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PRIVATE DEVOTION, PUBLIC ACTION: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MADAME ACARIE TO POST-REFORMATION FRENCH CATHOLICISM

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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"Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."

- *John 15:4-5, NRSVCE*

"No one achieves anything alone."

- *Leslie Knope*

This work would not have been possible without the support, encouragement, wisdom, and guidance of my mentors, my family, my friends, and my community. I am forever indebted to each and every one of you. May the Lord bless and keep you.

+AMDG+

ABSTRACT

Among the figures in Post-Reformation France who greatly influenced the development of Catholic spirituality as well as French history and culture is Madame Acarie, a wife, mother, mystic, and reformer who later became a Discalced Carmelite under the name Marie de l'Incarnation. Yet Acarie's name and influence are often obscured or marginalized in discussions of this important period in French Catholicism. This study addresses this gap in scholarship by investigating Madame Acarie's contributions to Post-Reformation French Catholicism.

First, Chapter One investigates the history of the Carmelite tradition and the Teresian reform that produced the Order of the Discalced Carmelites. Chapter Two treats the initiative led by Madame Acarie to introduce the Discalced Carmelites to France and the resounding impact of French Discalced Carmelites in subsequent centuries. Chapter Three evaluates the social, political, and ecclesiastical contexts in which Acarie operated, addressing the practice of spiritual and literary salons, the notion of Gallicanism, and the religious reform currents that spread across Europe in response to the Protestant Reformation. Lastly, Chapter Four examines the writings of Madame Acarie and finds them representative of the main principles of the French school of spirituality. Accordingly, Madame Acarie merits attention as a contributor to this significant movement in Catholic thought, as well as more generally to the history of Post-Reformation Catholicism in France.

Keywords: Madame Acarie, Marie of the Incarnation, Marie de l'Incarnation, French school of spirituality, Post-Reformation Catholicism, Church in France, Discalced Carmelites, Gallicanism, salons, reform, history of the Carmelites, Carmelite tradition

INTRODUCTION

Barbe Avrillot, more commonly known as Mademoiselle or Madame Acarie, was born in Paris in 1566. The effects of the Protestant Reformation in France were in full effect, the Wars of Religion having commenced only four years prior. The struggle between Catholics and Huguenots, and its implication for the Catholic church in France, and specifically for the capital city of Paris, would mark Madame Acarie's life. A product of her time and her milieu, Acarie was intricately tied to the political and societal happenings of the period. Concurrently, she was a religious figure of note whose mystical experiences and devotions speak to the transformative currents in conceptions of spirituality and piety that arose in response to the Reformation. As a member of the social and ecclesiastical elite, she stands as a fascinating prism by which to consider the intersection of personal devotion and public life at the close of the 16th and dawn of the 17th centuries.

At the turn of the 17th century, France was a country in recurring turmoil. As with many of its neighbors, the monarchy reeled from the Protestant Reformation and numerous ensuing religious conflicts, notably the eight successive Wars of Religion that took place from 1562 to 1598.[1] The Saint Bartholomew's Massacre of 1572, in which Catholic mobs in Paris murdered thousands of Huguenots, served as the culmination of various confrontations, as well as a turning point in the conflict, given the profoundly shocking nature of the violence. Moderates—often referred to as "Politiques"—who favored a strong unified nation over the resolution of religious

[1]Dates given here note the eight principal conflicts commonly referred to as the French Wars of Religion, stretching from the Massacre of Vassy in 1562 to the Edict of Nantes in 1598. Because further religious conflicts flared up again over the course of the following century, some scholarship extends the period considered under this term into the 17th century. See Mack P. Holt. *The French Wars of Religion, 1562–1629* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

differences grew in numbers, despite the persistence of the ultra-radical Catholic League.[2] As the government found an uneasy peace with the installation of Henri IV and the Edict of Nantes in 1598, the Catholic Church in France grappled with its changing role and the theological and spiritual questions raised by the Reformation.

In the aftershock of these seismic shifts in politics and society, a spiritual revival in the Catholic Church in France rippled across the country, led by figures such as statesman and priest Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, Doctor of the Sorbonne Charles de Condren, St. Vincent de Paul, St. François de Sales, and many more. Together, their collected efforts sparked what historian Henri Brémond dubbed "the French school" (3: 3) of spirituality in his *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France: depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours*. Consisting primarily of a common interest in certain spiritual devotions, this "school" is a movement whose influence unfolded throughout the following centuries, shaping the reform of the Catholic Church in France and inspiring the founding of a myriad of religious orders such as the French Oratory, the Order of the Visitation, and the Vincentian family of congregations. Like the country itself, the figures essential to the French school—also called the Bérullian school—lived in the tension between the secular and the religious, serving both the poor and the monarchy. All the while, they had to regain their bearings in a spiritual landscape marred by deep division and extremism.

Among these notable names, however, few feminine voices are ascribed credit; but this is not to say women were absent from the movement. In her book *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris*, Barbara B. Diefendorf traces extensively the feminine hand in the abundant religious transformation taking place in Paris, the heart of

[2] For a discussion of the political party known as *les Politiques*, see the chapter "Le parti des politiques" of DeCrue's *Le Parti des Politiques au lendemain de la Saint-Barthélemy: La Molle et Coconat*.

ultra-Catholic sentiment, at the time. There is one woman in particular, though, who had an indelible influence on the movement: Barbe Acarie, née Avrillot, later known as Blessed Marie of the Incarnation. So as to minimize confusion in light of her various monikers, I will refer to her in this study as Madame Acarie.[3]

Of upper bourgeois birth, Madame Acarie naturally occupied a prestigious role in the secular world, her parents being "of the most noble and ancient families of the city [Paris]" (Duval, 1). Her father was accountant general in the Chamber of Paris, and chancellor of Marguerite of Navarre, first wife of Henri IV; as for her mother, she "was a descendant of Étienne Marcel, the famous *prévôt des marchands* (chief municipal magistrate)" (Fournet). This prominent social and political status was cemented by her marriage to Pierre Acarie, a viscount and member of the Catholic League.[4] By the end of her life, she would occupy an important place in the history of Post-Reformation France. Madame Acarie's links to the League demonstrate that she inhabited a space that blurred the lines of public life and personal devotion. Furthermore, her contemporaries witness to both her action in society and in the Church, namely service to the needy as well as demonstrated worldly acumen in managing her family's connections and affairs. As a laywoman, that is, not a religious sister, until after the death of her husband, Acarie is particularly well suited to be the subject of an examination of society's complex relationship to faith in this era. An examination of the particular role she played in the

[3] Diefendorf notes that, according to convention of the era, it was customary for a French woman to retain her own family name. Nonetheless, "polite society" often addressed women by their husband's family name. "Madame," however, was reserved as an honorific for noble women; thus, "Mademoiselle" was used to refer to both married and unmarried women of upper bourgeois status. For this reason, early accounts utilize the name "Mademoiselle Acarie." Later biographers have since referred to her as "Madame Acarie" (23).

[4] The Catholic League was a contingent of ultra-radical Catholics who opposed the rise of Henri IV to the throne due to his ties to Protestantism. The League, as it its name is sometimes shortened, was instigated and led by Henri de Guise, Prince de Joinville and third Duke of Guise from 1563 until his assassination in 1588 at the hands of Henri III, who was, in turns, aligned with and opposed to the League (Goyau, "House of Guise").

development of the French school of spirituality and its impact on French society and culture for centuries to come shows the importance of her contribution to religious life in France during the period. Most notable among these contributions is her relationship to the Carmelite Order, one of the major Catholic mendicant[5] religious communities in history which owes many of its most beloved personages to France. Whether considering the main figures of the French school, the religious orders that sprung up across the country during this period, or the effects of this movement in the centuries that follow, the influence of Madame Acarie is to be found in each of these realms. By examining the life, writings, spirituality, and legacy of Madame Acarie, I will evaluate precisely what that influence was.

Considerations of the Study

It must be acknowledged that the dynamic between what in 21st-century parlance might be conceptualized as the "public sphere" and the "private sphere" was of a particular nature during the late 16th and early 17th centuries in France. The division between private and public, particularly concerning religion, was far less distinct than in modern French society. Religious fervor was so knit to social and political rivalries that the conflict between Catholics and Huguenots erupted into a de facto civil war. This was especially the case in Paris, due to its status as the epicenter of both the monarchy and the Church in France. Diefendorf notes that "Paris was one of the first cities to throw its allegiance wholeheartedly behind the League" (10). Accordingly, the League gained such political power that King Henri III, although he was Catholic, was nonetheless forced to flee the capital in May 1588 under the pressure of the League. He was ultimately assassinated by an ultra-radical Catholic, Jacques Clément, in August

[5] See Livarius Oliger, "Mendicant Friars." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 10. Robert Appleton Company, 1911. www.newadvent.org/cathen/10183c.htm.

of 1589, which triggered further conflict when the monarchy passed to Henri IV, who was himself sympathetic to the Protestant cause. While it resulted in political jockeying to place a sympathetic ruler on the throne, the division between moderate Politiques and radical League members stemmed from religious debate. The staunch Catholic majority deemed their Protestant (Huguenot) compatriots heretical and resisted the idea that this new sect be permitted to practice their faith. Ultra-radicals such as those in the League sought above all to quash heresy, at whatever expense to the nation. The moderate opposition, which pulled members from both faiths, was ready to smooth over the question of heresy if it meant greater stability and autonomy, as a state *and* for a Gallic Church (Diefendorf, 11). Thus, in this period, personal faith and public political opinion were essentially corollary.

In light of this relationship, it is little wonder that the aftershocks of these conflicts wrought not just social and political change but also transformation in the spiritual currents of the time. Though Diefendorf gives ample consideration of the climate in which such changes occurred, the heart of her book is a study of the religious practices Parisian women engaged in and the spiritual impulses that motivated them in the period from the Wars of Religion up until The Fronde.[6] Her findings directly locate the source of growing female asceticism in the trauma experienced as a result of the Wars of Religion. Over time this penitential asceticism metamorphosed into a drive towards charitable action. Along the way, numerous religious communities formed, usually with either or both aims, that is, ascetism and charitable action, belonging to their core principles. Many of these communities were founded for and by women. In fact, Diefendorf counts "at least forty-eight new religious houses for women . . . established in

[6] The Fronde was a series of civil wars in France from 1648 to 1653 that had devastating economic effects on the Paris region as well as the northeastern provinces of France until at least 1664. The economic crisis negatively impacted the patronage of religious communities by devout Parisians and, therefore, is "an appropriate termination point" for Diefendorf's study (15).

the city of Paris and its suburbs" (7) between 1604 and 1650. Other pre-existing communities underwent reformation initiatives at the same time, spurred on by the desires of an active lay population. The starting point for this window is particularly of note, for 1604 marks the foundation of the first French Carmel of the Discalced Order, a reformed order established in Spain in the late 1500s by St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. Madame Acarie was behind this project and deeply involved in its execution, and it is this achievement that is her most prominent legacy to France. Her involvement in the Church and in society, however, extends well beyond this foundation.

Acarie served everyone, from prostitutes to the poor and injured. For example, during the final war of religion and the siege of Paris, she made daily visits to the famous hospital Hôtel Dieu, where she tended to the sick. Then, when her husband was banished from Paris due to his involvement with the Catholic League that had opposed Henri IV, she took on her husband's business affairs and pled the case for his pardon. A charismatic woman, Madame Acarie hosted salons[7] in the Acarie home on Rue des Juifs in the Marais, and it is here where her initial influence both in society and the Catholic revival can be traced. Salons were a place of cultural exchange where groups of people met to exchange ideas and discuss issues. Later, salons became central to the development of literature of the 17th and 18th century, such as the famous Hôtel de Rambouillet in Paris presided over by Catherine de Vivionne, Marquise de Rambouillet, in the first half of the 17th century.[8] While the Acarie salons have not been explicitly tied to the

[7] The term "salons" here means regular meetings of an intellectual nature. These gatherings were typically hosted by prominent women of society in their homes.

[8] For a thorough discussion of the Hôtel de Rambouillet and its celebrated literary salons, see Leon H. Vincent, *Hôtel de Rambouillet and the Précieuses*, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1900. Faith E. Beasley offers a more recent look at these literary salons and their role in French historiography and memory in *Salons, History, and the Creation of Seventeenth-century France: Mastering Memory*, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006.

development of literary salons to follow, it is important to consider whatever similarities might exist, as well as the nature of these particular meetings at the Hôtel Acarie.

The Acarie salons gathered persons of import in the Church, as well as in society, including the major names of the French school of spirituality. Madame Acarie came to be known as "la belle Acarie," admired on many counts including for her looks, "since by all accounts she was stunning, with fair skin, chestnut brown hair, and striking green eyes." (Maloney). It is no wonder the circle was frequented by future saints[9] such as Vincent de Paul and François de Sales, given that Cardinal Bérulle was a cousin to Madame Acarie, and Bérulle was the major name associated with Catholic reforms at the time. It was with Bérulle's help that Acarie brought the Discalced Carmelite Order to France. As noted above, the first reformed Carmel in France opened in 1604. By her death in 1618, there were at least fourteen in France. For this reason, she is sometimes called the "mother of Carmel in France" (Alet, 245). Upon the death of her husband, Madame Acarie herself joined the Carmel and it was there where she spent the last five years of her life. The contemplative aspect of her personality is further evidenced by her intense prayer life: starting at the age of 22 (Maloney), she experienced mystical episodes (Duval, 507-17). A few years later, she is attested to have received, though invisible, the stigmata,[10] making her the first confirmed Frenchwoman to have manifested the sign (Duval, 97). While the writings of her own hand are limited in quantity—fifteen letters and a collection

[9] By "saints" we mean particular persons noted for having exhibited character of heroic virtue during their life and honored as exemplary models of faith and action within the Roman Catholic Church. Often, these persons have contributed to the Church and society by their writings, the foundation of religious organizations and institutions, and/or service to the community. Further explanation of the process of officially proclaiming someone a saint, known as canonization, can be found here: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02364b.htm.

[10] In Christian mysticism, the term "stigmata" refers to the manifestation of wounds echoing those associated with Jesus Christ during the Crucifixion, that is, "on hands, feet, side, or brow . . . with corresponding and intense sufferings" (Poulain). These may be experienced as outwardly visible marks or invisible pains. Notable stigmatics of history are Francis of Assisi (13th century), Catherine of Sienna (14th century), and Padre Pio (20th century).

of spiritual exercises—they are essential to this time of religious renewal, and her spirituality is attested to in the correspondence of others such as Pierre Coton, a Jesuit priest and royal confessor, and Michel de Marillac, a prominent statesman. Further testaments are found in the depositions submitted for her 1791 beatification and the lasting biography of her by André Duval, theologian and confessor to Vincent de Paul. Madame Acarie's contribution to the Catholic revival in France is not simply substantial, it is fundamental: the French school of spirituality arguably might not have flourished as it did without her facilitation and inspiration.

Moreover, the Discalced Carmelite Order which Acarie and her associates introduced to France has had a profound mark on both French history and the Catholic Church in France. Despite the fact that Carmelites, specifically the female religious congregations known as the Second Order, are typically cloistered nuns,[11] their presence can be noted in conjunction with several major landmarks in French society. For example, among the many casualties of the guillotine during the French Revolution was a group of sixteen members of the Carmel at Compiègne, France,[12] whose story has remained one of the lasting narratives of the Reign of Terror, portrayed in a novella, a play, an opera, and a film in the centuries since. Of the hundreds of faithful figures throughout history recognized as canonized saints by the Roman Catholic

[11] As is the case with other religious congregations that date to the Middle Ages, such as the Franciscans (Robinson) and the Dominicans (Mandonnet), the Carmelite Order has various components. The "First Order" consists of friars (male) who typically lead an active/contemplative life. The "Second Order" generally indicates cloistered communities of contemplative women. The "Third Order" consists of people (married, single, or celibate) living in the general society who incorporate aspects of the Carmelite way of life into their ordinary days. Though this is the essential composition of the Order, there now exist variants, for example, communities of active (non-cloistered) Carmelite sisters. See Bede Jarrett et al. "Third Orders," Ferdinand Heckmann "Tertiaries," and Benedict Zimmerman "The Carmelite Order" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

[12] See John Wainewright's article "The Sixteen Blessed Teresian Martyrs of Compiègne" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* for an overview of the martyrs. Gertrud von Le Fort's 1931 novella *Die Letzte am Schafott* (*The Last at the Scaffold*) takes the martyrs for its subject. This novella inspired a play by George Bernanos which, in turn, inspired an opera by Francis Poulenc that premiered in 1957 (*Dialogues des Carmélites*) and was adapted into a film in 1960 starring Jeanne Moreau (*Le dialogue des Carmélites*). In 2019, the Metropolitan Opera of New York performed a revival of John Dexter's 1977 production of *Dialogues des Carmélites*; this performance was broadcast through the company's Live in HD series of cinema transmissions to venues throughout the world.

Church, one of the most well-known and beloved is St. Thérèse of Lisieux, a spirited young Frenchwoman who died at the age of twenty-four in the Carmel of Lisieux in 1897. Thought at the time to be a simple, rather forgettable personage by her fellow nuns, her writings have become a worldwide bestseller and in 1997 she was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope John Paul II, one of only four women thus far to receive this designation—another being St. Teresa of Avila. More recently, another young French Carmelite, Élisabeth of the Trinity, hailing from the Dijon Carmel, was canonized in 2016; her particular spirituality and devotions have likewise gained many patrons since her death in 1906. As the woman at the heart of the project of bringing the Discalced Carmelite Order to France, Madame Acarie is, then, a bridge to these later Carmelite figures who have captivated the Catholic Church and the world at large.

Scope of the Study

In Chapter One, I provide an overview of the history of the Carmelite tradition from its origins on Mount Carmel in Israel through the reform instigated by St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross in late-1500s Spain which resulted in the Discalced Carmelite Order. The second chapter concerns the introduction of this Order to France in 1604 by Acarie and friends, as well as the role of the Discalced Carmelites in France subsequently. The third chapter establishes the social, political, and ecclesial circumstances of the period in which Madame Acarie was active. It is here where we examine potential connections between the salons hosted at the Hôtel Acarie and the later literary salons of Paris. Additionally, this chapter examines the intricate relationship of private faith and public action at this time in France. Lastly, in the final chapter I consider Madame Acarie's own writings, the portion of correspondence preserved as well as her meditations of spiritual exercise. Implicated in this examination is a discussion of the specific characteristics of the French school of spirituality as articulated by three of its main

figures Cardinal de Bérulle, Jean-Jacques Olier, and John Eudes. Detailed analysis will show connections in Acarie's own reflections to the themes of contemplation and devotion that are hallmarks of the French school.

Conclusion

In spite of all her accomplishments, Madame Acarie's name and influence are often left in the shadows or mentioned as a mere footnote. There has indeed been some scholarship dedicated to her presence over the centuries, but this is limited and occasionally only tangential. Interest has been renewed, however, in recent years. A documentary film about the life of Barbe Acarie entitled *Une sainte qui s'ignore* aired on French television in October of 2018, and her name was included in the French Archives' list of national commemorations for the same year, the 400th anniversary of her death. These examples testify to Madame Acarie's historical import and enduring relevance and suggest there is more to be discovered. Beyond her role in the French school of spirituality and the Carmelite Order, her legacy may be found in broader history and society, for example, in the literary salons of later centuries. Her story as a whole speaks to the complex and constantly changing relationship of Church and state, public life and private devotion in France throughout the centuries. From a modern French perspective, the spiritual and the secular are often viewed as firmly distinct realms, the former belonging to the private sphere, the latter to the public. The modern development of the idea of *laïcité* in France, of the separation of the religious and the secular, in spirit and in letter of the law, has only exaggerated this divide.[13] Madame Acarie, on the other hand, stands in sharp contrast to this principle: for her, there is but one sphere, encompassing both aspects. Her life, writings, and legacy

[13] I will treat the complexities of *laïcité* later in this study.

demonstrate that the division between public and private life, secular and spiritual action, is not as defined as presumed, they often intersect.

CHAPTER ONE

A History of the Carmelite Tradition

Of Madame Acarie's various achievements, her role in bringing the Discalced Carmelite Order to France is perhaps her most prominent legacy. In order to demonstrate her lasting influence in this area, it is first necessary to consider the tradition of the Carmelites and their presence in France. We must clarify that Carmelites presently exist in various forms and communities, of which the two most prominent groups are "The Carmelites" (OCarm), sometimes specified as "of the Ancient Observance" or "Calced," and "The Discalced[1] Carmelites" (OCD), occasionally known as "Teresians" after their reformer and foundress, St. Teresa of Avila ("A Brief History of the Carmelites"). While the foundation of the first Discalced Carmel in France in 1604 by Madame Acarie and her associates is an important landmark in French history, it should be noted that there were in fact Carmelites in France prior to this date. These Carmelites, though, were of the Calced Order, established prior to the reform of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. This controversial reform, instigated in Spain in the late 1500s, resulted in the Discalced Carmelites branching off into a new order in its own right. It is this order of which Madame Acarie is considered as foundress and "mother" (Alet 245) in France. Thus, to discuss the significance of the introduction of the Discalced Carmel in France at the hands of Acarie, we must treat the role of Carmelites in France prior to 1604, as well as the subsequent legacy of the Order following the founding of the first Discalced Carmel in France.

[1] "Discalced," meaning "barefoot," is a reference to the practice of the Teresian Carmelites to go barefoot (Zimmerman) or to wear only sandals ("The Teresian Carmel"). At the same time, it reflects the Discalced Carmelites' intentional return to austerity and to a more ascetical lifestyle, which will be treated in further detail where the Teresian reform is discussed.

