FRANÇOIS DE SALES AND CATHOLIC REFORM IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

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Abstract

Until recently, studies on French pastoralism have overlooked the existence of a political ideology within late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century sermon literature. And yet it appears that court preachers were co-opted by the Bourbon monarchy to assist in the pacification of the nobility and radical elements of both Catholic and Protestant confessions. This essay examines the sermon literature of the French saint, François de Sales, 1567-1622, in order to demonstrate that de Sales’s sermon literature consciously supported the crown’s pacification agenda. It is further argued that this political ideology in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sermon literature shaped the relations between court preachers such as de Sales and the Huguenot factions in the aftermath of the Edict of Nantes. With the emphasis on pacifying rebellious elements in the realm, the rhetoric in the sermon literature exhibited a sense of toleration of the existing Huguenot faction that had been absent in the sermon literature of the mid sixteenth-century.

1. Introduction

The history of pastoralism is as long as Christianity itself. The image of the preacher as the shepherd of his flock, tending to the spiritual needs of his parishioners was deeply ingrained in the Christian European consciousness. Based on Augustinian theory, this idea held that the pastor had the responsibility of leading his flock safely to the Heavenly City. However, not all preachers took their responsibilities seriously, leading to a decline in the quality of pastoral care throughout Europe. Throughout the history of the Church, reformation of pastoral care was an ongoing concern. The impetus for

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1 I would like to thank Dr. Peter Goddard and Dr. Erika Rummel, along with the anonymous readers at the Dutch Review of Church History, for their comments and suggestions.
pastoral reform originated from spontaneous popular movements such as the *Devotio Moderna*, though these movements were often short-lived or marginalized by the institutional Church. Because of entrenched interests and general inertia the institutional Church was slower to respond to the challenges presented by substandard preaching. As the Protestant Reformation made inroads throughout northern Europe, the Church could no longer ignore the accusations levelled against a corrupt clergy, forcing the Church to renew its efforts to improve the quality of pastoral care.4

In the sixteenth century much of the work of reform was aimed at doctrinal issues brought out by the efforts of biblical exegetes. Many issues regarding doctrinal reform were addressed at the Council of Trent between the years of 1545-63. After the Edict of Nantes of 1598 made religious division a *fait accompli*, efforts moved away from doctrinal reform to emphasizing a religiosity concerned with the inward piety of the laity that was independent of a deep understanding of doctrine. This development in pastoral thought coincided with the new political and social realities of post civil war France. During the period of the 1590s-1620s Catholic preachers were co-opted by the crown to promote the royal program of pacifying the factious religious confessions in the wake of the Edict of Nantes. This essay will focus on one of these preachers, François de Sales (1567-1622), to demonstrate the ways in which the new political ideologies manifested themselves in contemporary sermon literature. As titular bishop of Geneva, residing in the Duchy of Haute Savoie, he was on the front line in the battle against the Huguenots. Both the concern for religious and political peace and the heightened emphasis on inward piety are evident in de Sales's sermons and writings.

2. The political rhetoric of François de Sales

From early on in his preaching career, de Sales incorporated into his sermon literature a program encouraging political obedience. During a time when Henri IV's (1553-1610) claim to the throne was still tenuous, de Sales took advantage of his position as titular bishop of Geneva to support the Bourbon monarchy. In his first sermon after

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his installation, ‘Pour la Fête de Saint Pierre’ of 1593, de Sales condemned the neighboring Huguenots, who rejected papal succession from Peter. He then turned his attention to Peter’s presence in Rome as head of the fledgling sect. De Sales continued that Peter’s and, by extension, the Christian presence in Rome angered Nero, who had launched a wave of brutal persecutions against the Christians. De Sales equated Rome with Babylon because of the idolatries that existed in the city, maintained by Nero: “Ouy, vrayement, car l’idolatrie regnant en ce temps la a Rome qui estoit baignée du sang des Martirs par la tyrannie de Neron, ceste ville devoit ester appellée neronienne ou Babylone, et non pas chréstienne.” De Sales continued that Nero’s hatred of Christians extended personally to Peter, whom he wanted dead, yet whose life had been pled for by the Christian population: “Saint Pierre donq estant a Rome et disputant contre Simon magicien, après avoir gouverné l’Eglise environ vingt cinq ans, Neron le voulut faire mourir. Mays estant prié par les Chrestiens qu’il se conservast, comme tres necessaire a l’Eglise, laquelle ne peut perdre don chef sans recevoir quelque desarroy [...].” This particular example would have resonated with his congregation. First of all, they could not have missed the conflation of the pagans of Nero’s Rome with the Huguenot population of the Haute Savoie region.

