

Spring 1990

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James Hitchcock

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Recommended Citation

Hitchcock, James (1990) "The Historical Context of the Age of Gold: France 1560–1660," *Vincentian Heritage Journal*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 1 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol11/iss1/1>

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Professor James Hitchcock

The Historical Context of the Age of Gold: France 1560-1660

BY JAMES HITCHCOCK

French history as defined for these purposes has a quite precise beginning — 30 June, 1559, when King Henry II, in the midst of the celebrations of his daughter's marriage to Philip II of Spain, entered the lists to try his knightly skills. His opponent's lance broke. A splinter

slipped through the visor of the king's helmet and penetrated his eye. He lingered for almost two weeks, then left his kingdom in the hands of his widow, Catherine de Medici, with the throne nominally occupied by his fifteen-year-old son Francis II.

Although the strong foundation of French monarchy had already been laid, in fact the century 1560-1660 was largely one of turmoil and apparent disintegration, except for a few decades at the precise time of the greatest flourishing of the seventeenth-century Catholic revival.

Customarily the accession of a minor to a royal throne was a signal to restless nobles, who, in France as elsewhere, had never accepted the principle of strong centralized monarchy, once again to assert their independence on the grounds that the boy on the throne had been captured by a malign faction which did not have his best interest at heart. Such a stance was made doubly plausible when, as was the case in 1559 in France, the regent ruling on the king's behalf was a foreigner, Catherine de Medici. Two factions of the nobility vied for ascendancy — the ultra-Catholic house of Guise and the Protestant house of Bourbon, hereditary rulers of Navarre. Both families had royal blood in their veins, and both might realistically hope eventually to capture the throne.

By mid-century France, the "eldest daughter of the Church," had a substantial Protestant minority (perhaps 1,000,000 out of a population of 16,000,000), which was more important than its modest numbers indicated, since it included powerful nobles and wealthy bourgeoisie. John Calvin, a Frenchman from Picardy, had spent his formative years at the Sorbonne. He fled Paris in 1534 just in time to escape a systematic roundup of suspected heretics, which followed the Night of the Placards during which Protestant handbills suddenly appeared all over Paris, one of them on the bedroom door of King Francis I. Calvin first found refuge with Francis's sister, Marguerite of Navarre, where he composed the first draft of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Eventually he settled in Geneva in the French-speaking part of Switzerland and sent a stream of trained and zealous pastors back into his native country.

As with all religious wars of the time, religion and politics were inseparable. The Guises sincerely believed that heresy was abominable. Their stance as the champions of Catholic orthodoxy not only gave them their single most powerful weapon against the Bourbons on the grounds that the king did not oppose heresy with sufficient vigor. Conversely, the Bourbons in their role as the champions of true gospel

and religious liberty, were able to rally zealous followers and attract financial support.

Francis II, who was married to Mary Stuart (later the fabled Mary Queen of Scots), died at the end of 1560, to be nominally succeeded by his ten-year-old brother Charles IX. For the next quarter century Catherine de Medici, for whose family Machiavelli had written *The Prince*, a book she admitted studying with care, engaged in a delicate, subtle, and treacherous balancing act, her main goal the preservation of royal power within the family of Valois. Neither faction of the aristocracy could be defeated outright, so Catherine much of the time played off one against the other. Through most of the period, the crown officially condemned heresy but, also officially, promised toleration. In practice Catherine leaned to either the Catholic or the Protestant side depending on her political needs of the moment.

French Protestants were called Huguenots, a word (like “baroque” from the same era) whose etymology was unknown even at the time. (Possibly it was from the German *Eidgenossen*, meaning a confederacy.) In 1560 a group of Huguenots hatched a conspiracy against the king, which failed. Both Catholics and Protestants distrusted each other deeply, and there were sporadic outbursts of local violence. Open warfare began in 1562 after the duke of Guise perpetrated a massacre of Protestant worshippers in the town of Vassy.

Hovering constantly in the background of the French civil war was the power of Spain. Phillip II, Catherine’s son-in-law, not only wanted to strike yet another blow against a nation with which Spain had been at war intermittently since the beginning of the century, he also sincerely regarded himself as the champion of the Catholic faith everywhere in Europe. The Huguenots, on the other side, tried repeatedly to draw England and the German Protestant princes into their struggle, but with rather meager results.

