

# Some notes on the Touraine Reform

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## PRAYER AND ITS PROBLEMS, SOLITUDE

It was especially through their Constitutions of the Stricter Observance the Carmelites participated in the fervor of the Catholic Reformation at every level.<sup>1</sup> The Order was led back to the source of its being and made consciously aware of its vocation to prayer. It produced an abundant and significant spiritual literature, the record of the religious experience of its choicest spirits, among them not a few members of the Third Order which continued to evolve toward its present form. The Marian element of Carmelite spirituality was stressed, especially through the Scapular Confraternity. The apostolate became interiorized and charged with new zeal. Even materially the Order prospered: in spite of wars and pestilence its numbers grew, its convents and churches were embellished or rebuilt in the new style.

## **Liturgical Prayer**

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<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Reformation denotes the Reformation of the Catholic Church that came about chiefly in reaction to the various Reformations led by the early Protestant reformers who broke with the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century. While the Catholic Reformation can be traced back to the Reforms of the Spanish Church under Ferdinand and Isabella, a generation before Martin Luther, it primarily refers to the reforms mandated by the Council of Trent (1545-1562).

Like other medieval Orders, the Carmelites were charged by the Church with the community celebration of the liturgy. The first concern of the constitutions and of canonical visitators was the liturgical prayer of communities. This concern was often directed to externals such as cleanliness and the condition of the vestments and sacred vessels, but at the time such details could not always be taken for granted. Under Clement VIII exemptions from participation in choir were no longer tolerated. However, graduate students, lecturers and preachers preparing sermons were dispensed from some of the hours or attended by turns. Matins continued to be celebrated at midnight, a heavy burden on communities engaged in the apostolate and often neglected by less fervent ones.

The improvement in the quality of religious life and the promotion of contemplative prayer wrought especially by the Stricter Observance had their effect on liturgical prayer as it was celebrated both by the religious and the laity. The Divine Office, recited or chanted with devotion and solemnity, was also a source of edification for the people, as the choir was normally situated in clear view of the faithful, around or behind the high altar. The celebration of the liturgy in the Carmelite churches at Brussels and Guelders so impressed Magdalene de Cusance that in 1652 she prevailed on her husband, Count Albert van den Bergh, to bring the Carmelites to Boxmeer.

The liturgical books in use were substantially those of the Tridentine reform already described under the 16<sup>th</sup> century: Caffardi's breviary (1585) and missal (1587), and Fantoni's ceremonial (1616). The offices of the Carmelite saints, eliminated from these books but preserved by the Discalced friars and nuns, were finally added, together with feasts meanwhile acquired, to Orlandi's breviary (Antwerp, 1672) and editions by subsequent priors general.

In the renaissance of the liturgy chant books took on their modern form. Sebastian Fantoni issued a *Directorium* (Naples, G. G. Carlini, 1614), containing musical texts for Mass and office, as well as a *Processionale*, or chants for processions. Reprinted by following priors general Orlandi (1668), Barberi (1699), Laghi (1755), Ximenez (1774), it remained the official chant book until the reform of Gregorian chant in the twentieth century. The composer, or compiler, was Archangelus Paoli (d. 1635), prior and novice master in the Carmine of Florence.

Two provinces produced their own chant books. The Flemish province issued a *Directorium chori* in a beautiful edition by Plantin (Antwerp, 1650). The *Processionale*, published separately, was more comprehensive than the Order's. Processions, inherited from the Rite of the Holy Sepulcher, were a larger feature of the Carmelite Rite than of the Roman Rite. When the archbishop of Mechelen, suffering from Jansenist tendencies, attempted to restrict these processions in 1674 there was considerable controversy. The distinguished musician, Benedict of St. Joseph (Buns), revised his province's chant books: the directory with the title *Manuale chori* (Brussels, 1721); and the *Processionale* (Antwerp, 1711).

It should cause no surprise that the Portuguese province, so devoted to music, sacred and profane, should wish to create its own chant books. Caspar Campeilo (d. 1622), novice master at the Carmo of Lisbon, composed a *Processionarium* (Lisbon 1610), revised in 1642 by Anthony Segre, director of chant in the same convent. An Italian edition appeared in Venice in 1717. This book seems to be the predecessor of the *Directorium chori* (Lisbon, 1754), the work of Louis Caesar de Menezes, published posthumously by an anonymous member of the province.

Extant provincial acts show that the director of chant at the Carmo of Lisbon was appointed by the provincial chapter.

## **Mental Prayer and Contemplation**

Although the reform of the Order brought about a renewal of the liturgy, its most striking feature was its emphasis on the contemplative nature of the Order. ‘We profess,’ the constitutions of the Stricter Observance expressly declare, “that the first and foremost part of our institution consists in prayer and contemplation” (pt. 1, ch. 14, no. 1).

The life of prayer of the Order underwent a profound renewal. Mental prayer was assiduously practiced, leading not infrequently to mystical experience. This contemplative renaissance took place, not surprisingly, in terms of contemporary spirituality. Medieval forms gave way to the practice of methodical meditation, examination of conscience, eucharistic adoration, and annual retreats. Mental prayer, imposed on all religious by Clement VIII, was spread through the Order by Henry Sylvio and his successors. We have seen that Prior General Sylvio not only ordered meditation to be made but where necessary taught the brethren a method. He recommended especially Peter of Alcantara and Louis of Granada.