Without explicitly making the connection, de Sales made it clear that the Roman pagans’ bloody campaign against the early Christians was supported by Nero himself. “[Rome] devoit appelée neronienne... est non pas chréstienne.” Unlike the city preachers of the 1560s-80s de Sales avoided drawing any contemporary allusions between the state-sponsored persecutions of the Christian sect in ancient Rome and the situation in France. Granted that by the early 1590s, the civil wars that had been raging were finally subsiding, the hostility between the various factions was never far from the surface, and violence could break out at any time. After all, the earlier generation of city preachers had blamed the Valois monarchy for allowing heresy to gain a foothold in the Kingdom. Citing Old

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6 De Sales, ‘29 Juin 1593’ (see above, n. 5).
Testament monarchs that had either introduced or failed to expedite the destruction of heretical elements in Israelite society, the city preachers studied by Denis Crouzet and Barbara Diefendorf equated these wicked kings with any royal policy that sought a rapprochement with the Huguenot factions. Their sermons quite clearly made use of Old Testament exempla to justify rebellion against the crown. This is absent in de Sales’s preaching thus far. True, the political estate as represented by Nero implemented the agenda of extermination of the Christian sect, but de Sales avoids the allusion that Bourbon France was imitative of Nero’s Rome.

Although de Sales avoids launching a diatribe against the crown for apparently not doing enough to remove the Protestant heresy from the Kingdom, the terms employed within the sermon give his position a political tone. Peter is described as the president and universal governor of the Church, both terms with political implications that would have not been lost on his congregation.

De Sales develops further his conception of an ecclesiastical polity. Reviewing the last moments of the life of Jesus Christ, de Sales reminds his congregation that Jesus Christ was unable to carry his cross all the way to where he would be crucified. After stumbling and being unable to continue as a result of his scourging, the cross was carried by a man named Simon. Citing both the Old Testament prophet Isaiah and the Church Father Jerome, de Sales equates the cross with the royal sceptre demonstrating symbolically the legitimacy of Peter’s succession as the governor of the Church, after the death of Jesus Christ: “Simon porte la croix après Nostre Seigneur; la Croix est le sceptre royal de Nostre Seigneur: Et principatus ejus super humerum ejus ... comme saint Hierosme l’interprete. Ce signe estoit comme un præsage pour saint Pierre, qu’il porteroit un jour la Croix et le sceptre de Nostre Seigneur, non solum patiendo, sed etiam regendo. Simon Cyreneen porte la croix pour monstrer que nostre Seigneur, comme un sceptre, pour commander en l’Eglise militante et pour endurer.”


De Sales, ‘29 Juin 1593’ (see above, n. 5), pp. 44-45.
This sentiment becomes even more explicit as the sermon progresses. The Church is equated with a monarchy. The essential position is to counter claims levelled by the Huguenot faction that the Pope has no authority and that there is no scriptural basis for the ecclesiastical organization of the Catholic Church. For de Sales, the weakness of this position is self-evident. Without a proper hierarchal structure, it is impossible to maintain unity within the Christian polity. "Les hérétiques ne veulent point de chef, et partant ilz ont esté divisés en tant de sectes [ . . . ]," whereas the Catholic Church remains unified because it is led by papal authority dating back to Peter. But within the politically charged atmosphere of post-civil war France it is not difficult to extrapolate another underlying message. The religious schism of the Huguenots led directly to political schism, thus good Catholics, recognizing the primacy of the Pope, made good subjects because their support of the ecclesiastical polity supported in turn the secular polity.

