presented by one of the members of the Academy. In the register will be written the name, surname, country and qualities of the one who will be received. To him falls the responsibility of demonstrating his doctrine and capability, either by writing or by word, either in prose or in verse, before the members of the Academy.

All the members of the Academy will take their names and mottos as they fancy; nevertheless, they must be suitable. And the Examiner will take care that they be well taken and that they not be changed. After they will have been depicted, one will affix them according to the order of reception.

The conferences of those who will have to speak publicly will be done with a serious (meur) and exact judgment.

All the gallant masters of the honorable arts will be admitted to the general assemblies, including painters, sculptors, carpenters, architects, and the like.

Each lesson will comprise (as much as will be possible) an entire tract of some material; at the very least, one will try to draw a good conclusion from all that will have been said in the first lesson.

The style of speaking or of reading will be grave, exquisite, and plain and will not resort at all to the fashion of pedantry.

Lessons will be given in theology, or politics, or philosophy, or rhetoric, or cosmography, or geometry, or arithmetic. The aesthetic of languages, especially French, will also be dealt with there.

The members of the Academy designated to give the lessons will promise never to be absent without necessity.

On the door of the Academy will be affixed a notice which will mark the time and the contents of the lessons.

The lecturers will do all that is in their power to teach well, much, and in little time.

The auditors will pay attention, focusing their thoughts and their concerns on what will be taught; and if there is something that they do not understand, they will ask questions after the lesson.

The discourses and orations will be made with more eloquence than the lessons; in this case the oratory art will be made use of.
No heretic, schismatic, infidel, apostate, enemy of the country or of their most serene Princes will be admitted, nor will anyone who disturbs the peace or who is known for some public infamy.

All the members of the Academy will maintain a mutual and fraternal love.

One will try to set aside from the Academy all that could in any fashion nourish discord. When there will be some dissension or quarrel, the Prince or his lieutenant will very prudently order what is necessary to be done.

All things will come to the one who does his best. (*Omnes "melior charismata" aemulantor.*)[2]

Those who will arrive at the Academy after it has begun will seat themselves without ceremony and without any dispute over precedence. Nevertheless, there will be a particular place for the grand ones, including Princes, Prelates and the like.

None of the members of the Academy will make any sign of legerity of spirit, however small it may be; otherwise, he will be corrected by the Examiners.

The Prince of the Academy to be chosen will always be an illustrious man, virtuous and bearing the good of the Academy.[3]

The Trustees or Assessors will be wise, prudent, learned and expert persons.[4]

The Secretary will be someone with a clear spirit, subtle, expeditious and generous, and well versed in the humane letters. He will not send letters only to those previously named unless he has first shown them to the Prince, to the Trustees, and to the Examiners.

The Examiners will be well-versed in all things, as much as is possible, and will come near to (being) an encyclopedia; nevertheless, they will communicate to the Prince and the Trustees the pieces which should be examined.

The Treasurer to be chosen will be a prudent man, equitable and careful.

The members of the Academy should not be burdened with contributing for the things which will be necessary, according to reason.

Let not the avaricious set foot in the Academy.

A paid crier will be hired who will be obliged to call the members of the Academy in turn and according to the time, to lead the Prince and the Trustees to the Academy and see them out, to prepare the hall, and to arrange the seats.
Other matters will be taken care of in the manner necessary.

**NOTES**

** Concerning these Statutes, which were without doubt written in Latin, we have only the text published by Charles-Auguste de Sales in 1634, in the biography of his holy uncle (book VII, pp. 304-306). The biography gives a translation in the French edition of his work, which appeared in the same year (book VII, pp. 368-369). The French translation of the Latin (found in OEA 24:242-247) preserves that of the historian and is the basis for this English translation.

We know that the Florimontane Academy was the common enterprise of Francis de Sales and Antoine Favre, as can be seen by the accurate remark of M. Gaston Letonnelier in his Notice sur l'Académie Florimontane, fondée à Annecy par saint François de Sales et le Président Antoine Favre, Annecy, Abry, 1915, p. 34: it "must be considered as the fruit of the spiritual friendship which united the bishop and the lawyer ...; its Statutes are the result of their intimate collaboration." In his interesting study, the ex-archivist of Haute-Savoy (today the archivist of Isere) has done careful research on the part which each of the founders played. The ingenious similarities between the Statutes and the various writings of the Saint have led him to conclude that a good part of the former is like "the counterpart of the Salesian maxims" and that "the morality, doctrine and spirit of the Bishop" of Geneva is there "manifest almost in each line" (pp. 29-33). The conclusion seems incontestable.

What was the part played by President Favre? With the author cited above, we believe that it is necessary to attribute to him the Latin editing of the Statutes. Their archaic character is striking upon a first reading of them, and we do not find there anything of the style of St. Francis de Sales. On the contrary, is it not surprising that a magistrate as versed in Roman law as was Antoine Favre should have employed for writing the regulations of a learned organization the language of the ancient Roman laws. Elsewhere he delights in using archaic forms, as can be seen in his letters and other Latin pieces from his pen. The holy bishop had therefore given the responsibility of editing the Statutes to his friend; in giving him this new proof of his confidence, he referred also "to his experience as an academic," for "Favre had already taken part at Tourn" in the Papinienne Academy, which presents "an interesting comparison with the Florimontane Academy" (Notice, pp. 20, 33, 34, and see chapter 4).

It was said (OEA 14:48, n.1) that the ancient Academy was founded in the winter of 1606-1607; however, it is not improbable to specify further that the compilation and editing of its Statutes took place in November-December of 1606, with the establishment of the program, and that the opening of the sessions took place in January of 1607 (cf. Letonnelier, pp. 44-45).

The title -- "Constitutions of the Florimontane Academy" -- is given by Charles-Auguste on the sixteenth page of the index to the documents which he put at the end of his biography; in the table of the French version, the "Constitutions of the Florimontane Academy" are indicated under number 23.

1. A letter of Claude de Quoex, assistant to the Council of Geneva (see OEA 12:84, n. 1), written to St. Francis de Sales on December 20, 1608, furnishes an example of these academic names: "... it will suffice for me," he says, "only to admire them (your actions), since as well I bear the academic name: Admirer." (Archives of the Visitation of Annecy; see in the Notice already cited, p. 12, the complete text of this letter and the facsimile which accompanies it.)
The Statutes of the Academy make no other mention of its motto nor of its emblem, but Charles-Auguste has kept the memory of it -- an orange tree, with the words: flores fructusque perennes (p. 304). The one and the other are assuredly from the inspiration of our Saint, who loved the comparison with this tree, "almost all the year long" charged "of fruits, of flowers, and of petals all together" (Letter to Baroness de Chantal, May 3, 1604, OEA 12:264; see also 10:401.)

2. Cf. 1 Cor 12:31 -- "But eagerly desire the greater gifts."

3. Henri of Savoy, duke of Nemours, was invited to "will to take the title of Prince and protector;" but as he did not reside in Annecy, "the blessed Francis" after having given "commencement to the Academy with a most beautiful oration, then took the place of the Prince" (Charles-Auguste, pp. 367 and 369).

4. The "Assessors were: Francis de Sales ... for what concerned philosophy and theology, and Antoine Favre for what concerned the law, and both together indifferently for the sciences and the humane letters" (Charles-Auguste, p. 367).