The directory of novices of the Touraine province developed a “Carmelite” method of making mental prayer. Translated into Latin and Italian, it had a widespread influence in the Order until modern times. Five kinds of prayer are distinguished: oral, mental, mixed, aspirative, and unitive (or contemplative) prayer. The Touraine method of making mental prayer or meditation owes much to the Jesuit School, especially to Francis Arias and Louis de la Puente. To the Dominican Louis de Granada the method probably owes its voluntaristic and affective tendencies. More distinctive is the emphasis on aspirative prayer, or the practice of the presence of God, considered to be especially adapted to implementing the injunction of the Carmelite rule to meditate day and night on the law of the Lord. Here the influence of John of St. Samson and of Dominic of St. Albert is particularly discernible and through them that of the Franciscan

Henry Herp. The directory stops on the threshold of mystical prayer as a condition not likely to be found in novices, though it does deal with what it calls 'the prayer of simple regard.' The mystical experience of the Order is recorded in the works of its spiritual writers.

The practice of the prayer of simple regard was widespread, also among the laity, who were guided in every stage of the spiritual life by their directors. Spiritual direction was a favored ministry of the Carmelites.

### **Quietism**

Mystics attempting to describe ineffable experiences in a language other than that of professional theology have always been subject to a certain amount of misunderstanding and suspicion in the Church. They will be the first to admit that the eerie landscape they traverse is fraught with dangers and pitfalls. Not all have managed to emerge unscathed, and as a matter of fact the specter that had haunted the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries finally assumed reality in the Quietism of Michael Molinos (1628-1696), a Spanish priest resident in Rome, author of a *Spiritual Guide* (1675), who was alleged to have taught that the highest state of the spiritual life consisted in a passivity in which sinful actions were no longer such. In 1687 Innocent XI condemned 68 propositions supposed to reflect his teachings. Similar action was taken against the Oratorian Cardinal Peter Matthew Petrucci (d. 1701).

One of the members of the commission created by the pope to censure the propositions of Molinos and Petrucci was Louis Perez de Castro (1635- 1689), of the Castilian province, doctor of the University of Toledo, who spent many years in Rome as regent in Traspontina and professor in the Sapienza. He is also noteworthy as a bibliographer and historian with a keen critical sense. Unfortunately perfectionist scruples prevented him from making public his works; written in a cramped, precise hand they repose in the archive of the Order in Rome. Among them

is a copy of his annotations to individual propositions of Molinos and a complete *datum* on propositions 13 to 24. Perez was a good choice for the commission. A professional theologian, he was also a man of prayer with a profound experience of the interior life. His criticisms show him to be a Baconist and complete master of the doctrines of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross which he uses as a touchstone of orthodoxy. The mystics speak of matters not unfamiliar to him, and his judgment is tempered by an understanding that penetrates beyond the letter of the text.

The Quietists found a kindred spirit in Maur of the Child Jesus. Jacques Bertot, director of Madame Guyon, includes letters of Maur in his *Directeur Mystique* (Cologne, 1726, 4 v.). Madame Guyon herself seems to borrow certain concepts and expressions from Maur (indirectly from John of St. Samson). If so, as has been recently shown, she misinterprets his doctrine. For that matter, Cardinal Petrucci quotes St. Mary Magdalena de' Pazzi in a Quietist sense.

Maur was one of the suspected targets of what the exuberant Brémond calls "Chéron's bomb." This was John Chéron's *Examen de le théologie mystique*, published in Paris in 1657 but given ecclesiastical approval in 1654 and 1655. This work, in which the anti-mysticism of the age reaches a vociferous climax, assaults not only the excesses of mysticism but mysticism itself. The language of the mystics bears the brunt of Chéron's attack. "In these recent mystics you will scarcely find four lines in succession in which they use the manner of speaking common to the rest of men." Scholastic theology offers all the necessary terminology; in fact the contrast of the mystics' works with scholastic theology lies at the root of Chéron's reproaches. Thus, the mystics' description of the parts of the soul "causes a horrible confusion." In regard to the possibility of experiencing God Chéron in effect excludes mystical experience.

Pourrat is less severe on Chéron, in whose *Examen* he sees a needed caution to submit mystical experience to theology. "Had his advice been followed," he concludes, "Quietism

would have been avoided.” Chéron intended his remarks “as a friend and brother,” but did not name the person who had the “fearful privilege” (to borrow Certeau’s phrase) of bearing this relationship. Jesuit superiors, sensitive to the issue of mysticism, made discreet inquiries.’ In his *Spiritual Guide*, especially in chapters 5-7, Surin goes out of his way to treat issues raised by Chéron. From scattered allusions however, it seems that the doughty Carmelite had in mind his Discalced confrere, Nicholas of Jesus and Mary (d. 1660), author of a glossary of expressions used by John of the Cross appended to the translation of the saint’s works by Cyprian of the Nativity (Paris, 1641). Long after, another Discalced, the learned Honoré of St. Mary, replied to Chéron in his *Dissertation apologétique* (Bordeaux, 1701). Maur might have been expected to respond to what in fact was an attack on his revered master John of St. Samson. On the contrary Chéron’s strictures may have inspired prudence in Maur, flattening his style and diminishing a warmth that might otherwise have been there.

Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux and court preacher to Louis XI, an opponent of the Quietist ideas of Archbishop Fénelon and the intractable Madame Guyon, himself practiced the prayer of simplicity, pervasive of the era, taught him by his confessor, René of St. Albert (d. 1691). It was while he was prior of Les Billettes, the Parisian house of the province of Touraine, that René came to know the “Eagle of Meaux.” In the course of his lifetime he filled all the offices of the province, serving as provincial, 1665-1669. He left no writings.