In 1561 Catherine sponsored the Colloquy of Poissy, one of a number of ecumenical meetings of Catholics and Protestants held in the sixteenth century at which theological differences were debated. Although scarcely carried on in a spirit of mutual respect, such encounters nonetheless did involve at least the attempt to resolve religious differences peaceably. Usually, as in the case of Poissy, they failed. In 1563 Catherine granted limited toleration to the Huguenots under the Peace of Amboise, but the concessions were mainly tactical, and in any case she and her son did not control the kingdom to the extent that such promises were even enforceable.

The civil wars went on intermittently, reaching a climax in 1572 in the infamous Massacre of Saint Bartholomew (so-called because it occurred on 24 August.) At this juncture Catherine had seemingly chosen to reconcile with the Protestant Bourbons and had arranged a marriage between her daughter Marguerite and Henry of Navarre, the leading Bourbon prince. This "mixed marriage" was celebrated without papal approval. The intricacies of the Saint Bartholomew conspiracy to a great extent will remain forever hidden. It appears that Catherine plotted the assassination of a leading Huguenot, the Admiral Coligny, in the hope that it would provoke full-scale war between the Guises and Bourbons, leading to a mutual decimation which would leave the crown unchallenged. The attempt to shoot Coligny failed when he stooped to adjust his shoe at the moment the pistol was fired. Catherine reportedly then browbeat the hysterical young king into supporting a systematic massacre of Huguenots in Paris and elsewhere, an action which would both decimate the Bourbon party and be blamed plausibly on the Guises. Coligny, having fortuitously escaped being shot, was then hacked to death in his chambers, the signal for the systematic slaughter of Huguenots over the three-day period set aside for the celebration of the royal wedding. As many as 14,000 Protestants perished in various parts of France.

Henry of Navarre and other leading Huguenots were then forced to become Catholics, and the civil wars resumed. Charles IX died in 1574 and was succeeded by his brother Henry III, the third of Catherine's sons, who had recently been elected king of Poland as well. In 1576 Henry of Navarre escaped, abjured the Catholic faith, and resumed the wars.

Bolstered by Spanish support, the Guises formed the Catholic League, an organization of nobles and others which in effect functioned as a state within a state, its leaders stopping just short of holding that the Valois had forfeited the throne because of their failure to suppress heresy. Meanwhile the Huguenots, through their approximately 2,500 congregations throughout France, and the important nobles drawn to their cause also began acting as though royal authority had been suspended.

As usual in history, some of the most important developments of the age went almost unnoticed amidst the dramatic events of the war. Centered around the royal chancellor, Michel L'Hôpital, a group had formed which expressed disenchantment with the religious dogmatism of both sides and actively pursued, as far as they dared, a policy of

accommodation. Because of their purely political approach to religious questions, they were dubbed the *Politiques*.

In this movement can be found the germs of certain principles which would eventually triumph almost everywhere in the modern West — adjustment of religious differences in such a way as to permit differing groups to live peacefully together, a toleration which tacitly included a degree of scepticism about all religious doctrine, and the conviction that religion is a purely private matter which should not influence the public order. On the fringes of the movement was the greatest French philosopher of the age, Michel de Montaigne, whose personal beliefs veered between faith and scepticism and who was one of the first modern writers to admit to disbelief even in private.

Unlike Martin Luther, who had urged obedience to governmental authority in almost all circumstances, John Calvin had cautiously allowed for the right of rebellion when the gospel itself was threatened. Even so, he periodically expressed misgivings in the early stages of the French wars (he died in 1564), misgivings which his followers mainly ignored. In the latter part of the century some Huguenot writers, such as François Hotman and the anonymous author of the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* (*Revenge Against Tyrants*) elaborated for the first time in Western history a fully developed theory of the subjects' right of rebellion against kings who had forfeited their thrones. At roughly the same time a Catholic equivalent to this theory was being developed elsewhere, notably by Saint Robert Bellarmine, the Jesuit cardinal and theologian.

The beginning of the religious wars in France coincided with the final session of the Council of Trent, a gathering which most of the French bishops, at the behest of their monarch, had boycotted. Catherine de Medici did not welcome the council, whose policies she feared would deny her the flexibility she wanted in dealing with the Huguenots. The *Politiques* also argued that the decrees of the council should not be recognized in France, so the Counter Reformation was effectively kept off French soil until after the turn of the century, a fact which helps explain the brilliant but belated flowering of French spirituality at the later time, France assuming the leadership of Catholic reform at just the time that the Spanish spirit had apparently exhausted itself.

Henry III, like his mother, estimated the Guises to be a greater threat to his power than the Bourbons and hence drew closer to the latter, Spanish support for the Guises probably being the major factor in dictating that decision. In 1588 the Guises seized Paris, forced the

king to flee, and talked openly of deposing him. (While the Guises occupied Paris the Sorbonne actually did release the French people from their allegiance to the king.)