Origins and Charism of the Carmelite Order

As one of the "four great mendicant orders" (Oliger) cited in the Second Council of Lyons in 1274, the Carmelite Order has been a prominent example of organized religious life since the Middle Ages. The Order itself, however, claims roots that go back even further, even as far back as the Old Testament prophet Elijah. In his book *The Carmelites and Antiquity: Mendicants and their Pasts in the Middle Ages,* Andrew Jotischky examines this claim and traces the development of this historical tradition in narratives composed during the Middle Ages. If this claim be true, the Carmelite Order would effectively be "the oldest religious order in existence" (Jotischky 2). From the first appearances of this claim in medieval accounts of the Order's history, however, this historical tradition was met with skepticism to the point of what Jotischky calls "the shared assumption of its inherent implausibility" (2-3). In part, this skepticism was due to a general mistrust among scholars in the Middle Ages of the growing pretentions to antiquity from various institutions, families, and dynasties seeking to establish their place in politics and society. Nonetheless, there were those who defended the Carmelite claim, and this particular aspect of Carmelite historical tradition "enjoyed a life far beyond the medieval period" (3). For example, Jotischky notes that Johann Trithemius, Benedictine abbot of Spanheim, while dubious of French assertions of Trojan ancestry, "believed, and wrote in defence of, the Carmelite historical tradition." (2). Still today, the websites of both the Calced and Discalced Carmelites note a particular devotion to Elijah and trace their roots to Mount Carmel, a mountain range on the coast of the Haifa region of Israel. The location is "oftentimes spoken of" in the Old Testament of the Bible, and is believed to be the "place of residence" of the prophet Elijah as well as the site of several notable events in his life, such as the challenge of the priests of Baal recounted in 1 Kings 18, as Francis Gigot notes in his article on Mount

Carmel in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. The Carmelites, and even Elijah, however, were far from the first people to be drawn to the place.

The mount derives its name from the Hebrew word for "garden" and is remarkable for its "abundant and rich vegetable earth" (Gigot). In 2012, a series of caves on the western slopes of Mount Carmel were named a UNESCO World Heritage Site of Human Evolution due to evidence of "at least 500,000 years of human evolution demonstrating the unique existence of both Neanderthals and Early Anatomically Modern Humans within the same Middle Palaeolithic cultural framework" ("Sites of Human Evolution at Mount Carmel"). The verdant landscape makes the mountain range "ideal country" for hermits, as the land provides plentiful water and vegetation for sustenance while the height and forested landscape serve for seclusion (Jotischky 8). Scriptural accounts of the mount's significance added to the appeal of the place for Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. Even outside of the Abrahamic traditions "the sacredness of Carmel seems to have been known": the place is referenced as holy by the Egyptian King Thothmes II, the neo-Platonic philosopher Iamblicus, and the Roman historian, Tacitus (Gigot). These two factors, its sacred designation and its practical suitability, turned Mount Carmel into a refuge of monks as early as the fifth century (Jotischky 8). Yet the period from the sixth to the twelfth century appears to be mysteriously silent in terms of monastic activity in the area (9). Whether the eremitical tradition was broken during this interlude or the lack of evidence is simply due to an omission of documentation is unknown. What is agreed upon generally is that by the 12th century, there was a resurgence of monasticism on Mount Carmel, and it is here where the Carmelite monastic bloodline begins to be substantiated.

By the 1160s, indigenous Orthodox monks occupied the "cave of Elijah"; by 1185, Calabrian Orthodox monks had likewise settled on the range (Jotischky 9). With the conquest of

the kingdom of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187, monasteries in surrounding areas were being attacked and hermits faced increasing danger or were exiled from areas lost to Muslims forces. Noting the swelling population of Acre after 1192, Jotischky speculates that it "would be no small wonder if some [of the exiled clerics and monks] found their way to the agreeable slopes of Mt Carmel, a few miles to the south" (9). Certainly, by the early 1200s there was a growing, if loosely associated, collection of hermits gathering on Mount Carmel. We know this fact because sometime between 1205 and 1214, a group of them wrote to Albert de Vercelli, patriarch of Jerusalem, requesting the codification of "a way of life for a group of Christians dedicated to penance" (10). Jotischky identifies these hermits as Franks, though they are "unnamed and uncounted" (9) and the duration of their presence on Mount Carmel prior to their supplication to Albert "remains obscure" (10). It is possible that the group to which the eremitical Rule of St. Albert is addressed included both Frankish hermits and some of the Orthodox hermits present on Carmel since the previous century, though this demographic composition, too, is difficult to determine (11). In any case, "Albert's letter marks the foundation of the Carmelite community" (10), thereby situating the cornerstone of the Carmelite tradition in close geographical and temporal proximity to the pre-existing monastic tradition of Mount Carmel.

Writing in 1908, Zimmerman states that the order "holds that from the days of the great Prophets there has been, if not an uninterrupted, at least a moral succession of hermits on Carmel," thus tracing their roots to Old Testament times. Present-day accounts of Carmelite history, however, take care to address the nuances of this tradition. For example, the Calced Carmelites refrain from naming Elijah founder of the order while attributing their way of life to his model: "Then [in the 12th century] and in later times, the Carmelites did not acknowledge anyone in particular as their founder, but remained faithful followers of Elijah who was

associated with Mount Carmel through biblical events and through Greek and Latin patristic tradition which saw in the prophet one of the founders of the monastic life" ("A Brief History of the Carmelites"). In this way, 21st-century Carmelites claim their inheritance from Elijah while skirting the murky debate of their foundation. Nonetheless, the community established upon reception of the Rule of St. Albert makes the Carmelites the "only contemplative order founded in the Latin East" (Jotischky vii). The charisms and devotions of the order, sustained even throughout later transformations and reforms, are greatly marked by these origins.

Both the Calced and the Discalced attest that the core principle of the Carmelite way of life is contemplative prayer ("Our Charism" and "From Mount Carmel"). Along with this principle, Carmelites have a commitment to poverty and asceticism—though, as we will see, the nature of this tenet varies over time—as well as the balance of solitude within a communal existence. From the start, these characteristics were present in the Rule of St. Albert. The hermits were to live in individual cells and devote themselves to prayer and meditation. For those who could, there was an obligation to recite the Divine Office[2] according to the Rite[3] of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem; for those who could not, other recited prayers and pious meditation sufficed (Jotichsky 10; Zimmerman). This accommodation is significant because it suggests that at least some of the hermits were not necessarily literate, being "lay people,

[2] As Fernand Cabrol explains in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, this term signifies, "in ecclesiastical language, certain prayers to be recited at fixed hours of the day or night by priests, religious, or clerics, and, in general, by all those obliged by their vocation to fulfil this duty." These prayers are also referred to as the Liturgy of the Hours and are contained within the Breviary. The Divine Office is different from the prayers and formulas utilized in the Mass and other liturgical celebrations.

[3] By "Rite" we mean the forms and manner employed for "all services for the worship of God and the sanctification of men." This includes prescriptions for the administration of the sacraments, the recitation of the Divine Office, and any other ecclesiastical functions. The Rite employed determines the prayers said and the objects used (vestments, candles, water, wine, etc.) in any given ceremony. There exist several different Rites within the Catholic Church, such as the Roman Rite, the Byzantine Rite, and various Eastern rites, of which the Roman Rite is the most widespread. The Rite of the Holy Sepulchre has come to be known as the Carmelite Rite, as it is primarily utilized by the Calced Carmelites, though no longer by the Discalced (Griffin).

pilgrims and crusaders" ("From Mount Carmel"). The Carmelite lifestyle was, therefore, not restricted to any particular class of people. As we will see in Chapter Four of this study, the accessibility of Carmelite spirituality makes it a natural complement to the French School of Spirituality with which Madame Acarie is associated. To balance the activity of solitary contemplation, the original hermits were instructed to elect a prior under whose obedience they would live and to gather for daily Mass as well as a weekly Sunday chapter meeting. Partial vows of silence and periodic fasts were likewise decreed, and the hermits were to abstain from eating meat "except in cases of great necessity" (Zimmerman). These first Carmelites were forbidden to own property "beyond the animals necessary as beasts of burden" (Jotischky 10). This final instruction would soon be reinterpreted, however, as the changing needs of the order sparked a new phase in Carmelite history.

The European Migration and Its Consequences

Beginning in 1238, there was effectively "an exodus" (Jotischky 12) from Mount Carmel, first to Cyprus and soon after to Europe. In the face of growing concerns about the stability of the Latin East and concerned for their own safety, the Carmelite hermits migrated away from their geographical roots—and, ultimately, their eremitical foundation. In 1247, Pope Innocent IV issued the papal bull, *Quae honorem conditoris omnium*,[4] which officially removed the restriction on location set forth in the Rule of Albert. No longer were Carmelites obliged to live solely in secluded places: "If the prior and brothers see fit, you may have foundations in solitary places, *or where you are given a site that is suitable and convenient for the observance proper to your Order*" (Pope Innocent IV, emphasis mine). This decree permitted the Carmelites to move

[4] "Whatever Is for the Honor of the Creator of All."

not merely to the mountains or forests of the European continent but all the way to the heart of its cities, provided that a patron furnished the land. Carmelite houses sprung up quickly in Sicily, England, and Provence; before long Carmelite expansion reached German, Italian, French, and Iberian ground. These new foundations provoked not infrequent conflicts with neighboring parishes or other religious orders in urban centers (Jotischky 19-20). Additionally, Pope Innocent IV agreed to certain mitigations of the Carmelite rule: community life replaced solitary life, meals were taken in common, prescriptions for abstinence from meat and habitual periods of silence "though not dispensed with, [were] rendered less stringent," and restrictions on the keeping of livestock were all but lifted (Zimmerman). Therefore, the geographical drift from Mount Carmel went hand in hand with a shift in *modus vivendi*.

No longer hermits living off the land in isolated regions, the Carmelites needed different means of sustaining themselves. Yet the prohibition on owning property placed on them by Albert in 1214 and specified by Pope Gregory IX in 1229 remained in place. They needed patronage not only in the form of land upon which to settle but also in currency, "relying for support on their own work and on the charity of the faithful" (Oliger). Thus, the papal bull of 1247 precipitated the transformation of the Carmelites from hermits into mendicant friars (Jotischky 15), a status confirmed in 1274 at the Second Council of Lyons. Proximity to Christian populations, in combination with the mendicant designation, allowed the Carmelite friars to progressively gain permission to exercise ministerial duties and carve a place for themselves in the universities over the course of the 13th and 14th centuries. Consequently, the character of the Carmelite way of life began to change from its strictly contemplative roots to an orientation towards active ministry (26-9). The composition of the order "became increasingly clerical": while the first Carmelites were probably lay brothers, by the 1290s laymen were

excluded from chapters and deprived of a voice even in matters of their own convents (32). Carmelites who could not celebrate Mass, preach, or hear confessions had little place among the friars.

On the other hand, the migration to Europe and the resulting transformations of the Carmelites did have the benefit of producing the Carmelite Second Order, that is, Carmelite nuns. Women had been associated with the order previously, as part of the lay confraternities known as the Carmelite Third Order (Jotischky 42). A papal bull issued in 1452,[5] however, gave the Carmelite Prior General the authority to found convents for women. Prior General John Soreth wrote a rule and constitutions for Carmelite nuns (Zimmerman). This rule was mostly the same as that of the Carmelite friars, with a few special regulations that were not preserved to history. However, one major difference between the Carmelite First Order (friars) and the Carmelite Second Order (nuns) was that the women religious took a vow of perpetual cloister (Jotischky 42). Naturally, the daily life of the two groups of Carmelites differed, with the friars partaking of ministerial duties in the world while the nuns remained within the walls of their convents. As we will see, though, this difference did not necessarily result in a more faithful observance of the Carmelite principles of solitary prayer and contemplation.

Despite the transformations, the Carmelites' connections to their early days on Mount Carmel were not entirely lost. The use of the Rite of the Holy Sepulchre maintained a liturgical link with the Holy Land; at the same time, the Carmelites seem to have imported certain

[5] *Cum nulla*, issued by Pope Nicholas V.

devotions[6] into the West which later became "standard features of late medieval religious practice" (Jotischky 33). At times throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, pockets of reform bubbled up in one province or another, but none had the sweeping influence of that reform which took place in Spain in the late 1500s, producing the Discalced Carmelites. More often than not, the prevailing movement was towards mitigation rather than reformation. Despite the adjustments made by Pope Innocent IV in 1247, the Carmelite rule was considered "too severe for those who spent one half of their life in the intellectual turmoil of the university and the other half in the exercise of the sacred ministry at home" (Zimmerman). As such, in 1432 Pope Eugene IV granted further mitigation of the modified Rule of St. Albert "allowing the use of flesh meat on three or four days a week and dispensing with the law of silence and retirement" (Zimmerman). In *The Carmelites: A History of the Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel*, Joachim Smet considers the changes as both a practical necessity and "the source of every subsequent division in the Order" (qtd in Jotischky 41). It is the Carmelite way of life in the wake of this mitigation and subsequent laxity of observance to which St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross objected, spurring the formation of the Discalced Carmelites in the late-16th century.[7]

The Carmelite Order in France Before the Reform

[6] Jotischky gives the example of the feast of the octave of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin in particular, as well as a general intensity of celebration of Marian feasts and traditions in the Carmelite liturgy. Another such import is the devotion to St. Anne, mother of the Blessed Virgin (33-4). Pinpointing the transmission of such devotions with certainty it, however, merits further research.

[7] In his article "The Carmelite Order" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Benedict Zimmerman notes various abuses that came into custom among the Carmelites, as well as other religious orders, during the 14th century, such as accepting posts of honor outside the order, retaining personal property (hereditary or earned), and permitting superiors to govern indefinitely within a house. While chronicling various reform attempts made within the Carmelite Order, Zimmerman concludes that only the Council of Trent (1545-63) and its response to the Protestant Reformation succeeded in effectuating a restored conception of religious life and removing such abuses.

Even before the advent of the Discalced Order, Carmelites were present in France and French Carmelites played a significant role in Carmelite development. It is reported that St. Louis (Louis IX), King of France, encountered the hermits of Mount Carmel while on crusade in 1254. He brought six of them back with him to make the first foundations in the Île-de-France (Jotischky 34 and Zimmerman). Carmelite houses had been founded prior to this date in Provence, at the time part of the Holy Roman Empire and not the Kingdom of France, such as in Marseille in 1248. Other foundations followed: Valenciennes by 1259, Montpellier by1260, and Toulouse by 1263. There were roughly twenty-two Carmelite houses in France by 1274 (Jotischky 14). The noted Prior General John Soreth was himself of Normand origin, born near Caen in 1394. After entering the Caen Carmelite house, he was ordained a priest in 1417; he went on to become a Doctor of Theology in 1438 and, later, Regent of Studies in Paris. Soreth served as Provincial of the French Province of the Carmelites (1440-1451) before becoming Prior General in 1451, an office held until his death in 1471. Soreth was an "ardent reformer" and made some progress in restoring practices to align with the original spirit of the Carmelite constitutions, but his successors in the office of Prior General sustained this momentum (Zimmerman). Where Soreth did have lasting influence, however, was in the formation of the Carmelite nuns.

As noted above, Soreth is credited with establishing the first rule and constitutions for Carmelite nuns, as the papal decree permitting the foundations of such convents was given during his tenure as Prior General. Likewise, he was influential in further developing the Carmelite Third Order ("Bl. John Soreth, Priest (M)"). The prestige of these first Carmelite Sisters, however, is credited to the Duchess of Brittany, Blessed Françoise d'Amboise (Zimmerman). At Soreth's urging, the Duchess founded a Carmel for nuns in the Bondon district

of Vannes in 1463, the first Carmel for women in France. She herself joined five years later ("Françoise d'Amboise et les premiers Carmels féminins"). This first convent, and the four others subsequently founded in Brittany, purportedly practiced faithful observance of the constitutions set forth by Soreth and Françoise d'Amboise up until the French Revolution, when religious orders were supressed. Today, a Discalced Carmel, founded in 1866, stands in its place, honoring both the history of the Discalced Reform and the legacy of the Duchess of Brittany ("du 'Bondon' à aujourd'hui"). In this way, Françoise d'Amboise is a precursor to Madame Acarie, being the foundress of those first Calced Carmels for women much as Acarie shepherded in the Discalced Carmelite Order.

As Soreth and Françoise d'Amboise demonstrate, French hands have long had a significant role in shaping the development and spread of the Carmelite Order. Their influence quickly spread to neighboring countries. Following the foundations in Brittany, Carmelite convents for women were founded in Italy and Spain. Zimmerman notes that, particularly in Spain, the lifestyle of the nuns was greatly admired, and they received much attention. With many aspiring young women flocking to their doors, these Carmelite convents soon found their resources overwhelmed, unable to maintain the convent or provide for the nuns inside. While the Carmels in France may have had the guiding example of Françoise d'Amboise to regulate them, those in Spain were not so restrained. By the early 16th century, taxed with swelling numbers and influenced by the increasingly lenient observance among the Carmelite friars—especially because of the mitigations to the Rule of St. Albert introduced in previous centuries—the state of Carmelite communities of nuns had moved increasingly far from the order's roots. These are the conditions under which Teresa Sánchez de Cepeda y Ahumada, known today as St. Teresa of

Avila, entered the convent of the Incarnation at Avila in 1535. Her experience of these conditions stoked a desire for reform and, ultimately, resulted in the Discalced Carmelite Order.

The Discalced Reform of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross

Teresa Sánchez de Cepeda y Ahumada was born on March 28, 1515, in the ancient walled city of Avila, Spain. The day of her baptism at her family's local Catholic parish happened "by a strange coincidence" to be the same day as the dedication of a new Carmelite monastery, Our Lady of the Incarnation (Antier 8). Decades later, it would be this very monastery where Teresa would go to seek the habit of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (8). In his introduction to the 1911 David Lewis translation of *The Life of St. Teresa of Jesus Written by Herself,* Zimmerman addresses directly the circumstances of the Carmel at Avila in this era. What began in Avila as a group of no more than fourteen pious ladies, known as a *Beaterio* or Beguinage, gathered for a communal life of prayer and service but not affiliated with a religious order, was established circa 1486 as a community of nuns under the Carmelite rule. By 1510, the community was growing and found itself in need of a more spacious site, and the new monastery, a costly project, was initiated. When Teresa entered the Monastery of the Incarnation in 1535,[8] there were "about 140" nuns in the Carmel (xi-xii). The monastery's revenues "were totally insufficient" for the community, despite the support of requisite dowries provided by the nuns' families.[9] Upon Teresa's entrance, her father Don Alonso Cepeda agreed to a yearly

[8] The year for Teresa's entrance to the Carmel at Avila is debated, with scholars placing it in any year between 1533 and 1537. Zimmerman treats this debate, which stems from Teresa's own vague and conflicting references to ages and dates in her writings, in his introduction to Teresa's autobiography. Finding the evidence "so overwhelming that it seems indisputable," Zimmerman concludes that Teresa entered the convent in 1535 and made her first profession of vows in 1536 (xiii).

[9] The growth continued until 1567, when the reception of novices was suspended until the convent could re-establish a balance between its expenses and revenues (*The Life*, Introduction, xii). Notably, this censure was in the wake of Teresa's reform beginning in earnest.

contribution of approximately forty bushels of grain or, alternatively, two hundred gold ducats; he also financed the provision of all material goods necessary for the life of a nun, from a bed and sheets to her habits and devotional books (Antier 35-6). It is clear that the Carmel did not have the means to provide for its members. This financial situation of the Monastery of the Incarnation exacerbated pre-existing issues with the observance of the Carmelite rule.

As recounted above, when Soreth wrote the constitutions for Carmelite nuns in 1452, he largely transferred the constitutions of the friars over to those of the nuns. However, Zimmerman asserts that the "essential difference" between the ministerial demands on Carmelite priests and the lack thereof on Carmelite nuns resulted in guidelines ill-suited to a cloistered community of women. He summarizes, "it follows that the Constitutions of the friars left the nuns rather more freedom in that matter of enclosure than is generally thought compatible with the aims of a strict Order" (*The Life*, Introduction xi). In part, the negligence of enclosure helped alleviate the financial strain of the convent. Teresa recounts in her autobiography[10] that nuns would often leave the convent due to its lack of means. At the same time, she notes pressure from the superiors to go out and visit certain persons to which the superiors were obliged:

> Though in that house in which I then lived there were many servants of God, and God was greatly served therein, yet, because it was very poor, the nuns left it very often and went to other places, where, however, we could serve God in all honour and observances of religion. The rule also was kept, not in its original exactness, but according to the custom of the whole Order, authorised by the Bull of Mitigation. There were other

[10] In truth, *The Life* belies its name: it is scarcely an autobiography. While Teresa does recount some of her childhood and early days in the Monastery of the Incarnation, the text is more an account of her mystical experiences, visions, and theories on prayer. *The Life* was written at the behest of Teresa's confessor and submitted to Spanish Inquisitors for evaluation. Regardless, the text later became a spiritual classic and a hallmark of Spanish literature. Carlos Eire published an academic study of Teresa's autobiography, a biography of the text itself, in 2019 through Princeton University Press, entitled *The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila*: *A Biography*.

> inconveniences also: we had too many comforts, as it seemed to me; for the house was large and pleasant. But this inconvenience of going out, though it was I that took most advantage of it, was a very grievous one for me; for many persons, to whom my superiors could not say no, were glad to have me with them. My superiors, thus importuned, commanded me to visit these persons; and thus it was so arranged that I could not be long together in the monastery. (Ch. XXXII. 12)[11]

Evidently, the Carmel at Avila was not truly cloistered nor particularly austere, a far cry from that first community on Mount Carmel. Thus, the practical complications wrought by the urban placement of the monastery, while filling its rooms, strained its intended character.

In addition to practicing the authorized mitigated rule, the community of the Incarnation demonstrated further drifting from the eremitical Carmelite origins. It appears that convent walls did little to separate worldly society from seeping inside. In the introduction to the second volume of Teresa's *Collected Works,* Kieran Kavanaugh describes the class structures that persisted even in the monastery, with richer nuns, having obtained permission to retain their personal income, paying for the best rooms while nuns who were poor slept in dormitories. Some nuns of means had private quarters, wore jewelry or other adornments to their habit, and owned pet dogs. Often, their reason for being in the convent was less of a religious vocation and more "the solution to a social problem" such as a lack of marital prospects (27). Being of noble birth, well-provided for by the dowry her father financed, and widely liked by many persons, Teresa was not the least beneficiary of these conditions. Nonetheless, the state of the Monastery of the Incarnation increasingly began to perturb the future foundress.

