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A Catholic Model of Martyrdom in the Reformation Era: The Bishop in Seventeenth-Century France¹

By the seventeenth century, episcopal martyrdom was an established reality and ideal throughout the Catholic church. Bishops could pay homage to the celebrated prelates of the early church who had gone bravely to their deaths at the hands of their persecutors. Equally, they had access to the white martyrs who had lived their lives as ‘spiritual athletes,’ martyring themselves through extraordinary sufferings for Christ. French bishops shared in this legacy, and their church had its own tradition of episcopal martyrology.² Of course, no French bishop need expect to die a martyr’s death by 1600, but he faced his own challenges in an ancien régime that expected its bishops to be ecclesiastical leaders, political agents and prominent members of the social establishment.

These last two were radically different images of episcopacy to those proposed by traditional theology, which emphasised the spiritual nature of the office, its functions of pastoral care and government of Christ’s flock. Neither were they images that fitted easily with the growing spirit of Tridentine reform in the French church. Yet Catholic reformers, including members of the episcopate itself, succeeded in offering bishops a means of reconciling these conflicting expectations through an adapted notion of spiritual martyrdom that injected new life into an ancient ideal, remoulding its traditional character according to contemporary spiritual trends. This updated construction, mainly disseminated through publications and correspondence, offered the bishops’ opportunities to participate in the world without allowing themselves to be ruled by it. To the historian, this model of martyrdom provides an insight into the concerns of the Catholic reform movement in France, for it resolved an urgent dilemma: how did a bishop function in the world, with its profane temptations and pressures to sin, without moving ever further from God?

This question had perhaps never been more pertinent, for the bishop of a French diocese had enormous demands made on him. Appointed by the crown, he was a royal servant, under obligation to represent the king, keep the government informed on regional affairs and cultivate political and social stability. In an age when popular unrest was an ever-present possibility, he was expected to be a mediator, broker and governing force.³ Indeed, the crown remained quite prepared to use bishoprics as a means of patronage and it was certainly not unknown for its loyal servants to be rewarded with dioceses, although it was far less common in the seventeenth century than it had been before. Yet significant numbers of prelates did owe their positions to political service. In 1648, François Bosquet was appointed to Lodève in recognition of his assiduous labour as a provincial intendant, while Henri Arnauld of Angers served as a diplomat in Rome before his nomination to Angers in 1649.⁴ Many bishops also acted as deputies in the provincial estates and in the clerical Assembly, where they were required to examine any political affair that remotely affected the ecclesiastical realm.

Whether he spent his time at court or in his diocese, the laity also expected much of its bishops. Not only should he be a generous benefactor; he should also cultivate a life appropriate to the dignity of a prince of

¹ An early, shorter, version of this article was delivered at the Early Modern Martyrdom Colloquy held by the Centre for Seventeenth-Century Studies, University of Durham, in April 2002. I would like to thank the Colloquy’s organiser, Dr. Paul Scott, for his co-operation in the publication of this version.

² Bishops Gregory of Tours had penned the famous Glory of the Martyrs in the sixth century. Its emphasis lay with Gaul and the Gallic church and it included a record of Lyonnaise bishops who had been ‘perfected by martyrdom’: Gregory of Tours, Glory of the Martyrs, trans. Raymond Van Dam, (Liverpool 1988), 10, 73.

³ Joseph Bergin, The Making of the French Episcopate, (New Haven and London 1996), 469-711; Sharon Kettering, Patrons, Brokers and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France, (New York and Oxford 1986), 124-5.

the Catholic church. This was even more important if the bishop was a member of the secular nobility, and through the seventeenth century, the overwhelming majority were.⁵ In practice, this generally involved possessing a household and wealth corresponding to those of the leading local aristocracy. To maintain their social standing, many bishops undertook extravagant building projects and, indeed, contemporaries often commented on the large numbers of new and refurbished episcopal palaces.⁶ This secular view of episcopal office was perpetuated by the fact that many noble families regarded particular sees as their lineal property, invaluable tools for their retention of status and power: amongst seventeenth-century bishops who owed their seats to virtual hereditary tenure were the prelates of the Villars family who dominated the dioceses of Agen, Mirepoix and Vienne. Equally, the Gondi clan provided Paris with four successive bishops (and archbishops) between 1568 and 1661, concluding its extended dominance with the disgraced Cardinal de Retz.⁷

When these secular assumptions are compared with the strikingly different apostolic images presented by the Gospels and in the writings of such well-known ecclesiastical figures as Ignatius of Antioch and Gregory the Great, obvious discrepancies are evident. Neither Paul nor Gregory could have countenanced such a worldly episcopate, its religious functions diluted and weakened by the secular demands placed on it. Yet the Council of Trent offered little guidance to bishops. Its recommendations on episcopacy were overwhelmingly administratively geared because it urgently needed to establish a basic programme of governing functions which bishops could immediately adopt in their dioceses to ensure religious reform. In consequence, the Council could afford to spend little time describing the lifestyle and behaviour appropriate to the episcopate, though it did make sporadic attempts to connect living habits with the purpose of the episcopal vocation. A modest episcopal table and train would encourage ‘moderation, modesty, continence’ and humility in the faithful whom bishops served. On all occasions, bishops were to ‘manifest simplicity, zeal for God and a contempt for vanities.’⁸

Several biographical and diocesan studies have pointed to the strenuous attempts of French prelates, like their counterparts in Italy and Spain,⁹ to follow the tridentine programme by founding seminaries and holding regular synods and visitations.¹⁰ Many of these reforming bishops were uneasily aware that the demands made

⁴ Bergin, French Episcopate, 342, 564-65, 580, 632-3.

⁵ Ibid., 396-7, 430, 531; Jonathan Dewald, Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture. France, 1570-1715, (Berkeley, California and Oxford 1993), 150; Norman Ravitch, Sword and Mitre: Government and Episcopacy in France and England in the Age of Aristocracy, (The Hague 1966).

⁶ Henri Bégouen, Les Couserans aux xvii^e et xviii^e siècles, (Foix 1901), 3-14; Correspondance de Fénelon, Jean Orcibal, Jacques Le Brun and Irénée Noye, eds., 17 vols (Geneva, 1972-99), ii, 242-3, Fénelon to Colbert (archbishop of Rouen), 8 April 1692.

⁷ Bergin, French Episcopate, 632-3, 715-6.

⁸ Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, ed. H. J. Schroeder, (Saint Louis and London 1941), Sess. XXVI, ch. I, 232-3.

⁹ See, for example, Oliver Logan, The Venetian Upper Clergy in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries, (New York and Queenston, Ontario 1996), 215-374; Paolo Prodi, Il Cardinale Gabriele Paleotti (1522-1597), 2 vols (Rome, 1959); John Tomaro, ‘San Carlo Borromeo and the Implementation of the Council of Trent’, San Carlo Borromeo: Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century, John Headley and John Tomaro, eds., (Cranbury, New Jersey 1988), 67-84; Anthony Wright, ‘San Juan de Ribera and Saint Charles Borromeo: The Counter-Reformation in Spain and Italy Compared’, Miscellanea Historiae Ecclesiasticae, viii, ed. Bernard Vogler, (Brussels and Louvain 1987), 364-72.

¹⁰ Amongst the best recent studies are: Isabelle Bonnot, Hérétique ou saint? Henri Arnauld, évêque janséniste d’Angers au xvii^e siècle, (Paris 1983); Philip Hoffman, Church and Community in the Diocese of Lyon 1500-1789, (New Haven and London 1984); Keith Luria, Territories of Grace: Cultural Change in the

on them by society and the crown did not correspond to the image of the bishop in traditional religious literature. They witnessed at first hand the tremendous risks for any bishop torn between the conflicting responsibilities of the sacred and the secular and forced to associate routinely with laymen of influence and affluence. Reformers who were not members of the episcopate also proved acutely aware of the discrepancies between the worldly politique prelate and the saintly apostle of Christ, and they too were not afraid to draw attention to the failings of contemporary bishops and to construct a vision of episcopacy which responded to their concerns. All found that they could not or did not wish merely to accept traditional theological and spiritual ideals of episcopacy, and they certainly did not believe that Trent had provided sufficient guidance to bishops. Traditional views had to be adapted to fit the seventeenth-century context so that they answered the particular needs of its bishops as well as the peculiar challenges thrown up by a spectacularly affluent environment and aristocratic culture.

Amongst the most ancient and venerable episcopal representations was the bishop as martyr, a portrait familiar from the Gospels¹¹ and other texts and, of course, from the hagiography surrounding the martyred bishops of the early church.¹² More recently, martyrdom had received renewed impetus at the height of religious conflict during the sixteenth century, with thousands of Catholics and Protestants enduring horrific tortures and deaths for their refusals to betray their faiths. As a result, Catholic Europe was flooded with martyrological literature, including the Roman Martyrology, which was translated into French and other languages.¹³ But although French bishops had plenty of examples of martyrdom to inspire them, no one from their ranks had actually died a martyr's death for many centuries. Yet this did not mean that they were not aware of the connection between martyrdom and episcopacy. In fact, the substantial literature produced by bishops and by those who wished to advise them on the nature, purpose and practice of episcopacy reveals frequent references to episcopal martyrdom.¹⁴ However, this is an understanding of martyrdom which, while recognisably traditional in several key aspects, is demonstrably particular to the situation in which bishops then found themselves.