Catherine died in 1589. Despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that at this very time in history Jesuits and Dominicans were locked in their famous theological quarrel over grace and free will, the fanatical Dominican Jacques Clement chose 31 July, the feast of Saint Ignatius Loyola, to assassinate Henry III. Both the Guises and Bourbons could now lay claim to the throne, the Valois line having failed after 261 years. It was, however, Henry of Navarre, now called Henry IV as the first Bourbon king, who successfully asserted that claim, winning Paris and much of the rest of the kingdom over the next few years. For four years France was actually ruled by a Protestant, who was condemned by the pope as an apostate. In 1593 Henry announced his conversion to the Catholic Church. Although his fabled remark, "Paris is worth the Mass," is probably apochryphal, it may be a fair statement of his attitude at the time. Later, however, he showed an increasing zeal on behalf of Catholic orthodoxy, once openly rejoicing when a Catholic debater bested a Protestant on the subject of the Eucharist.

However, the *Politiques* also triumphed with Henry, and in 1598 he brought the religious wars to an end with the issuance of the Edict of Nantes. By that decree all Huguenot nobles were to enjoy full freedom of worship for themselves and their dependants, and the Protestant bourgeoisie were guaranteed similar freedom in about 200 towns and cities. Protestants were to be admitted to the universities, and they could operate schools wherever they enjoyed freedom of worship. Royal funds were secretly channeled to Protestant pastors, and a special court was set up — the Chamber of the Edict, staffed by Protestant Judges — to adjudicate alleged violations of the document. Most remarkable, the Huguenots were not only granted freedom of worship, they were also granted the means to enforce it — they could arm themselves and fortify the cities where they enjoyed liberty.

During the dozen years left to him, Henry worked successfully to restore monarchical power and prestige. He was a popular king and an able one. With the help of his very capable minister the duke de Sully (a Huguenot who as a child had escaped the Saint Bartholomew Massacre), he especially rebuilt the royal finances and once again restored the elaborate system of centralized administration which had been created by his predecessors. This brief golden age came to an end in 1610 when, about to go to war against Spain, he was assassinated in camp by a Catholic zealot, François Ravailac.

France at the death of Henry IV can be described in terms of those groups and institutions, that tight network of laws, customs, privileges, and responsibilities which after the Revolution of 1789 came to be called the Ancient Regime. At the top was the monarch, who on paper and to some extent in reality could already be called absolute, although his



The Participants

power was seriously endangered in times of great national crisis, such as the religious wars. The nobles who had been losing power to the monarchy since the thirteenth century had never accepted the justice of their loss. Thus, as noted, they took advantage of every opportunity to reassert their privileges in the face of a weak king. The bourgeoisie were relatively few in number and of very limited political influence. Much more than in some other countries (notably England) middle-class Frenchmen were drawn to the work of royal service. For decades the kings had been multiplying offices, which were sold to ambitious seekers who recouped their costs through the fees due them in the discharge of their duties. (This was an entirely legal system, not one of surreptitious bribery and corruption.) Since advancement through the royal service was the surest road the bourgeoisie had to profit and status, the middle class tended to be bound to the crown in a special way, although frustrated office holders could sometimes also be leaders of resistance.

The most important political institution next to the monarchy was the Estates General, an assembly of three distinct groups — clergy, nobility, and commons — which was about 300 years old in Henry IV's time. Like other medieval representative bodies, such as the English Parliament, it was summoned mainly when the king needed money, but it usually took advantage of his needs to put forth demands for reform of various kinds. There were also several provincial estates, such as that of Languedoc, which had the same function on a regional level, a reflection of the fact that the laws and customs of France still to some extent varied from one territory to another.

The French Parlements were not, as in England, legislative bodies but law courts, of which the Parlement of Paris was by far the most important. Parlement in effect had a veto power over royal decrees by refusing to register them and thus to enforce them, although this veto could be overridden by the king in a quaint ceremony called a "bed of justice" because he was carried into the Parlement chamber on a litter.

The Church both stood outside this political hierarchy and was part of it. The higher clergy largely came from aristocratic families and were often deeply involved in politics. The clergy as a group constituted the First Estate.

Gallicanism — the theory that the French Church was quasi-independent from Rome and ceded only a titular authority to the pope — can be traced to the conciliar movement of the fifteenth century. It was given practical ratification by the Concordat of Bologna in 1516 which granted the king the right to nominate bishops while the pope retained the right of veto. As a result, the higher clergy tended to be overwhelmingly royalist and inclined, when pressed, to support the king against the pope, as it did in nullifying the excommunication of Henry IV. The term ultramontanism — meaning "beyond the mountains," hence those who looked across the Alps to Rome — was coined about this time to refer to outspokenly pro-papal Catholics, of whom the Jesuits were the chief.