[11] While all references to *The Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila: The Life of Teresa of Jesus Written by Herself* are to the 1911 edition, the citations are given by chapter and paragraph for uniform ease of verification regardless of the edition or translation employed. The text is referred to as *The Life*, as the original in Spanish is *"La Vida."*

Teresa had been experiencing a progressive reconviction of her calling to the religious life through the practice of silent prayer—as opposed to vocal prayer such as that of liturgical ceremonies and the recitation of the Divine Office—including mystical experiences and even a vision of Hell (*The Life*, Ch. XXXII). Writing later in *The Way of Perfection*, an alternative account of her life directed to the audience of her fellow Discalced nuns, she expresses her desire to do all she could to atone for her own sins as well as the fracturing of Christianity at large, having heard of the divisions elsewhere in Europe, namely in France and Germany (Ch. I. 2; Ch. III. 1-5).[12] Teresa states that her resolution was "to follow the evangelicals counsels as perfectly as I could and strive that these few persons who live here do the same" (Ch. I. 2). In September of 1560, she and some companions, most all related to her, gathered in her quarters and began to postulate the idea of founding a new monastery, "under the primitive Rule of Carmel, in the spirit of the desert: silence, poverty, strict enclosure—everything that favors prayer and union with God" (Antier 131-2). With the promised patronage of Maria de Ocampo and Doña Guiomar de Ulloa, they set about the project, even obtaining the permission of the Provincial (*The Life*, Ch. XXXII. 16). However, the promised funds soon proved insufficient (Antier 134-5), and "a violent persecution" began as soon as the news spread, such that the Provincial changed his mind (*The Life*, Ch. XXXII). The new monastery—to be called St. Joseph's—was put on hold and Teresa remained at the Incarnation, where she "was very much disliked throughout the whole convent" (*The Life*, Ch. XXXIII. 2). At the encouragement of her advisors, Franciscan, Dominican, and Jesuit priests, Teresa and her accomplices nevertheless discretely pursued the project, working around the Carmelite authorities. At last, in February 1562, a papal bull from Pope Pius IV authorized the foundation of a new convent subject to the primitive rule of the

[12] As with *The Life*, all references to *The Way of Perfection* are given by chapter and paragraph for uniform ease of verification regardless of the edition or translation employed.

Carmel and under the direct authority of the bishop of Avila, who was not even aware of the arrangement until after the fact (Antier 140, 158). The Monastery of St. Joseph at Avila was inaugurated on August 24, 1562, with a handful of newly professed Discalced nuns; a year later, Teresa herself was given permission to move from the Incarnation to St. Joseph (172). Thus, the reform of the Discalced began.

In Teresa's words, the reformed Carmelites were to observe the rule "with the perfection with which it was observed when initiated" (*The Way*, Ch. III. 5). The Discalced aimed to imitate the life of those first hermits (Ch. XI. 4 and Ch. XIII. 6). Though they sought a life of "rugged solitude and contemplation" as with those desert hermits; however, the "primitive Rule" they embraced was not actually the initial Rule of St. Albert given to the Frankish hermits. Teresa was apparently unaware of that first rule; instead, she took as their model the rule as it stood when Innocent IV approved the 1247 stipulation that allowed for migration to Europe and established the Carmelites as mendicants (*The Life*, Ch. XXXVI. 27). Evidently, as Kavanaugh states, "there was for her enough of the eremitical spirit in the rule for Carmelite mendicants. . . to lead her to emphasize the practice of solitude through an enclosure and withdrawal from the world greater than that which existed at the Incarnation" (*Collected Works,* Introduction 26). As recounted in *The Life,* this form of the rule meant the Discalced nuns followed the "somewhat severe" prescriptions for abstinence from meat, eight-month fasts, and "some other austerities besides." Even so, Teresa notes that the community further tailored the rule in pursuit of strict observance: "yet the sisters think it [the primitive rule] light on many points, and so they have other observances, which we have thought necessary for the more perfect keeping of it" (*The Life*, Ch. XXXVI. 28). In fact, until the encounter with another Carmelite nun likewise discontent with the mitigated rule, Teresa planned on allowing for reformed monasteries to receive revenues or have

an endowment. When she learned that the un-mitigated rule forbade the possession of property, she embraced a strict principle of poverty for her reformed monasteries, which became a point of contention even with her closest advisors, who thought this approach unsustainable (Ch. XXXV). In many ways, therefore, the Discalced reform restored to the Carmelite Order the original spirit of that first community on Mount Carmel.

After the first foundation in Avila, and in spite of the turmoil within the Order as a result, Teresa continued to found various other reformed monasteries. By the time of her death in 1582, there were seventeen reformed foundations for nuns in Spain (Antier 318-9). In addition, Teresa entrusted the establishment of the first reformed monastery for Carmelite friars[13] to St. John of the Cross and Fr. Antonio de Heredia, having found them to be sympathetic to the renunciation of the mitigated rule. In fact, both had been on the point of leaving the Carmelites to join the Carthusians (201-2). John of the Cross became the leader of the masculine component of the Discalced and, while it is irrefutable that Teresa laid the cornerstone of the Reformed Carmel, his influence "would make it possible for the Carmelites to consolidate and extend Teresa's reforms, something her being a woman would have prevented" at the time, if only due to the fact that he had license to freer movement in the world (Antier 212). Furthermore, John of the Cross would be counted in history as one of the major figures of Spanish literature and greatest spiritual writers of all time.

Through the remainder of the 16th century, the Discalced continued to face oppositions and obstacles from within the Order. In 1575, the General Chapter of the Carmelites nearly abolished the Discalced foundations. Having received the approval of the papal nuncio, and not

[13] Duruelo, 1568 (Antier 316).

particularly receptive to the mitigated authorities, the Discalced Carmelites resisted, even calling their own provincial chapter. After assorted excommunications, kidnappings, and imprisonments of the Discalced friars, King Phillip II intervened. In 1680, the Discalced nuns and friars were declared their own special province, albeit still under obedience to the mitigated Prior General. Having found the differences between the two branches too great, the Discalced Carmelites were finally separated from the rest of the Carmelite Order in 1593, "for the sake of peace and tranquility and for many other reasons" (Zimmerman). From then on, the Discalced Carmelites developed independently and quickly in Spain and beyond—most notably, for our purposes, in nearby France.

Conclusion

Just as the verdant swaths of the Mount Carmel mountain range attracted hermits for centuries, the Carmelite tradition has attracted countless souls all over the world since it first sprung up along the coast of the Haifa region in Israel. As we have traced, the Carmelite way of life has gone through numerous transformations in both theory and practice since the first community formed under the Rule of St. Albert in the 13th century. Having wandered from their roots, literally and figuratively, Carmelites have nonetheless attempted to return to the origins of their Order, so as to more perfectly live out the eremitical spirit that originally inspired it. The reform instigated by St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross in 1500s Spain is chief of these efforts. Having thus considered the origins and defining characteristics of the Carmelites, we will now turn to their role in French history and culture and their connection to Madame Acarie. By way of Madame Acarie and her associates, the Carmelite tradition took root and flourished in France. Yet the Order of Discalced Carmelites, as it took shape in France, continued to contribute to the metamorphosis of this tradition.

CHAPTER TWO

The Discalced Carmelite Order in France

Introduction of the Discalced Reform in France

Attempts to bring the Teresian Carmel to France were made not long after the reform began in Spain in 1562. André Duval, Madame Acarie's confessor and first biographer, chronicles several initiatives, starting as early as 1588. Some projects progressed to the point of voyages into Spain to bring Discalced religious to France to direct these potential foundations. All, however, fell apart for various reasons: insufficient funds, death of the benefactor, conflicts taking place in France at the time, etc. (119-20). It was not until Madame Acarie and her associates took on the endeavor that the project was able to be realized. Around 1601, the writings of Teresa of Avila[1] were translated into French, thanks to the work of Jean de Brétigny and Fr. Dom du Chèvre (Renoux).[2] It is notable that Acarie was not at all taken with the Spanish reformer's story in the beginning. Duval recounts in the biography that Acarie listened to the stories but did not find them to her taste:

> Elle les écouta attentivement, mais elle n'y prenait pas grand goût au commencement, et s'étonnait comment cette sainte Mère avait pu fonder si grand un Ordre dans l'Église.

[1] Duval notes that the works Madame Acarie encountered were the collected books of Teresa of Avila, as well as her biography, written by Francisco de Ribera, S.J, in 1690. Ribera's biography was the first complete one to be published, is rather extensive, and has remained the preeminent version for centuries, as Carlos Eire notes in *From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth-Century Spain*, Cambridge UP, 2002 (383).

[2] Duval attributes the translation to du Chèvre, making no mention of de Brétigny in association with it. Christian Renoux, however, asserts that the bulk of the work was done by de Brétigny, with some help from du Chèvre. On the previous page of his text, Duval does mention de Brétigny, though, as having been the envoy to Spain in a previous attempt to bring Discalced Carmelites to France, calling him "le sieur de Brétigny" (119).

> [She listened attentively to the chapters [of Teresa's books], but she did not like them very much in the beginning, and was surprised how this holy Mother had managed to found so great an Order in the Church.] (120)[3]

Christian Renoux explains that this distaste was primarily because the writings contain many passages in which Teresa relates visions and revelations. As did the circle of theologians with which she associated, Acarie had a general distrust of purported visionaries, having encountered and heard of various false mystics.[4] Both Renoux and Michel Picard (139) note that Fr. Pierre Coton, SJ, royal confessor, testifies to this explanation. Despite her initial indifference[5] to Teresa of Avila and her ideas, Madame Acarie would prove to be the essential agent for a successful introduction of the Discalced Carmelites to France. Shortly after first encountering the translated works, Duval reports, Madame Acarie experienced a vision of her own, that of Teresa of Avila claiming that God wanted Acarie to found religious houses of her Order in France. After resisting the subject, Madame Acarie could not ignore the impression left by the vision and brought the matter to her confessor at the time, Fr. Dom Beaucousin (120-1). Having considered the matter, Beaucousin called for a meeting to determine the feasibility of the endeavor.

[3] All translations from the French are my own, unless citing a translated edition.

[4] Most notable is the story of Nicole Tavernier, a supposed mystic from Reims, though the possession of Marthe Brossier was also a concern of Acarie's circle in 1599 (Renoux). Duval recounts the story of Tavernier, of whom Acarie was suspicious, as well as how Acarie succeeded in convincing the leading theologians around her to let her investigate Tavernier's piety, ultimately confirming her suspicions (108-16). Elsewhere in the biography, Duval insists upon Acarie's resistance to and frustration with her own mystical experiences (252). Moshe Sluhovsky treats the Tavernier events, as well as the broader context of disputed mysticism, in *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism*, University of Chicago Press, 2008.

[5] Actually, Acarie's response was more complicated. In spite of Duval's initial statement in the 1621 biography, his testimony in the 1630 papal process for her beatification omits this feature, noting instead Acarie's admiration of Teresa. Picard sifts through this contradiction by noting the nuance of Duval's phrasing in his testimony: "Le mot 'surtout' rend les témoignages cohérents: Barbe admire l'œuvre ainsi que la force et la vertu de son auteur; mais elle regimbe aux récits d'extase [The word "mainly" renders the testimonies coherent: Barbe admires the work as well as the strength and the virtue of its author; but she balks at the accounts of ecstasies]" (138).

The assembly present at the subsequent meeting included, according to Duval, de Brétigny and Jacques Gallemant, priests who had both been part of previous efforts to bring the Discalced Carmelites to France, as well as Pièrre de Bérulle, Beaucousin, and Duval himself (121).[6] This group determined the project to be "totally impossible" and did not take it any further. Months later, however, Teresa of Avila appeared to Acarie a second time, reiterating the command more loudly and strongly (122). A second gathering was held, this time with the addition of (St.) François de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, who was visiting Paris to preach. Despite the "difficulties" which had been deemed obstacles at the prior meeting, the associates determined to carry the project forward (122). To do so, they needed the proper contacts within both the Church hierarchy and the monarchy. Furthermore, the group needed "quelque personne de qualité"—preferably backed by wealth—to be the name and face of the foundation (124). Madame Acarie knew just the individual: Mademoiselle Catherine d'Orléans, Princess of Longueville, cousin of the king and a close friend of Marie de Médicis (Renoux).[7] Between François de Sales and Mlle de Longueville, the obstacles foreseen by the theologians were resolved, and the patent letters were granted by King Henry IV in July of 1602. The approval of the French monarchy, as well as that of the pope, the location for the first monastery, the initial funds for the foundation, and even the safe passage of Bérulle in Spain and permission to bring Discalced nuns back to France with him: all were achieved through the decisive influence of the bishop and the princess. Clearly, as Renoux terms it, the project was "une aventure collective" in

[6] Renoux remarks that Bérulle, Beaucousin, and Duval had all been part of a group of theologians to whom Gallemant and de Brétigny had presented their prior project to bring Discalced Carmelites to France. As in this first meeting following Acarie's vision, the theologians deemed the project unsuitable, however, and discouraged Gallemant and de Brétigny from pursuing it.

[7] It is, in fact, Marie de Médicis who is, at least nominally, "first foundress" of the monastery, though Catherine and her sister, Marguerite, provided the necessary funds, obtained the former priory of Notre Dame des Champs to be converted for the monastery, and lobbied for the support of the royal family (Renoux).

which many persons played a role. Yet none of this would have come together without the central figure, Madame Acarie, who connected all the people needed to make this endeavor come to fruition.

While it is fair to presume that many of these figures would have been aware of each other merely by being part of the same ecclesiastical and societal elite, their affiliation, and the collaboration that resulted from it, can largely be traced to the Acarie household. Even prior to 1601, the Hôtel Acarie was established as an important gathering place of the devout in Paris (Renoux). Madame Acarie personally knew all the actors involved in the translation project of Teresa of Avila's collected works and Renoux proposes that she may have been the one to suggest de Brétigny submit his translation to Fr. du Chèvre for revision. One of the theologians, Fr. Thomas Blanzy, tasked with approving the French edition of the collected works, was likewise connected to Acarie as the professor of her oldest son and the confessor of one of her daughters. Jacques Gallemant met Madame Acarie at the Saint Gervais church in Paris in 1597 and became one of her "directeurs de conscience"; over the next few years, the Acarie family and Gallemant made various visits to each other (Renoux). Of the group of theologians to whom the vision and project were submitted for consideration, Beaucousin and Duval were close friends, as well as confessors, of Acarie. As for Bérulle, he was Acarie's cousin, nine years her junior, and the two were often communicating and collaborating. Duval insists that Acarie long held the idea that Bérulle should found an order to better train priests and was his main

encourager in the foundation of the French Oratory (221, 240).[8] Each of these figures, thus, had been previously affiliated with Madame Acarie and integrated into her circle—of presence, at the Hôtel Acarie, and influence, in matters both spiritual and temporal.

The exception to the rule might be François de Sales, Bishop of Geneva. On the one hand, it is possible that de Sales naturally joined the members of Acarie's circle at their frequent salons during his visit to Paris, given that these were the prominent thinkers in the Parisian Church at the time. On the other, Renoux makes a case for a different timeline, insisting that Mlle de Longueville wrote to de Sales and incorporated him into the project only after she had been approached with it. Nonetheless, the princess, and therefore the bishop, would not have joined without the appeal of Madame Acarie. What is perhaps most remarkable about the cast of characters involved in bringing the Carmel to France is that their partnership would have been unimaginable a mere decade before:

> Cette collaboration entre la duchesse de Longueville et le cercle Acarie est assez étonnante: quelques années seulement après la fin des guerres de Religion, elle réunit, en effet, d'anciens ligueurs et l'une des plus célèbres victimes de la Ligue.
>
> [This collaboration between the Duchess of Longueville and Acarie's circle is rather surprising: only a few years after the end of the Wars of Religion, the collaboration indeed

[8] The French Congregation of the Oratory was founded by Bérulle in 1611. Bérulle modeled the priestly fraternity after the Italian Oratory founded at Rome in 1575 by St. Philip Neri. Unlike religious orders or monasteries, there are no vows associated with the Oratory, other than the vows members made upon entering the priesthood. The sole aim of the congregation is "the perfect fulfillment of their priestly functions" (Ingold). This was intended to aid in "the rehabilitation of the ecclesiastical life" in France. As we find with the French Discalced Carmelites, the French Oratory founded by Bérulle distinguishes itself from its model with particular attention to the situation in France at the time. The French Oratory sought "[t]o meet the special needs of the Church in France at the period," notably mirroring the tendency toward centralization in that all houses of the congregation were to be governed by the superior-general. In contrast, houses in the Italian congregation were independent of one another.

brought together former Leaguers and one of the most well-known victims of the League.] (Renoux)[9]

It appears, then, that Madame Acarie's dexterity in assembling this group behind the Discalced Carmelite project was more than just the result of an affable personality. As with the country itself, the members of the group bore the scars of the long-lasting religious conflicts recently halted. That Acarie was able to convince them all to work together, united in this cause, demonstrates a remarkable capacity for diplomacy and persuasion.

For these reasons, Madame Acarie rightfully deserves to be considered the true leader of the venture and, therefore, foundress of the Discalced Carmel in France. Duval devotes the final chapter of the biography,[10] entitled, "Comment elle doit être justement appelée fondatrice de l'ordre des carmélites en France [How She Should Justly Be Called the Foundress of the Carmelites in France]," to this subject, fielding any number of potential objections. Such objections include the contribution of the others, particularly Bérulle and Gallemant, and the fact that she was a married laywoman rather than a religious at the time of the foundation. In other words, she was "une simple laïque parisienne [a simple Parisian laywoman]" (Renoux). Yet, for all the crucial efforts of the other members involved in the project, Duval affirms, it is Acarie who was most concerned with the direction of the project:

[9] Here, Renoux refers to the imprisonment in Amiens of Catherine d'Orléans, along with her mother, sisters, and sister-in-law, which began in December 1588 and lasted for more than three years. Barbara Diefendorf recounts the details of this captivity, a direct result of the fallout from the assassination of the duke and cardinal of Guise at the order of King Henry III, in her book (43-8).

[10] Duval's biography is divided into three books, with the first treating the life of Madame Acarie more or less chronologically and the second concentrating on her "graces and virtues." The third and final portion of the work is entitled, "Des choses miraculeuses arrivées après la mort de Sœur Marie de l'Incarnation [Of miraculous things following the death of Sister Marie of the Incarnation]."

> Pour ce qui est du soin et de la vigilance qu'ont ordinairement les fondateurs d'Ordre, bien que plusieurs aient contribué à celui des Carmélites, comme le Père de Bérulle, M. Gallemant et autres, néanmoins, c'est elle qui en avait le plus de soin.
>
> [As for the care and vigilance that founders of Orders ordinarily have, even though several contributed to that of the Carmelites, like Bérulle, Gallemant, and others, nevertheless, it is she who took the most care with the foundation.] (617)

Acarie's diligence in the realization of the project is chronicled in her letters, overseeing the selection of the Spanish nuns to be brought back to France even while she remained in Paris, and testified to by her contemporaries throughout the building of the monastery and training of the novices.[11] Duval, among other witnesses, attests that she was on the building site most every day, doing everything from supervising the workers to examining construction materials. It is surely her hands, supported by all those whom she engaged in the project, that guided the founding of the first monastery to fruition.

Yet the objections concerning Acarie's status of foundress which Duval anticipated or to which he was responding were not stifled then and there. The Association des Amis de Madame Acarie treats on their website the role of Madame Acarie and her status as foundress or the erasure thereof in their memorandum, "La 'Sainte' de Pontoise, fondatrice du Carmel français? [The 'Saint' of Pontoise, Founder of the French Carmel?]." A full study of the competing versions of the introduction of the Discalced Carmel in France, as the author of the memorandum notes, is worthy of a book in itself. While Acarie's contemporaries and several texts published between 1621 and 1893 in France clearly present her as the cornerstone in the foundation of the Discalced Carmelite Order in France, there was some opposition to that idea even during this

[11] Her work in these matters will be treated in greater detail in the subsequent chapter.

period. This only increased as Bérulle's legacy gained popularity, begun with the first biography of him, written by Germain Habert in 1646. This and subsequent texts portray Acarie as the "second" to Bérulle's role in the endeavor. In English references, Bérulle is sometimes presented as the sole introducer of the Discalced Carmelites in France or, if they mention Acarie, note the "co-operation" of the two cousins; the other members of the group are overlooked.[12] It would appear that by the late 1800s, French Discalced Carmelites such as St. Thérèse de Lisieux and St. Élisabeth of the Trinity (Dijon), both of whom we treat below in regards to the legacy of the Order in France, took little note of Madame Acarie: she is not once mentioned in their writings. On the contrary, the German Jewish philosopher-turned-Discalced-Carmelite-nun Edith Stein (1891-1942), known as St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, evidences far more interest in Acarie's significance to the French Discalced Carmel than most 20th- and 21st-century sources on the topic coming out of France. Despite this apparent relegation of Acarie to the background over time, there are those who maintain her chief status as foundress of the Discalced Order in France. The Association is proof of that and makes it their mission to reclaim this title for her, as well as spread general awareness of her existence. This is because what Acarie accomplished goes far beyond the first Carmel in Paris.

While Acarie and her associates brought the Teresian reform over the Spanish border, they did so in a uniquely French way. To be sure, the members of the group were agreed that the foundation must be authentic to Teresa of Avila's reforms. They determined that merely obtaining the rules and constitutions of the Teresian Carmel was not sufficient. Rather, it was necessary to have nuns from an authentically reformed Spanish monastery to form and shape the

[12] For example, the entry on Bérulle in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford UP, 2005, mentions Bérulle's frequenting of Madame Acarie's salons, but states in the next sentence that *he* brought the reformed Carmelites to Paris, with no mention of the role of anyone else in the initiative.

French Discalced community. Their intent was not, however, to make one modest foundation in the way that Teresa of Avila had initially sought to form one small community of perfect adherence to the primitive rule, the Monastery of St. Joseph at Avila. From the start, the group had every intent of creating a French branch of the Discalced Order that would flourish and spread into all corners of the realm, and this is why Paris[13] was selected as the location of the first foundation:

> On en délibéra et on fut d'avis premièrement que le premier monastère s'érigerait à Paris, et non ailleurs, parce que cette ville étant la capitale du royaume et le lieu de réunion de toutes les personnes de qualité, l'Ordre se dilaterait aisément de là dans toutes les provinces . . .
>
> [We deliberated the matter and were of agreement first of all that the first monastery would be established in Paris, and not elsewhere, because, this city being the capital of the kingdom and the meeting place of all persons of quality, the Order would easily expand from there to all the provinces . . .] (Duval 122)

Duval's own words demonstrate the intended reach of this endeavor. Acarie and her associates fully aimed their project to have a significant and lasting influence on all corners of France. They were aware, though, that in order to achieve this they would need the approval of the powers-that-be, both in France and in Rome.