### **The Devils of Loudun (1632-1640)**

Not to speak of the grosser forms of obsession with the evil one—witchcraft and witch trials—the devil played a large role in the spirituality of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Mystics, even genuine ones, claimed to experience his influence in the form of supernatural phenomena, including

physical violence. The most clamorous case of alleged diabolical possession was that of the Ursuline nuns of Loudun, a circus which for years drew thousands of curious spectators. The Carmelites with a convent in the town could hardly be expected to remain aloof.

After their chaplain John Mignon, the first persons consulted by the nuns with regard to their puzzling experiences included a number of Carmelites: Antonin de la Charité (prior), Eusebius of St. Michael, Eligius of St. Peter, Calixtus of St. Nicholas, Peter Thomas of St. Charles, Philip of St. Joseph and Eugene of St. René (prior of Poitiers). The first official account of the exorcisms, dated October 7, 1632, was signed by Mignon, Peter Barré (canon of Chinon), Eusebius and Peter Thomas. The account of October 11, which specified Urban Grandier, curé of St.-Pierre-du-Marché, as the warlock responsible for the possession and roses as the instrument of the incantation, was witnessed by Mignon, Antonin, and Eusebius.

The trial of Grandier, ending in his condemnation to be burned, August 18, 1634, took place in the Carmelite convent of Loudun. Peter Thomas of St. Charles and Peter of St. Mathurin are known to have participated in the exorcisms of April 20, 1635, and January 6, 1636. The role of the Carmelites in the innumerable exorcisms remains to be investigated.

At the behest of Louis XIII, Leo of St. John journeyed to Loudun to report on the affair, arriving on July 8, 1635. He came away convinced that the nuns were indeed possessed. "Prudence alone requires us to conclude," he wrote to the king, "that so many young women, conspicuous for noble blood, age, respectability and virtue, are not guilty of a fiction or acting out a play in bad taste."

Such was also the conviction of Brother John of St. Samson who wrote letters of consolation to the Ursuline community and to Elizabeth Blanchard, one of the boarders, as well as a treatise on diabolical possession, addressed to an exorcist. The devil, he teaches, possesses

only the body; the spirit remains free and uncontaminated. Possession is a trial which offers God's friends a chance to prove their love. The exorcist need have no fear of Satan and should place his trust in God, but he should confine himself to the formulas of exorcism prescribed by the church and not indulge his curiosity by impertinent questions (advice badly needed in Loudun). In an exorcism of Elizabeth and Sister Suzanne on July 8, 1641, by Peter Thomas of St. Charles, Peter of St. Mathurin and Prosper of St. Louis, Bernardine of St. Pacomius applied a relic of Brother John to Elizabeth and was rewarded for his pains with several uncomplimentary remarks by the devil.

Among the many visitors to Loudun who published accounts of what they witnessed was an anonymous Carmelite of Poitiers, known only as "J.D.P.C.," who addressed to a confrere "A True Account of What Took Place at Loudun at the Exorcisms of the Possessed Young Women, Together with a Miracle that Happened in the Presence of All at Hand" The "miracle" occurred on December 1, 1636.

Some favored admitting Protestants to the exorcisms, so that they might be converted at the sight of the power of the Church over the devil. In other cases sinners were turned from their evil ways by the frightful goings on. Among these was Peter de K eriolet, councilor of the Parliament, who after witnessing an exorcism in 1636 was converted from his loose living ways, was ordained a priest and took to the road as a wandering pilgrim. His spiritual director was Dominic of St. Catherine (d. 1669) who also wrote his biography (Paris, 1663, etc.).

Valentine of St. Armel (d. 1680) was the spiritual director of Madame Jeanne Marie du Houx, friend and correspondent of Mother Joan of the Angels, and had originally introduced her to the Ursuline prioress.

The Carmelites of Loudun were no strangers to diabolical disturbances. From 1623 to 1625, before the phenomena began at the Ursulines, the convent was a prey to ghosts, strange noises, moving furniture, quakes that shook the whole structure. Peace was restored only after the provincial, Matthew Pinault, prescribed the Forty Hours' Devotion and a procession of the Blessed Sacrament through all the rooms of the house. Although the constitutions of 1626 prescribe measures against the practice of magic (pt. 3, ch. 6, no. 4), no provision is made concerning sorcery, possibly because so grave a matter was left to the competence of higher authority.

Alexis Porri (d. 1609), of the Mantuan Congregation, practiced exorcism in Venice and wrote a Discourse against Diviners (Venice, 1597) and *Antidotarium adversus daemones* (Venice, 1599).

As late as 1711 Noel Laimerie, en-provincial, was accused of sorcery, and several members of the convent of Toulouse confessed to attending witches' Sabbaths and practicing abominations. Punishment of sorcery lessened with the growth of toleration and the spread of agnosticism. With his brief *Sollicitudini*, Oct. 1, 1745, Benedict XIV regulated the practice of exorcism.

### **The Eremitical Life**

The return to the primitive ideal of the Order involved, besides the renewal of the spirit of prayer, the practice of solitude distinctive of the hermits of Mount Carmel and the early foundations of the Order in Europe.

It was the Discalced Thomas of Jesus who conceived the idea of establishing hermitages where the original Carmelite style of life could be observed. He founded the first "desert" at

Bolarque in Spain (1592), and it was in that country that most hermitages appeared, but the Italian Congregation issued the earliest legislation regarding this type of foundation.