In concluding this sermon, de Sales acknowledges the social upheavals of his times, especially war and its attendant poverty, yet claims that good subjects are not to blame the political estate for those ills. He makes the distinction between the bad thief on the cross and the crucifixion of Peter. The suffering that the congregation may endure from the fallout of the Wars of Religion is self-imposed, and not imposed by the state. "La guerre, la pauvreté et les autres misères nous crucifient, il est vrai, mais elles nous crucifient comme le mauvais, larron et non comme saint Pierre; c'est à dire qu'au lieu de prouffiter de ces maux, nous en empirons." Thus one was to maintain one's fealty to the crown, as evidenced by de Sales's use of the Israelite Queen Jezebel's persecution of the prophet Elijah. During the 1560s-80s, Jezebel and her husband Ahab had been favorite stock figures in sermon literature as biblical precedents for what happens when the crown supported heretical factions, providing biblical authority to underpin the city preachers' call for revolution against the royal court. This application is completely absent in this and later sermons by de Sales. Rather, de Sales equates the persecution of Elijah by Jezebel with Peter's martyrdom and urges

10 Ibid., p. 49.
11 Ibid., p. 53.
12 Crouzet, Guerriers de Dieu (see above, n. 8), p. 427.
that all Christians must be prepared to accept the fate given them by God.

Preaching to the same congregation a few days later, de Sales continues with his theme of Peter’s primacy as the chief apostle, and by extension the Church’s primacy vis-à-vis the state: “Et si les Romains anciens solemnisoyent ce premier jour a lhonneur de leur Empereur Auguste, duquel le nom mesme fut donne a ce mois, ne vous semble il pas raisonnable que changeant le corporel au spiritual et le mondain au Christianisme, au lieu de le feste a lhonneur de Dieu, sous le nom don lieutenant general, vrai Empereur de l’Eglise militante, tres auguste, tressaint et tres grand Prince des Apostres, et par la grace de Dieu protecteur et patron de ceste nostre Eglise pastoral?” This passage contains a number of important elements of de Sales’s formulation of his political thought. First, the date of 1 August for this sermon itself serves an important function. De Sales notes that the pagan population of Rome had solemnized the first day of August in honor of the Roman Emperor. He argues that since Peter was the head of the Church of Rome that it would be appropriate to use the day to honor not the Roman Emperor but instead the “vrai Empereur de l’Eglise militante.” On one level this is certainly a clever mnemonic device to remind the congregation why this particular day is important in the Petran sermon cycle. But even more profound is the conflation of Peter with the Roman Emperor. It would appear that this conflation would have a twofold purpose. First, it would remind the congregation that the Catholic Church supersedes all temporal authority by dramatically co-opting a day that had traditionally been used to honor the political head in order to honor the first head of the Christian Church. Second, the language used to describe Peter’s role as the head of the Christian Church is overtly political. He is referred to as “Empereur,” “tres auguste,” and the “grand Prince,” terms that had historically been reserved for the Roman Emperors.

Again in the language of de Sales’s ecclesiastical polity, the Church, by assuming the role of the Roman emperors, is not accountable to the political estate. Yet it is interesting in the early sermon literature of de Sales that the French saint did not condone or argue in favour

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13 De Sales, ‘Pour la Fête de Saint Pierre es Liens, 1 Aout 1593’ (see above, n. 5), p. 56.
of rebellion against political authority. Rather, de Sales seems to promote the opposite. Rebellion against the ecclesiastical polity was the equivalent of rebellion against the secular polity because the organization of the church polity encompasses the political estate; thus to fight against the Catholic Church is to fight against the state.

For de Sales, this tension between the ecclesiastical and secular polities was not as problematic as it was for others. At the end of the sermon de Sales reminds his congregation that Jesus, during the last hours of his life, had been bounced back and forth between Herod and Pilate. First Jesus was sent to Herod and then to Pilate, who sent him back to Herod, who in turn resent him back to Pilate. De Sales explicitly refers to the fact that as the governor of Judea, sending Jesus to be tried by Pilate was the equivalent of sending him to the Roman Emperors “faunt […] l’Empereur romain.” For de Sales, though the political estate as defined by the Roman Empire was responsible for the death of Jesus Christ, the state was only fulfilling God’s purposes. Instead it is Herod who is singled out. Herod’s hatred of the early Church came as a result of his fear that he would lose his kingdom to Jesus Christ, an animosity stretching back to Christ’s birth: “Herodes eut une fois peur que Nostre Seigneur ne fut Roy pour le deposseder de son royaume, et ceste peur luy a toujours dure et dure jusques a huy. Herodes prit en hayne la discipline ecclesiastique [. . .].” This passage certainly has the potential of serving as the basis for the justification for political rebellion. But rather than pursuing this particular path, de Sales addresses any misconception of how a Christian should behave towards the secular Prince. Herod was not the legitimate king of Judea since he did not descend from the royal line. The Roman governors had imposed Herod upon the Judean kingdom, and his persecution was founded as much on his desire to placate his Jewish subjects as it was out of a concern for maintaining his throne.