By the time of the project's deliberation in 1602, the Discalced Carmelite Order had already been declared distinct from the rest of the Order of Carmelites, as explained above. Additionally, the reform had made its way to Italy, so a Discalced Italian congregation existed before then (Zimmerman). Why, then, did Acarie's group insist on petitioning the Pope for the right to found a Discalced Carmel in France? Presumably, given that the Order was "déjà établi

[13] The prior initiatives to establish the Discalced Carmelites in France, recounted by both Duval and Renoux, had intended to found Carmels elsewhere, such as in Toulouse, Noyers, and Aumale (Duval 119).

et reçu par l'Église en Espagne et en Italie [already established and accepted by the Church in Spain and in Italy]" (Duval 123), they would have only needed permission from the local authorities to found a monastery within the limits of Paris and its diocese. Acarie and her associates, however, sought to establish the Discalced Carmelite Order in France in its own right under papal authority. On one hand, this would give the foundation greater legitimacy; with the approval of both the king and the pope, who could impede their cause? On the other, Duval notes a theological reasoning for this aspect of the project, insisting that the solemn vows to be taken by French Discalced Carmelites would only have validity if the Order in which they were made was approved by the Holy See "dans le royaume où on le veut établir [in the kingdom where one wishes to establish it]" (Duval 123).[14] In any case, the Order of Discalced Carmelites in France was clearly intended to be a distinct institution. This is underscored by the unique provisions made for governance of the French Discalced Carmelites:

> The French Carmelite nuns were placed (with few exceptions) under the government of the Oratorians,[15] the Jesuits, and secular priests, without any official connection either with the Spanish or the Italian congregation of Discalced Carmelites, forming a congregation apart from the rest of the order. (Zimmerman)

[14] It is difficult to verify Duval's assertion. In recent centuries, the regulations for the foundation of Roman Catholic religious orders and the profession of solemn vows within those orders have been codified in the Code of Canon Law and overseen by what is now known as the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. At the beginning of the 17th century, there did exist various predecessors to this congregation, the first being the Sacred Congregation for Consultations about Regulars, founded in 1586 by Pope Sixtus V and confirmed in 1588. In 1601, this was joined with the Congregation for Consultations about Bishops and Other Prelates ("The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life"). Thus, surely there were pertinent regulations in place at the time of the Paris foundation. What exactly these statues were, however, is difficult to ascertain. For our purposes, it suffices to know that papal authorization conferred distinctive status on the Order of Discalced Carmelites in France.

[15] The Oratorians, of course, were not founded until 1611; only then would they have governed the French Discalced Carmelite nuns.

Whereas in Spain and Italy there were concurrent or preceding foundations of Discalced Carmelite friars who were able to minister spiritually and sacramentally to the monasteries of nuns, the Discalced Order in France was at first solely instituted as a congregation of women. The first three superiors of the French Discalced Carmelites were, therefore, Duval, Gallemant, and Bérulle: a Doctor of Theology from the Sorbonne and two secular[16] priests (Poitra 45). Such a provision had the effect of distinguishing the French Discalced Carmelites from the other congregations of the Order existing in Europe. In this way, Acarie headed a project that, while ostensibly importing the reform Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross had undertaken in Spain, resulted in a distinct congregation of French origin.

One more distinguishing aspect of the French Discalced Carmelites is that they were not, strictly speaking, mendicant. Upon determining to bring the Teresian reform to Paris, Acarie and her associates debated the question of the monastery's finances. Duval reports that Madame Acarie advocated for the greatest poverty, trusting in Divine Providence to provide what was necessary. This reflects the extreme importance of poverty stressed by Teresa of Avila in both *The Life* and *The Way of Perfection*. Despite having initially planned on allowing her reformed monasteries to have a revenue, Teresa changed her mind once she learned more about the level of poverty endorsed in the primitive Carmelite Rule.[17] She then resolved to refuse all endowments. Though at times on the verge of wavering on this point to appease her counselors or local authorities, Teresa ultimately held fast to this principle and succeeded in having it

[16] Here, as in the Zimmerman quote above, "secular" refers to the fact that they were unaffiliated at the time with any specific religious order. Clergy who follow a rule of life as part of a particular religious order are known as "regular clergy." Secular priests may also be called "diocesan," as they are under the authority of the local bishop. They may be assigned to a parish or, as in the case of Bérulle, assigned to various other posts. See Auguste Boudinhon's article "Secular Clergy" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

[17] This change was briefly referenced in the previous chapter.

confirmed by Papal decree.[18] Acarie's associates, however, were convinced that this was not the case:

> Mais comme on reconnut qu'en Espagne l'Ordre n'était point mendiant, et que la sainte mère Thérèse, quoiqu'elle fût grande zélatrice de la pauvreté aussi bien que la bienheureuse Marie de l'Incarnation, ne l'avait pas établi en cette sorte, on n'en voulut rien résoudre pour lors.
>
> [But as we recognized that in Spain the Order was not mendicant, and that the holy mother Teresa, although she was as much a great zealot of poverty as Blessed Marie of the Incarnation, had not established it in this way, we did not want to resolve anything for the time being.] (Duval 123)

Perhaps the situation of the Discalced Carmels in Spain had changed by then, or perhaps the Paris collective was ill-informed of their state on this point. In any case, the matter was settled when the Parliament of Paris verified the patent letters from King Henry IV—with the modification that the nuns would not be mendicants. This resolved the question for the 1604 foundation at Paris, "et par suite, tous les autres érigés depuis ont été faits pour être rentés [and consequently, all the others since erected were made to be provided with an income]" (Duval 123). Thus, in a strange turn of events, the Discalced Carmelite Order's migration from Spain into France precipitated a change in the mendicant identity that the Carmelite tradition had gained upon its initial arrival in Europe. For this reason, too, the introduction of the Discalced Carmelite Order in France is significant.

Once the Discalced Carmelites were established in Paris, they flourished, spreading rapidly to other parts of the country and "being held in high esteem by the episcopate, the Court,

[18] Zimmerman's editorial notes to *The Life* explain that the initial brief authorizing the Avila foundation, in February of 1562, stated that revenues would be held in common. Months later, however, Teresa obtained a revision of the brief from the Holy See (dated December 5, 1562) that authorized the Discalced foundation to subsist on alms alone. Pertinent passages of *The Life* include Ch. XXXIII. 15; Ch. XXXV. 1-7; Ch. XXXVI. 19-23; and Ch. XXXIX. 20.

and the people" (Zimmerman). Despite a subsequent period of Jansenist rule in the Parisian mother house,[19] the French Discalced Carmelites continued to increase the renown and numbers of the Order throughout the world. In fact, a study by Fr. Rafael Mejia traces nearly half of all Carmels existing in the world in 1990 as descendants of the 1604 foundation in Paris ("La 'Sainte' de Pontoise, fondatrice du Carmel français ?"). The foundation in Paris in 1604, then, was not simply that of one insignificant monastery on French soil but the start of an altogether distinct branch of the Discalced Carmelites. As we will see, the French Discalced Carmelites have continued to distinguish themselves in the centuries since.

The Carmelite Order in France Since the 17th Century

Discalced Carmelite nuns, by nature of their order's charism, are not particularly concerned with being noticed or remembered by the world: their lives, their work, their prayer – it is all traditionally hidden away in the cloister. Nonetheless, there are some members of this Order of which the world could not refrain from taking note. One familiar with French history cannot help but wonder how this Order founded at the turn of the 17th century fared at the close of the 18th century with the Revolution and its attempt to dissociate Christianity from all aspects of French life. Among the many persons whose blood was spilled by the guillotine was a now-infamous group of women from the Discalced Carmel at Compiègne, France. Having been expelled from their convent on September 14, 1792, this group of nuns nevertheless persisted in their way of communal life and prayer within the private residences to which they relocated. This despite having had all their possessions confiscated and being forbidden from wearing their habits, clothing themselves in civilian garments borrowed from friends (Bush 93-8). For this

[19] Zimmerman notes this in his entry "The Carmelite Order" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* but provides no further details.

reason, as well as for their obvious hostility to the Revolution and sympathies to the former monarchy, the women were convicted of "crimes" against the Revolution and the Republic, arrested in June of 1794, and transferred to Paris the following month (164-7). Shortly after, they were condemned to death.

On July 17, 1794, at the Place de la Nation in Paris,[20] Mother Teresa of Saint-Augustine and her companions[21] climbed the stairs of the scaffold one by one, having sung together throughout the journey there (Wainewright). The image of such a procession is striking, and perhaps it is for this reason that the martyrs of Compiègne captured the attention of several 20th-century creators. These Carmelites were first portrayed in a 1931 novella by Gertrud von le Fort entitled *Die Letzte am Schafott* [*The Last at the Scaffold*]. Georges Bernanos, late in his life, wrote a dramatic adaptation of the novella that was published posthumously as *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Francis Poulenc adapted Bernanos' script into an opera of the same name. Premiering in 1957, the opera was performed as recently as 2019 by the Metropolitan Opera of New York. In 1960, a film adaptation of Poulenc's opera, *Le dialogue des Carmélites*, was released, starring Jeanne Moreau. Thus, this small group of women who intended to be forgotten by the world have repeatedly been recalled in French culture. Yet none of these retellings are

[20] During the Terror, this was called the Place du Trône Renversé.

[21] The community included (in age order, from 78 to 29, as listed in *To Quell the Terror*): Sr. Jesus Crucified (Piedcourt), *choir sister*; Sr. Charlotte of the Resurrection (Thouret), *choir sister*; Sr. Euphrasia of the Immaculate Conception (Brard), *choir sister*; St. Julie Louis of Jesus (Crétien de Neuville), *choir sister*; Sr. Teresa of the Heart of Mary (Hanisset), *choir sister*; Sr. Saint Martha (Dufour), *lay sister*; Sr. Catherine (Soiron), *extern*; Sr. Marie of the Holy Spirit (Roussel), *lay sister*; Sr. Teresa of Saint-Ignatius (Trézel), *choir sister*; Mother Henriette of Jesus (de Croissy), past prioress and novice mistress, *choir sister*; Sr. Teresa (Soiron), *extern*; Sr. Saint Louis (Brideau), sub-prioress, *choir sister*; Mother Teresa of Saint-Augustine (Lidoine), prioress, *choir sister*; Sr. St. Francis Xavier (Verolot), *lay sister*; Sr. Constance (Meunier), *novice choir sister* (precluded from professing vows under laws from 1789). Additionally, three members of the community were absent at the time of arrest and, therefore, escaped martyrdom: Sr. Stanislas (Legros), Sr. Teresa of Jesus (Jourdain), and Sr. Josephine-Marie of the Incarnation (Philippe). Sr. Josephine-Marie of the Incarnation, born Françoise-Geneviève Philippe, authored an account of the events and gathered a collection of documents and relics from the community before her death in 1836.

particularly faithful to history, following the lead of Gertrude von le Fort's initial fictionalization, as William Bush attests in *To Quell the Terror: The Mystery of the Vocation of the Sixteen Carmelites of Compiègne Guillotined July 17, 1794* (9-11). Bush gives an extensive account of the community, treating the events of July 1794 as well as the histories of the community of Compiègne, in an effort to recover the authentic story of the martyrs. Bush covers many details, down to what clothing the nuns wore and the hymns they chanted on their way to the scaffold. What is most pertinent for our study, however, is how these French Discalced Carmelites came to arrive at the guillotine.

The dramatized versions of the Compiègne martyrs' story often emphasize the idea that the community intended to offer themselves as voluntary sacrifices. B.D. McClay, writing on Poulenc's opera for *Commonweal* magazine, states that the nuns swore a "vow of martyrdom as an act of reparation on behalf of France" (21). Likewise, Stephanie Mann refers to their "act of consecration, a vow of martyrdom" (25). Bush, however, takes care to differentiate between these two phrases, a vow of martyrdom and an act of consecration. Rather than a willful pursuit of martyrdom, he claims, these Carmelites accepted the proposal of "an 'act of consecration' whereby each member of the community would join with the others in offering herself daily to God, soul and body, in holocaust[22] to restore peace to France and to her church" (11). A later addition to this act of consecration was an intention "for the release of souls from prisons and the lessening of the number passing to the guillotine" (112). Their goal, then, was not to go to the guillotine themselves; rather, they sought to devote their daily efforts and existence as Discalced Carmelite nuns for the sake of their country and their faith, as well as for an end to the mass

[22] The term "holocaust" here takes its meaning from Jewish religious language denoting a sacrifice in which the victim was completely consumed by fire (Bush 6).

brutality taking place.[23] In this way, the martyrs of Compiègne follow in the footsteps of their predecessors. This is precisely what Madame Acarie hoped to do by bringing the Discalced Carmel to France, as well as part of the reason why Teresa of Avila sought to reform the Carmelite Order: to rehabilitate the Church in Europe and make amends for the horrors being done there. Hence, the martyrs of Compiègne sustain the legacy of Madame Acarie's Discalced Carmelite foundation in every way. Furthermore, their deaths are ingrained in the scar tissue France now bears as a result of centuries of religiously embroiled conflict. The story of this small group of Discalced Carmelites speaks to the struggle of navigating personal devotion and the public space with which France has grappled from the Middle Ages to the present day.

It would be unthinkable to consider the legacy of the French Discalced Carmelites without mentioning Marie Françoise-Thérèse Martin, known as St. Thérèse of Lisieux.[24] With the Mother of the Discalced Carmelite Order, Teresa of Avila, Thérèse is one of currently only four women to hold the title of "Doctor of the Church," signifying her contribution to Church doctrine.[25] She seems a rather unlikely candidate for prestige of this nature, given that she entered the Carmel in Lisieux in 1888 and died from tuberculosis there nine years later at the age of twenty-four. Yet the writings she left behind, most notably her autobiography *L'Histoire d'une âme* [*Story of a Soul*], have proved to be rich spiritual texts for religious and laypeople alike. Writing for *The New York Times*, Barbara Stewart dubbed her "the Emily Dickinson of Roman Catholic sainthood." Canonized in 1925, Thérèse is adored worldwide and "has inspired

[23] Notably, the Reign of Terror ended with the arrest and execution of Robespierre ten days, or a Republican week, after the execution of the Compiègne nuns.

[24] Also known as Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face and "The Little Flower."

[25] For further explanation of this title, see John Chapman's article "Doctors of the Church" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Note that this reference was published in 1909. As such, Chapman does not name any Doctors proclaimed in the 20th century.

far more affection and devotion among many faithful Catholics than the heroics of martyrs" (Stewart). Purportedly, Pope Pius X called her "the greatest saint of her century" (qtd. in Ulanov 1 and Descouvemont and Loose 5), while Pope John Paul II deemed her "the saint for the millennium" (Stewart). Thérèse is, therefore, no small footnote in the history of the Catholic Church, that of the Discalced Carmelites, nor that of France.

What is it about this cloistered nun of little worldly accomplishment that attracts so many devotees? Rev. Robert Colaresi explained the simplicity of Thérèse's spirituality: She lived a quiet little life in her convent . . . But she was a bright light ahead of her time. She believed in a God of love and thought she should just do simple things with love. Period" (qtd. in Stewart).[26] Another enthusiast, Anne Schaentzler, expressed the accessibility of this beloved Carmelite figure: "She's there for me . . . She's like me—plain, ordinary" (qtd. in Stewart). Recall that the Carmelite tradition was never strictly reserved for professed religious: there is strong evidence to suggest that the first Carmelite community formed under the Rule of St. Albert included laypersons, some of whom were illiterate (Jotichsky 10; Zimmerman). The spiritual insights of Thérèse, known as the "Little Way" follow this tradition in being accessible to anyone and everyone:

> First of all, for Thérèse the Little Way signified a path that everyone can follow, a life without ecstasies or special penances. Fascinated from her youth by Joan of Arc, instilled with the desire to become also a great saint, Thérèse understood early that "to attain sanctity, it is not necessary to do outstanding works, but to hide oneself and practice

[26] Colaresi was director of the Society of the Little Flower in Darien, Ill., from 1991 to 2019. The Society was founded in 1923 with the mission of promoting devotion to St. Thérèse around the world ("The Society of the Little Flower").

> virtue in such a way that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing." (Descouvemont and Loose 226)[27]

In this way, this most eminent member of the French Discalced Carmelites has brought the heart of Carmelite spirituality to the everyday person. As we will see, this emphasis on accessible spirituality is reflective of the French School of Spirituality, as well as the example of Madame Acarie herself.

Nearly a contemporary of Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Élisabeth of the Trinity, née Élisabeth Catez, is another French Discalced Carmelite who has come to be widely known in recent years. Born near Bourges in 1880 to a military family, Élisabeth was noted to have a lively, tempestuous temperament and a talent for music ("Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity"). Even as a child, she developed a desire to join the Discalced Carmelites across from which she, her mother, and her sister lived after her father's death. Élisabeth entered the Dijon Carmel in 1901; five short years later, she died following a long and painful battle with Addison's disease. Like Thérèse, though, these years produced treasures for the Carmelites and the general faithful. Anthony Lilles notes that Élisabeth had an affinity for Teresa of Avila and was "among the first to read an early version of Therese of Lisieux's *Story of a Soul*." One finds the traces of her Discalced Carmelite predecessors in her writings, which stress the potential for devotion and holiness in the ordinary. Carolyn Humphreys notes that, for Élisabeth, even "daily unsung activities" could be opportunities to encounter God: "She envisioned each incident and circumstance of life as a sacrament, which brought God to an individual and assisted an individual to become more aware of God's indwelling presence." Hence, Élisabeth, too, carries

[27] This source, *Thérèse and Lisieux,* is a photographic biography. Descouvemont wrote the text; interspersed are pictures and documents photographed by Loose.

on the legacy of Madame Acarie and the French Discalced Carmelites Acarie founded. Despite having lived around the same time as Thérèse of Lisieux, Élisabeth of the Trinity was not canonized until 2016. Perhaps for this reason she is somewhat less recognized outside of Carmelite circles. Nonetheless, the renewed attention to Élisabeth of the Trinity brought about by her canonization testifies to the lasting influence and important contributions of the French Discalced Carmelites.

Conclusion

When Madame Acarie and her associates introduced the Discalced Carmelite Order to France, they did not simply extend the reformation begun by Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. Rather, they built upon the ancient Carmelite tradition and established it in a uniquely French way. As the woman at the core of the initiative, Madame Acarie rightfully holds the title of foundress of the Discalced Carmel in France. This particular branch of the Order, as we have traced, subsequently became the powerhouse of the Carmelites, producing such celebrated figures as the martyrs of Compiègne, Thérèse of Lisieux, and Élisabeth of the Trinity. Furthermore, it is from the Discalced Carmelites of France that the Order continued to spread throughout the world. Accordingly, the introduction of the Discalced Carmelites to France was a significant achievement which influenced French history and culture as well as Catholicism worldwide. By recovering the role of Madame Acarie in the establishment of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in France, then, we find the missing link between the origins of the Carmelite tradition and the French Discalced Carmelites who have shared the riches of that tradition with the Church and the world. Though this accomplishment may be her most prominent legacy, we examine in the chapters to follow other important contributions Madame Acarie made during the Post-Reformation period.

CHAPTER THREE

Situating Madame Acarie in Her Context

For an understanding of Madame Acarie's lasting influence on French culture, it is important to examine the context in which she found herself. In this chapter, we consider norms of society, politics, and the Church during Madame Acarie's epoch. First of all, as a member of the upper bourgeoisie, Acarie naturally had to confront societal expectations for her gender and class. While faithfully fulfilling the duties expected of her as a young wife and mother in the social elite, she often challenged the impositions put upon her. Given that Acarie lived in the late 1500s and early 1600s, the role of women is not the only complex dynamic which merits our attention. In the Introduction, we briefly treated the political turmoil through which she lived: numerous Wars of Religion, the passing of the monarchy to Henri IV, the Edict of Nantes, and more. As this series suggests, politics and religion were inherently interwoven during this time period, and the mixture was often volatile. There were some instances in which Madame Acarie was caught up inadvertently in the politics of the era. At other times, though, Acarie's initiative proved her to be remarkably deft at navigating the complicated political circumstances of France in the era, where the boundaries between religion and politics were extremely permeable and relationships between the Church and the State were in flux. At times these two entities worked in concert, but in other instances each sought to assert itself over the other. On the individual level, public action and personal faith or devotion were inseparable. Yet even this complexity did not deter Madame Acarie, who adroitly operated in all arenas. Lastly, it is crucial to consider what the state of the Church in France was like during Madame Acarie's lifetime and how her role in shaping it confirmed or broke the models previously ascribed to women. Thus, by

situating Madame Acarie in her social, political, and ecclesiastical context, we may better understand her legacy.

Madame Acarie and Society Life: In the World but Not of It

When Madame Acarie was born as Barbe Avrillot on February 1, 1566, she joined a wealthy and devout family who was part of the *noblesse de robe*, the rising elite.[1] She enjoyed a materially comfortable childhood at home before being sent to be educated at the age of eleven to the Franciscan Abbey of Longchamp, where her aunt was a nun (Duval 2-3). She adapted well to life there, so much so that she began to develop religious aspirations. As this outcome was not at all her family's educational intent in sending her there, they removed her from the convent after three years, and she returned to the Avrillot home. Even as a young girl, however, Madame Acarie exhibited a strong will. If she could not remain at Longchamp, she would bring Longchamp to the Avrillot home. She implemented as best she could a way of life similar to that which she had experienced in the abbey, to the great frustration of her mother (Sheppard 9). In response, Madame Avrillot attempted at first to bribe her daughter with the attractions of society life such as fine new clothing and numerous social events. The future Madame Acarie did not waver, though; silk dresses, parties, and potential suitors could not dissuade her from her intent to become a religious sister like those who ran the Hôtel Dieu hospital. Her parents were opposed to this idea, finding the hospital, crowded with the sick and dying, an unsuitable environment for their bourgeois daughter and insisting that she marry (Duval 7). When Madame

[1] Biographical facts and anecdotes in this chapter are taken from both Andre Duval's 1621 text, the first biography, and Lancelot Sheppard's 1953 biography in English entitled *Barbe Acarie: Wife and Mystic*. Sheppard, one of few English-language scholars of Acarie, based his text on the work of all the major biographers of Acarie. In addition to Duval, these include Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Boucher (1791) and Fr. Bruno de Jésus-Marie, O.C.D., (1942). He further lists as sources two popular texts, by Emmanuel de Broglie (1903) and Emily Bowles (1879), as well as volumes 2 and 3 of Henri Bremond's *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France: depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours* (1916, 1921).