The Stricter Observance, through Touraine, took over from the Discalced both the idea and the form of hermitages. The chapter which its constitutions devoted to this sort of foundation (pt. 1, ch. 2) is drawn almost literally from the Discalced legislation. An important difference is the requirement that the hermitage be attached to a convent.

‘We ordain that in every province there be one eremitical convent, remote from cities and the noise of people, where some of us may live under strict cloister, wholly dedicated to the contemplation of heavenly things and to the practices of holy solitude ‘(no. 1).

The hermitage, which should accommodate no more than twelve solitaries in separate dwelling places (no. 6), is attached to a regular convent, the prior and officials of which carry out necessary business with the outside world. Visiting friars should also be lodged in the convent, not the hermitage. The provincial’s permission is required to enter the area of the hermitage proper. The prior must visit each hermit once a week. On Sundays the hermits join the community in the convent for meditation, chapter of faults, office, Mass and a spiritual conference. On Thursdays the hermits gather to discuss Sunday’s conference. Likewise on the principal feasts and special occasions the hermits come to the convent for sung Mass and office.

In the hermitage Mass is recited, not sung, and the office is recited in a monotone with long pauses. Vestments should be made of wool, simple and unadorned, as should be all the appurtenances of the hermitage. The hermits are not to engage in scholarly pursuits, preach or hear confessions. Continual silence is to be observed “after the example of our Father Elijah, Leader and Prince of Hermits.” Besides two hours of meditation in common the hermits should

dedicate another hour in their cells “to this truly angelic exercise.” “The rest of the time they should be so occupied with the presence of God and heavenly conversation that they may truly strive to meditate day and night on the law of the Lord.” It was also prescribed that every year the prior should add a few trees, fruit-bearing and otherwise, so that the place “may be more apt for prayer and contemplation”— a curiously romantic touch (inherited from the Discalced) well in advance of Rousseau.

The practice of the solitary life was largely confined to France and Belgium, countries in which the Stricter Observance particularly flourished. The earlier Carmelite experiments with the solitary life, undertaken before the Stricter Observance had taken firm root, were less successful. In some cases it was a question of reviving previously existing hermitages, Carmelite or otherwise. Hermits, often attached to a rustic chapel, to the care of which they were appointed by the bishop, abounded everywhere.

### **St. Louis in the Forest of Valence (Aquitaine)**

In 1491, upon recommendation of Louis d’Amboise, Bishop of Albi, King Charles VIII granted a tract of land in his forest in Valence for a hermitage to a certain Pierre Dausits, apparently a Benedictine monk. After the latter’s demise the reforming bishop granted the hermitage dedicated to St. Louis to the reformed Congregation of Albi, in the founding of which he had played a leading role. Not unlikely, at least in the early fervent days of the Congregation, some Carmelites led the solitary life in the forest of Valence. During the religious wars, especially in 1574, when the Huguenots laid siege to Valence, there would have been little leisure for the contemplative life.

As in the case of other houses of the province of Aquitaine, the reform introduced by John Tuaut brought new life to the hermitage of St. Louis. In 1623, Angelus Bridel, commissioned by the prior of Albi, on which it depended, undertook the restoration of chapel and convent, buried under brambles and thorns, the lair of wild animals. Two years later the Bishop of Albi was able to bless the new chapel. At the time he began his work of reconstruction Bridel was a young friar of twenty-four years. In 1669 he is described as being seventy years of age, having lived in the hermitage for forty-eight years, thirty of them as vicar.

The structure renewed by Bridel faced east and contained the chapel of St. Louis, 27 ft. long, 15 ft. wide and 15 ft. high, with a single altar, two confessionals and a pulpit. A large porch fronted the chapel. The adjacent sacristy was 12 ft. square. An addition to the chapel in 1630 housed a kitchen and refectory. On the upper storey, but not over the chapel, were three rooms, reached by a wooden stair, one each for a guest, the sick, and a procurator.

Around 1653 a wing was added to the north, a barn for storing grain with a wine cellar. The upper story contained eight cells for religious. A third building was situated some distance to the southwest of the monastic structures. It contained a stable for horses, a bakery and a dining hall for hired laborers. The chapel and cells were enclosed within a fence of wooden stakes. Since the chapter of 1644 the hermitage of St. Louis had enjoyed the status of a convent independent of Albi. In 1688 the cornerstone of a new church was laid.

In a letter of 1670 to the Bishop of Albi, the provincial, Charles of St. Joseph, declared that the community of St. Louis “lived an eremitical life according to their institute.” Their life in any case did not exclude a certain amount of assistance in the hamlets round about, as parish registers attest. Although it had no “miraculous” image, the chapel was frequented by large crowds on certain feast days, especially the feast of St. Louis, when twelve confessors were not

enough. The degree to which the contemplative life was led in this remote place depended on the province's spiritual vitality, which like that of the Church in general declined in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Priors were elected to the hermitage down to the Revolution.

### **Graville (Under the Jurisdiction of the Prior General)**

Graville in the diocese of Bazas belonged under the immediate jurisdiction of the prior general. Its founder, Andrew Blanchard, was a member of the province of Narbonne, but Graville itself was situated in the Gironde, territory actually of the province of Gascony. Who the hermits were, or from what provinces they were recruited, is not known. The fact that the hermitage was the responsibility of the faraway prior general augured ill for its efficient administration, but the renaissance of the contemplative life had hardly begun, and there was no experience in the conduct of hermitages. The location of Graville would be explained by the friendship of Blanchard with its lord.