One of the masters who had written on episcopal martyrdom was Gregory the Great who, in the sixth century, had produced a comprehensive Pastoral Rule to answer his qualms about emerging from the monastery to assume papal office.¹⁵ Torn between his desire to flee the world and the new vocation that God had laid before him, Gregory vowed to answer God's call and to fight the temptations of the world to which he would now, more than ever, become exposed.¹⁶ This was not a physical martyrdom, but rather a spiritual, and here Gregory was echoing and expanding on what was already a very popular spiritual theme. Augustine, Cyprian,

Seventeenth-Century Diocese of Grenoble, (Berkeley and Oxford 1991); Bernard Peyroux, La Réforme catholique à Bordeaux (1600-1719), 2 vols (Bordeaux 1995); Robert Sauzet, Contre-réforme et réforme catholique en bas-Languedoc. Le Diocèse de Nîmes au xvii^e siècle, (Louvain and Paris 1979).

¹¹ John Pobee, Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul, (Sheffield 1985), 93-118.

¹² Including visual art: Émile Mâle, L'Art religieux après le Concile de Trente. Étude sur l'iconographie de la fin du xvi^e siècle, du xvii^e, du xviii^e siècle, (Paris 1932), 130-1, 268, 279.

¹³ Brad S. Gregory, Salvation at Stake. Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe, (Cambridge, Mass., and London 1999), 4, 279.

¹⁴ This literature includes private correspondence, treatises, hagiography and didactic manuals. I have used all varieties in the writing of this article.

¹⁵ The Pastoral Rule can be found in A select library of Nicene and post-Nicene fathers of the Christian church, trans. Charles Lett Feltoe, 12 vols (Oxford and New York 1895), xii, 9-71.

¹⁶ Carole Straw, Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1988), 193.

Jerome and Gregory all described a form of martyrdom which could be undergone in times of peace. In contrast to actual martyrdom, lifelong martyrdom was a struggle of the soul, involving the practice of virtue and the overcoming of vice. Through suffering, the bishop could redirect his life, so that instead of being a slave to the world, misdirected with trivial material concerns, he became a devoted slave to God.¹⁷ This suffering was potentially composed of both burdens imposed by God and penitent corporal austerities undertaken by a contrite heart.¹⁸ Man should offer his sufferings, his obedience and his works to God; indeed, he should offer his whole life in a sacrifice of penance, praise and thanksgiving. If he did so, he would destroy what was sinful in his life, while obediently living a life of patience, love and holiness in the world.¹⁹

The French conception of the episcopal life as a perpetual white martyrdom was embedded in this traditional vocational model, and it assimilated the teachings of the church fathers. However, it was equally and more immediately indebted to the particular doctrines of contemporary spirituality then circulating in France. In answer to the thorny question of how bishops could reconcile their affluent places in society with their divine calling, reformers devised a type of spiritual martyrdom which could balance both through emphasising emotional suffering and sacrifice and the death of the self. Simultaneously, ‘mortification of the heart’ overtook mortification of the body as the prime manifestation of episcopal perfection. In this composition, it was the topical theology of the French school of spirituality and the model of Bishop François de Sales that provided the inspirational principles for the martyred bishop.

II

Possibly the most significant legacy of Catholic reform in France was the spirituality and theology of the French school, principally formulated by Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), cardinal and founder of the Oratorian congregation, and augmented and disseminated by other leading ecclesiastics, including Charles de Condren, Jean-Jacques Olier, and Vincent de Paul.²⁰ Building on the Council of Trent, these reformers identified the success or failure of catholicism with clerical renewal, and rising to this challenge, embarked on an examination of the entire concept of clerical ministry. In doing so, their ‘school’ developed theologies of both priesthood and episcopacy which shaped clerical formation throughout the Catholic church for several centuries.²¹

The French school’s theology was overwhelmingly Christocentric,²² though situated firmly within a hierarchical schema that borrowed from Pseudo-Dionysian structures of heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchy.²³

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 212.

¹⁸ By the middle ages, these could include negative (such as poverty, fasting and silence) and positive mortifications (such as vigils, wearing of chains or hairshirts, flagellation, painful physical exercises and kissing the diseased): Giles Constable, *Attitudes Toward Self-Inflicted Suffering in the Middle Ages*, (Brookline, Massachusetts 1982), 10, 15.

¹⁹ Straw, *Gregory the Great*, 187-8.

²⁰ Charles de Condren succeeded Bérulle as superior of the Oratorians in 1629; Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) founded the Congregation of the Mission (Lazarists) in 1625; Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-57) established the Sulpician congregation in 1645. See Alison Forrester, ‘Fathers, Leaders, Kings’: Episcopacy and Episcopal Reform in the Seventeenth-Century French School,’ *The Seventeenth Century*, (2002)***

²¹ Michel Dupuy, *Bérulle et le sacerdoce. Étude historique et doctrinale. Textes inédits*, (Paris, 1969), 7; J. Choné, ‘La Spiritualité sacerdotale’, *XVII^e Siècle*, LXII-III (1964), p. 112-32; Nicole Lemaître, ‘Le Prêtre mis à part ou le triomphe d’une idéologie sacerdotale au xvi^e siècle’, *Revue d’Histoire de l’Église de France*, LXXXV (1999), p. 275-89.

²² Several studies have emphasised the incorporation of Augustinian doctrines into Bérulle’s theology, enabling him to place Jesus Christ, the God-man, at the core of mystical ascent: Jean Dagens *Bérulle et les origines de la restauration catholique (1575-1611)* (Bruges 1952), 141; Wayne Hankey, ‘Augustinian Immediacy and Dionysian Mediation in John Colet, Edmund Spenser, Richard Hooker and the Cardinal de Bérulle’,

It also retained a strong mystical element, which focused on self-abandonment, obedience to the divine will and the ascent of the individual to union with God.²⁴ This blending of traditions produced a theology in which the ecclesiastical hierarchy was divided into three triads, ‘the operations of the sacraments, the godlike dispensers of the sacred things and those guided by them (the dispensers)...towards the sacred.’²⁵ The ecclesiastical triads were further subdivided into ranks, with bishops in the middle triad, and situated above priests and deacons.²⁶ As a member of the most elevated rank within his ecclesiastical triad, the bishop was a figure of sublime authority. Bérulle pointed to the example of the early church where perfectly devout priests had submitted to the jurisdiction of their bishops, but was equally keen to legitimise episcopal authority by emphasising the bishop’s intimate relationship with God.²⁷ Their station as grand prêtres within the hierarchy confirmed that bishops were the most godlike of hierarchical figures, who mediated their insights into divine truths to those inferior in ranks.²⁸ Bishops perfected others through teaching and through the administration of the sacraments of order and confirmation.²⁹ Yet the role of grand prêtre simultaneously demanded that they be of unparalleled personal sanctity.³⁰ While, therefore, the dignity of the episcopal office was supreme within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, this brought weighty obligations of piety and servitude to its incumbents.

Only through complete self-renunciation, following Christ’s example, could a bishop serve God alone, for his personal will had to be destroyed if he were to overcome the selfish ambitions that distanced him from the divine. For a bishop to correspond in perfection to the status of his office, the French school advocated personal ‘divinisation’ and selfless servitude. If a bishop was willing to offer himself in sacrifice for the benefit of his flock, then he would emulate the eternal victimhood of Christ who offered his humanity to the Father for all mankind.³¹ This was, in the words of Charles de Condren, ‘the most perfect, and the most holy, and the most worthy way of adoring God, a way which embraces the entire practice of true religion.’³² Like all priests of Christ, the bishop offered Jesus as victim through frequent celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice,³³ but he could also offer himself as a victim through a life of suffering labour for God. Then, he made a perpetual oblation for his own and others’ sins, which signified complete renunciation and the death of the self, and total repudiation of

Augustinus in der Neuzeit, Colloque de la Herzog August Bibliothek de Wolfenbüttel, 14-17 octobre, 1996, ed. Dominique de Courcelles, (Turnhout, 1998), 125-60.

²³ Pseudo-Dionysius, Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works, trans. Colm Luibheid, (New York, 1987).

²⁴ In his youth, Bérulle was a member of the mystical Acarie circle: Henri Brémond, Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu’à nos jours, 12 vols (Paris 1916-36), ii, 193-262; Dagens, Bérulle, 132.

²⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius, trans. Luibheid, 235.

²⁶ For an extended analysis of Bérulle's use of Dionysian structures in his theology of episcopacy, see my earlier article, "'Fathers, Leaders, Kings": Episcopacy and Episcopal Reform in the Seventeenth-Century French School', The Seventeenth Century, (2002), ***

²⁷ This principle is clearly outlined in Bérulle’s Projet de l’érection de la Congrégation de l’Oratoire de Jésus, contained in Correspondance du Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, ed. Jean Dagens, 3 vols (Paris and Louvain 1937-9), i, 118. See also ibid., iii, 617-8, Bérulle to an Oratorian priest, (n. d.).

²⁸ P. Cochois, ‘Bérulle, Hiérarque Dionysien’, Revue d’Ascétique et de Mystique, 37 (1961), 314-53; 38 (1962), 355-75, at 348.

²⁹ Pseudo-Dionysius, trans. Luibheid, 236-8.

³⁰ Cochois, ‘Bérulle, Hiérarque’, Revue d’Ascétique, 358-9.

³¹ Oeuvres complètes de M. Olier, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris 1856), col. 287-88.

³² Oeuvres complètes du P. Charles de Condren, , ed. Louis-Marie Pin, 2 vols (Paris 1857-8), ii, 106: ‘...la manière d’adorer la plus parfaite, la plus sainte et la plus digne de Dieu, et qu’il renferme tout le culte de la religion véritable.’