Avrillot's first tactic failed, she took the opposite route, imposing harsh punishments on her daughter for disobedience, including coarse food and banishment from drawing near to the fireplace at all during the winter of 1581-2 (Sheppard 8). Something must have changed in the young woman, though, for by August of 1582, she was wedded to Pierre Acarie. While there was some level of obedience in Madame Acarie's acceptance of the suitor presented to her by her parents, Duval overextended this fact to claim that obedience was the sole foundation of the marriage, and other biographers followed suit.[2] Friends of the couple, however, testified that the Acarie's marriage "could be proposed as a very model of conjugal perfection" and that Madame Acarie had a "very great and tender love" for her husband (Sheppard 55). The marriage resulted in six children[3] and a household that became widely-respected throughout Paris.

As a young wife, a certain kind of dress, demeanor, and activity was expected of Madame Acarie. Duval reports that, even though she abstained from wearing ornaments she deemed purely vain and was perplexed by the latest Parisian fashion trends, she dutifully took part in these conventions of society out of love and obedience to her husband and mother-in-law, both of whom took it as a point of honor that she follow the customs of their peers (17-8). Duval recounts a conversation between Acarie and her mother-in-law in which Acarie expressed her frustration at the accessories expected of her, "qui ne servent qu'à faire perdre le temps [which serve only to waste time]" and her wish for "un habit qui se pût mettre en un instant [clothes

[2] Duval, as Acarie's first biographer and because he knew her well during her life, has been the authority on Acarie's life and character for centuries. As a result, later biographers such as Boucher stress a marriage of obedience as Duval's text does. However, Sheppard points out that Duval, writing shortly after Acarie's death, and Boucher, whose work was published the same year as Acarie's beatification, "are in a constant quest of edification and so, from the very beginning, are inclined to depict a plaster saint" (12).

[3] Their children are Nicolas (b. 1584), Marie (b. 1585), Pierre (b. 1587), Jean (b. 1589), Marguerite (b. 1590), and Geneviève (b. 1592). All six survived to adulthood, and all three daughters entered the Discalced Carmelite Order. Four of the letters preserved from Acarie's correspondence are written to Marie, the eldest daughter, under her religious name Marie de Jésus. The other children are referenced therein.

which could be put on in an instant]" (18). I have translated "un habit" here in the general sense of "clothing." Duval's text, however, plays on the double sense of the word, "habit" which can also indicate the religious habit. As is often the case with hagiographies, this first biography very clearly intends to present Madame Acarie as an exemplary and extraordinary model of piety. In this way, Duval takes care to point, throughout the text, toward Acarie's later entrance, once widowed, into religious life, often implying or stating forthright that Acarie continued to long for the convent. Lancelot Sheppard asserts, however, that this depiction is a "completely false" picture:

> It would be a mistake to imagine the young wife, haunted continually by her desire for the religious life, putting on with regret the fine clothes required by her station in life, accompanying her husband to the houses of their friends, with a polite smile on her pretty face and black misery in her heart. (13)

Sheppard reports that, instead of with a painfully hidden reluctance, Madame Acarie welcomed the benefits and amusements of married life among the social elite of Paris with a "natural instinctive enjoyment" (13). In any case, she became a delight of society, earning the moniker "la belle Acarie [the beautiful Acarie]" for her looks, her attire, and her all-around congenial comportment. Few would have guessed her earlier intentions of religious life.

Madame Acarie embraced some aspects of life as a young socialite with particular enthusiasm. She appreciated the chivalric literature circulating among her peers around the time, such as *Amadis de Gaule*[4] and similar books, and she read these works "innocemment, par curiosité facile et commune en cet âge [innocently, with curiosity that was simple and common

[4] This text is a French translation of *Amadís de Gaula*, a Spanish chivalric romance popular in the 16th century. Michael Harney explains the appeal of *Amadís* for readers old and new alike: "*Amadís* combines the sentimental and the chivalric, while adding bountiful measures of pure adventure and fantasy. It has heroes and damsels, witches and wizards, villains and monsters, kings and counselors, giants and dwarves, wars and sieges" (369).

in this age]" (Duval 21). The ever-zealous Pierre, finding a copy of *Amadis* on his wife's table, was scandalized by the romantic tales. He collected the books that had been lent to his wife, returned them to their owner, and, on the advice of his confessor, purchased "good books, books of devotion," taking care that they were "attractive [in] appearance" (Sheppard 17). The precise titles her husband acquired are not recorded, but Duval reports that Madame Acarie willingly took to this spiritual reading material and enjoyed it (21). While this anecdote serves on the one hand to demonstrate Madame Acarie's rather typical experience of and interest in Parisian society of the time, it marks on the other hand the beginning of a change in her attitude towards that same society life. In one of those unnamed texts given to her by Pierre, Madame Acarie read the line "Trop est avare à qui Dieu ne suffit [One is too stingy for whom God is not enough]," and it so greatly changed her "qu'on eût dit que Dieu l'eût frappée d'un coup de tonnerre [that one would have said God had struck her with a thunderbolt]" (Duval 21). The year was 1588, and from this time on, Sheppard tells us, Madame Acarie set about her daily activities with a new approach, attempting to seek God alone through both contemplation and the service of her vocational duties (18-9). Not only does this new approach to her daily life explain her later affinity for Carmelite spirituality, but it also led to her becoming a major influence in the ecclesiastical elite of Paris.

Madame Acarie and Business: A Keen Eye, a Steady Hand

In addition to her roles as wife and mother, Madame Acarie proved herself to be a woman of agency in any manner of affairs. Upon their marriage, Pierre entrusted management of the household to his wife. The Hôtel Acarie[5] was a sizeable estate, consisting of one main house

[5] At the time, the Hôtel Acarie was located on Rue des Juifs, "between what is now 11 rue Ferdinand Duval and 12 rue des Écouffes" (Sheppard, 12).

with two smaller houses, gardens, stables, and many servants (Sheppard 14). Sharon Kettering notes that this arrangement was, in fact, common practice in the 16th and 17th centuries in France (819). While women may have been excluded from most institutional positions of power, their leadership in the business of the domestic sphere was substantial, as was the work: "Running the town house of a wealthy family employing a number of servants was itself a considerable administrative task, and many wives assumed responsibility for the management of the family fortune as well" (820-1). A woman's influence could also extend beyond her own household into that of her children or other family members (818). Additionally, wives were sometimes tasked with overseeing the operations of rural estates and administration of family-run businesses (821). As manager of the family estate—though Pierre must still have directed some aspects of the estate, as we will see below—Madame Acarie had many responsibilities in addition to the care of her six children. Kettering points out that the weight of these charges compounded as a result of the conflicts of the era: "An increasing number of noblewomen were faced with the task of rearing small children and managing the family's affairs as the religious wars took their toll of male family heads" (823). Madame Acarie acutely experienced this particular fallout of the Wars of Religion.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Pierre Acarie was a staunch member of the Catholic League, an ultra-radical group which opposed both Protestantism in general and Protestant-sympathizer King Henri IV specifically. His enthusiasm for the cause was such that he was given the pejorative nickname the "Lackey of the League," and he contributed to the League's funding "generously, even recklessly," endangering both his fortune and reputation (Sheppard 31, 41). Sheppard remarks that Madame Acarie was just as opposed to the Huguenots as her husband but that she saw the issues with more clarity, "because she had friends and relations—all of them

Catholics—on both sides" (31).[6] Despite his fervor, Pierre never took violent action nor was named for any other crime: "on ne lui reprochait aucune avarice, violence, ni offense envers personne [he was not accused of any avarice, violence, nor offense against anyone] (Duval 75-6). The king nonetheless exiled Pierre from Paris in 1594 but allowed him to choose the location of retirement; he chose the Carthusian monastery at Bourgfontaine, approximately forty-five miles from Paris. In his absence, Madame Acarie discovered the extent of Pierre's investments in the League. Over the past several years, Pierre had incurred significant debts, having loaned money to his compatriots and financially backed League activities himself. Additionally, conflicts outside of Paris meant that their rural estates brought in no revenue. Creditors came calling; the possessions and even the Acarie home were seized. Madame Acarie was left to manage the situation on her own.

Acarie focused on necessary tasks with diligence and fortitude. Her children were placed in school at the Sorbonne and Longchamp or with relatives, for the younger two. As for herself, Madame Acarie found lodging with her cousin Madame de Bérulle (née Séguier). Pierre de Bérulle was at that time a student at the Sorbonne and had frequented the Hôtel Acarie before, but it was during this period that the friendship between the two cousins began. Sheppard notes that it was also then that Andre Duval first encountered Madame Acarie. Apart from housing at the Bérulle family, Acarie's friends and relatives did not offer much in the way of financial support. Her own father, Nicolas Avrillot, had followed Pierre's lead in becoming overly involved with the League. Monsieur Avrillot found himself similarly lacking resources and retreated to his estates in Champagne. Back in Paris, Madame Acarie went about restoring her family's name and finances. She spent her days dealing with numerous debts and loans, writing

[6] For example, the Séguier family, her relatives, were openly supportive of Henri IV (Sheppard 31).

an *aide-memoire* for the judges, and petitioning for meetings with persons of potential influence in her family's affairs. She even somehow managed to raise a ransom when Pierre was taken hostage by a group of bandits and subsequently got him relocated to Luzarches, much closer to Paris. Despite several difficulties and a series of injuries that left her with a limp for the remainder of her life, Madame Acarie ultimately succeeded in all efforts of restitution.[7] Sheppard affirms that it was Acarie's reputation with the king that finally won Pierre's pardon: "Henri IV held Barbe in great esteem and it was in token of his regard for her that he allowed Pierre to return to Paris" (50). By the beginning of 1599, Pierre rejoined Madame Acarie and their children who had returned to the Hôtel on the Rue des Juifs.

A few years later, Madame Acarie once again demonstrated her proficiency in worldly affairs during the construction of the first Discalced Carmelite monastery in Paris. As we have established, Madame Acarie was at the core of this collaborative effort. While certain tasks were delegated to other members of the group, such as the expedition into Spain to select Discalced Carmelite nuns to bring back to France, it was nonetheless Madame Acarie who oversaw every aspect. Michel de Marillac, jurist and member of Marie de Médicis' inner circle, became involved in the project shortly after its conception and witnessed that "c'était elle qui conduisait la barque [it was she who steered the boat]" (Picard 143). Duval tells us that once the location of the first monastery was secured, Madame Acarie oversaw the work being done to transform the former priory of Notre Dame des Champs into a suitable home for Discalced Carmelite nuns (134-5). She was on-site daily, taking on all manner of duties: examining the wood, stone, and

[7] Throughout her travels to visit her husband and children and resolve their financial and legal difficulties, Acarie was injured on three occasion, breaking her hip once and fracturing her thigh twice. In the first instance, her horse was startled as she was climbing into the saddle; she was dragged along the road and, once free of the saddle, was not found for two hours (Sheppard 47). In the second and third injuries, she fell after missing a step on the stairs during visits to her son and husband, respectively (48, 49).

mortar used for construction, supervising the workers, and ensuring that all were both diligently working and honestly paid. She exhibited a remarkable aptitude for the work such that Duval was surprised to see her in action:

> Je m'étonnais souvent de la voir parler si pertinemment de leur métier à toutes sortes d'ouvriers, leur donnant de bons avis, et usant en ses paroles de termes propres. Il m'eût semblé, si je ne l'eusse point connue, qu'elle n'eût jamais fait autre chose en sa vie que de bâtir et d'être parmi les ouvriers.
>
> [I was astonished to see her talk so pertinently of their trades to all sorts of workers, giving them good opinions, and using proper terms in her speech. It would have seemed to me, if I had not known her, that she had never done another thing in her life but build and be around workers.] (134-5)

Given that Acarie's life up to that point had meant she was more likely to be frequenting social gatherings than construction sites, Duval's observations are indeed surprising. Michel de Marillac often accompanied Acarie to oversee the work and, together, they handled the financial needs of the project. While Acarie managed the financing, de Marillac handled the contracts with the workers. When it came time to settle accounts, de Marillac, too, noted Acarie's adeptness:

> Nous avons ensemble fait compte avec un grand nombre d'ouvriers, maçons, charpentiers, couvreurs, tailleurs de pierre, menuisiers, vitriers, plombiers, carreleurs et plusieurs autres, à tous lesquels elle gardait si nettement la justice qu'il paraissait que c'était une vertu.
>
> [We settled accounts with a great number of workers, masons, carpenters, roofers, stonemasons, joiners, glaziers, plumbers, tilers, and several others, toward all of whom she adhered to justice so clearly that it seemed a virtue.] (Picard 146)

Perhaps the household management she had undertaken upon marrying Pierre included some work of this sort, or perhaps he had involved her in other such affairs that he may have had or

pertaining to their estates. In any case, Madame Acarie demonstrated a remarkable talent for business and administration. If this skill was not wholly unheard-of, considering Kettering's findings about the practices surrounding domestic patronage power of early modern French noblewomen, it was nonetheless subversive to the stereotypical institutional exclusion of female agency in the era.

Madame Acarie and the Salon: Salons at the Hôtel Acarie

Another manifestation of female influence in this period is the salon, and Madame Acarie took part in this practice, too. Beginning in 1599, upon the family's return to their home on the Rue des Juifs, Madame Acarie found herself the center of her own salon. Sheppard notes that Acarie did not orchestrate the salon: "Her spiritual salon—it was not organized by her or desired, it occurred in spite of her—reached the height of its fame a few years after the return of the family to the [R]ue des Juifs" (79). In increasing numbers, men and women of all varieties frequented the Hôtel Acarie, seeking Madame Acarie's counsel and company. These included the prominent group of theologians already mentioned in relation to the Carmelite project: Bérulle, Duval, Beaucousin, Gallemant, de Brétigny, and de Sales when he was in Paris. Later, St. Vincent de Paul also found his way to the estate on the Rue des Juifs. The number of regular guests demonstrate the popularity of Acarie's Hôtel: "The house was continually beset by ecclesiastics, monks, friars, and layfolk . . . People were knocking on the door all day" (Sheppard 53). Michel de Marillac and Madame de Meignelay, née de Gondi, are two of the most prominent non-ecclesiastical participants in the Acarie circle. While not all individuals in the Acarie circle were members of the clergy, they were most likely all fervently Catholic, and the discussions and activities which took place there were predominantly of a spiritual nature. Yet Sheppard claims that this spiritual salon was "not unlike its almost contemporary literary

counterpart at the Hôtel de Rambouillet" (56). In content the two salons may have differed, but in style and import to their respective fields of interest, the comparison is fair, as we show below.

In French history, salons are best known as the driving factor behind the development of much 17th- and 18th-century French literature. As noted in the Introduction, Catherine de Vivionne, Marquise de Rambouillet, is famous for having presided over a salon in her Parisian manor. Regular gatherings at the Hôtel de Rambouillet flourished from approximately 1620 until its decline between 1648 and 1665 (Vincent 24, 30). The Rambouillet meetings are generally taken to be the dawn of the great age of salons. L. Clark Keating offers an examination of the literary salon's predecessors in the period just prior to the era of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Keating concludes that the salons of the 16th century, while more informal than those of Rambouillet and her peers, were of a similarly significant nature: "the breadth, width, and depth of social life stand revealed in the politeness, the entertainments, and the serious preoccupations of sixteenth-century drawing rooms" (146). Thus, the Acarie salon which took shape at the turn of the 17th century is implicitly connected to this historical phenomenon.

Furthermore, Kettering notes that salons were a natural extension of the domestic patronage power afforded to French noblewomen in the early modern period. In the spaces of the extensive estates they managed, noblewomen were able to support artists, intellectuals, artisans, and even clergy by employing them within their households as secretaries, tutors, clerics, musicians, or craftsmen (831). This service within the household often became a means of career advancement for both the individual and other family members (826, 829). In this way, royal and noble women were able to encourage the arts and humanities, thereby transforming their domestic patronage into cultural patronage, from power in the private sphere to influence in the public sphere. In contrast to the formalized, direct power of institutional authority, Kettering sees

this notion as “the exercise of indirect power through personal relationships by women” (818). When one considers Madame Acarie’s connections to many persons of influence in both society and the Church, as we will explain below, one can see that this power, if indirect, reached far and wide. Therefore, while the spiritual salon that took place in the Hôtel Acarie may not be a direct ancestor of the later literary salons of the 17th and 18th centuries, it nevertheless partakes of and contributes to this tradition.

Madame Acarie and Politics: Navigating Permeable Boundaries

At the beginning of this study, we gave an overview of the political conflicts which plagued France throughout Madame Acarie’s lifetime. We also treated specifically how Madame Acarie’s relatives were caught up in the conflict between the Catholic League and the French monarchy, and what this meant for the Acarie family once Henri IV defeated the League. Opposed by a powerful and devoutly Catholic group of French nobles, Henri IV had to convert to Catholicism from Protestantism and then besiege his own capital city before he could take the throne. Alison Forrestal notes, though, that the king’s conversion was not convincing enough for some subjects, particularly once Henri IV issued the Edict of Nantes, which gave the Protestant Huguenots freedom of religion (“Latecomers to Reform?” 1). In response, the king redoubled his efforts to win over his former opponents: “[F]rom the early 1600s, he lavished favours on new Catholic foundations and works in a bid to convince Catholics of his credibility as king, to reassure them of the Catholic character of the Bourbon monarchy, and to enhance royal control over the ecclesiastical domain” (“Latecomers to Reform?” 1). The fact that Henri IV converted to Catholicism in order to claim the throne, and that he then employed patronage of Catholic foundations to garner support once he presided upon it, demonstrate that the relationship between Church and State in the late 1500s and early 1600s was very different from what is found in

France today. Religious affiliation and political power were intricately associated in most European countries during the Middle Ages and the early modern period. We shall see now that the dynamic in France was of a particular character.

As "the eldest daughter of the Church" (Leo XIII), France long received special honor from Rome for its Christian status. Over the centuries, that honor at times precipitated into special privileges, namely in the realm of self-governance. In response, some French Christians and monarchs increasingly came to see the French Church as distinct from its fellows in Europe and, to an extent, from papal authority. This perspective came to be known as "Gallicanism." Antoine Dégert explains the implication of this term:

> This term is used to designate a certain group of religious opinions for some time peculiar to the Church of France, or Gallican Church, and the theological schools of that country. These opinions, in opposition to the ideas which were called in France "Ultramontane," tended chiefly to a restraint of the pope's authority in the Church in favour of that of the bishops and the temporal ruler. It is important, however, to remark at the outset that the warmest and most accredited partisans of Gallican ideas by no means contested the pope's primacy in the Church, and never claimed for their ideas the force of articles of faith. They aimed only at making it clear that their way of regarding the authority of the pope seemed to them more in conformity with Holy Scripture and tradition. At the same time, their theory did not, as they regarded it, transgress the limits of free opinions, which it is allowable for any theological school to choose for itself provided that the Catholic Creed be duly accepted.[8]

In theory, Gallicanism purports to be nothing more than a doctrinally consistent principle of subsidiarity: the more immediate form of governance is the preferred to any authority further

[8] In contrast, Ultramontanism advocated for the supremacy of papal authority. See Umberto Benigni. "Ultramontanism." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 15. Robert Appleton Company, 1912. www.newadvent.org/cathen/15125a.htm.

removed. In other words, proponents of Gallicanism supported a sort of decentralization in which the local ecclesiastical or temporal authorities could evaluate and administer papal directives as they saw fit. While these beliefs were codified with the Declaration of the Clergy of France of 1682, which issued four articles asserting the autonomy of the French Church and the limitations of papal authority, they existed in fact well before then. Gallicanism originated around the 14th century, when King Philip the Fair challenged Pope Boniface VIII with the claim that "in virtue of the concession made by the pope, with the assent of a general council to Charlemagne and his successors, [the king] has the right to dispose of vacant ecclesiastical benefices" (Dégert).[9] This study does not focus on the theory of Gallicanism; rather it is concerned with how the principles of Gallicanism, largely supported by both temporal and ecclesiastical powers, affected the practice of relations between Church and State in the 16th and 17th centuries.

In practice, a privileged relationship between France and the papacy allowed French authorities, whether ecclesiastical or sovereign, greater jurisdiction and the French Church greater autonomy than elsewhere. Forrestal traces how the beliefs of Gallicanism were utilized by bishops to affirm their own authority against that of the pope and, at times, the king as well

[9] Ecclesiastical benefices are revenued offices, ostensibly with ministerial duties attached to them. Oftentimes, these offices would be filled for political reasons by someone incapable of performing said duties and a clergy member would be paid a smaller sum to serve as proxy

(*Fathers, Pastors, and Kings: Visions of Episcopacy in Seventeenth Century France*).[10] The coordination of religious and secular players to subvert traditional chains-of-command was not, however, singular to the hierarchal Church. Megan Armstrong explains that members of mendicant religious communities in the 16th century increasingly appealed to French judicial courts, rather than to their ecclesiastical superiors, to resolve communal disputes.[11] As Armstrong acknowledges, the French state did already have some level of governance over religious communities, at least when it came to material matters; the oversight of internal concerns, however, was not typically an area over which state institutions would have had any say:

> Secular courts held jurisdiction over the temporal [affairs] of the Church but never over the person of the cleric. Secular courts could sit in judgment, for example, on the financial affairs of a religious community, but they could not sit in judgment of the behavior of its members. (511)

[10] Forrestal breaks down the term "Gallicanism" into two types, "political Gallicanism" and "ecclesiastical Gallicanism": the term 'political gallicanism' describes the alliance between church and state to limit papal authority, while ecclesiastical gallicanism is characterised by the belief that the French church should be independent of both king and pope. A more particular application subdivides ecclesiastical gallicanism, however, according to the institutional structures of the French church, so that the specific term 'episcopal gallicanism', in part, represents the special privileges or liberties pertaining to the office of bishop. These privileges were thought to have evolved since the time of the early church, and their defenders were fond of tracing them to their origins in order to defend their legitimacy. Equally, however, episcopal gallicanism was characterised by a tough defence of episcopal rights of jurisdiction, so that the bishops' rejection of illegitimate papal intervention within their dioceses should be at least partly understood as a manifestation of their gallicanism" (111). We treat "political Gallicanism" and "ecclesiastical Gallicanism" together in this study under the blanket term "Gallicanism," since the two combined to create the complexity that existed during Madame Acarie's lifetime.