The latter, Count Henry de Gournai, Lord of Marcheville, travelled to Rome to request from the prior general permission to establish a hermitage. The Bishop of Bazas, Henry Listolfe Maroni, added his solicitations. On April 15, 1638, Prior General Theodore Straccio named Andrew Blanchard his commissary for the new foundation, to be made "in the place which the aforesaid Bishop Henry and Count Henry would assign to him." The hermitage was to be immediately subject to the prior general through his commissary who had the same powers as a provincial. Its members had no voice in the provincial chapter and could not leave the hermitage without the General's permission. All this is apparent from the brief of Urban VIII, May 4, 1639, confirming Straccio's patents. In 1637 the Prior General, as we have seen, had just finished his constitutions for reformed houses with its chapter on hermitages. He must have been gratified by

this blossoming of the eremitical spirit. His provisions for Graville are obviously suggested by the eremitical reform of Monte Oliveto.

Blanchard had been in communication with John of St. Samson in connection with his plan to found a hermitage. The constitutions of the Stricter Observance with its chapter on the eremitical life had not yet seen the light of day, and Blanchard's intentions were misunderstood. The definitors at the annual congregation of 1636 of the province of Narbonne appealed to Straccio to take due measures against this "form of institute distinct from any Carmelite institution, Discalced or regular observance." The Prior General gave Blanchard his full support. A certain M. de Quincarnon donated his domain of Graville, forty *arpents* of woodland in the parish of Bernos, fifteen kilometers from Bazas.<sup>2</sup> Pierre Drillhole, second archdeacon of Bazas, contributed 4,000 *livres* toward the construction of the hermitage. All these persons, including the bishop of Bazas, enjoyed some standing in Jansenist circles.

Little is known about the life and personality of Andrew Blanchard. He obtained the licentiate in theology at the University of Paris in 1628. In 1643 he became prior of Clermont. At the time of the foundation of the hermitage he was prior of Mende. His association with some of the reformed houses of the province, as well as his desire to lead the solitary life, suggests that he formed part of the group of reformers in the province. Blanchard is said to have composed statutes for the hermitage, now lost.

According to an extant list of priors of Clermont, Blanchard was again prior there in 1648. In that case he would not have been on hand in 1649 to admit the nemesis of the institution, the notorious prophet and mystic, John Labadie. This bizarre character was no stranger to the Bordelais. He had entered the Jesuit Order in Bordeaux and made his studies there. He also spent

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<sup>2</sup> An *arpent* is slightly less than an acre. One *arpent* equals .085 acres.

a year at the Jesuit college in Agen (1634), where he may have made the acquaintance of the eremitical community under the leadership of Anthony Sabré. He impressed all with his oratorical talents and mystical gifts, though not Surin, who detected in him a spirit of overweening pride. Great was the consternation when in 1638, Labadie requested to be dispensed from his religious vows, later alleging that this step had been necessary to respond to an interior call to restore primitive Christianity. As a secular priest he had already worn out his welcome in several dioceses by his curious doctrines, when he appeared at Graville.

There he at once summoned Sabré and his companions from their hermitage in Agen; together they made prior a certain Sylvester, probably one of their number. On April 28, 1650, Labadie left Graville, riding a donkey and carrying a large statue of Christ, and so was not there on May 3, when the new bishop of Bazas, Samuel Martineau, arrived to restore order. From Carmel Labadie that same year turned to Calvinism, which in turn he abandoned after a controversial career to found his own sect of Labadists. Sabré died on October 5, having seen the error of his ways and written an open letter to Labadie about his conversion to Calvinism (Bazas, 1651). Sabré's companions however continued contumacious, encouraged by Labadie's letters to reinstate Sylvester. Finally Martineau had recourse to the secular arm, invaded Graville by force, jailed seven of the hermits and sent the others away. The hermitage did not survive the disturbance. Labadie seemingly never made profession as a Carmelite.

From Clement of St. Bernard, subdelegated commissary, Blanchard received permission to leave the hermitage and return to his province of Narbonne. He appears a third time as prior of Clermont in 1655. He apparently did not finish his term, for it is certain that he was prior of Dijon in 1658. He died at Besan 1661.

## **Lormont (Gascony)**

The hermitage of Lormont had a venerable tradition antedating its occupation by the Carmelites. The chapel of St. Catherine of Lormont, situated on the cliffs above the Garonne at a point near the present railway tunnel to Orléans, was attended by a resident hermit. Earliest references date from 1386. In 1446 the Carmelites of Bordeaux obtained possession of chapel and hermitage from the owners of the property, heirs of the late Pey de Moulon de Camarsac, and thereafter supplied the “hermit” or chaplain for the chapel which was a popular place of pilgrimage, especially of mariners returning from long sea voyages. In 1570 the hermitage was destroyed by Huguenots. After the Great Pestilence of 1585, the Carmelites virtually abandoned the ruined hermitage, into which other hermits occasionally settled. In 1614 under the prior of Bordeaux, Raymond Rateguy, the situation was clarified and the exclusive rights of the Carmelites to the site confirmed. Thereafter the Carmelites continued to inhabit the hermitage and serve the chapel in spite of its ruinous state. Later practice shows that the Carmelites presented a friar who was then officially appointed to the office by the archbishop.