³³ Michel Dupuy Bérulle et le sacerdoce. Étude historique et doctrinale (Paris 1969), 123-8, 277.

the world's trappings; the bishop would live entirely in and for God.³⁴ All that would matter to him would be his service of God and his church. This was the highest form of holiness since, ultimately, it brought the suffering victim back to union with the Father. Indeed, their office demanded that bishops should suffer more than any other members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

This was precisely the advice that Bérullian reformers gave to their episcopal contacts. When Sébastien Zamet had a vocational crisis during the 1630s, he turned to Charles de Condren for advice. But, rather than encouraging the bishop to resign from Langres, Condren persuaded him to remain faithful to his vocation. Even when tested by hardship and feelings of despair, he should continue to serve the souls that Christ had committed to him and to give himself in his episcopal work 'to the Son of God who calls you there,...work there with him, and in his spirit.'³⁵ Vincent de Paul gave a similar recommendation to Alain de Solminihac. There was a relationship of constant correspondence and mutual support for over twenty years, and it was de Paul who persuaded Solminihac against resigning his diocese in 1652 when the bishop was struck down with illness by reminding him that the Apostles and Saint Paul had retained their charges despite great suffering.³⁶

The reformers unquestioningly accepted the traditional notion that a bishop owed his diocese the same loyalty that spouses owed each other, and they condemned those who neglected their 'wives.'³⁷ Many bishops, Olier wrote to Étienne Caulet of Pamiers, simply exercised their functions of police and justice, suspending 'the principal functions...which must vivify their diocese.' Olier insisted on the necessity of self-renunciation so that a bishop's actions would be entirely moulded by God's wishes rather than by ambition and self-interest: 'It is necessary to be truly dead and empty of oneself and to leave great latitude to the Spirit in our soul to operate by us as and when it wants.'³⁸ In a later letter that he wrote to Caulet when the bishop was plagued by rebellious canons, Olier told him that all bishops had to suffer in their work, for that was what made it worthwhile, but they should not allow this knowledge to demoralise them. If their hearts would only remain faithful to Christ, 'the rest is nothing' for their endurance of trials and devotion to God's wishes would bring its heavenly reward.³⁹ De Paul developed this theme in relation to the worries endured by bishops when they clashed with regular clergy in

³⁴ Ibid., 199; Correspondance de Fénelon, Orcibal, Le Brun and Noye, eds., ii, 48, Louis Tronson (Oratorian superior) to Fénelon, 29 September 1686; Eugene Walsh, The Priesthood in the Writings of the French School: Bérulle, De Condren, Olier (unpubl. PhD diss., Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., 1949), 96-7.

³⁵ Lettres de Condren, Auvray and Jouffrey, eds., 150-52, letter to Zamet, October 1634: '...au Fils de Dieu qui vous y appelle, et y travailler ainsi avec lui, et en son esprit.'

³⁶ Alain de Solminihac. Lettres et documents, ed. Eugène Sol, (Cahors 1930), 470, de Paul to Solminihac, 1651/52.

³⁷ The marriage bond was regularly used by bishops and others to describe the relationship between prelates and their see. See, for example, Jean-Pierre Camus, Les Fonctions du hiérarque parfait, où se voit le tableau de l'évesque accomply (Paris 1642), 557: 'Le bien qui attache les Evesques à leurs Eglises estant comme marital, à raison dequoy ils portent l'anneau, comme un mary est obligé de quitter pere et mere pour adherer à sa femme.'

³⁸ Quatre lettres, 11-2, letter to Caulet, 29 December 1646: 'Jay creu très souvant et jay toujours apprehendé avec gemissements que les prelates augustes de l'Église de Dieu ce trouvoient éloignés de leurs saints ministères et des fonctions essentielles et capitalles de leur estat, s'exerceant seulement au dehors des polices et travaux de justice, estant ainsi en suspension des principalles fonctions de l'esprit qui doit vivifier leur diocaise...l'esprit du saint prelat dessert la sanctification dans les peuples...Il fault estre bien mort et vuide de tous soy meme et laisser une grande latittude a l'Esprit en notre ame pour operer par nous en la maniere et au temps qu'il le veult.'

³⁹ Ibid., 15, letter to Caulet, January 1648: 'Que le coeur demeure sauvre le reste n'est rien.' Olier also quoted 1Peter1:7.

their dioceses. He told Louis Abelly that the late bishop of Comminges⁴⁰ and Bishop François de Sales had here offered perfect examples of conduct.⁴¹ Both had rejected regulars' resistance to their authority with a combination of firmness and charity, but had been sanctified through the suffering that they endured to defend proper ecclesiastical discipline.⁴² Even when a bishop's outer life was in turmoil, de Paul knew, he could possess interior peace if he kept his eyes fixed on God. He had seen this blessing in his friend Solminihac, who strove to please God rather than men and was able to do so because his soul was intimately linked to the divine.⁴³ Olier even composed a little prayer of supplication to God, which asked him to produce bishops with a 'spirit of sanctity and of separation from the world.'⁴⁴

III

The French school offered a potent ideal that the reformers did their best to foster in bishops themselves through their broad network of contacts and, indeed, through their influence on royal nominations to dioceses.⁴⁵ In their writings, Olier and his associates concentrated on several elements of the office: authority, perfection and sanctified service. Bishops were portrayed as pivotal members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, enlightened through their intimacy with God and functioning with supreme, but benign, authority over the lower clergy and the faithful. Central to this vision of the office were the particular notions of death of the self and spiritual sacrifice, which the school's members perfectly aligned with their concepts of episcopal leadership and service. These were supremely natural bases on which to build an ideal of spiritual martyrdom that bishops could personify in their vocations, and they were widely adopted as the key elements of episcopal martyrdom. None of the French's school major representatives actually used the word 'martyrdom,' but they did employ a language of white martyrdom to describe their intention that bishops would serve God alone. Yet 'martyrdom' became the dominant shorthand for those who echoed their spiritual views, and it crops up repeatedly in published literature and in the private writings of bishops. Although Jean-Pierre Camus, bishop of Belley, did not adopt the term martyrdom in relation to sacrifice and abnegation, he was a close confidant of both Bérulle and Condren, and their habitual contact had a decisive impact on the theological outlook presented in this prelate's many publications.⁴⁶ Most particularly, Camus absorbed their emphasis on victimhood and sacrifice of the self, and was amongst those who actually used the striking title grand prêtre to summarise those essential episcopal qualities. As grand prêtre, Camus directed, the bishop should celebrate or at least hear a daily mass, in order to gain pardon for sinners and medicine for his own faults.⁴⁷ But he was also a victim in another manner. Here Camus drew special attention to the agony in the garden, when Jesus had suffered terribly in preparation for his ultimate sacrifice on the cross. The bishop would also be 'powerfully tormented' in his 'difficult, laborious and

⁴⁰ The dévot Barthélemy de Griet de Donadieu: Bergin, French Episcopate, 610.

⁴¹ Abelly was nominated bishop of Rodez in 1662, but when struck with paralysis in 1665 he was forced to abandon his appointment.

⁴² Saint Vincent de Paul. Correspondence, entretiens, documents, ed. Pierre Coste, 14 vols (Paris 1920-25), ii, 3-4, letter to Abelly, 14 January 1640.

⁴³ Ibid., 434-5, letter to unnamed bishop, between 1643-52.

⁴⁴ Lettres de M. Olier, 2 vols (Paris 1885), ii, 520, letter to one of the disciples of Saint-Sulpice: '...l'esprit de sainteté et de séparation du siècle.'

⁴⁵ Forrester, 'Episcopacy and Episcopal Reform,' pgs***

⁴⁶ A full bibliography of Camus' works is printed in Jean Descrains, Bibliographie des oeuvres de Jean-Pierre Camus, évêque de Belley (1584-1652), (Paris 1971).

perilous' charge. Still, when he sacrificed his life to the 'service of God and of his neighbour' it had a high purpose: he would do satisfaction for his own sins and those of others, would contribute to the preservation of God's church and, ultimately, would earn a heavenly repose.⁴⁸

When Antoine Godeau published his works on episcopacy approximately twenty years after Camus, his absorption of the French school's views was even more pronounced than the bishop of Belley's had been, and he explicitly identified the sacrificial victimhood of episcopacy as a spiritual martyrdom. He was so enamoured with the image that he penned an ode commemorating Charles Borromeo's admirable actualisation of it:

Of Martyrs, Charles holds the rank,
Although he [did not] pour the blood
That flowed in his chaste veins;
He [was] neither a Tyrant, nor a Butcher;
But Love in the long sorrows,
Made him Martyr of his Flock.⁴⁹

The bishop could be a witness to Christ through steadfast perseverance, labour and virtue. With the crown ever more steadily encroaching on the ecclesiastical realm primarily through *parlementaire* interventions in ecclesiastical affairs, it is not unexpected to find that the persecution resulting from defence of the church was a pervasive theme in French publications on episcopacy, or that it was couched in this language of white martyrdom.⁵⁰ Many bishops conceived their personal battle with royal officials as a trial of suffering and persecution, an affliction to be borne without flinching. Though few of them actually expected to die for their stance, they placed themselves within the long tradition that included prelates like Thomas à Becket who had faced death rather than abandon the rights of God's church.⁵¹ For Godeau, 'the Bishops will always groan under the authority of the temporal Justice, which is, it seems, applied only so that an occasion to mortify them will not escape.'⁵² The renowned Alain de Solminihac, bishop of Cahors, also considered these struggles on behalf of the church to be a form of mortification: when he failed to regain church land from local Huguenots, he wrote that

⁴⁷ Camus, Hiérarque parfait, 429-32: 'L'Evesque est un grand Prestre, qui doit servir de modele et de patron de sainte vie.' In his 1620 homily on Borromeo, Camus claimed that the archbishop of Milan had been particularly attached to the agony in the garden: Camus, Homelies panegyriques, 170.