[11] Armstrong primarily discusses instances relating to Franciscan communities, as their claims during this period were the most numerous and the best documented. She affirms, though, that the findings can be extended to all of the mendicant orders: "The remarkable similarities between the legal disputes engaging all of the four major orders of mendicant clergy in France during this period, however, enable us to generalize to some extent about relations between the mendicant clergy and the [P]arlement during the period of this study" (507). As explained by Livarius Oliger in his article "Mendicant Friars" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, the four mendicant orders are the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Carmelites, and the Augustinians.

Yet Armstrong notes that "these religious were turning to the [P]arlement in increasing numbers after 1500 as a buffer against the reforming and centralizing tendencies of their generals and other ecclesiastic superiors," as well as to settle internal disputes, such as that which arose from an election for the head of a community house in Paris in 1581 (507-8). Armstrong's finding is that, in calling upon Parlement to resolve their conflicts, these mendicant orders "legitimized the court's involvement in their affairs" (530). This trend that both Armstrong and Forrestal note, that of religious communities and as well as bishops voluntarily advocating for a Gallic Church in which Rome had less and less oversight of its operations while French state institutions gained more, only contributed to the unique transformation of the Church in France.[12]

The preceding discussion demonstrates the permeable boundary between Church and State during Madame Acarie's period. Between the privileges granted to the French Church by the papacy in centuries past and the voluntary deference of ecclesiastical figures to state authorities, kings and government institutions in France "could lawfully stretch their powers in ecclesiastical matters beyond the normal limits." (Dégert). The discussion in the previous chapter on this subject shows how this development directly impacted the work of Madame Acarie. We know that the Parlement of Paris had a clear role in the first Discalced Carmelite foundation in Paris. Duval notes it was Parlement who made the determination that these French Discalced Carmelites would be revenued rather than mendicant. The previous discussion also demonstrates

[12] The presence of a Gallic Church as it is here described and as it progressed over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries is greatly contrasted to *laïcité* as practiced in 20th-and 21st-century France. *Laïcité* is usually translated as either "separation of Church and State" or "secularism"; one may find both of these expressions in discussions concerning other countries. How these concepts are implemented in French government and society, however, is distinct to France. The principle of *laïcité* was established with the 1905 law on the division between Church and State. The practice of *laïcité* has evolved over time and is often a source of controversy. While the confines of this study do not permit as ample an exploration of this subject as it merits, we nonetheless observe that France in the 16th and 17th centuries saw the intertwining of State and Church, while the 20th and 21st centuries have seen the opposite in this country. Though a principle of religious freedom is maintained, the French state is legally prevented from recognizing religions, though it does recognize religious organizations. A particularly controversial development of *laïcité* is that outward forms of religion, such as the burqa, are regulated in the public space.

that during the venture to establish the Discalced Carmelites in France, Acarie and her associates insisted upon obtaining approval for the foundation from both the king and the pope. Earlier, we noted that there may have been a theological concern about the validity of vows professed by nuns in a newly established order without express approbation of the pope. This dual-permission method gave the foundation greater legitimacy and the complex relationship between Paris and Rome in terms of Church governance sheds further light on this intention.

While the king issued his own patents for the foundation, it was the pope who approved the constitutions and named the superiors of the order (Morgain 350). Therefore, by seeking the approval of both the king of France and the pope, Acarie and her associates fall to neither side of the Gallican/Ultramontane debate. They adroitly managed the conflicting theories on primacy of authority, allowing the foundation to be a significant landmark for the French Church without it becoming embroiled in political conflict. A parallel can be seen here with the group of players behind the introduction of the Discalced Carmelites to France. As discussed in the previous chapter, Renoux remarks that Madame Acarie brought together former League members and one of the most prominent victims of the League in this collaboration. In this way, Madame Acarie demonstrated her talent in maneuvering the porous boundaries of religion and politics during her epoch.

The Carmelite tradition that Acarie introduced to France was a path to reconciliation in other instances as well. Such was the case with the Carmel in Pontoise, founded in January of 1605. As Stéphane-Marie Morgain recounts, the Wars of Religion had devastating effects on the town of Pontoise. Having been staunchly allied with the League and besieged by royal forces until the triumph of Henri IV, Pointoise was in a wretched state by the dawn of the 17th century: “Au sortir de la crise ligueuse, Pontoise est en ruine, endettée, appauvrie et sa dépopulation

amorcée avec la guerre de Cent ans, s'accélère [At the end of the League crisis, Pontoise is in ruin, indebted, impoverished and its depopulation begun by the Hundred Years' War, accelerates]" (Morgain 349). Yet Duval, a native of Pointoise and superior of the French Discalced Carmelites along with Gallemant and Bérulle, proposed that it might be the perfect location for the second foundation. Acarie called upon her friends de Marillac and Marie de Bréauté to patronize the foundation while Gallamant formed the novices; Duval furnished the house that would serve as the monastery (350). The Teresian Carmel was welcomed by the Catholic élite in Pontoise. Morgain proposes that, for these former Leaguers, investing themselves in the Discalced Carmelite foundation offered a way of redirecting the same fervor that had led to their involvement in the League (353). At the same time, it reconciled them to royalist supporters:

> Le Carmel apparaît ici encore comme un lieu capable de rassembler autour d'un même idéal spirituel et mystique des élites naturellement opposées politiquement et qui le resteront encore pendant quelques décennies. Les anciens ligueurs, ou les "crypto-ligueurs," peuvent collaborer avec des catholiques royaux à la mise en place d'un projet commun de réforme de l'Église.
>
> [The Carmel appears again here as a place capable of unifying around one single spiritual and mystical ideal the elites [who were] naturally politically opposed and who would remain so for some decades. The former Leaguers, or the "hidden-Leaguers," could collaborate with royal Catholics in the establishment of a shared reform project of the Church.] (353)

This view was useful because it demonstrated to the king a common willingness to contribute, by means of the Discalced Carmelite foundation, to the work of national reconciliation (335). For Morgain, the Teresian Carmel "constituait un lieu privilégié de réconciliation politique et de silence mystique [constituted a privileged place of political reconciliation and of mystical

silence]" (354). Here again, Acarie and her circle evidenced great diplomatic skill in navigating the fluctuating boundaries of religion and politics in this era. The Pontoise convent, which was "especially dear" to Acarie (Sheppard 183) and at which she would spend her final days, exemplifies in this way one important aim of the Discalced Carmelite foundation in the eyes of both Acarie and Teresa of Avila: the rehabilitation of the Church and the soothing of political and religious wounds.

Madame Acarie and the Church: At the Heart of Reform

As the previous discussion established, the politics of the State were often inseparable from the operations of the Church in France in the 1500s and 1600s. The practice instigated by Philip the Fair of the king filling ecclesiastical benefices, that is positions in the Church hierarchy or in religious communities which usually assured a desirable income, had been solidified such that the king appointed almost all superiors of religious communities by the end of the 16th century (Sheppard 75). In men's houses, the abbot or superior may not even have been part of the religious community, holding the role and title solely for the income while paying a veritable ecclesiastic to perform the required duties. This was not the case with religious communities of women, but appointments there were no less problematic. An infamous example is Angélique Arnauld, who was named abbess of the Cistercian Abbey of Port-Royal at the age of eleven (76).[13] Between the abuse of the appointment system and a general practice of using the convent as a convenient solution for those who found difficulty making a marital match, monastic life in early modern France was in disarray. While the Council of Trent, which concluded in 1563, had attempted to address and rectify various abuses and disputes within the

[13] Under Arnaud, Port-Royal became a stronghold of Jansenism.

Church that the Protestant Reformation had exposed, its directives were not implemented in France because Parlement, flexing the Gallican privilege afforded it, had not ratified them (Picard 122).

As for the laity of the Church, despite apparent religiosity demonstrated during the Wars of Religion, they experienced a lack of direction. For the most part, laypeople were not necessarily interested in personal interior devotion. Picard claims that many were disheartened by decades of religious conflict, poorly informed of the beliefs of their faith, and led by priests who may have been no better catechized than they were (121). Sheppard, on the other hand, observes a dissociative current. In the same way that the practice of awarding ecclesiastical benefices to those totally unqualified for them separated the office from the spiritual functions it was meant to administer, there was a general dissociation for both ecclesiastic and layperson of public profession of religion and personal spiritual life:

> That to be an ecclesiastic or a religious involved certain responsibilities was generally agreed; that it involved a certain spiritual or interior attitude was, usually, an uncommon point of view. The same religious attitude pervaded the laity. The obligations of religion, when they were fulfilled, were regarded as a matter of law; they were social duties, the expression of adherence to a system, rather than a manifestation of personal piety. The idea of a spiritual life was, in most cases, lost or at least obscured to all intents and purposes. (77)

This notion was not necessarily due to apathy on the part of the laity. Picard remarks that there was little incentive for the layperson to cultivate an interior spiritual life because it was not deemed accessible to them: “Rappelons qu’en ce temps-là on pense que, pour être saint, il faut être entré en religion; le rôle du laïc est de faciliter la vie du religieux pour que celui-ci devienne saint [Let us remember that at this time one thinks that, to be holy, it is necessary to have entered

into religion; the role of the layperson is to facilitate the life of the religious so that the latter becomes holy] (123). Madame Acarie stood in complete contradiction to this idea.

As noted above, 1588 was a landmark year for Acarie, the year she read the line "Trop est avare à qui Dieu ne suffit [One is too stingy for whom God is not enough]," convicting her of a need for change and inspiring her to approach her life as a pursuit of God. At first, this change took the form of works of service: she fed the hungry, helped prostitutes get off the streets and, particularly during the siege of Paris, tended to the sick, wounded, and dying in the Hôtel-Dieu hospital in Paris. Picard considers this period her "public apostolate" of sorts (125). Later, as the salon developed around her, Acarie became increasingly involved with various religious orders. Prior to introducing the Discalced Carmelites to France, Acarie had already shaped the reform of several monasteries and abbeys in Paris and beyond. Picard lists the names of at least a dozen of these institutions, including Longchamp, where she herself was schooled as a girl, and Duval devotes an entire chapter to the subject of these reforms. Later, she was involved with the foundation of the Ursulines in France and advocated for Bérulle to found the Oratory. Furthermore, the Hôtel Acarie became a virtual revolving door of persons seeking spiritual advice. Madame Acarie counselled many young women and widows who were discerning whether or not to enter religious life (Picard 131). But it was not only laypeople who sought out her advice. Many of the religious communities she helped reform specifically requested her involvement, and the various theologians that frequented the Acarie salon consulted her on particularly difficult cases of spiritual direction (Duval 332). While waiting for the Spanish Discalced Carmelites to arrive and for the construction on the first French Carmel to be completed, Madame Acarie oversaw the formation of the postulants, those who hoped to enter the newly established community, for the two years it took for the project to be realized

(Sheppard 131). Even after the arrival of the Spanish nuns, she continued to assist for a time in the training of the newly-professed sisters, as the Spanish nuns did not yet speak French sufficiently (134).

As a married laywoman, Acarie was an unlikely counsellor and formator. Duval points out that priests and members of religious communities typically do not willingly defer to married persons, at least when it comes to their interior spiritual direction (102). Picard explains, moreover, that Acarie was not naturally positioned to have any sort of influence in the Church: "En résumé, Barbe Acarie, femme mariée, mère de famille, dans le monde est, a priori, bien peu apte à avoir un rôle de quelque importance dans l'Église de l'époque [In sum, Barbe Acarie, married woman, mother of a family, in the world is, a priori, really ill-fit to have a role of some importance in the Church of the age] (124). Nonetheless, Acarie came to be renowned for her spiritual insight. As a highly active reformer and foundress of religious orders as well as a source of spiritual counsel to many, Madame Acarie greatly contributed to the Counter-Reformation of the French Church.

The group of reformers, founders, and theologians that gathered around Acarie went on to catalyze the spiritual renewal of Post-Reformation France. Bremond declares Madame Acarie to be "la plus grande force religieuse de son temps, et de quel temps! [the greatest religious force of her time, and what a time!]" (2: 259).[14] This assertion is not, however, inspired by an impressive body of spiritual or theological texts; in fact, Bremond states that she wrote nothing. This suggestion is incorrect, and the next chapter will examine her writings. According to Sheppard, it was not until the 20th century that her *Vrais Exercices*, a collection of brief

[14] It should be noted that Bremond restricts Acarie's preeminent status to the first half of the mystic renewal in France, that which he treats in volume 2 of his study, which is entitled *L'Invasion Mystique*. For the latter period, covered in *La Conquête Mystique: L'École Française* (volume 3), he presents Bérulle as the predominant figure.

devotions originally published in 1623, were discovered in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France by Fr. Marie Amand de Saint-Joseph, O.C.D. and reproduced in Fr. Bruno de Jésus-Marie's 1942 biography of Acarie (201). Bremond makes no claims about what her teachings might have been nor attempts to place her above other masters. Rather, in his presentation, Madame Acarie is to the spiritual, and specifically mystical, renewal in France as Marianne was to the French Revolution: a personification of the movement's chief ideals. If François de Sales is the theological powerhouse of the dawn of 17th-century French mysticism, and Bremond judges him to be, then Madame Acarie is the incarnation of this spirituality: "De la vie mystique ainsi ramenée à son essentielle et salutaire simplicité, François de Sales . . . sera le grand docteur. Mme Acarie en fut la grande inspiratrice et le modèle achevé [François de Sales will be the great doctor of the mystical life thus reduced to its essential and salutary simplicity. Madame Acarie was the great inspirer and the complete model of it]" (2: 261). This distinct current of spirituality, and those who propagated it, as we will discuss in the subsequent chapter, opened up mysticism to anyone and everyone, most notably to laypeople and to women in particular. As an early modern noblewoman, a wife, and a mother, Madame Acarie not only made remarkable contributions to the shaping of the Church in 17th-century France, she came to be representative of the potential of its faithful.

Conclusion

The era in which Madame Acarie lived was complex on many fronts. Having examined societal norms, expectations, and practices of the 1500s and 1600s, we may better understand the circumstances in which Acarie lived. In many ways, she enjoyed a fairly typical life for a woman of the early modern bourgeoisie, experiencing the joys, tasks, and trials of society and family. At the same time, the political and religious upheaval in France during her lifetime meant that

Acarie faced numerous challenges. Whether in seasons of war or peace, however, Madame Acarie proved herself to be capable of handling matters of domestic management, legal recourse, business operations, and political diplomacy with generosity and aplomb. All the while, she became increasingly implicated in the transformation of the French Church. A foundress and reformer of religious orders, as well as an esteemed source of spiritual counsel, Madame Acarie came to be emblematic of the new currents of mysticism and personal devotion that stirred Post-Reformation France. In the next chapter, we will consider the parameters of this spiritual movement and evaluate how Madame Acarie's own writings, albeit limited, fit into these contexts.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Writings of Madame Acarie

While, as we have seen, scholarship on Madame Acarie has treated to some extent her role in the introduction of the Order of Discalced Carmelites to France as well as in the foundation or reformation of various other religious houses and communities, there is relatively little consideration of her own writings. In part, this lack of scholarship is due to the fact that the actual portion of Acarie's writings which has been preserved is limited. As we noted in the previous chapter, Bremond erroneously states that she wrote nothing. Duval reports that, when asked once why she had not written anything on the interior life, given the experience she had in the matter, Acarie responded that she had, in fact, written something at the beginning of her spiritual journey, only to have later burned it entirely, convinced that her writings were so lowly and small in comparison with the grandeur of the topic and the many saints who had written better than her (363). However, a collection of brief devotional writings attributed to Acarie was discovered in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in the 20th century, and Bruno de Jésus-Marie included them in his 1942 biography of Acarie. This collection first appeared in 1622 under the title *Vrais Exercices de la bienheureuse*[1] *Marie de l'Incarnation composés par elle-même, très propres à toute Âmes qui désirent ensuivre sa bonne vie* [*The True Exercises of Blessed Marie of the Incarnation Composed by Herself, Very Suitable for Souls Who Desire to Follow Her Good Life*]. In addition to this text, a fraction of Acarie's correspondence, which

[1]The term "bienheureuse [blessed]" can be used in the Catholic Church as both a general descriptor and as a technical term denoting that the status of beatification has been conferred upon a deceased person. For more on this process, see Camillo Beccari's article "Beatification and Canonization" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Since Madame Acarie, as Marie of the Incarnation, was not beatified until 1791, we take the usage here to be in the general, descriptive sense. However, at the time of Madame Acarie's death some were already convinced of her extraordinary holiness, as Duval reports: "Tous demandaient à savoir des nouvelles de sa mort, parce que durant sa vie la plupart des séculiers, aussi bien que les réguliers, la tenaient pour sainte [All were demanding to know the news of her death, because during her life most secular clergy, as well as regular clergy, considered her to be a saint]" (316). Picard similarly notes that it was proclaimed "La sainte est morte [The saint is dead]" (219).

Duval tells us was "une infinité de lettres [an infinity of letters]" (347) exists, preserved either in French archives or via reproductions included by biographers such as Duval and Boucher. A handful of additional devotional passages which were not included in the *Vrais Exercices* are likewise found interspersed throughout works about Acarie. Yet it was not until 2004 that all of these assorted writings were presented in one volume, edited by Bernard Sesé and published by Arfuyen under the title *Écrits spirituels*. As of yet, there is no English translation of this edition. Consequently, Madame Acarie's writings merit an updated, comprehensive consideration. In the present chapter, we examine Acarie's writings and how they relate to the currents of spirituality espoused by her contemporaries and successors, namely what has come to be known as the French school of spirituality. In fact, we begin with this subject, as it will provide the background context which informs our analysis.

The French School of Spirituality

The concept of the French school of spirituality is owed to Bremond, who utilized the expression in titling the third volume of his exhaustive work on the history of religious sentiment in France. Bremond sets up a vision of 17th-century spiritual thought that begins with a "Mystic Invasion" from 1590 to 1620, constituting the second volume of his study, and is fulfilled by a "Mystic Conquest," subtitled "L'École Française."[2] Yves Krumenacker has examined extensively Bremond's notion of the French school, potential problems with the expression, and

[2] Volumes 4, 5, and 6 also bear the title "*La Conquête Mystique* [*The Mystic Conquest*]" but take up different concentrations distinct from the French school as Bremond presents it. Volume 1 is titled "*L'Humanisme dévot* [*Devout Humanism*]." Bremond's text is comprised of eleven volumes in total.

even the methodological complexities of making such divisions.[3] Yet Krumenacker admits that, since the appearance of Bremond's *Histoire littéraire,* it is no longer possible to write on the authors and figures treated therein without using this term, even if to contest it ("Henri Bremond et l'École française de spiritualité" 1). Many have, indeed, challenged the term or nuanced it, often preferring instead the designation of a "Bérullian school," as have Cognet, Rayez, Le Brun, and Dupuy (Krumenacker, "Qu'est-ce qu'une école de spiritualité?" 7-8). While disputing Bremond's idea of a French school, these critics nonetheless confirm the leading role in which Bremond cast Bérulle. Prior to Bremond, Bérulle was largely known as the founder of the Oratory and a theologian of primarily priestly concerns. In *Histoire littéraire* and in later works, he is considered the leader of the French school and more: a mystic author, a restorer of theocentricism, and an inspirator of most great men of the age (Krumenacker, "Henri Bremond" 3-4). As such, most scholarship considers anything prior to Bérulle's main publications, beginning with *Discours des Grandeurs de Jésus* in 1623, as either a separate form of "abstract mysticism" from which Bérulle broke away (Poitra 2, 34, 43-7) or a related yet distinct antecedent, as implied by Bremond's divisions.

In this framing, Madame Acarie figures solidly prior to the advent of the French school of spirituality, and she features accordingly in the second volume of Bremond's work. Krumenacker highlights, however, that Bremond's *Histoire littéraire* is decidedly more literary than historical, utilizing only literary texts and not archival documents, and aims primarily to study the devotional characteristics found within those texts:

[3] See *L'école française de spiritualité: des mystiques, des fondateurs, des courants et leurs interprètes*. Cerf, 1998 ; "Henri Bremond et l'École française de spiritualité." *Chrétiens et sociétés. XVIe-XXIe siècles* no. 9, 2002. OpenEdition, journals.openedition.org/chretienssocietes/4006, pp. 1-18. doi: 10.4000/chretienssocietes.4006 ; and "Qu'est-ce qu'une école de spiritualité?." 2006. HAL: Archive ouverte en Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société, halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00221505/.

> [Bremond] veut ne faire qu'une histoire littéraire, et non une histoire tout court. Cela signifie qu'il utilise des sources exclusivement littéraires et qu'il ne se sert d'aucune pièce d'archive. Dans les ouvrages étudiés, il recherche non le mérite littéraire, la valeur esthétique, ce qui lui fait négliger la plupart des poètes et des prédicateurs, mais la vie intérieure de l'auteur. De ces auteurs, il ne retient pas tout, mais seulement leur insistance sur telle ou telle dévotion. Aussi utilise-t-il deux types d'écrits, les biographies et les traités didactiques, qu'il veut éclairer l'un par l'autre. . .
>
> [Bremond wants to make only a literary history, and not just a history. This signifies that he employs exclusively literary sources and that he does not use any archival item. In the works studied, he looks not for literary merit, aesthetic value, which causes him to neglect most poets and preachers, but the interior life of the author. From these authors, he does not retain everything, but only their insistence on one or another devotion. He also uses two types of texts, biographies and didactic treatises, with which he wants to illuminate one by the other. . .] ("Henri Bremond" 12)

Given these methodological confines, it follows that Bremond gives no consideration to Madame Acarie as a contributor to the French school of spirituality since he had no knowledge of Acarie's writings. While he does stress the importance of Acarie's role in the period from 1590 to 1620, notably for her spiritual salon and her public action via charitable works, as well as in relation to various religious orders, Bremond accounts for nothing more than a peripheral or at best anticipatory rapport with the French school on Acarie's part. As with the entire notion of the French school of spirituality, subsequent scholars have followed Bremond's model. Certain characteristics typically identified as consistent with the French school of spirituality, however, are nonetheless found in the *Vrais Exercices* and correspondence of Madame Acarie.