With the reform of the province of Gascony, Lorrnont entered a new phase of its history. To Andrew of St. Peter, former provincial and professor at the University of Bordeaux, and Maur of the Child Jesus, the hermitage above the Garonne seemed indicated as the hermitage prescribed for every reformed province by the constitutions of the Stricter Observance. Generous patrons for the renovation of the buildings presented themselves in the persons of the president of the parliament of Bordeaux, Arnaud de Pontac, and his learned and devout spouse, Louise de Thou, penitent of Surin and benefactress of the Discalced nunnery of Bordeaux. The pious couple desired “to contribute to the increase of the cult which the religious of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel render to so glorious a patroness and to augment as much as they can

devotion to the adorable mystery of the Infant Jesus. They further considered that “these places of retreat, established in so holy a fashion by the first founders of the said order, are very efficacious means for preserving the spirit of prayer, which is the soul of religious perfection, and moreover, these places of solitude are very suit able and conformable to the hidden state of soul characterizing the Holy Child Jesus during his infancy.” In the emphasis on the Divine Infancy it is not difficult to discern the hand of Maur of the Child Jesus.

During his visitation of Gascony Prior General Jerome Ari lent a ready ear to the project. Under his presidency the chapter held at Agen in 1664 gratefully accepted the generous offer of Arnaud de Pontac. The hermitage of Lormont was to be financially independent of the convent of Bordeaux and have control of all revenues accruing to it. Andrew of St. Peter was named procurator with powers to negotiate a contract with Pontac, oversee the construction, collect alms and live on the premises to supervise the work. As soon as the building was far enough advanced Andrew, Maur, and a laybrother, Roch of the Assumption, were authorized to take up residence at Lormont, after consultation with the provincial and permission from the archbishop. These arrangements did not affect the service of the chapel of St. Catherine. A chaplain, nominated by the community of Bordeaux and approved by the archbishop, might still offer the foundation Masses, but should have nothing to do with the hermits. If the chaplaincy should become vacant or be renounced, the hermits might assume its duties.

Thus authorized, Andrew proceeded to sign a contract with Arnaud and Louise, December 18, 1665. The hermitage was to be named St. Catherine of the Child Jesus. As soon as conditions permitted, Andrew, Maur and Roch were to take up residence in Lormont and remain there stably. They or their successors could not be removed except for canonical reasons. The hermitage was to accommodate up to three priests and one brother. Any besides the present

occupants were to be chosen by the hermits themselves together with the prior of Bordeaux and the provincial. Every Monday a Mass was to be offered in honor of the Divine Infancy. Further, the hermits were to remember their benefactors in their prayers and honor them as their patrons and founders. In return these agreed to contribute 8,000 *livres*: 6,000 to provide an endowment and 2,000 for construction.

Once the Prior General was safely on the other side of the Alps, the province had second thoughts about this alienation of income. The chapter of 1668, which elected Richard of St. Andrew provincial, while acknowledging the gracious gesture of Arnaud and his wife and agreeing that the hermitage should be rebuilt “according to the norms and usage of the Order and our constitutions about hermitages,” rejected the privileges granted to the hermits. The president of the chapter, Hilary of St. Joseph, formerly provincial, availed himself of his powers as commissary of the Prior General to abrogate the decrees of the chapter of Agen regarding Lormont. Maur accepted this decision and with Brother Roch was allowed to inhabit the hermitage. Andrew, who had walked out of the chapter in protest, was refused admittance to Lormont.

There followed one of those baroque legal battles into the labyrinthine ways of which it were best not to venture here. In 1677, Archbishop Henry de Béthune finally mediated the dispute in favor of the convent of Bordeaux, which however, was to enter on its rights only after the concession or death of Andrew. The latter condition was fulfilled in 1679.

Meanwhile, in 1671 the restoration of Lormont had begun. According to an 18<sup>th</sup> century report, the tiny chapel measured six by three meters. The sculptured retable of the single altar pictured St. Catherine with her wheel. Before her there appeared Christ and the Virgin; above her

was an angel. An arch supported by two panels with floral designs bore the arms of the Carmelite Order in silver and sable.

Joined to the chapel was the hermitage, consisting of five cells (two for guests), refectory and kitchen. Furnishings of the cells were sparse and austere. The library was lodged in the prior's cell, and its catalog has survived.

The hermits were allowed to leave their solitude for considerations of obedience or charity. Maur visited persons he directed in Bordeaux and elsewhere. In 1675 and 1685 he was elected provincial, in 1679 prior of Bordeaux. Around 1680 the hermits were joined by a layman, Charles de Brion, scion of a noble family, which tried every means to lure him back to the world. At the command of Maur, his spiritual director, he took orders. He stayed on at Lormont after Maur's death in 1690, but in 1701 moved into Bordeaux to the Hôpital de la Manufacture, a sort of refuge for the needy who were taught trades. There he remained until his family persuaded him to return to Paris.

How long thereafter the solitary life was lived in Lormont, if at all, is not known. With time the Bordeaux Carmel even lost interest in the chaplaincy. In 1766, Archbishop Louis Jacques d'Audibert de Lussan on pastoral visitation found the site abandoned, the chapel used as a tool-shed, the door to the hermitage missing. He ordered the Carmelites to renovate the chapel and restore it to sacred uses.

### **Basses Loges (Touraine)**

Oddly, Touraine did not take steps to fulfill the requirements of the constitutions regarding hermitages until relatively late. Since 1630 through the munificence of Louis XIII Les Billettes in Paris had possessed a hospice, known as Basses Loges, situated in the Forest of

Fontainebleau near the Seine, a mile from the royal castle. In his history of the province written fifteen years later Leo of St. John saw in it an ideal site for a hermitage, and in 1658 Venturini sent patents for this purpose, but nothing came of the plan. In 1669 a vicar was placed in charge of the hospice and the Divine Office and meditation in common were initiated.