⁴⁸ Camus, Homelies panegyriques, 140-51.

⁴⁹ Antoine Godeau, La Vie de Saint Charles Borromée, cardinal du titre de sainte Praxede, et archevesque de Milan (Paris 1657), preface (unpaginated): 'Des Martyrs, Charles tient le rang,/Quoy qu'il n'ayt pas versé le sang/Qui couloit dans ses chastés veines;/Il n'eut ny Tyran, ny Boureau;/Mais l'Amour dans de longues peines/Le fit Martyr de son Troupeau.' The verse was also published separately in 1652 (Paris), while the Vie was reprinted in 1663 and 1684.

⁵⁰ Many of these disputes are dealt with in Pierre Blet's studies of the clerical Assemblies: Le Clergé de France et la monarchie, 2 vols (Rome 1959); Les Assemblées de clergé et Louis XIV de 1670 à 1693, (Rome 1972); Le Clergé de France, Louis XIV et le saint siège de 1695 à 1715 (Rome 1989). See also Alison Forrestal, Fathers, Pastors, Kings: Visions of Episcopacy in Seventeenth Century France, (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2000), 150-74. A revised and extended version of this dissertation will be published by Manchester University Press in 2004.

⁵¹ Camus, Hiérarque parfait, 371-2; Godeau, Eloge des evesques, 176; Martin, Vie de S. Thomas de Villeneuve, 99-103.

the defeat was a personal lesson in humility.⁵³ On more than one occasion, Solminihac vowed that he would willingly sacrifice his life in order to conserve the church's jurisdiction and episcopal dignity, an admission that his first biographer was later to highlight admiringly.⁵⁴

This principle was most vividly articulated in the writings of the four Jansenist bishops: Pavillon of Alet, Caulet of Pamiers, Arnauld of Angers and Choart de Buzenval of Beauvais.⁵⁵ These men spent over two decades fighting the might of the crown and papacy in order to defend their episcopal right to teach the faithful of their dioceses.⁵⁶ At times, they feared for their personal security and they certainly adopted the attitude of martyrs for a cause that was greater than any man could fully fathom. Faced with accusations of obstinacy, ignorance and heresy, as well as threats of trial and deprivation of their temporal goods and diocese, the four felt under perpetual siege but rallied themselves with a vivid language of perseverance and divine purpose.⁵⁷ Perhaps the most outspoken was Nicolas Pavillon whose correspondence was riddled with a language of martyrdom that formed the basis of his stance and steeled his resolve to withstand pressure from powerful quarters. The roots of that self-possession lay as far back as the 1630s when the young bishop penned a personal rule of life. In it he expressed his desire always to recognise and do God's will, without selfish interest or fear. If persecuted, he would endure it patiently.⁵⁸ Little did he know then that he would have plenty of opportunities to live up to that ideal. Throughout the Formulary quarrel, Pavillon reiterated his belief that it was his responsibility as a 'depository...of the Faith and Discipline of the Church' to protect that institution fearlessly and zealously at all times. To remain silent would be a betrayal of his episcopal vocation.⁵⁹ Pavillon was, he claimed, ready to lose not only temporal goods for this worthy cause, but also to give up his life entirely.⁶⁰ Some bishops, the four prelates admitted, in a letter to Pope Clement IX, might prefer 'their repose and fortune to their health,' but their consciences would not allow them to neglect the rights of their office and abandon their clergy.⁶¹ They knew that this would lead to opprobrium and torment, for 'the more a Bishop will live saintly, the

⁵² Lettres de M. Godeau, evesque de Vence, sur divers sujets, (Paris 1713), 280, letter to Monsieur Balzac, 15 November 1646: 'Les Evêques gemiront toûjours sous l'autorité de la Justice temorelle, qui n'est, ce semble, appliquée qu'à ne laisser pas échaper une occasion de les mortifier.'

⁵³ Alain de Solminihac, ed. Sol, 204-7, Mémoire.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 426, letter to Chansarel, 27 November 1650; ibid., 554, letter to Estrades (Bishop of Condom), 20 December 1653; Leonard Chastenet, La Vie de Monseigneur Alain de Solminihac Evesque Baron, et Comte de Caors, et abbe regulier de Chancellade, (Cahors 1663), 758-61.

⁵⁵ All four bishops have been the subject of biographical studies: Bonnot, Hérétique ou saint?, (Arnauld); Étienne Dejean, Un Prélat indépendant au xvii^e siècle. Nicolas Pavillon évêque d'Alet (1637-1677), (Paris 1909); Jean Gaillard, Un Prélat Janséniste. Choart de Buzenval, évêque de Beauvais 1651-1679, (Paris 1902); Jean-Marie Vidal, François-Étienne de Caulet évêque de Pamiers (1610-1680), (Paris 1939).

⁵⁶ The history of the Formulary dispute has been well documented. See Pierre Blet, 'Louis XIV et les papes aux prises avec le Jansénisme', Archivum Historicae Pontificae, 31 (1993), 109-92, 32 (1994), 65-148; Louis Cognet, Le Jansénisme (Paris 1964); Alexander Sedgwick, Voices From the Wilderness. Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France, (Charlottesville, Virginia 1977).

⁵⁷ Dejean, Un Prélat indépendant, 186n.

⁵⁸ Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 14428(i), fo. 133v, 136v.

⁵⁹ Charles-Hugues Lefebvre, Vie de Monsieur Pavillon, évêque d'Alet, 3 vols (2nd edition, Utrecht 1739), ii, 30, Pavillon to Curé Ferret, 1661. The same sentiment was expressed by Choart de Buzenval in a letter to Pavillon three years later (ibid., 104-5, 4 November 1664) and by Henri Arnauld in his Lettre de Monseigneur l'Evesque d'Angers au roy. Sur le sujet de la signature du Formulaire du clergé, (n. p., 1661).

⁶⁰ Dejean, Un Prélat indépendant, 186n.

⁶¹ Oeuvres de Messire Arnauld. Docteur de la maison et société de Sorbonne, 43 vols (Paris 1775-3), xxiv, 453.

less he will be assured in his seat...by this, he attracts powerful enemies who will be able to oppress him easily.’⁶²

For the Jansenist bishops, theirs was an apostolic and episcopal crusade on behalf of the entire church. Of course, this slotted comfortably into the general tendency of all Jansenists to see themselves as beleaguered advocates of truth within the church, who suffered heroically in order that others might benefit.⁶³ But it certainly had acute and profound resonance when applied to the character of the episcopal office, and to the specific experiences of these four high-profile bishops. Yet even though other seventeenth-century bishops did not share the quartet’s crushing pressures they could also adopt the language of martyrdom to understand the purpose of suffering. Positively, injuries to his person, traps and persecution enabled a bishop to follow in the footsteps of Christ; as Antoine Godeau commented, bishops were more similar to Jesus than any other member of the church, and their trials offered them the opportunity to imitate his earthly torments. Each should expect that ‘one charges them of injuries, that one gives a bad sense to their most innocent actions, that one erects traps for them, that one mocks their remonstrances, and that one persecutes them.’ Godeau explicitly called this testing life a martyrdom, a martyrdom of the spirit which must be endured for the greater good of his soul and the church of Christ.⁶⁴ Just like the beleaguered bishop, Christ had entered into ‘sufferings, labours and ignominies; and finally he offered himself in sacrifice to the Cross.’ Godeau was consoled by the fact that not only Jesus, but also illustrious bishops like Charles Borromeo had earned this title, and he was keen to apply this principle to his own life in order to give purpose to the difficulties that he encountered in his diocese.⁶⁵ Like Solminihac and the Jansenist bishops, he welcomed unavoidable opposition as a means of cultivating the Christ-like virtues of holiness and zeal: ‘I must render them benedictions for their injuries, and service for their persecutions.’ In spotting ‘roses among the thorns,’ Godeau knew that ‘the Bishop the most removed from his Patria, the most destitute of all human help, and of all consolation, the most mistrusted, the most persecuted’ could thank God for the opportunity to become ‘more similar to him than others.’

It was not simply in his steadfast protection of the church’s rights that the bishop could assume the mantle of a spiritual martyr. Every day of his episcopal life, he was presented with challenges and temptations which could be transformed into propitiatory offerings to God⁶⁶ and into opportunities to conform to Christ’s suffering and virtues. Godeau, for example, suffered desperately from loneliness in remote Vence. As a native of Paris, a member of the Académie Française, and a natural extrovert, he found his isolation from news and

⁶² Ibid., 559: ‘Plus un Prélat vivoit saintement, moins il seroit assuré dans son siege...il s’attire par-là des ennemis puissants qui le pourroient facilement opprimer.’

⁶³ Sedgwick, Jansenism, 195-6; id., The Travails of Conscience. The Arnould Family and the Ancient Régime, (Cambridge, Mass., and London 1998), 257-8; René Taveneaux, Jansénisme et réforme catholique, (Nancy 1992), 35-44. Martin Barcos praised the bishops’ heroic willingness ‘de souffrir, de d’estre persecutez pour cette mesme cause’: Correspondance de Martin de Barcos abbé de Saint-Cyran avec les abbesses de Port-Royal et les principaux personnages du groupe Janséniste, ed. Lucien Goldman, (Paris 1956), 215, Barcos to Gilbert de Choiseul, 1654.