However, de Sales does superficially touch upon the role of the crown regarding the current state of the Catholic Church in France: “Le grand philosophe chrestien, Justin le Martir, en l’Apologie a Antonin, rejette l’erreur d’aucuns qui se faiisoient acroire que l’Eglise vouloit

14 Ibid., p. 60.
15 Ibid., p. 62.
16 Ibid., p. 64.
lever le magistrat seculier, et sous ce pretexte, la persecutoient. C'est ce qui la fait encore persecuter maintenant: certaine raison d'Estat. Je m'en rapporte a la France: personne ne veut la grandeur [de] l'Eglise maintenant, on la mettroit volontier sub modio; mais Nostre Seigneur ne le permettra jamais. By being so explicit, de Sales runs the risk of inciting his congregation to violence directed against the state. And yet keeping with his underlying conception of the Christian's role in society, de Sales argues that even if the state was responsible for persecution, that Christians should take comfort in knowing that all of God's people have suffered persecution.

De Sales's conflation of the ecclesiastical and secular polity gains further maturity. The sermons following his sermon 'Pour la Fête de Saint Pierre es Liens,' from the last half of 1593 until February of 1594, contain little in the way of political discourse. However, in his 'Pour le Dimanche de la Septuagésime,' de Sales refers to Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh as he attempted to free the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. Moses is described as a governor of the people and is an important figure, in that he was seen as more than just the spiritual leader of the exiled Israelites, for he also took on the role of king and judge of the people: "Moyse, ce grand capitaine de probité, estant appellé de Dieu, lors qu'il paissoit les brebis de son beau-pere Jetro en la montaigne Oreb, a la charge de la conduite et gouvernement general d'Israël pour le deliver des mains de Pharao, la majesté de Dieu luy apparoissant en un buysson ardent, il pratiqua tous les vrays moyens, et demanda a Dieu toutes les vraves qualities, marques et conditions avec lesquelles il faut entreprendre de parler de la part de Dieu et de gouverner un people."

By March 20, 1594, de Sales's political language becomes increasingly explicit. His sermon 'Pour la Quatrière Dimanche de Carême' is one of his most polemical. Although de Sales never called for the physical extermination of the Huguenot faction, he was comfortable condemning their heresies in violent language. In this sermon, the rhetoric reaches a fervent pitch. He opens the sermon with the example of Elijah destroying the priests of Baal. It is not long before de Sales equates the priests of Baal with the Huguenots. This example

17 Ibid., p. 62.
16 De Sales, 'Pour le Dimanche de la Septuagésime, 6 Fevrerier 1594' (see above, n. 5), pp. 120-21.
also carries a second underlying context, since it was the Israelite
King Ahab who had allowed the cult of Baal to flourish among
God’s people. De Sales quickly turns his audience’s attention to Jesus
Christ’s encounter with the Samaritans, leading into a brief retelling
of the history of the origins of the Samaritans. In the course of this
account of biblical history de Sales does not resist comparing the
Huguenots to the schismatics of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
Because of their heresies, they are invaded and carried off by the
Assyrian armies, who in turn repopulate the area with a loyal client
population. Apart from religious heresy, the Ten Tribes of Israel
were scattered also because they refused to recognize their legitimate
king, Rehoboam. De Sales again equates religious schism with polit-
cial rebellion: “L’origine des Samaritains est, qu’apres la division du
royaume d’Israel faite par Hieroboam [...] Hieroboam, de peur que
les dix tribuz de son obeysance ne reprissent l’affection de leur roy
naturel, Roboam, s’il alloient reconnoistre le Temple et l’ordinaire
succession des prestre en Hierusalem, il fit un temple des faux dieux
en Samarie [...]. De ce schisme, ne vint que mal en Israël. En fin,
sous Osse, Salmanzar roy d’Assyrie rendit captifz tous les schisma-
tiques, comme le turc a faict nos schismatiques [...] et en leur place
envoya des Scythiens et Babyloniens [...].”