The first steps toward realizing the province's dream of a hermitage were taken by Angelique of St. Francis, subprior of Les Billettes in Paris. He obtained from Monsignani patents dated March 29, 1683, appointing him commissary general charged with establishing a hermitage of the Order in France. The conditions of his appointment were roughly those laid down by Prior General Straccio in 1638 for Graville. On May 9, fourteen friars of the province desirous to lead the solitary life met at Les Billettes and named Angelique their procurator to carry out any necessary negotiations. Such an encouraging show of enthusiasm for the contemplative life augured well for the success of the undertaking. Fortunately the plan of an autonomous foundation under the Prior General never materialized. Instead, the province took the matter in hand. On September 11, 1684, the community of Les Billettes, persuaded by the provincial, Stephen of St. Francis Xavier, ceded its rights over Basses Loges to the province, thus eluding by this amicable settlement the quarrels which had been the bane of Lormont. Construction began at once. A report of March 16, 1686, describes the progress of the work. The previously existing cruciform church was dedicated to St. Nicholas with altars to St. Louis and St. Teresa in the transepts. Precious possessions of the sacristy were silver vestments sewn by Queen Anne of Austria and Princess Marie Therese. The royal family had always been generous benefactors of Basses Loges and hopefully would aid with the work of construction. According to Leo of St. John the altar of St. Teresa was a votive offering for peace by Queen Anne.

At the time of the report the convent had eight cells in addition to common rooms of modest size. When completed it would be able to accommodate fourteen friars. The community consisted of Hilarion of St. Ursula, another unnamed priest, three laybrothers and an “oblate” named Louis. The lay brothers, Damasus of the Virgin, Michael of St. Alexis and Stephen of St. Medard, were planning, building and decorating the hermitage.

Upon completion, the report continues, the hermitage will not be the least of the houses of the province and will be their crown. Part of the church is finished, as well as five of the fourteen cells. The hermitage is in the form of a quadrangular cloister measuring 550 feet by 400 feet.<sup>3</sup> There are five cells each on the eastern and western sides, none on the northern. On the southern side are four more cells and the church extending into the midst of the cells.

The cells opened into the cloister with a door and a small window through which food could be passed. Each cell had a vestibule, room with a stove, portico for walking, study, refectory, workroom and bedroom. Above is room for storage. The hermitage is situated in a valley above which the wooded hills rise like so many steps to heaven. There are natural caves no human ingenuity could devise. Only the calls of animals are heard and the sound of water leaping into the air, flowing onto the plain or murmuring sweetly like the fountain of Elias. The general chapter of 1686 expressed warm approval of the enterprise.

The provincial chapter of 1687 which elected Mark of the Nativity provincial announced the completion of the hermitage and called for volunteers for the solitary life. Hilarion of St.

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<sup>3</sup> The “perch” (Latin, *pertica*) was not a standard unit of length and in France varied from 10 feet to 22 feet. In adjusting Father Joachim’s measurements to a more commonly understood measurement, the editor has taken the most conservative conversion rate—the *perche romaine* which equals approximately 10 feet or just over 3 meters.

Ursula was to continue as provincial vicar. On August 14, 1687, the new provincial officially “established” the hermitage of Basses Loges. He composed *Reglemens et claircissements*, regulating in minute detail the daily life of the hermits, which he caused to be approved by the annual congregation of May, 1688, and which he promulgated at his visitation of the hermitage in October. Perhaps on that occasion also the first prior was elected in the person of Angelique of St. Francis, a fitting gesture. He was succeeded at the following chapter of 1690 by Ignatius of St. Henry.

At present no information is available on the subsequent history of Basses Loges, but it evidently continued to function. Priors of the “solitude” were regularly elected at the provincial chapters down to the Revolution. Around 1710 Noel Laimerie of the province of Toulouse stated that Basses Loges and Sainte Anne d’Auray were the only surviving Carmelite hermitages in France.

The Carmelite church of Sainte Anne d’Auray, patroness of Brittany, was a much frequented center of devotion. Its convent which could accommodate forty friars was no hermitage. Remotely situated, perhaps in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century it also served as a contemplative house for the Breton half of the province of Touraine.

The national constitutions imposed on the French provinces in 1772 retained the legislation on hermitages, an unexpected kudos to the contemplative life in the age of Illuminism and a sign perhaps that this type of foundation still survived at that date.

### **Termuylen (Belgian Province)**

The Belgian province conducted a successful experiment in the solitary life which passed over to the Flemish (Flandro-Belgian) province at the time of the division (1663).

The chapel of Our Lady of the Mule in the forest of Liedekerke traced its origin to the Middle Ages and was the result of a vow made to the Virgin who appeared astride a white mule to crusaders praying for a safe return from the wars. In the course of time the chapel came under the care of the Carmelites of Aalst. The attached house was later destroyed.

The chapel of Termuylen seemed the ideal site for the hermitage prescribed by the Constitutions of the Stricter Observance. The provincial chapter of 1649 commissioned the prior of Aalst, Livinus d'Hondt, to construct the province's hermitage there. Priors were asked to find benefactors for each of the cells of the hermitage. D'Hondt died the following year without being able to complete the task assigned to him.