⁶⁴ Lettres de M. Godeau,***full ref 127-31, letter to Monsieur Chappelain, 12 September 1639: ‘...qu’on les charge d’injures, que l’on donne un mauvais sens à leurs actions les plus innocentes, qu’on leur dresse des pieges, qu’on se mocque de leurs remonstrances, et qu’on les persecute...les souffrances, les travaux, et les ignominies; et enfin il s’est offert en sacrifice à la Croix...il louera nôtre Seigneur de la grace qu’il lui fait d’être plus semblable à lui que les autres...Je leur dois rendre des benedictions pour leurs injures, et du service pour leurs persecutions.’; id., Vie de Saint Charles Borromee, 361-3.

⁶⁵ Id., Vie de Saint Charles Borromee, preface (unpaginated).

⁶⁶ Id., Eloge historique du bienheureux François de Sales, evesque et prince de Geneve, (Paris 1663), 96.

society very trying indeed. Reflecting on the sacrifice that he made in leaving Paris, he consoled himself with the knowledge that he could turn these trials into positive lessons: the good bishop should gaze on God and not on the world, or as Gregory the Great had termed it, be in the world, but not of it. Naturally, he would encounter moments of despair, but, even in those dark times, he had to soldier onwards, just as Paul and the Apostles had.⁶⁷ Bishops could only do so if they were ‘dead to themselves,’ an essential quality that the humble Godeau was sure that he lacked.⁶⁸ Adopting a classic doctrine of the French school, Godeau argued that if the bishop endured his scourges through steadfastly gazing on God alone, then he simultaneously sacrificed Christ and himself to God. For in suffering like Christ, the bishop was united with him.⁶⁹ A recent example was Alain de Solminihac, one of the few French bishops included in Godeau’s *Eloge des evesques*. In that work, Solminihac was presented as a bishop who had completely abandoned himself to God, so that he became like a ‘christian infant.’ That had produced two marvellous results: the bishop’s detachment from the world meant that his actions had been informed solely by his love for God; equally, he had been capable of immense sacrifices for divine glory.⁷⁰

Solminihac’s own reflections demonstrate that Godeau did not idealise the bishop’s qualities. Even when he was nominated to Cahors in 1636, Solminihac displayed a marked reluctance to accept it, telling those who tried to encourage him to change his mind that, not only was he unworthy of the honour, but that he feared that the episcopate would expose him to the temptations of the world.⁷¹ Only after much prayer and spiritual advice did Solminihac finally assume his position as bishop. He was anxious, however, to ensure that he would never give in to the temptations of complacency and self-indulgence, and his rule of life expressly recommended that he remain ‘always in the presence of God’ through concentrating on the type of spiritual matters that would ‘inflare [him] with love of God.’ He vowed that, as Christ’s ‘living copy,’ he would not have any will but that ‘of my God’ and that he would not perform any action which was not inspired by God. In this absolute self-abnegation, he would be joined with Christ himself, for Christ would ‘give the strength and a special virtue’ to animate the bishop’s imitation of his wholehearted service of God.⁷² These ideas had surely been fostered by a long friendship with Jean Barrault, bishop of Bazas and Arles, a *dévo*t mentor with ties to the Bérullian circle and to François de Sales. In letters to Solminihac, Barrault did not hesitate to advise his younger friend on the necessity of following God’s will without regard for oneself. He asked Solminihac to understand that self-

⁶⁷ *Lettres de M. Godeau*, 124-31, letter to Monsieur Chappelain, 12 September 1639; *ibid.*, 132-3, letter to Cardinal Richelieu, (n. d.). See also Leonor d’Estampes (Bishop of Chartres), *Advis de l’Assemblée generale du clergé de France: A Messieurs les Archevesques et Evesques de ce royaume*, (Paris 1625), 42.

⁶⁸ *Lettres de M. Godeau*, 132, letter to Cardinal Richelieu, (n. d.).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 359-61, letter to Abbé de Cerisy, (n. d.).

⁷⁰ Antoine Godeau, *Eloge des evesques, qui dans tous les siecles de l’eglise ont fleury en doctrine et en sainteté*, (Paris 1665), 757-9.

⁷¹ *Alain de Solminihac*, ed. Sol, 137-8, letter to Louis XIII, June 1636. Solminihac had previously refused the bishopric of Lavour for the same reasons: *ibid.*, 135, letter to Richelieu, 20 April 1636; *ibid.*, 135, letter to Cardinal Sourdis, same date; *ibid.*, 136, letter to Jean Barrault (Bishop of Bazas), same date.

⁷² Cited in Raymond Darricou, *Au coeur de l’histoire du Quercy. Alain de Solminihac évêque de Cahors (1593-1659)*, (Chambray-lès Tours 1980), 24-5; cited in Eugène Sol, *Le vénérable Alain de Solminihac abbé de Chancelade et évêque de Cahors*, (Cahors 1928), 96: Nos discours seront le plus que nous pourrons de choses spirituelles et de ce qui me pourra enflammer... à l’amour de Dieu. J’auray aussi un grand soin... de ne dire ny preter l’oreille aux curiosités, me tenant toujours en la présence de Dieu... je ne veux avoir autre volonté que celle de mon Dieu, et de ne faire aucune action que je ne me sente meu d’icelle.’ See also Solminihac’s letter to de Paul, in which he declared his constant submission to God’s will: *Saint Vincent de Paul. Correspondence*, ed. Coste, iv, letter to de Paul, 25 January 1651.

abnegation would enable one to ignore the world's temptations, and that the suffering of episcopal life would ultimately bring one to Heaven.⁷³

As Solminihac knew, the temptations and pressures of the world could be immensely seductive. How could he, and other bishops, cultivate their selfless absorption in divine cares? The solution lay, for Solminihac and every episcopal reformer, in prayer. Prayer provided bishops with a path to God and a supportive foundation for their vocations, and it was the primary defence against egoism, complacency and cowardice. For in developing the intimate relationship with God that their hierarchical office demanded, bishops would learn God's will and would be given the grace to fulfil it.⁷⁴ This assumption lay at the root of Condren's advice to Zamet, and it inspired Solminihac's and Pavillon's promises to pray daily and intensely for at least two hours. Several kinds of prayer were possible: eucharistic celebration, meditation on the Scriptures and contemplative reflection, and all were effective in destroying the selfish human will.⁷⁵ The recommendations of the famous Mercuès conferences included entire sections on episcopal prayer, so necessary to 'satisfy the obligations of our charges worthily.' It would foster 'great detachment from all things, a destruction of ourselves, profound humility, great patience.' In prayer, the bishop would 'abandon [himself] to the movements that it will please God to give us, and to all that he will wish to do with us.'⁷⁶ When the Mercuès participants described the purpose of eucharistic celebration, they actually used Bérulle's title of *grand prêtre*, just as Jean-Pierre Camus had done some years earlier. In celebrating mass daily, the bishop honoured God, appeased his 'ire,' and thanked him for the blessings he had granted his people. By bringing the sacrifice of Christ into relief, however, the mass also became an excellent preparation for death, and was more applicable to bishops than to any other members of the church, 'because of the particular alliance that we have contracted with our Lord.' Just as Bérulle and Olier did, the conferences encouraged bishops to identify with Christ, for 'we are like the victim that must be immolated for all the people of our dioceses, and we will approach with this spirit of victim.'⁷⁷ More broadly, their entire lives, every thought and action, should be informed by love of the cross, so that they would sacrifice their own lives to God; they would 'suffer all for God's glory and the health of others.'⁷⁸

Of course, there was nothing original in the type of prayer that the conferences encouraged. What was special to the decrees and to the advice given by reformers was the purpose of those prayers: the sacrifice of the self to God. This principle was equally apparent in works on episcopacy by ecclesiastics like Étienne Binet. In 1629, he published a hagiographic life of the martyred Saint Savinian, the first archbishop of Sens. This

⁷³ Alain de Solminihac, ed. Sol, 80-81, Barrault to Solminihac, 12 March 1629.

⁷⁴ Godeau, *Eloge historique du bienheureux François de Sales*, 85-6.

⁷⁵ Sol, *Le Vénérable Alain de Solminihac*, 95-6; Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 14428(i), fo. 138r-v. Solminihac and Pavillon practised all three types of prayer.

⁷⁶ These quotations are taken from the records of the conferences (held in Mercuès in 1649 and 1655) attended by Solminihac, Pavillon, Caulet, Nicolas Sevin of Sarlat and Philibert de Brandon of Périgieux: Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 14428(i), fo. 3r-9r, 35r-41r, at 3v-4r: 'Nous devons quasi a tous momens consulter Dieu pour satisfaire dignement aux obligations de nos charges...un grand detachment de toutes choses, un aneantissement de nous mesmes, une profonde humilité, une grande patience...on y pourra ressentir s'abandonnans aux mouvemens qu'il plaira a Dieu nous donner, et a tout ce qu'il voudra faire de nous.' For supplementary information, see Jean Valette, 'La Conférence de Mercuès (1649), *Annales de Midi*, 1957), 71-7, and René Toujas, 'A propos de la conférence épiscopale de Mercuès (Lot) in 1649: publication de directives inédites de pastorale,' *Actes du 96è congrès national des sociétés savantes*, (Paris 1976), 95-105.