3. Proselytizing among the Protestants

De Sales’s political rhetoric must also be viewed within the context of
his proselyting efforts among the Huguenot population of the Haute
Savoie region. In his study of rural missions, Louis Châtelier argues
that one of the hallmarks of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-
century pastoralism was the renewed effort to reclaim spiritual and
temporal territory that had converted to Protestantism. As titular
bishop of Geneva, de Sales oversaw these proselyting efforts. In his
controversies with the Huguenot faction, he was forceful in attack-
ing what he considered heresy, and in much of his writings he main-
tained a conciliatory tone toward his religious opponents.

19 De Sales, ‘Pour le IVe Dimanche de Carême, 18 Mars 1594’ (see above, n. 5),
p. 154.
20 Louis Châtelier, The Religion of the Poor: Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation
Different factors were responsible for the cooling down of the rhetoric between the religious camps. The changing social climate of France caused by the ascension of Henri IV in 1589, and the subsequent Edict of Nantes, curtailed much of the earlier hostility. Once Henri IV was securely on the throne, a concerted effort was undertaken to establish royal authority throughout the kingdom. After nearly three decades of civil war, the royal party's paramount concern was establishing the power of the crown over the rebellious segments of society, whether over the nobles who, under the guise of religious conviction attempted to gain power at the expense of the royal court, or over the Gallican Church which had provided much of the impetus to religious violence that the protagonists easily conflated with subversive political violence. While there are many disagreements as to the reasons for Henri IV's success, the fact remains that for the most part, his reign had brought to the kingdom a level of stability unknown for a generation. This interest in promoting social stability also became part of the rhetoric of the seventeenth-century preachers. It would not be fair to say that the Church became the creature of the crown, or that the Bourbon dynasty actively sought to weaken the position of the Catholic Church. But as the centralized authority of the crown was established, religious schism that threatened societal order would not be tolerated. Here de Sales's *Introduction à la Vie Dèvote* is illustrative of this trend, explained in part by de Sales's connection to Henri IV. As king, Henri "encouraged and urged the saint in his work of instructing the people in their religion."^21

The sermon literature from this period also indicates that the French saint understood the connection between the crown's policy of pacification of the realm and religious instruction. Speaking to his congregation in the Savoy region during the Feast of Pentecost 1593, de Sales compared the effects of sin and its effects on the social body. De Sales was not alone in making this comparison. Etienne Molinier, preaching to his congregation in Toulouse in 1635, explicitly drew the comparison between the removal of sin and social harmony.^22

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^22 De Sales, 'Pour la Fête de la Pentecost, 6 Juin 1593' (see above, n. 5), pp. 23-25.
This was the beginning of a process defined by Henry Phillips as "the socialization of religious practices [meaning] in effect that religious difference was perceived [. . .] in social terms." The socialization of religious practices allowed de Sales to operate within a religious space while at the same time arguing that religious schism of any kind was disruptive to the socio-political system. This explains the continued presence of a confrontational tone in de Sales’s work. Coughing secular concerns in devotional language, de Sales was able to emphasize the role that the devout life played in maintaining harmony and order in the world. In his injunction on patience, the devout are instructed that they should bear the verbal or physical assaults of their enemies, and even friends, to avoid the evils of outward strife. “Yet it often happens that two good men, both with good intentions, because of conflicting ideas stir up great persecutions and attacks on one another.” This theme is taken up in both de Sales’s sermon literature and devotional writings through the figure of King David. In his sermon ‘Pour le Dimanche des Rameaux’ de Sales cites the revolt and subsequent death of David’s son Absalom, 2 Samuel 15-18, as a cautionary tale of the results that occur from challenging legitimate political authority. In the Introduction, this theme is continued. De Sales cites the Israelite King Saul’s murderous pursuit of David, placing it within the context of the obligation a good Christian had towards even a wicked king. David refused to take up arms against Saul, despite the injustice of Saul’s designs, and by extension threaten the stability of Israelite society: “Saul poursuivant a mort le pauvre David, qui fuyoit devant luy es desers d’Engaddi, entra tout seul en une caverne en laquelle David avec ses gens estoyent caches; David, qui en cette occasion l’eut peu mille fois tuer, luy donna la vie et ne voulut seulement pas lut faire peur, ains l’ayant laisse sortir son innocence, et luy faire connoistre qu’il avoit esté a sa merci.”