The mass of society in France, as in every other European country at the time, was made up of peasants — poor farmers, some of whom owned their own land but most of whom worked for others either as tenants or as wage laborers. They had no political voice except through occasional rebellions, which were usually caused by high taxes and were almost always unsuccessful.

The Counter Reformation² in France can also be conveniently dated from the death of Henry IV, not because he was himself an obstacle to

it, but because it was in 1611 that Pierre de Bérulle, later a cardinal, founded in Paris a branch of Saint Philip Neri's Oratory, and it was from this center that much of the spiritual revitalization of France took place. Among Bérulle's close friends was Saint Francis de Sales, who was both a spiritual master and nominal bishop of Geneva. Among other things, Bérulle imported reformed Carmelite nuns from Spain, and with them came the influence of the mystical writings of Saint Teresa of Avila and others.

After his second and permanent conversion to Catholicism, Henry IV obtained an annulment of his marriage to Marguerite of Valois (whom Saint Vincent de Paul once served as almoner) and married into the Medici family of Florence. At his death his widow Marie became regent on behalf of the boy king Louis XIII.

Once again the pattern asserted itself whereby a weak king controlled by an unpopular foreign regent was a standing invitation to the nobles to reassert their power. This time, however, the assertion was organized and was broader than just the nobility. When the Estates General were summoned in 1614, each estate put forth its own strong demands, and the proceedings became so threatening that Marie de Medici dissolved the body. Subsequent French monarchs thought they were better off without it and successfully held off calling another for 175 years. When next it met — in 1789 — it was to be the occasion for the Revolution. (The provincial estates continued to exist, and whenever possible the crown dealt with them on matters of taxation.)

In the Estates of 1614 the leader of the First Estate was the young bishop of Luçon, Armand-Jean du Plessis, duke de Richelieu. His performance so impressed Marie de Medici that she took him into her service. Although mistrusting him for a time, the king soon found him indispensable. At Louis's behest the pope made Richelieu a cardinal in 1622, and from 1624 until his death in 1642 he dominated French politics.

Richelieu had no power of his own and his status depended entirely on the support of Louis XIII, who was unstable, neurotic, and weak. He understood, however, that the cardinal had only the interests of the crown at heart and supported him even when the cardinal fell out with Marie de Medici. Faced with the need to choose between his mother and the cardinal, Louis chose the latter, and Marie went into a foreign exile from which she never returned.

Richelieu had two major goals: the complete consolidation of royal power at home and the defeat of the Habsburgs, especially Spain,

abroad. The first was achieved by systematically moving against every person, group, or institution which threatened royal power. Prominent nobles, including the king's own brother, were exiled, imprisoned, or even executed. Although the cardinal was hated, he could not be safely opposed. The second group which seemed to Richelieu a threat to royal supremacy was the Huguenots because of the clause in the Edict of Nantes which permitted them to fortify their towns in self-defense. Typical of his bifurcated approach to politics, Richelieu moved against the Huguenots (who by now had far less aristocratic support than they had had in the previous century) not primarily for religious but for political reasons. After taking and subduing the last of their towns (himself presiding over the siege in armor), he razed their fortifications but continued to allow them the freedoms guaranteed in 1598. (The Edict of Nantes would be rescinded by Louis XIV only long after Richelieu's death.)

The war between France and the Habsburgs, as noted, dated back to the early sixteenth century and for a time inspired a sense of desperation in the French. They were ringed by Habsburg territory: the Spanish Netherlands to the north, the Holy Roman Empire (Germany) on the north and the east, and Spain to the south. It was for this reason that the two leading Catholic monarchs of Europe, France and Spain, had been at odds with each other since before the Reformation, and a principal reason why the French virtually boycotted the Council of Trent, which they suspected of being Habsburg controlled.

Now Richelieu saw the chance to break Habsburg power once and for all when the German Habsburg emperor, aided by his Spanish cousins, attempted one final time to suppress Protestantism and consolidate his empire in the Thirty Years War of 1618-1648. As had Henry II during the 1540's, Richelieu now sent aid to the German Protestants and dealt the final blow to any hope of German unification under a strong emperor.