⁷⁷ Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 14428(i), fo. 5v-7r: 'Nous sommes comme la victime qui doit estre immolée pour tous les peuples de nos dioceses, et nous en approcherons avec cet esprit de victime.'

included several references to the need for bishops to martyr themselves spiritually through a life of sacrifice in God's service,⁷⁹ and Binet particularly highlighted the essential role of prayer in this process. Pointing out that the constant, wearisome round of pastoral visits, synods and preaching would exhaust any bishop without appropriate inspiration, he advised bishops to open their hearts to God 'in the fervour of [their] holy contemplations.' Hearts of stone could be transformed into hearts that burned with love of God.⁸⁰ Other writers pointed to the examples of holy bishops who had prayed frequently to God in order to draw away from the material world and towards the spiritual. Simplician Saint Martin and Isaac Le Maistre respectively singled out the well known sixteenth-century prelates Thomas de Villeneuve and Barthélemy des Martyrs of Braga for their prayerful lives, interpreting them as reflective of the archbishops' concentration on God, but also as the means by which they had each maintained their focus on spiritual concerns.⁸¹

IV

One of the figures cited most frequently by Godeau, Saint Martin, Olier and others to illustrate their vision of episcopal prayer and sacrifice was François de Sales. Again and again, he was presented as a bishop who had perfectly abandoned himself to God's will, an abnegation that had manifested itself most famously in his charity towards all. De Sales' episcopate was considered to have been very special indeed. He had mastered the 'mortification of the heart' incorporated in spiritual martyrdom, so that his will had constantly been turned towards the good, even in the face of temptations and pressures from secular society. The archbishop's special gift had been his supreme charity; it was this virtue that had propelled his sacrifices and had inspired him to endure the suffering involved in episcopal life. For charity was the supreme manifestation of love of God and man, and it fitted comfortably into the French school's pre-occupation with self-sacrifice. Bishops were constantly encouraged to adopt Salesian charity, on the basis that if anything could overcome ambition and selfishness, it was this kind of compassionate love. Naturally, de Sales' life had required discipline, for it had often been difficult for him to resist sin, but this was a discipline willingly undertaken in charity. It was also an interior discipline of the will, rather than of the body, a cultivated 'poverty of the spirit' that allowed de Sales to seek spiritual rather than material benefits.

The widespread preference for the principles and values of Salesian mortification is especially marked when it is compared with the judgements of physical martyrdom and suffering made by French episcopal reformers. Significantly, while Nicolas Caussin was willing to admit, in his treatise on François de Sales, that physical mortification did have some spiritual value, he immediately qualified this admission with the claim that interior mortification, the 'cross of God,' was the most admirable virtue of all. The whole of François de Sales' life was marked, he concluded, by this.⁸² Olier agreed with Caussin, characterising the Salesian episcopate as 'mortification of the spirit, founded on the spirit, and operated by it, dividing the flesh from the spirit.' Linking de Sales' thought with his own theology, Olier declared that this type of penitence and suffering was sure to destroy human vices.⁸³ Even Godeau, himself a bishop, acknowledged that all prelates did not need to follow the

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 66r-v.

⁷⁹ Binet, *L'Idée des bons prelates*, 186-8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 291-2. Le Maistre de Sacy made the same point in his *Vie de Dom Barthelemy des Martyrs*, 553.

⁸¹ Le Maistre de Sacy, *Vie de Dom Barthelemy des Martyrs*, 545-53, 563, 782-3; Martin, *Vie de S. Thomas de Ville-neuve*, 233.

⁸² *Les Oeuvres de François de Sales*, ii, 49.

⁸³ *Oeuvres de M. Olier*, ed. Migne, col. 1266, 1269.

physical austerities of someone like Charles Borromeo, as long as they lived reasonably simply and penitently, using prudence to mark the limits of their austerity. Charity, he said, the touchstone of de Sales' episcopal life, was the most important feature of episcopal actions, rather than extreme mortification.⁸⁴

Nobody articulated the factors driving the Salesian episcopate with more precision than the celebrated Bossuet who, shortly before de Sales' canonisation,⁸⁵ produced a well-crafted panegyric of the late bishop that compared the Borromean and Salesian episcopates in order to highlight the best qualities of both. Each man had been of extraordinary and edifying sanctity, Bossuet began, though of quite different talents and conduct. For Borromeo had renewed religious life through administrative reforms, while de Sales had done so by his cross, 'with his thorns, with his detachment and his sufferings.' But having pinpointed de Sales' particular form of interior mortification, Bossuet then turned to the phenomenal charity that had characterised his episcopate. This virtue, so particular to the bishop, had won him many hearts, when with compassion and patience he had led them towards God. 'Never had a man practised this innocent ruse and this salutary intelligence better than the holy bishop of whom we talk.'⁸⁶

Other churchmen actively promoted the Salesian attitude towards extreme mortification. Alain de Solminihac lived a particularly simple life and, in 1652, expressed his willingness to expose himself to illness by personally ministering to the plague-ridden. An inner moral compulsion drove him to declare his readiness to die in the service of his flock.⁸⁷ Here, the abstract principle of suffering self-sacrifice informed the bishop's decision, with practical realities placed subordinate to his obligations towards his pastorate. Yet, amongst others, Vincent de Paul strongly counselled him against such an extraordinary sacrifice, and wrote that Borromeo's action, which Solminihac hoped to emulate, arose from a very particular divine inspiration and did not have to be imitated by other bishops. Rather, Solminihac should assume a supervisory role, organising and encouraging spiritual assistance as well as providing material aid but avoiding direct exposure to the plague himself as much as possible.⁸⁸ Solminihac's high regard for de Paul's opinion, and presumably for the advice of his other confidants, meant that he eventually followed this advice. It is significant that the bishop changed his mind, and was prepared to temper his enthusiasm for Borromean austerity and extreme mortifying sacrifice when he felt it necessary: 'I will follow your advice in all, I had been resolved to expose myself only in so much as I knew it was the will of God.'⁸⁹ The general conclusion reached by Solminihac and his advisors was that the charitable principle did not need to take the form of extreme physical suffering and mortification: it was as much a progressively cultivated mental and spiritual state as a corporal one and it could be manifested in routine episcopal labours.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Godeau, *Borromée*, 581-92: 'Concluons donc que la vie de Saint Charles n'est pas un exemple régulier que tous les Evêques doivent suivre.'

⁸⁵ De Sales was beatified in 1662 and canonised three years later.

⁸⁶ *Oeuvres oratoires de Bossuet*, ed. J. Lebarq, 7 vols (Paris 1890-7), iv, p. 323-8, 335-9, at : 'Jamais homme n'a mieux pratiqué cette ruse innocente et cette salutaire intelligence, que le saint évêque dont nous parlons.'

⁸⁷ *Vincent de Paul. Correspondance*, ed. Coste, iv, 495-6, Solminihac to de Paul, 17 October 1652.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 520-2, de Paul to Solminihac, November 1652.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 528, Solminihac to de Paul, 21 November 1652: 'Je suivray vos avis en tout, je ne m'estois resolu de m'exposer qu'en tant que je connus que c'estoit la volonté de Dieu.'

⁹⁰ This conclusion was echoed by Bossuet, who argued that de Sales did not approve 'extraordinary austerities.' See *Correspondance de Bossuet*, ed. C. Urbain and E. Levesque, vi, 421, Bossuet to Madame Corneau, 10 October 1694.

However, seventeenth-century bishops and reformers did not denigrate the memory of the red martyrs, even though they had a distinctly unenthusiastic attitude towards physical mortification. When describing actual martyrdom, they stuck firmly to traditional language and principles. As it had been for the early church, martyrdom was a wondrous vocation involving patient suffering, endurance of insult and injury and, ultimately, the shedding of blood, in order that one could witness to Jesus Christ.⁹¹ One example was Saint Savinian, archbishop of Sens, who was thought to be have been one of the original seventy-two disciples sent forth by Peter ‘to plant this vine and to cultivate it well.’⁹² A perfect example of apostolic mission for his descendants to follow, remarked his biographer, Étienne Binet, and a bishop who ‘carried a heart of gold’ and ‘a soul of diamond.’⁹³ Savinian had not only worked energetically to convert and care for his people, he had also been a martyr for God.⁹⁴ Yet why had God permitted the martyrdom of Savinian, his apostle bishop? For Binet, this was a glorious fate, in which the archbishop had been able to emulate Christ, who had willingly shed ‘his precious blood to redeem souls.’⁹⁵ Martyrdom offered an example of heroic sacrifice to those who had not yet been converted through Savinian’s preaching: ‘It is virtue which talks by these mouths of blood, and none can resist the Rhetoric...of the magnanimous and invincible patience of a true servant of Jesus Christ.’⁹⁶ No words or miracles could match the impact of Savinian’s suffering and death for Christ. As the first archbishop of Sens, he was destined for martyrdom, but all bishops should know that their office was ‘a true apprenticeship of Martyrdom,’ which might bring, at any moment, ‘the knife on the throat’ that would pour ‘all [their] blood on the prepared Altar.’⁹⁷

Binet presented Savinian’s martyrdom in classic terms: patient devotion to the faith and to his people, suffering and persecution, enduring loyalty to Christ until his excruciating death, and a just reward in Heaven for his loyal sacrifice. Still, it is obvious that even Binet did not regard Savinian’s death as a literal model for contemporary bishops, a sentiment that was strongly echoed by other reforming writers. They did not wish their bishops to die for the faith, even if the opportunity had been present in seventeenth-century France. Instead, they positively discouraged that fate, and actually displayed a pronounced distaste for any kind of physical suffering. This was certainly a departure from the middle ages, when the lives of individual saints had frequently been characterised by acute food and sleep deprivation, as well as corporal punishments. Even in the seventeenth century, these kinds of ‘buffeting’ disciplines were far from obsolete.⁹⁸ Yet, amongst bishops, while martyrdom

⁹¹ Alfred C. Rush, ‘Spiritual Martyrdom in St. Gregory the Great,’ *Theological Studies*, (1962), 569-89; Pobe, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, 93-118.