The chapter of 1652 under the presidency of Filippini elected provincial Daniel of the Virgin Mary who promoted the ideal of the solitary life. On May 17, at the chapter itself Filippini issued patents declaring Count de Boisson, his wife and children founders of Termuylen by reason of their benefactions. Before the chapter, on March 21, Daniel as prior of Brussels had engaged the services of a surveyor, M. Deblocke who drew up a blueprint. According to his plan, still extant, twelve cells form a circle around a chapel, the whole complex surrounded by a wall and flanking the chapel of Our Lady of the Mule and attached house.

By the following year the foundation had sufficiently progressed to allow Filippini on September 6 to make Termuylen a convent independent of Aalst. The general chapter of 1654 declared Termuylen a "locus eremiticus" and granted its superior voice in the provincial chapter. On December 23, Daniel promulgated an *Ordo vitae regularis*, consisting of fifteen rules for the conduct of the hermitage.

The first superior of Termuylen, which in the beginning rated only a vicar, was Berthold of St. Joseph, an allusion perhaps to St. Berthold, thought to be the first Latin prior of the

hermitage on Mount Carmel. Born in Gelderen in 1624, he died in 1653, only twenty-eight years old. He left a history in Flemish of Termuylen (Ghent, 1653). Another vicar of Termuylen, apparently the second, was Francis of the Child Jesus (d. 1667), author of *A Very Profitable Instruction for Using the Holy Sacrament of Penance Well and Piously* (Ghent, 1660) which saw several editions. He also published Albert the Great's *Exceedingly Devout Little Book on Forsaking Transitory Things and Cleaving to God Alone*, with reflections from the works of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross (Ghent, 1663).

After Termuylen was given voice in the provincial chapters, its superiors, beginning with Fulgentius of the Purification in 1656, regularly attended these gatherings until the suppression of the province. Gratian of St. Elias, elected in 1659, wrote a *Mirror of Good Thoughts for every day of the month* (Ghent, 1665) and *Exercises for Philothea during her Monthly Retreat* (Ghent, 1671). The book-lover will note with delight his gracious little volume, *Beauté de Carmel* (1660), in which twenty-six sonnets recounting legends of Carmel face as many engravings by Peter Clouwet made from drawings by Abraham van Diepenbeke. Among translations Gratian made should be mentioned his version in Flemish of Boudon's *True Devotion to Mary the Mother of God* (Ghent, 1697).

In 1659 the construction of the hermitage was still not completed. On March 22, Venturini, noting that its "construction had not been promoted with due diligence because no one person had been put in charge," appointed Michael of St. Augustine his commissioner.

Jerome Ari's visit to Termuylen was brief. Arriving around noon of May 19, 1663, he was in Brussels by six o'clock that evening. The community of hermits under Gratian of St. Elias, in the last days of his vicar-ship, numbered five priests, three brothers and a *donatus*. "With special joy," the General's secretary wrote, "the Most Reverend Father observed that the

eremitical convent is most suited to the Carmelite spirit and to recollection. It is well begun and laid out and with God's help is proceeding favorably. He will take up the matter of enlarging it at the provincial chapter." At that chapter Matthias Hunen, one of the reformers of Lower Germany who chose to remain in Belgium at the division of the provinces, was elected vicar of Termuylen.

At the chapter of 1681, Termuylen was raised to the status of convent with a prior, Augustine of St. Francis Xavier, an indication no doubt that the hermitage had finally reached the full term of its development.

In 1759, Roque Alberto Faci records the founding of the desert of Termuylen and adds that it was still inhabited. Priors were regularly elected at the chapters until the end of the province.

When Munsterbilsen in the Flandro-Belgian province is called a hermitage in official documents, the term refers only to its original condition, before it was acquired by the Carmelites as a hospice for questing friars and preachers. Bestowed on the Order by Isabelle Henriette, abbess of Munsterbilsen, in 1672, it was made a vicariate by the chapter of 1674 with Peter Thomas of St. Cyril as its first vicar. Munsterbilsen never became a full-fledged convent with a prior.

The foregoing exhausts the list of known hermitages in the style of the constitutions. Peter Anson, indefatigable student of the solitary life, is a bit hard on Carmelite hermitages, Calced and Discalced, which he characterizes as "period pieces," belonging "to the same social system that created the Palace of Versailles." The prayer and penance practiced there was of the same sort as ever hermits practiced.

The old Order was not as successful in conducting these hermitages as the Discalced, who after all invented the genre. The old Carmel carried the burden of the ages and continued sometimes to express its contemplative inclination in less organized ways. Late in the 17<sup>th</sup> century George of St. Mary, of the province of Francia, obtained leave to retire to a solitary place where he eventually died. He was held by all to be “a man of mystical ways, most dedicated to the practice of penance and solitude.” The case has already been noted of the Irishman, James of St. Joseph O’Cain, who from 1770 to 1778 lived as a recluse attached to the Lady Chapel in Arcachon in the diocese of Bordeaux. It is thought that Denis O’Mahoney was a Carmelite of the old observance. He built a hermitage on the site associated with St. Finbar on the island in lake Gougane Barra, West Cork, where he died around the year 1700. In Sicily, Prosper Giambertoni (d. 1642), of the convent of Piazza in the province of St. Albert, was a doctor of theology and taught in universities of the Italian continent before he received permission to live as a hermit near his native Piazza. It would be difficult to say how many Carmelites chose this form of life. The perfect solitary, as Dom Paul Ziegler of Quarr Abbey has observed, remains unknown and has no history.