Before identifying the main characteristics of the French school, it bears explanation that in Christian thought, and specifically in Catholic Christian thought, all forms of devotion and spirituality are aimed toward sanctification. In Christianity, sanctification is essentially a process

of deification, or divinization, that consists of "participating, of becoming, a *partaker*, never the possessor, of divinity" (Meconi and Olson 13). Throughout history, various theologians have conceived of this process in different ways, thereby generating the various schools of spirituality identified in a history of religious thought such as that of Bremond. In considering the question of how to define a school of spirituality, Krumenacker concludes that the ideas of any particular school of spirituality are always a reworking of that which preceded: "Pour l'auteur de cet article, il n'y a jamais de nouveauté absolue, mais toujours des filiations, des généalogies, chaque époque remodèle un courant spirituel pré-existant [For the author of this article, there is never absolute novelty, but always filiations, genealogies, each era remodels a pre-existing spiritual current]" ("Qu'est-ce qu'une école de spiritualité?" 8). What distinguishes one school from another, Krumenacker argues, is therefore which themes or practices are prioritized (10, 15). Hence, the specific characteristics of the French school do not signify drastic revolutions in theology, but rather developments in the emphasized practical applications of that theology.

Michon M. Matthiesen gives an overview of the French school's main features as well as the key figures typically associated with it. As is consistent with scholarship since Bremond, Matthiesen places Bérulle as "*the* theologian of the French school" (151), followed by Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657) and John Eudes (1601-1680). Both Olier and Eudes, Matthiesen states, amplify and adapt Bérulle's initial vision. That vision consists of: 1) a central focus on the Incarnation, in which God became human in the person of Jesus Christ; 2) a union of the believer with Christ via a participation in the experiences and dispositions of Christ during his time on earth, operated through contemplative prayer; 3) an emphasis on the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist; and 4) an assertion that this path to sanctification is "a hidden, ordinary spiritual path" (149-50). Though these principles are treated with slight nuances by Bérulle, Olier, and

Eudes, all three evidence "a palpable optimism that sharing in the divine life of Jesus is possible for all Christians who live in the world" (161). For this reason, Matthiesen views de Sales, who "held out the possibility of perfection in the spiritual life to those who lived in the secular world" (150), as a prelude to the French school and Thérèse of Lisieux, who "[took] up the themes of democratic holiness, living Jesus, abandonment, love of God, consummation, and divinization" (164), as its coda. We have already examined the connections between Madame Acarie, as foundress of the Discalced Carmelites in France, and Thérèse of Lisieux, as her most prominent spiritual descendant, in Chapter Two. There, too, we noted de Sales' involvement with the introduction of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in France. Furthermore, Bérulle spent several years frequenting the salon at the Hôtel Acarie. Unsurprisingly, then, the themes of the French school of spirituality are also found in the writings of Madame Acarie, underscoring these connections with a written link to the French school.

The Writings of Madame Acarie

In *Écrits spirituels,* Sesé presents Acarie's texts in four different sections. First, there are the *Vrais Exercices,* which Sesé divides into passages numbered 1 to 17. While these spiritual exercises are sourced from the 1622 publication under Acarie's name, several of them correspond to passages in the Duval biography in which Duval cites various prayers that Acarie prepared for those she advised (321, 353-9). Her correspondence follows, fifteen letters in full or fragment. One of the letters resides in the Carmel of Pontoise, two at the Carmel of Clamart, and one in the papal records for the process of Acarie's beatification; the rest are sourced from copies retained in the National Archives or from reproductions found in various works published about Acarie during the 17th and 18th centuries (Acarie 156). These are followed by what Sesé calls "Autres Écrits [Other Writings]": five additional devotional passages which do not figure in the

Vrais Exercices, but which Duval and Boucher included in their biographies of Acarie. Lastly, Sesé annexes Boucher's summary of a text Acarie prepared for one of her spiritual mentees on the choice of a state in life, i.e., how to discern whether or not to enter religious life. In fact, this treatise also appears in Duval's biography, though Duval seems to quote Acarie's text directly while Boucher's wording represents an adaptation. Duval adds that the principles Acarie recommends are largely inspired by the teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits (352). Before a thematic analysis of these texts, we will make a few preliminary notes about the letters and the *Vrais Exercices*.

Of the letters, four are believed to be addressed to Pierre de Bérulle and four to Madame Acarie's eldest daughter, Marie, under her Carmelite name Mère Marie de Jésus. De Marillac is the recipient of two letters, while Madame de Meignelay (Charlotte Margeurite de Gondi) and Madame Jourdain (Loïse Gallois) each received one, as did a Monsieur de Fontaine. The recipients of the remaining two letters remain unidentified. In her correspondence, Acarie writes of mostly personal matters, expressing her concerns and directives to Bérulle and Madame Jourdain as they carried out the excursion to Spain for Discalced nuns to head the Paris foundation, advising Madame de Meignelay as she considered joining a religious community, and providing her daughter updates and requests for prayers. While they reveal interesting details about Acarie's management of the Carmelite project from a distance and her later transition to religious life following her husband's death, one finds (or observes) little of external concern, save an occasional note about Père Coton's preaching winning the affection of the whole court (97-8) or the news of a bishop's death (124). This correspondence contains nothing performative or choreographed. In this way, these letters differ from their near contemporaries, the letters of Madame de Sévigné, written to her daughter, that became famous in the latter portion of the 17th

century. De Sévigné's correspondence demonstrates an orchestrated effort to sustain the attentions and affections of her geographically-removed daughter with professions of her own emotional distress and narrative accounts of worldly happenings.[4]

Nonetheless, an interesting mother-daughter dynamic permeates the four letters from Madame Acarie to her daughter Marie. Acarie composed all four of these letters in the last two years of her life, after she was transferred from the Carmel of Amiens, where she had entered in 1614, to the Carmel of Pontoise, where she died in 1618. Her daughter, Mère Marie de Jésus, remained at Amiens as sub-prioress. The title "Mère" and the leadership role that Marie held made Acarie's daughter her superior within the religious order. Madame Acarie addresses her letters, therefore, to "Ma Mère, ma sœur et ma fille [My Mother, my sister, and my daughter]" (115), "Ma Mère et ma fille" (119), or simply "Ma Mère" (123, 127). She often closes with a similar expression of convoluted relationship, such as "Je suis, ma Mère, votre plus petite sœur pour vous servir en notre Seigneur [I am, my Mother, your youngest sister to serve you in our Lord]" (118). Madame Acarie even devotes a portion of one letter to express her wish that, since they have both become Carmelite nuns, the biologically-determined relationship between mother and daughter be forgotten: "Que notre affection soit toute spirituelle puisque Dieu veut que nous menions une vie toute spirituelle et qu'il n'y ait plus en nous d'affection selon la chair et le sang. . . [May our affection be entirely spiritual since God wants us to lead a wholly spiritual life and may there no longer be in us any affection according to the flesh and blood. . .]" (123). Yet later in this letter, Madame Acarie cannot refrain from slipping back into a motherly role, communicating her concerns for Marie's brothers and sister-in-law and urging her daughter to

[4] See Louise K. Horowitz's article "The Correspondence of Madame de Sévigné: Letters or Belles-Lettres?" *French Forum*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1981, pp. 13-27. Horowitz treats the critical debate over the literary status of de Sévigné's correspondence and ultimately concludes that even if the letters were not intended to be published, they nonetheless evidence an orchestration meant to please and persuade her daughter.

pray for them (125). Apart from this unconventional contrast to the relationship between de Sévigné and her daughter, there is little to be juxtaposed between their letters and those of Madame Acarie.

As for the *Vrais Exercices*, the portions that correspond to passages in the Duval biography are part of a series of prayers which Acarie compiled for Marie when this eldest daughter was just beginning to practice the spiritual life (Duval 352). The prayers are intended to be used before, during, and after receiving the Eucharist (353); Duval also clarifies that they are not meant to be seen as a spiritual itinerary (352). Rather, Acarie offered an assorted collection of prayers, which she herself employed, with the advisement to use only one of them at a time and according to one's interior disposition at any given moment (Duval 357). What is contained in the *Vrais Exercices* is effectively an expansion of this collection. Some of the prayers which Duval included in the same section of his biography (352-7) are not, however, to be found within the *Vrais Exercices*; these Sesé has included under "Autres Écrits." Alternatively, Duval records another text which Acarie prepared, this time for a Carmelite sister who was the niece of Père Coton, which does appear in the *Vrais Exercices* as exercises #5 and #6. Interestingly, Acarie purportedly instructed this nun to burn the text after having read it, as she had with her initial writings; obviously, the text was not destroyed by the time Duval wrote his biography (357). Finally, it is necessary to specify that the divisions of the *Vrais Exercices* in Sesé's preparation are different from the arrangement found in the 1623 second edition, that which Bruno

reproduced in 1942.[5] While the order remains the same, the 1623 version of the text does not number the exercises but intersperses thematic titles. Sesé makes no explanation for this structural decision.

Having considered these aspects of Madame Acarie's writings, we now analyze their rapport with the themes of the French school of spirituality.

1) A Central Focus on the Incarnation

The first emphasis of the French school is on the doctrine of the Incarnation, that is, on the belief that the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, became human. The fact that Madame Acarie assumed the name Marie of the Incarnation when she entered the Discalced Carmelites as a lay sister suggests that this concept was central to her spirituality and that it would logically feature in her writings. Indeed, there are numerous references to this belief in the *Vrais Exercices*. In both exercises #2 and #4, Acarie addresses Jesus in regard to his descent to Earth. In the first instance, she notes Jesus's works and sufferings in the world:

> Vous, dis-je, qui étant infiniment zélateur de mon salut, ne m'avez point voulu perdre, mais êtes descendu du Ciel en terre, pour endurer tant de travaux et tourments, comme Vous avez fait, afin de me réconcilier à votre Père céleste, et satisfaire pour moi sa divine justice.

[5] At the time of the writing of this study, Bruno's text was inaccessible. I received an electronic edition from the Carmel of Pontoise as I was preparing the final reading copy of my thesis but was unable to incorporate it into this study. A digitized version of the 1623 second edition of the *Vrais Exercices* can be found, however, on the website of the Association des Amis de Madame Acarie. A postface included after the content of the *Vrais Exercices* implies that this digitized version was reproduced from a text published in 1942, suggesting Bruno's *La Belle Acarie.* This digitized version of the *Vrais Exercices* includes notes to the text, but there is no indication of their origin. Nevertheless, we take the divisions of the *Vrais Exercices* found in the digitized version to be consistent with the original publication.

> [You, I say, who being infinitely zealot of my salvation, did not want to lose me, but descended from Heaven to Earth, to endure so many labors and torments, as You did, in order to reconcile me to your celestial Father, and satisfy for me his divine justice.] (29)[6]

The next time Acarie treats this descent, she highlights the infancy of Jesus:

> Je vous rends grâces infinies, ô mon doux Jésus de cette excessive charité que [Vous] m'avez montrée, lorsque Vous êtes descendu du ciel en terre, et avez daigné pour moi être enveloppé des petits drapeaux, reposer en la crèche et mangeoire des bêtes, être sustenté du lait très savoureux de votre mère vierge, endurer pauvreté et disette, être travaillé d'une infinité de douleurs et travaux.
>
> [I give you infinite graces, oh my sweet Jesus, of this excessive charity that You showed me, when you descended from heaven to the earth, and deigned for me to be wrapped in swaddling clothes, to rest in the manger and trough of animals, to be sustained by the very delicious milk of your virgin mother, to endure poverty and lack, to be warped by an infinity of sufferings and toils.] (40)

In both cases, Madame Acarie highlights the human experiences of Jesus while in the world. The second passage especially concentrates on the physical experiences of being clothed and nursed by a mother as well as encountering deprivation and scarcity. Other passages of the *Vrais Exercices* continue to highlight the physical implications of the Incarnation. Acarie is specifically attentive to the bodily sufferings of Jesus, reflecting on his body (27), wounds (31, 42), and above all blood (33, 37, 40, 41, 53, 54), all of which are considered "précieux [precious]" and "cher [dear]." For Madame Acarie, the emphasis on the Incarnation largely plays out in contemplation of the "très sainte et très sacrée humanité [very holy and very sacred humanity]" taken on by divinity in the person of Jesus (32, 48, 55). There is a natural transition,

[6] When citing Acarie's writings, the numbers given denote on which page of Sesé's text the citation figures, so as to avoid the confusion of exercise numbers and letter numbers.

then, from this first principle of the French school to the second tenet, a participatory union with Christ by means of contemplative prayer.

2) Participatory Union with Christ

The second major theme of the French school of spirituality consists of a belief in the possibility of uniting oneself to the divine through "an intimate sharing in the life and states of the God-Man" in silent prayer, in imitative acts, and in the Eucharist (Matthiesen 161). Throughout the *Vrais Exercices*, Madame Acarie expresses the desire for and possibility of unification with God (27, 30, 35, 39, 43, 49). This desire is sometimes tied to the sacrament of Eucharist, also known as Communion: "ce saint Sacrement que je désire recevoir pour être plus parfaitement conjoint et uni avec Vous [this holy Sacrament that I desire to receive in order to be more perfectly joined and united with You]" (27). In exercise #12, Acarie turns from addressing God, as she does for most all the rest of the *Vrais Exercices*, and instead expounds to her own soul upon the many gifts of God. Here, she complexifies the dynamic, asserting that the desire for unification and transformation is reciprocal: "tu peux être continuellement transformée en Lui . . . . Il désire Lui-même se donner à toi, et t'unir à soi par amour [you can be continually transformed in Him . . .. He desires to give Himself to you, and to unite you to Him by love]" (70). Thus, one notices the first half of this second principle of the French school, that of the possibility for unification to the divine, clearly present in Acarie's *Vrais Exercices*.

The writings of Madame Acarie likewise evidence the second half of this principle, the manner in which it is operated. Immediately following the passage from exercise #4 cited above, in which she describes the nativity scene, Acarie proceeds to consider the Passion of Christ, that is, his arrest, imprisonment, beating, and crucifixion (40-1). Furthermore, Madame Acarie details in two of her letters how she implements this sort of prayer in her own spiritual life. First, in a

letter to Bérulle from a few days after Easter of 1615, Acarie reproaches herself for having not adequately entered into commemoration of the Passion by contemplating the sufferings of Christ:

> Le Samedi Saint y étant, je me sentis reprise d'avoir eu les jours précédents si peu de sentiments des douleurs et tourments qu'avait soufferts notre Seigneur Jésus Christ pour mes péchés, et pour ceux de tous les hommes. Mon ingratitude et insensibilité me donna grande douleur.
>
> [As it was Holy Saturday, I felt reprimanded to have had so few feelings the preceding days of the pains and torments that our Lord Jesus Christ had suffered for my sins, and for those of all men. My ingratitude and insensitivity gave me great suffering.] (106)

Her eye falling upon the image of a crucifix in prayer, Acarie then descends into deeper contemplation, precisely the sort she lamented having not practiced in the preceding days:

> Quelque temps après, jetant l'œil extérieur sans dessein sur un crucifix, l'âme fut touchée si subitement, si vivement, que je ne pus pas même l'envisager davantage extérieurement, mais intérieurement. Je m'étonnai de voir cette seconde personne de la saint Trinité, accommodée de cette sorte pour mes péchés et ceux des hommes. Il me serait du tout impossible d'exprimer ce qui se passa en l'intérieur, et particulièrement l'excellence et dignité de cette second personne.
>
> [A little time after, casting the external eye unintentionally on a crucifix, the soul touched so suddenly, so sharply, that I could not even view it any longer externally, but internally. I was astonished to see this second person of the holy Trinity, treated in this way for my sins and those of men. It would seem to me altogether impossible to express what took place on the inside, and particularly the excellence and dignity of this second person.] (106)

While Acarie does not provide details on what this interior experience consisted of, finding it impossible to express, this visualization certainly seems to approach the "imitation of the God-Man's own *interior* life" advocated for by Bérulle and the French School (Matthiesen 153).

Madame Acarie relates a similar experience in a letter to de Marillac from 1616. Approaching the steps to the hermitage of Calvary, presumably a place of retreat on the grounds of the Amiens Carmel, she recalls: "À la première marche, l'esprit fut touché, et eut quelque lumière sur les pensées et occupations intérieures qu'avait le Fils de Dieu, faisant le voyage du Calvaire [At the first step, the mind was so touched, and had some light on the thoughts and interior occupations that the Son of God had, making the journey to Calvary]" (113). Here, Madame Acarie explicitly describes the very practice that the French School takes for its second principle. In this way, the prayers in the *Vrais Exercices* provide an example of material one might use to begin meditation upon the exterior experiences of Jesus. Acarie's letters then reveal how one might enter into such a meditation in a way that provides access to an experience of the interior states and dispositions of Jesus.

3) Emphasis of Baptism and the Eucharist

To some extent, the third principle theme of the French school of spirituality is implicated in the first and the second, as both the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist revolve around an initiation into divine communion.[7] In the case of baptism, this initiation entails a cleansing of sin and an acceptance into the community of the faithful. In the Eucharist, this initiation consists of receiving the body and blood of Jesus, under the appearance of bread and wine, in the act of Communion. We observed above that Acarie often links the desire for union with Christ to the reception of the Eucharist, referred to as the "sainte Sacrement [holy Sacrament]," in the *Vrais Exercices*. The terms "sainte Sacrement" and "Hostie [Host]," the name for the bread of the Eucharist, appear twelve times in the first four exercises. Though some

[7] For further explanation of these sacraments in Catholic theology, see the following articles in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: William Fanning, "Baptism" and Joseph Pohle, "The Blessed Eucharist as a Sacrament."

of these spiritual exercises were part of the collection of prayers prepared for Acarie's daughter on the topic of the Eucharist, as explained by Duval (352), the exercises in which these terms feature the most, six times in #3 and four times in #4, are not included in that assortment. In any case, the lexical evidence suggests that Acarie stresses the sacrament of the Eucharist, which is reminiscent of the characteristics of the French school.

On the contrary, the sacrament of baptism appears directly cited only once in the *Vrais Exercices*. Madame Acarie, in exercise #2, bemoans the sins she has committed since her own baptism:

> Ô plût à votre souveraine bonté que je ne Vous eusse jamais offensé, mais au contraire que j'eusse conservé mon âme en cette pureté et innocence, de laquelle l'aviez embellie après le Baptême.
>
> [Oh were it pleasing to your sovereign goodness that I had never offended You, but on the contrary that I had conserved my soul in this purity and innocence with which you had embellished it after Baptism.] (31)

By lamenting the loss of the purifying effects of baptism, Acarie underscores the importance of it. This usage may be the only instance of the name of the sacrament, but various words and expressions relating to purity, purification, and cleansing appear throughout several of the exercises. Exercise #3 contains a call for a baptism not with water but with the blood of Jesus: "Lavez-moi, mon doux Jésus, de votre précieux sang, guérissez-moi, et me santifiez parfaitement [Wash me, my sweet Jesus, with your precious blood, heal me, and sanctify me perfectly]" (33). The lines that follow connect the action of baptism with that of the Eucharist, affirming that in receiving Communion, the believer hopes to be "purgé et nettoyé de tout péché [purged and cleansed of all sin]" (33). Returning to exercise #12, in which the soul is the addressee, Acarie exhorts, "Lave-toi, purifie-toi, nettoie-toi, et chasse bien loin de ton cœur, par vraie contrition et

déplaisance, toute soillure d'iniquité et macule de péché [Wash yourself, purify yourself, cleanse yourself, and chase far away from your heart, by true contrition and displeasure, all stain of iniquity and spot of sin]" (72). With this example, the soul is instructed to be the agent of its own purification. Although this purification is not consistent with the typical form of baptism, in which the sacrament is administered by another person, Catholic theology supports the concept of a "baptism of desire" (Fanning). While not technically a sacrament in its own right, this "baptism of desire" is considered efficacious when the soul expresses "a perfect contrition of heart" like that "true contrition" called for in Acarie's spiritual exercise. Consequently, Madame Acarie's *Vrais Exercices* reflect a lexical emphasis on the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.

4) A Democratic Holiness

The fourth and final main principle of the French school of spirituality is an affirmation of democratic holiness, that is, the stance that sanctification and, moreover, the type of spirituality espoused by the French school are accessible to anyone and everyone, regardless of position, occupation, and state in life. If the core of the French school is an assertion that all have the potential to share in the divine life through reception of the sacraments and contemplation of the specific experiences and interior dispositions of Jesus, then that potential is precluded for no individual (Matthiesen 161). Madame Acarie implies as much in at least one of the *Vrais Exercices*, affirming that by merit of the "dignité admirable [admirable dignity]" and "grande simplicité [great simplicity]" of the ordinary human soul, one can become "l'hôtesse d'un si noble et si excellent Hôte [the hostess of so noble and so excellent a Guest]" (71-2). One need not have a particular status, vocation, or role in the world to possess the potential for union with God; the only prerequisite is a human soul. Yet this formulation reflects the fourth principle of

the French school on a conceptual level; to leave the point there would be to misunderstand wholly Acarie's approach to spirituality. This idea must, therefore, be supplemented by a consideration of how it colors the practical advice Madame Acarie offered to others.

In her letter to Madame de Meignelay, written sometime between April of 1614 and April of 1615, Acarie advises her friend on whether or not she should join a religious community. While expressing high esteem for the religious life, and having entered it herself, Madame Acarie finds it better for Madame de Meignelay to remain in the world and that her friend will benefit from doing so:

> Entrer en religion, c'est beaucoup recevoir de Dieu. Mais demeurer dans le siècle, avec les dispositions et désirs qu'il vous a donnés, je confesse que c'est beaucoup lui donner. Oh, comme il y en a peu qui puissent se donner de cette manière, abandonnant tout ce qui est de leur propre intérêt et y demeurer pour Lui seul, le monde leur restant dehors et dedans pour croix. Oh, s'il se trouvait une âme avec cette disposition et dégagement, combien Il en serait honoré!
>
> [To enter into religion, this is a lot to receive from God. But to live in the world, with the dispositions and desires that he gave to you, I confess that it is a great deal to give to him. Oh, as there are few of those in the world who can give of themselves in this manner, abandoning all that which is in their own interest and living there for Him alone, the world remaining outwardly and inwardly for them a cross. Oh, if there were a soul with this disposition and detachment, how much would He be honored in it!] (102-3).

With this exhortation, Madame Acarie not only professes the possibility that a life lived in the ordinary world can glorify God and lead to holiness, but also indicates that this route can be even more meritorious than a life as a religious brother or sister or a clergy member.