⁹² Étienne Binet, *L’Idée des bons prelates et la vie de Saint Savinian Primat, et premier archevesque de Sens, et de ses saints compagnons*, (Paris 1629), 7-11. Antoine Godeau lauded several martyr bishops, including Timothy and John Fisher, in his *Eloge des evesques*.

⁹³ Binet, *L’Idée des bons prelates*, 53.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 85, 219.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 170: ‘C’est la vertu qui parle par ces bouches de sang, et nul ne peut resister à la Rhetorique...de la patience magnanime, et invincible d’un vray serviteur de Jesus-Christ.’

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 186-91: ‘A vray dire l’Evesché c’est un vray apprentissage du Martyre...Il faut faire estat que tous les jours soient pour nous le iour du dernier sacrficie, et que’à tout moment on nous doive passer le cousteau par la gorge, et verser tout nostre sang sur l’Autel préparé.’

⁹⁸ Louis Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices in the Middle Ages*, (London 1927), 147-204, 170-1; Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 313; Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls. Fourteenth-Century Saints and their Religious Milieu*, (Chicago and London 1984), 21-49, 122-49; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast. The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1987), 42; Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints and Society. The Two Worlds of Western*

and corporal suffering were still revered, they were increasingly seen as the exclusive domain of episcopal saints like Martin of Tours and Charles Borromeo and, therefore, as unnecessary and undesirable for the majority of prelates. Isaac Le Maistre de Sacy argued that the austerity of the religious life was not proper for the episcopal, even though Martin of Tours and Gregory the Great had transferred their monkish austerities to their episcopal vocation. Charles Borromeo might have followed their example, Le Maistre added, but that was because he too was blessed with an extraordinary ‘love for humility and for poverty.’⁹⁹ Other bishops were not obliged to take this path.

Every treatise on Charles Borromeo referred to his magnificent austerities and his life of physical penance.¹⁰⁰ When Bishop Camus delivered a series of panegyric homilies on the saint between 1616 and 1622 (collectively published in 1623), he lauded the ‘strange and extraordinary mortifications’ that Borromeo had undertaken in order to reduce his body to servitude. In particular, Camus commented, Borromeo had wished to cultivate a spirit of chastity and humility through the subjection of his body to the divine will. His disciplines included a very frugal diet of bread and water, restricted sleep and extremely spartan living conditions. That simple lifestyle was all the more impressive to Camus because it was cultivated amidst the material splendour of the Milanese archbishopric and by a man who had been born into a powerful noble family. ‘To love poverty when one is in a contrary condition is to be really poor of spirit and affection.’¹⁰¹ That observation had particular application to many bishops in seventeenth-century France. Étienne Cavet adopted it enthusiastically when he described Borromeo’s ‘one thousand incommunities’, his nocturnal vigils, abstinences, prayers and bodily mortifications.¹⁰²

However, although Camus displayed the greatest respect for Borromeo’s feats in his homilies, he made it perfectly clear that he did not want his brethren to imitate them. ‘We are no more than the cold ashes of which our predecessors were the blazing coals.’¹⁰³ Others were less scathing in their language, but they acquiesced with Camus’ basic position. Jean-Jacques Olier agreed that Borromeo was a bishop possessed of ‘miraculous and divine virtue,’ but did not shy from arguing that the austerity and rigour of his life were simply too much for most bishops to emulate.¹⁰⁴ Antoine Godeau made precisely the same point in his eulogy of the late archbishop. In a chapter entitled ‘The Corporal Austerities of Saint Charles,’ Godeau told how, inspired by God, Borromeo had undertaken tremendous penances throughout his career, offering his body for the sins of men. In sanctifying

Christendom, 1000-1700, (Chicago and London 1982), 154-6, 233-4. See also one of the most popular contemplative works of this period, Thomas à Kempis’ The Imitation of Christ, trans. E. M. Blaiklock, (London 1979), 84, (The word ‘buffeting’ is taken directly from this text).

⁹⁹ Le Maistre de Sacy, Vie de Dom Barthelemy des Martyrs, 677-8.

¹⁰⁰ In a letter to the queen mother, Pierre de Bérulle also highlighted Borromeo’s sacrifices of austerity and humility: Correspondance du Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, ed. Dagens, i, 210-14, letter to the queen mother, 3 November 1615.

¹⁰¹ Camus, Homelies panegyriques, 14-28, at 28: ‘Aymer la pauvreté estant dans une contraire condition, c’est estre vrayement pauvre d’esprit et d’affection.’

¹⁰² Ibid., 183; Étienne Cavet, Pourtraicts racourcis de Saint Charles Borromée, Sainte Thérèse, Soeur Marie de l’Incarnation, et du B. H. François de Sales, Evesque de Geneve, (Lyon 1632), 42-6.

¹⁰³ Camus, Hiérarque parfait, 188-9: ‘Nous ne sommes plus que les froides cendres dont nos predecesseurs estoient les charbons ardans.’

¹⁰⁴ Jean-Jacques Olier, Discours sur Saint François de Sales, printed in Oeuvres complètes de M. Olier, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, (Paris 1856), col. 1253-72, at 1256.

his own body through disciplines, therefore, he had sanctified others.¹⁰⁵ But, wrote Godeau, ‘The life of Saint Charles is not a regular example that all Bishops have to follow.’ He pertinently observed that Christ had not lived an acutely austere life while on earth. Rather, he had lived as a man in the world, eating and drinking just as men did. Though his Apostles has practised their own austerities, as had other early bishops like Ambrose and Martin of Tours, Christ was obviously the principal model for bishops, and if he had avoided corporal mortification then so should they.¹⁰⁶ Bishop Godeau had offered the same ideal in his eulogy of Augustine just five years earlier. Although he had to admit that the saintly Augustine had practised corporal penitence, Godeau was at pains to stress that he had only done so with the utmost circumspection and prudence.¹⁰⁷ Obviously, Godeau was extremely anxious to discourage, or at the very least to restrict, physical mortification by bishops. To do so, he, like Camus, was not above implicitly criticising the practices of revered members of the Catholic episcopate, even when he did not have the confidence to condemn them outright.

The attitude of suspicion surrounding physical mortification is nowhere more evident than in the cult of Bishop de Sales. Even a cursory examination of the published reflections reveals an authorship that saw in de Sales a bishop who had neither approved of nor indulged in constant and radical corporal austerities, but who had, nonetheless, managed to live a life of supreme sanctity. The prolific Godeau produced an eulogy of de Sales in 1663, where he hammered home his belief that self-inflicted corporal austerities were not within the episcopal remit. Although Godeau agreed that de Sales did not overly indulge in the material offerings of life, the image that he presented was far from that of a bishop occupied with extreme bodily penance. Rather, Godeau informed his readers, de Sales ate, drank and slept as others did, without excess.¹⁰⁸ Three other leading representatives of the French clergy, each from a different ecclesiastical group, took the opportunity to push this point to its logical conclusion in their own reflections on de Sales’ life. Olier’s panegyric of the late bishop observed that the only external mortifications undertaken by de Sales had been the mockeries and contradiction inflicted by others.¹⁰⁹ The Jesuit and royal confessor, Nicolas Caussin, once more highlighted de Sales’ moderate approach to fasting, vigils and possessions.¹¹⁰ After making these admissions, both commentators then proceeded to paint the bishop, not as a figure who purposely inflicted tremendous physical suffering on his body, but as a man who had followed ‘the cross of God’ through mortification of the heart and spirit. He was, in Caussin’s words, ‘a domestic genius...to be imitated because of the grandeur, ease, and the mildness of all his actions.’¹¹¹

V

Yet, even though episcopal advisors removed self-inflicted physical suffering from their vision of episcopacy, they certainly did not to encourage a mellow life for bishops. Moderation of habits was the catchphrase in every treatise and manual, and virtually every author identified three particular dangers for

¹⁰⁵ Godeau, *Vie de Saint Charles Borromee*, 587-92: ‘La vie de Saint Charles n’est pas un exemple regulier que tous les Evesques doivent suivre.’

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 581-4.

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*, *La Vie de S. Augustin evesque d’Hyppone*, (Paris 1652), 568-75.

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*, *Eloge historique du bienheureux François de Sales*, 94-6. Étienne Cavet supported this view of de Sales’ ‘temperate’ sobriety: Cavet, *Pourtraicts racourcis*, 312-17.

¹⁰⁹ *Oeuvres complètes de M. Olier*, ed. Migne, col. 1268-72.