This emphasis on the Christian’s duty in regard to his or her responsibility to the state coincided with the waning of the eschatological

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24 De Sales, Introduction (see above, n. 21), p. 139.
26 De Sales, ‘Sermon pour le Dimanche des Rameaux, 3 Avril 1594’ (see above n. 5), p. 161.
angst that had remained prevalent within the European mentality at
the beginning of the seventeenth century. Early Christianity’s heavy
emphasis on the imminent return of Jesus Christ held a predomi-
nant place within the medieval religious mentality. Though constantly
present, expectations of the end of the world took different forms
throughout the history of Western Europe. As scholars such as Ann
Ramsey and Denis Crouzet have argued, the sixteenth century was
“[steeped] in prophecy and astrological prediction, eschatological
preaching, and a penitential consciousness in preparation for the
approaching end of time and the Last Judgement.”

Crouzet argues that the religious wars were a direct result of what
he refers to as “les violences mystiques,” based on the millennial
train of thought evident in Parisian city preachers such as Simon
Vigor. In sixteenth-century France, polemicists, employing the apoc-
alyptic texts of Daniel and Ezekiel, conflated religious rhetoric with
political violence. As Claude Dubois maintains, in the early modern
period the anti-Christ was seen to be real and historical, thus mak-
ing it possible for the radical city preachers to identify those at the
French court as the anti-Christ because “the most Christian King”
had failed to excise the Protestant heresy. Therefore the religious
wars were sent as a punishment from God, leading to the imminent
violent end of the world. Luther’s break from the Church aided
in unleashing this virulent strain of eschatology in the sixteenth-
century, which was fuelled by the city preachers’ use of Old Testament
texts. Thus in Barbara Diefendorf’s study, radical preachers of the
1560-70s viewed God as the vengeful judge of the Old Testament. Preachers of the seventeenth century, however, viewed God as a
loving Father; true devotion “presuppose l’amour de Dieu.”

In the traditional of baroque pastoralism, God was love, and true
religious devotion came from an understanding of this divine love.

26 Ann Ramsey, Liturgy, Politics and Salvation: The Catholic League in Paris and the
Nature of Catholic Reform, 1540-1630 (Rochester, 1999), p. 60.
27 Crouzet, Guerriers de Dieu (see above, n. 8), p. 75.
28 Claude Dubois, “The Erosion of the Eschatological Myth (1597-1610),” in
Humanism in Crisis: The Decline of the French Renaissance, ed. Philippe Desan (Ann Arbor,
29 Crouzet, Guerriers de Dieu (see above, n. 8), 1: 88.
30 Crouzet, La Genèse de la Réforme Française (see above, n. 8), pp. 159-68.
31 Barbara Diefendorf, “Simon Vigor: A Radical Preacher in Sixteenth Century
The Edict of Nantes coincided not only with a general sense of exhaustion after nearly thirty years of civil war in France, but also with new trends in philosophical thought throughout Europe, which placed greater emphasis on toleration. William Bouwsma points to de Sales as one of many examples of those who engaged in discussion with those of opposing belief systems, for as "(non-resident) bishop, [de Sales] visited Geneva frequently for discussion with Theodore Beza, Calvin’s successor as leader of its church [...] Thus in spite of savage persecution of heresy in some parts of Europe, other places permitted variety." De Sales’s pastoralism was influenced by the "rhetorical conception of the human being" opened "at once to reformism, inwardness and toleration."

4. Conclusion

Taking the sermons and writings of François de Sales as a case study, this essay has argued that in the period following the Edict of Nantes the sermon literature of court preachers transmitted and promoted the crown’s program of pacification. The political rhetoric evident in the early sermons of de Sales not only denounced the Huguenots as both religious and political schismatics, but also encouraged the Catholic nobility that it was their duty as Christians to obey the crown. This rhetoric emerged as French society recovered from the homicidal civil wars which had torn apart the kingdom.

The social environment of post civil war France had a profound impact on seventeenth-century pastoralism. The Edict of Nantes (1598) brought about relative peace to France, and it also acknowledged the permanence of the religious divisions of the kingdom. De Sales spent a great deal of effort in proselyting among the Huguenots of the Savoie region. His controversies with the Protestants differ from the polemics of his predecessors of the 1580s. It is true that the French saint engaged in polemic with his opponents, but he never called for their extermination. His reasoned approach came out of the changing political atmosphere under the reign of Henri IV.

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., p. 111.
As the seventeenth century progressed, these factors would continue to impact the development of the new world of French preaching. The increasing baroquism of religious rhetoric, and the growth of reactionary elements in Port Royal and the Fronde were heirs of the work begun by François de Sales and his contemporaries.