Similarly, in the treatise she prepared for the choice of a state in life, Madame Acarie informs her spiritual protégé on the importance of discerning the vocation most suitable to each

individual (149-52). Acarie declares that this discernment does not require extraordinary measures: “la voie ordinaire [the ordinary route]” suffices, in which one is attentive to the example of Jesus found in the Gospel and the internal inspirations received from God (Duval 351-2). We cite here Duval’s account of the treatise because the summary version made by Boucher and reproduced in Sesé’s edition of Acarie’s writings distorts at times her meaning. For example, whereas in Boucher’s summary this point reads “Il suffit de peser les raisons pour et contre [It suffices to weigh the reasons for and against]” (152), there is no mention of such a systematic evaluation of the positives and negatives in Duval’s account. Rather, Acarie suggests a more organic route relying on inspiration. Hence, the counsel Madame Acarie offers in this treatise echoes the idea of “a hidden, ordinary spiritual path” advocated for by the key figures of the French school (Matthiesen 149-50). Accordingly, we find that each of the four main principles of the French school of spirituality are represented in the diverse writings of Madame Acarie.

Criticism on the *Vrais Exercices*

As previously noted, there is relatively little scholarship that exists addressing the writings of Madame Acarie. While the *Vrais Exercices* first appeared in 1622, Sesé states that there is no existing autograph and that the “*opuscule* [booklet]” appeared in a second and third edition in 1623 and 1624, respectively (12-3). Since these appear to have been forgotten until they were rediscovered in the 20th century, there are few scholars that treat the *Vrais Exercices*. Moreover, those that do so rely heavily on the reproduction and analysis of Bruno de Jésus-Marie. Unfortunately, during the time and confines of this study, Bruno’s text is inaccessible.[8]

[8] See note 5 above.

We can only evaluate what subsequent scholars—Sheppard, Diefendorf, and Sesé, for example—tell us about Bruno's commentary. Though these indirect accounts may not give the full picture of Bruno's critique, lack of full access to this source has allowed our study the freedom to make a largely independent analysis of the *Vrais Exercices*, evaluating them on their own merits without the bias of previous criticism. Nonetheless, we take into consideration the views Sheppard, Diefendorf, and Sesé report about the analysis given by Bruno.

Sheppard, whose biography appeared only a decade after Bruno's text, notes that while Duval and Boucher included certain excerpts of the *Vrais Exercices* unassociated with the volume within their respective biographies, "as for the rest, it must be acknowledged, as Fr. Bruno admits, that certain portions of it 'betray another pen.'" (201). Bruno's comment about "another pen" is confusing out of context, and Sheppard does not adequately address it; his own conjectures on Madame Acarie's spiritual teaching simply note her primary influences. Sheppard also remarks that the *Vrais Exercices* were not mentioned in the witness testimonies for Acarie's beatification process. For his part, Shephard sees potential influences on Acarie's writings from Benoît de Canfeld's *Rule of Perfection*[9] and Acarie's various encounters with Franciscans and their variants, during her youth at Longchamp and her familiarity with the Capuchin community on the rue Saint-Honoré, as well as, obviously, the Carmelite tradition. In his preface to *Écrits spirituels*, Sesé similarly speculates on the various sources that may have shaped the development of Acarie's interior life (13-6). Yet the quote from Bruno, highlighted by Sheppard, goes further than tracing inspiration, appearing to suggest that the *Vrais Exercices* may not have been of Acarie's hand.

[9] Whether or not Acarie read this work, Canfeld was her spiritual advisor from 1592 to 1594 (Sheppard 23, 90).

Diefendorf offers enlightenment on this point, claiming that the *Vrais Exercices* "have been shown to be largely an expansion of and embroidery on a variety of late medieval spiritual writings, most particularly a treatise by Louis de Blois, a Flemish mystic" (85). A few pages later, she gives as example of the embellished material an image, that "of plunging one's sins into Christ's wounds," used in exercise #2; but Diefendorf goes on to argue that the sentiments expressed in the *Vrais Exercices* are nonetheless "clearly heartfelt and not mere mechanical borrowings" (89). In her notes, Diefendorf explains her reasoning for calling these devotional writings "derivative", if not inauthentic, tracing a history in witness testimonies of Acarie leaning on various books or passages from spiritual treatises and scripture for her own or others' meditation, as was common practice at the time (89n46). Yet inspiration does not equate imitation, and even this sort of imitation, if it be that, for it more closely resembles adaptation, does not constitute lack of originality. If that were the case, much of the poetry included in various literary canons around the world would be considered wholly unoriginal for sheer fact of having employed the metaphor of a rose for beauty or the season of springtime for youth. On the contrary, the use of a familiar convention or image places these works in correspondence with the existing tradition while at the same time contributing to that body of work in existence. Moreover, Diefendorf herself does something similar in expanding upon Bruno's analysis of the *Vrais Exercices*, embroidering it with her own nuanced understanding.

Furthermore, Madame Acarie would hardly have been trying to write anything revolutionary when she composed these spiritual exercises, out of concern for adherence to orthodoxy. We have already noted that she and her circle were wary of figures who professed to have personal visions and revelations, and that Acarie herself was greatly troubled by her own mystical experiences, as Duval reports (252). Diefendorf aptly points out that "[o]riginality was

not valued by Acarie (or others of her generation), particularly where spiritual writings were concerned" (89). In fact, they considered the most prominent new lines of thought in religion during this period—Protestantism—to be grievous heresy. Additionally, reform movements that swept across the religious houses of Europe prior to and in the 1500s and 1600s were often spurred by a desire to return to a more rigorous observance of older traditions (Armstrong 520). The Discalced Carmelite Order exemplified this tendency, and Acarie's involvement here, as well as with other reforms, indicates that she held similar views. What Madame Acarie presented, then, was herself: her own engagement with and response to pre-existing concepts and a long-standing tradition.

Conclusion

There exists no intent to develop an altogether novel conception of spirituality in the writings of Madame Acarie, as doing so would have been deemed doctrinally dangerous. Rather, the *Vrais Exercices* and Acarie's other preserved writings formulate in her particular voice the devotional currents contemporary to the era, namely the French school of spirituality. In this way, Madame Acarie contributes to the body of spiritual texts produced at the time and presents them to her particular audience. The second half of the title given to the *Vrais Exercices* upon their publication in 1622 indicates their intended audience: *très propres à toute Âmes qui désirent ensuivre sa bonne vie* [*Very Suitable for Souls Who Desire to Follow Her Good Life*]. Rather than a treatise written for the clergy or by a member of a religious order for their brothers or sisters in the community, the *Vrais Exercices* aimed specifically for those who wished to follow the model of Madame Acarie's life, a life that was primarily lived in the world as a wife

and mother.[10] With this text, therefore, these spiritual exercises, in building upon an established tradition and even if adapting the writings of others, as Diefendorf claims, are rendered accessible to the average person, most especially the average laywoman.

Thus, the association that Bremond makes between the spiritual teaching of de Sales and the example of Madame Acarie is underscored by the *Vrais Exercices*. De Sales' teaching stands synonymous with the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, a collection of writings he prepared for his spiritual mentees. Published in 1608, this work swiftly became "the most popular and beloved guide to the path to sanctity for men and women living in the world" (viii). De Sales explains his objective as, "to teach those who are living in towns, at court, in their own households, and whose calling obliges them to a social life, so far as externals are concerned" (x). Surely Madame Acarie, if anyone, exemplifies this concept, as Bremond asserts. In the preface to *Introduction to the Devout Life*, de Sales proclaims that the ideas he presents therein are nothing new, only an original arrangement of them:

> Even so the Holy Spirit of God disposes and arranges the devout teaching that he imparts through the lips and pen of his servants with such endless variety that, although the doctrine is ever one and the same, their treatment of it is different, according to the varying minds whence that treatment flows. Assuredly I neither desire, nor ought to write in this book anything but what has been already said by others before me. I offer you the same flowers, dear reader, but the bouquet will be somewhat different from theirs, because it is differently made up. (x)

[10] Some may contest my claim by pointing out that Madame Acarie is referred to in the title by her religious name, Marie of the Incarnation, rather than her name as it was when she was a wife and mother in the world. The *Vrais Exercices* were published in 1622, only four years after Acarie's death at the Carmel of Pontoise in 1618. Having entered the Discalced Carmelites as a lay sister in 1614, she died as a religious sister; it is thus fitting to refer to her by the name she embraced upon entering Carmel. Yet anyone familiar with her story, as those living at the time would have been given her prominence in society and the French Church, anyone who knew at all "sa bonne vie [her good life]" and wished to follow it, would have been presented with a model of four years in the convent preceded by thirty-two years in her first vocation.

Just as for de Sales, the writings of Madame Acarie do not pretend to make any novel claims; rather, the words preserved in her *Vrais Exercices*, correspondence, and other devotional treatises constitute a bouquet as singular in nature as that of their author. In this way, the writings of Madame Acarie should rightly be considered a valuable contribution to Post-Reformation Catholic spirituality in France.

CONCLUSION

Following Madame Acarie's death in 1618, many admirers flocked to her tomb to pay homage to the believed saint, including Marie de Médicis and Anne d'Autriche (Duval 627-8).[1] Duval published the first biography of Acarie in 1621; by 1625, the work was already in its seventh edition, translated into several other languages, and known throughout Europe (628). In 1626, a marble mausoleum intended to house Acarie's remains was completed for which Louis XIII furnished the marble and his mother and Michel de Marillac provided the funds (629).[2] The monument had two identical faces on either side of a shared wall, one on the inside of the convent, in the chapel of the founders, and the other on the outside, in the chapel of St. Thérèse, "en sorte que les religieuses et le peuple pouvaient également satisfaire leur dévotion envers la Bienheureuse [so that the nuns and the people could equally express their devotion to the Blessed]" (629). More than merely a practical convenience, this design choice reflects Madame Acarie's life: at once inhabiting both secular and religious environments, public and private spheres. Acarie became a role model and intercessor for laity and religious people alike up to and during the 19th century. With the dawn of the 20th century, however, Acarie's position in the history of the Church during the late 1500s and early1600s in France began to be overshadowed by later figures such as Pierre de Bérulle and his followers. In his landmark study of religious sentiment in France, Henri Bremond both established the term "the French school of spirituality" to describe the Catholic revival that occurred in 17th century France and firmly excluded

[1] An appendix to the 1893 edition of Duval's text consulted throughout this study provides the information and the following citations.

[2] The mausoleum was completed in 1625, but Acarie's remains were not placed there until 1643, due to papal restrictions on public veneration of non-beatified persons. Acarie was not beatified until 1791, but her remains were nonetheless moved to the mausoleum by 1643 due to preservation concerns (Duval 631-4). In 1792, when the nuns were forced to leave their convents, the mausoleum was demolished, and its contents mostly destroyed (642).

Madame Acarie from this movement, albeit acknowledging her importance in the period immediately prior to the French school. Bremond's portrayal of the development of 17th-century spirituality in France is largely the cause of Acarie's diminished presence, and subsequent scholarship has generally taken his work for its model. On the contrary, this study demonstrates Madame Acarie's written link to the French school, as well as her other fundamental contributions to the developments of Post-Reformation French Catholicism.

Madame Acarie's most prominent legacy is the introduction of the Order of Discalced Carmelites to France. Through our explanation we have shown the significance of the Carmelite tradition and its development over the centuries. Chapter One traced the origins of the Carmelites from their genesis on Mount Carmel, in the Haifa region of Israel, through the European migration and the resulting transformation of the Order from an eremitical to a mendicant community. The 16th-century reform movement led by Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross resulted in the separation of the Discalced (OCD) from the Calced (OCarm) Carmelites in 1593. Even prior to the Teresian reform being introduced to France by Madame Acarie and her associates, French Carmelites had a major role in shaping the tradition of the Order. The Normand John Soreth, as Prior General of the Carmelites from 1451-1471, established a rule and constitutions for Carmelite nuns, creating the feminine branch of the Order in 1452. Soreth entrusted the founding of the first Carmel for women to Françoise d'Amboise, Duchess of Brittany, who made Carmelite nuns widely known and respected. The Carmels founded by d'Amboise and those who later followed her model existed up until the French Revolution, but they were ultimately eclipsed in reputation by the presence of the Discalced Carmelites that Acarie introduced to France in 1604.

Whereas French Carmelite nuns were guided by d'Amboise's legacy of regulations, their Spanish counterparts experienced the deterioration of cloistered communal life common to many religious communities in that age due to overburdened monasteries and relaxed observance of the respective rules that set the parameters for a community's lifestyle. Teresa of Avila, having encountered the problems resulting from these issues in the Carmelite monastery of the Incarnation in Avila, Spain, founded a community that would return to a more faithful observance of the rule given to early Carmelites.[3] This rule called for a return to the origins of the Carmelite tradition via a more austere lifestyle than that practiced under the mitigated regulations introduced during the Order's metamorphosis in Europe, strict enclosure for Carmelite nuns, and an emphasis on solitary contemplative prayer. Initially the source of much contention with the Carmelite community, the Discalced Carmelites who followed the Teresian reform became a distinct Order at the end of the 16th century and are now the more recognizable of the two branches of Carmelites.

Chapter Two examined Madame Acarie's leading role in bringing the Teresian reform to France. Even though the endeavor to establish the Order of Discalced Carmelites was a collaborative effort involving several major 17th-century figures from both society and the Church, including Bérulle, François de Sales, and Mlle de Longueville, Acarie assembled this collective and spearheaded the project herself. Consequently, she is rightly called foundress and mother of the Discalced Carmelites in France. Beginning with the first foundation in Paris in 1604, French Discalced Carmelites continued to contribute to the Carmelite Tradition, drawing upon the eremitical roots of the Order while at the same time distinguishing themselves from

[3] The first rule of the Carmelites was the Rule of St. Albert, given by the patriarch of Jerusalem sometime between 1205 and 1214. Teresa of Avila's reform embraced in fact the 1247 revision of the Rule of St. Albert approved by Innocent IV.

Discalced Carmelites in Spain and Italy. Most notably, Acarie and her associates sought dual approval from the pope and the king of France, thereby permitting them not simply to found one monastery in Paris but also to lay the groundwork for a whole network of Carmels reaching every corner of France. Furthermore, governance of the French Discalced Carmelite nuns was placed not in the hands of Discalced friars but in those of Jesuit, Oratorian, and secular priests, given that Discalced friars did not exist in France at that time. Lastly, the French Discalced Carmelites were approved with a stipulation from the Parlement of Paris that the nuns be sustained by fixed annual revenues rather than relying on changeable donations. All of the aforementioned actions made French communities of the Discalced Carmelite Order separate from those variants found in other European countries during this period.

The current prominence of the Order of Discalced Carmelites as one of the most celebrated religious communities in the world owes much to its French members. The first monastery in Paris was quickly followed by several other foundations, such that there were at least fourteen French Carmels at the time of Acarie's death in 1618. From France, the Order quickly spread to other countries, and many 21st-century Carmels across the globe can trace their roots to France. Moreover, several of the Order's most well-known figures came from France. The Carmelite martyrs of Compiègne hold a significant role in Carmelite history as well as in French history and culture in general. The story of their execution on the guillotine not only demonstrates the ferocity of the Reign of Terror but also captivates writers, dramatists, and audiences to this day through the plays, films, and operas into which the event has been incorporated. Thérèse of Lisieux may have spent her short and quiet adult life in the cloister of the Lisieux Carmel, but her writings have posthumously made her famous. She is one of only four women to hold the title Doctor of the Church and devotion to her continues to flourish

worldwide. Thérèse's contemporary, Élisabeth of the Trinity, likewise lived a brief life yet left behind brilliant spiritual writings when she died at the age of twenty-four in the Carmel of Dijon. The Compiègne Carmelites, Thérèse, and Élisabeth all evidence a spirituality that includes the motivation for founding the Discalced Carmelites, a desire for reparation for the wounds inflicted by religious conflicts and for restoration of the Church in France. These spiritual daughters of Madame Acarie also supported an approach to devotion practiced by Acarie herself, that of a spirituality accessible to anyone and everyone in the ordinary moments of everyday life, whether lived in the cloister or in the world. All these religious women left a lasting impact on much of Catholic history and thought.

Chapter Three described Madame Acarie's contributions to Post-Reformation French Catholicism through an examination of the social, political, and ecclesiastical circumstances during the period in which she lived. Though she wavered as a young girl between her own affinity for the religious life and her family's expectation that she would marry, Madame Acarie successfully and happily navigated her roles as wife, mother, and socialite of the Parisian elite upon her marriage to Pierre Acarie. During their marriage, Madame Acarie took charge of managing their extensive household, a common practice and avenue of patronage power for early modern noblewomen. When Pierre's involvement with the Catholic League left him exiled by the king and their family in financial ruin, Acarie handled their financial and legal issues. Relying on her business acumen and diplomatic skills, Madame Acarie triumphed in restoring the family's property and obtaining her husband's pardon from the king. Her administrative perspicacity likewise aided her oversight of the building of the first Discalced Carmelite monastery in Paris.

Madame Acarie enjoyed respect for her achievements inside and outside of the home. She came to be known as a gifted spiritual advisor. So many clergy members and lay persons frequented the Acarie estate on the Rue des Juifs in Paris that a spiritually oriented salon developed around Acarie. Though the Acarie salon was of a thematically different character than the later literary salons of the 17th and 18th centuries in France, it nonetheless existed as a means of accessing the indirect power of relationships which the advent of salons permitted women. As an extension of this salon, Madame Acarie participated in the reform of numerous houses of religious communities. Since Acarie was a married laywoman, it is remarkable that her counsel was sought by clergy and religious, as these groups typically looked for guidance within their own communities, seeing themselves as the advisors to the laity and not vice versa. Madame Acarie's blending of worldly and ecclesiastical action reflects the complex and changing relationship between clergy and laity in her epoch. The relations between Church and State in France were complicated and in flux in the 1500s and 1600s. Both French ecclesiastical hierarchy and state institutions showed increasing support for a Gallic Church that limited papal authority. Political factions were nearly indistinct from religious interest groups, and the monarchy at times appeased these groups to secure its authority. These trends resulted in a unique Church-State relationship in France. As a reformer in the Church, and having herself been caught up in the clash of political-religious factions via her husband's involvement with the Catholic League, Madame Acarie navigated these turbulent conditions and, through her foundation of Discalced Carmelite monasteries which brought together former rivals, did her part to aid in the national reconciliation taking place for both the French Church and State in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

Chapter Four analyzed Madame Acarie's writings. Given her close association with and significant influence on several crucial figures, such as Bérulle and de Sales, in the Catholic revival in France in the 1500s and 1600s, Acarie's texts merit discussion in the context of the currents of thought prevalent during her time, namely the "French school of spirituality." Since Acarie's preserved writings are limited and because her sole published work *Les Vrais Exercices* fell into obscurity at some point between the 17th and 20th centuries, scholarship has rarely addressed this aspect of her life. The present study examines Acarie's writings, including both devotional texts and epistolary correspondence. Though Acarie has long been perceived as a marginal presence among the French school's key figures and predecessors, a thorough analysis of her writings through the lens of its four vital tenets proves that her written legacy reflects all the main principles of the French school's approach to spirituality.[4] Moreover, Madame Acarie's unique presentation of these lines of thought, as a woman who had lived devoutly in the world before entering the Carmel, rendered the French school of spirituality accessible to both laypeople and religious in a way that was not done by the theologian-priests who led this movement. Written by a laywoman rather than by a member of the clergy, the *Vrais Exercices* were described in their subtitle as "*très propres à toute Âmes qui désirent ensuivre sa bonne vie* [*Very Suitable for Souls Who Desire to Follow Her Good Life*]," implying that one need not be a professed religious brother or sister nor a priest to follow her example in the spiritual life. Therefore, Madame Acarie's writings may be counted among her other important contributions to Post-Reformation French Catholicism previously discussed.

[4] These principles are: 1) a central focus on the Incarnation, in which God became human in the person of Jesus Christ; 2) a union of the believer with Christ via a participation in the experiences and dispositions of Christ during his time on earth, operated through contemplative prayer; 3) an emphasis on the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist; and 4) an assertion that this path to sanctification is "a hidden, ordinary spiritual path" (Matthiesen 149-50).

Even though a paucity of Madame Acarie's writings have been preserved, we learn from her contemporaries and biographers that she was a prolific letter-writer.[5] Acarie composed another work, in addition to the texts assembled in the *Vrais Exercices*, but she herself destroyed that writing. The inaccessibility of Bruno de Jésus-Marie's edition, in which the *Vrais Exercices* were reproduced for the first time since the 17th century and wherein he offers his own analysis of this collection of spiritual exercises, makes it difficult to access his perspective on Acarie's work.[6] This study nonetheless offers a close reading of Acarie's writings through the lens of the French school of spirituality.

Further research will expound upon the important contributions that Madame Acarie made to Post-Reformation Catholicism in France. For example, a broader evaluation of the spiritual and devotional writings produced by women during the 17th-century Catholic revival in France could discuss gender parity in studies of the history of French spirituality. Barbara Diefendorf's work on the pious practices of women during this period, in which she observes a shift from penitential to charitable action, demonstrates the leadership of women in founding religious communities and charitable organizations during this period. Yet Acarie was not the only woman to leave written record of her approach to spirituality at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries, and these contributions merit consideration. The writings of Jeanne de Chantal, associate of de Sales, with whom she founded the Visitation Order, offer an opportunity to juxtapose the work of Acarie and a female contemporary.[7] Other areas of study include an examination of the extent to which the notion of Gallicanism, which created porous

[5] Fifteen letters survive, some of which exist only as fragments.

[6] See note 5 in Chapter Four.

[7] Jeanne de Chantal was the grandmother of Madame de Sévigné.

boundaries between Church and State in the 16th and 17th centuries, facilitated the French Revolution's censure of religious communities and ecclesiastical institutions. This study would be enhanced by comparing the complex Church-State dynamic prior to the Revolution, and the crafting of various policies of *laïcité* in subsequent centuries could provide useful insight into the complicated issues of *laïcité* in the 20th and 21st centuries in France.

In reflecting on Madame Acarie's legacy, one cannot help but observe the difficulty in pinpointing where private devotion ended and presence in the public sphere began. Her actions in society—serving the poor, founding and reforming religious communities, even pleading her husband's case before king and court—were informed by her interior spiritual journey and were the result of her connections with Church leaders and religious forces of the age. This dynamic existed not simply for Acarie but for much of French society in the 1500s and 1600s. During Acarie's era, it was difficult to draw divisions between personal faith and public action. 20th- and 21st-century formulations of *laïctié* have attempted to relegate religion to the personal, private realm in order to create a supposedly neutral public sphere—this attempt has become increasingly difficult to realize. By focusing on the evolution of the relationship between Church and State in past centuries, future research can illuminate the intricacies of public and private life, secular and spiritual action, in modern-day France.

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