¹¹⁰ Nicolas Caussin, *Traicte de la conduite spirituelle selon l’esprit du B. François de Sales, evesque de Geneve*, printed in *Les Oeuvres du bienheureux François de Sales*, ii, 48-9.

contemporary bishops: first, the calls for favours made on them by relatives; second, the risk of becoming a crown servant rather than an ecclesiastical and, finally, the temptation to spend diocesan income on frivolous luxuries. There was nothing worse than either a spendthrift or politique prelate, and each was roundly condemned for their failure to distance themselves literally and emotionally from material possessions. Jean-Pierre Camus was one of the most outspoken, for as a bishop with quite a plain lifestyle, he could not understand why other prelates presumed to use the church's goods as their own personal pot of gold. A true bishop should use diocesan income solely for the good of his church, and especially to aid the poor. Riches and worldly honour were to mean absolutely nothing to him, so that he had no need for sumptuous clothing, food or fittings. The only way to honour the episcopal ministry was through virtue, which would ultimately earn the genuine respect of princes and paupers alike.¹¹² Equally, Antoine Godeau condemned the pomp that he believed to be destroying the episcopate. In particular, he argued that it was actually self-defeating, for if bishops acted like grands seigneurs, then the crown and laity were bound to treat them as such. If they were outwardly sycophantic, inwardly these scorned bishops for their profane lifestyles.¹¹³ Yet, blunt as he was on this topic, Godeau reserved his most stinging criticism for court prelates. To solicit the court for favours was distasteful enough,¹¹⁴ he observed, but to live one's vocation as a politique prelate was simply inexcusable. In a harsh judgement of Pierre de Marca, royal minister and archbishop of Toulouse and Paris, Godeau pointed out that a life immersed in politics and 'intrigue, favour, complacency and cowardice' could never be reconciled with the ministry of Christ.¹¹⁵ As Camus concluded, bishops were not courtesans who sold their integrity as God's ambassadors for earthly rewards.¹¹⁶

These were harsh assessments of the contemporary episcopate. With the same incisiveness, Godeau remarked that the seventeenth century pre-disposed bishops to extravagance, since they often felt obliged to follow the habits of the laity in order to avoid being accused of singularity and pride. He recommended that bishops adopt a lifestyle that struck a happy balance between decadence and excessive frugality: simple eating habits, an avoidance of excessive sleeping and inactivity. Even the clerical Assembly issued guidelines on the simple lifestyle appropriate to a bishop, for 'that which is eminent before men, is [an] abomination before God.'¹¹⁷ Noone, however, condemned all material comfort. Rather, it was a question of using a degree of ornamentation and luxury which was consistent with the hierarchical dignity of the episcopal office. Yet, no bishop should become a slave to secular and fleshly extravagances, since he should always be focused on God and on his spiritual charge. This was the stabilising 'poverty of the spirit,' so apparent in the life of François de Sales, a complete emotional detachment from worldly surroundings, which meant that he had never become

¹¹¹ Ibid., 52, 121: '...un genie domestique...estre imité à raison de la grandeur, la facilité, et la douceur de toutes ses actions.'

¹¹² Camus, Homelies panegyriques, 116-8; id., Hiérarque parfait, 158-9, 189, 225-30, 370-1, 667-8: 'La frugalité honneste, et la sobriété soit en recommandation aux Evesques, afin que par là ils tesmoignent qu'ils ont Pasteurs, non pour se repaistre eux-mesmes du sang et de la substance des peuples, mais plustost pour repaistre les pauvres.'

¹¹³ Godeau, Vie de Saint Charles Borromee, 519.

¹¹⁴ Lettres de M.Godeau, 286, letter to an unnamed bishop, 23 July 1646.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 318-9, letter to Abbé de Thomassin, (n. d.).

¹¹⁶ Camus, Hiérarque parfait, 555-6.

¹¹⁷ Leonor d'Estampes, Advis de l'assemblée generale du clergé de France: a messieurs les Archevesques et Evesques de ce Royaume, (Paris 1625), 30, 35-40: 'Ce qui est eminent devant les hommes, est en abomination devant Dieu.'

obsessed with profane objects and comforts. After all, as Godeau noted, episcopal dignity was spiritual in essence, and not material.¹¹⁸ Jean-Baptiste Noulleau also criticised the pomp characteristic of the seventeenth century and advised bishops to shun what he termed ‘concupiscence of the flesh.’¹¹⁹

Of course, poverty is a relative concept in any century, but, in practice, it is obvious that a notable number of seventeenth-century bishops strove to combat the temptations of greed and immoderate consumption. Solminihac, Pavillon, Caulet and many other bishops were well known for their simple but strict lifestyles and their efforts to cultivate what they described as ‘poverty of the body and soul.’¹²⁰ For Bossuet, who spent so much time at court, the temptations were acute: a man naturally inclined towards material comforts, he maintained a comfortable, if not ostentatious, household as bishop, but fought to distance himself mentally from his environment through hours of meditative prayer and study.¹²¹ Underpinning this activity was the belief that though a bishop might be surrounded by wealth, he could cultivate the interior spirit of poverty appropriate to his office. Even Fénelon found it difficult to avoid the trappings that accompanied a life at court, and it was not until he took up permanent residence in Cambrai, after his banishment from Versailles during the Quietist controversy,¹²² that he was free to indulge his taste for simplicity and to shun ‘the dung heap of worldly goods.’¹²³ In fact, he was so appalled at the extravagances of some bishops that he was moved to write to one of the culprits, Colbert of Rouen, to complain of the ‘building frenzy’ sweeping France; how could this be curbed, he asked, if bishops did not give an example of simplicity and modesty in their living arrangements? ‘Show the heart of a bishop,’ he urged, ‘who is no longer tied to the world, and who brings the reign of Jesus Christ.’ Instead, Fénelon saw in Colbert a disciple of Christ who had fallen prey to the deadly sins of pride and greed: ‘The Gospel is in [your] mouth, and social glory is in [your] works.’¹²⁴ However, even in the career of a devout churchman like Fénelon, the tension between episcopal ideals of ecclesiastical service and secular temptation is evident; this bishop did not reside in Cambrai for the first two years of his appointment because Louis XIV demanded that he continue to tutor the duke of Bourgogne at the royal court.¹²⁵

Inevitably, there would always be bishops who failed to live up to this ideal, and their histories have been amply documented.¹²⁶ Yet, it is equally obvious that seventeenth-century reformers did offer what they considered to be a workable vision of contemporary episcopacy, in which the French school’s theology and the Salesian model gave new impetus and character to spiritual martyrdom. Historians usually consider early

¹¹⁸ Godeau, *Vie de S. Augustin*, 420-6, 557-60; *id.*, *Éloge des évêques*, 565.

¹¹⁹ Noulleau, *Villazel*, 22; Camus, *Borromée*, 7, 18; *id.*, *Hiérarchie parfaite*, 182-3; Étienne Molinier, *La Vie de Mre. Barthélemy de Donadieu de Griet Évêque de Comenge* (Paris 1639), 322; Saint Martin, *Vie de S. Thomas de Villeneuve*, 82.

¹²⁰ Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Fr. 14428(i), fo. 3v; See also Pavillon’s rule of life: *ibid.*, fo. 133v, 136v.

¹²¹ Calvet, *Bossuet*, 66-7.

¹²² Ély Carcassonne, *Fénelon. L’Homme et l’oeuvre* (Paris 1946), 25-74.

¹²³ *Correspondance de Fénelon*, Orcibal, Le Brun and Noye, eds., iv, 13, Jean-Jacques Boileau to Fénelon, February 1695; Carcassonne, *Fénelon*, 139-40; *Écrits inédits de Saint-Simon*, ed. M. P. Faugère, 8 vols (Paris 1880-93), iv, 461; E. K. Sanders, *Fénelon. His Friends and His Enemies 1651-1715*, (London 1901), 244-8, 323-6.

¹²⁴ *Correspondance de Fénelon*, Orcibal, Le Brun and Noye, eds., ii, 242-3, letter to Colbert, 8 April 1692: ‘L’Evangile est dans [votre] bouche, et la gloire mondaine est dans [vos] ouvrages...montrez un coeur d’évêque qui ne tient plus au monde, et qui fait régner J.C.’

¹²⁵ Fénelon resided in Cambrai from August 1697: Carcassonne, *Fénelon*, 59, 139.

¹²⁶ There is no evidence, for instance, to suggest that the *politique* Pierre de Marca ever felt at all uncomfortable with the fruits that accompanied his role as advisor to the Mazarine government: François Gaquère, *Pierre de Marca, sa vie, ses oeuvres, son gallicanisme*, (Paris 1932).

modern saints to be objects of reverence rather than emulation, and the reaction to saintly episcopal aesthetics like Borromeo does meet this general rule.¹²⁷ But it was hardly the case with the bishop of Geneva. Why did reformers expect bishops to imitate de Sales' internal and external habits rather than those of any other bishop? And why were their wishes actualised in the vocations of men like Solminihac, Camus and Fénelon?

Even in the middle ages, theologians had cautioned against prolonged bodily mortification, but de Sales' popularity amongst episcopal reformers cannot be explained away as simply a function of their extreme suspicion of any bodily penance.¹²⁸ Rather, de Sales was adopted so wholeheartedly because his brand of martyrdom allowed some accommodation between the sacred and the profane in a society where bishops could not hope to escape from the world even if they wished. They could assuage their consciences by adopting a stringent attitude to their spiritual life and by cultivating the internal spirits of poverty and charity which compensated for a relatively relaxed exterior lifestyle. In addition, this Salesian model fitted comfortably with the doctrines of the influential French school: its contemporary stress on the notions of suffering sacrifice and self-abnegation tipped the balance towards mental discipline rather than corporal inflictions. Partially because of his links with this school, de Sales could be adopted as a truly French episcopal saint, born 'for the good of France' and for the specific benefit of its seventeenth-century bishops, even though he was not technically French.¹²⁹ Yet, ultimately, he was chiefly attractive to French episcopal reformers because he helped them to articulate an updated model of episcopal life that answered the immediate and complicated realities thrown up by the ancien régime. As Bishop Godeau and his reforming confreres proved, it was an applicable ideal which allowed them to move amidst profane corruption without losing sight of their higher goals.

¹²⁷ Kieckhefer, Unquiet Souls, 13, 191; Walker Bynum, Holy Feast and Holy Fast, 85-7.

¹²⁸ Constable, Attitudes Toward Self-Inflicted Suffering, 22.

¹²⁹ Nicolas Talon's judgement in Les Oeuvres de François de Sales, ii, 20.