As a consummate practitioner of *realpolitik*, Richelieu might be thought of as a familiar example of the worldly prelate of the Middle Ages and early modern times. But the reality was more complex. His closest advisor, also a skilled practitioner of *realpolitik*, was the austere Capuchin mystic Friar Joseph de Tremblay. Richelieu himself was also rather austere and, although he had become a bishop at age 22 entirely through family connections, had sincerely devoted himself to the reform of his small and remoté diocese. Personal scandal never touched him. Altogether his was the classic case of a man who absolutely

separated his religion from his public life and apparently saw no connection between the two.

At various times he gave support to Bérulle, Vincent de Paul, and other leading figures of the Catholic revival. Although the decrees of the Council of Trent had now been formally published in France, Richelieu took advantage of their newness to have himself elected abbot of the two most venerable monasteries in France, Cluny and Cîteaux, but he did so mainly to force reform on both the Benedictines and Cisterians. (In reforming the latter he preceded the famous Abbé de Rancé of La Trappe by several decades.)

French society was pulsating with new religious ardor in the decades of Richelieu's ascendancy. In general he supported all reform movements which seemed to pose no threat to the monarchy. Even the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, a secret society of devout Catholics who involved themselves deeply in political appointments and in social and cultural affairs of various kinds, met no opposition so long as it did not thwart Richelieu's purposes. (The group was suppressed later by Louis XIV.)

One of the most important religious events in France in the seventeenth century was the dissemination by Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, the abbé de Saint-Cyran, of the theology of the Flemish Bishop Cornelius Jansen, especially his quasi-Calvinistic view of human depravity and election.

Saint-Cyran, who himself had important social and political contacts, became the spiritual director of the Cistercian convent of Port-Royal, which had branches both in and near Paris. The nuns of Port-Royal, who were characterized by their archbishop as "pure as angels and proud as devils," were headed by Mother Angélique Arnauld, member of an important legal family. She had become abbess at age nineteen as a result entirely of family influence, had presided over a comfortably lax establishment, and had then been converted to more fervent and austere ways during the first wave of the new piety, around 1610.

The story of French Jansenism in the seventeenth century is immensely tangled and complex, a classic illustration of the impossibility of separating religion from politics in earlier eras. On the religious side the Jansenists at first attracted wide sympathy and support, including from Saint Vincent, because they represented a new spirit of devotion and strict morality amidst a generally lax and worldly society. Whatever vices they had, the Jansenists had the ability to melt hard hearts,

and they began to have a noticable spiritual impact on Parisian society.

The Jesuits represented a wholly different theological school with their mainly Thomistic commitment to free will and a view of human nature as damaged but not depraved. As ardent defenders of orthodoxy they suspected the Jansenists of being crypto-Calvinists. The Jansenists, on the other hand, accused the Jesuits of catering to lax consciences in their moral theology and their confessional practice and particularly in their encouraging of frequent communion, which the Jansenists believed in effect was a denial of sin.

Beginning in 1640 both the Sorbonne and the various popes issued a series of condemnations of Jansenist propositions, and to each one the Jansenists replied in a familiar way — they accepted the truth of the condemnation in question but also insisted that, however carefully and subtly drawn, it did not reflect their own teachings accurately. This game continued into the next century.

The Arnauld family was influential in the Parlements and as zealously committed to the Jansenist cause. There were other French lawyers and judges, as well as some nobles, who probably hated what the Jansenists taught but became their supporters precisely because their enemies were the pope and his ultramontane minions, the Jesuits. The various condemnations of Jansenism were a major occasion for the revival of Gallican ideas during the first half of the century.

Richelieu kept Saint-Cyran in prison for four years, correctly understanding that the Jansenists' view of sin and repentance, as well as their requirements for receiving communion, would exclude the king himself from the sacrament of the altar. (Richelieu, for example, seems to have believed that the sin of giving aid to the German Protestants could be easily absolved, then in effect committed again a short time later.) Ultimately Louis XIV suppressed Port-Royal, and the movement lost most of its fashionable support, although it continued strong at the popular level through the eighteenth century, when Jansenists were among the very few French Catholics willing to battle the scepticism of the Enlightenment unreservedly.

Associated with Port-Royal yet just barely outside the boundaries of formal Jansenism was the greatest religious thinker of the age, the mathematician Blaise Pascal, personally a mystic but someone who, through his famous wager concerning the existence of God, tried to reach those who had no faith. His *Pensées* (*Thoughts*) were a sketch for an ambitious, never-written systematic apology for Catholicism, based mainly on the inherent tension between the human longing for infinity

and the stark limitations of finite existence, a tension resolved only in the God-man Jesus Christ.

The most influential thinker of the age was the philosopher René Descartes, who found it prudent to live and work in Holland but whose philosophy of systematic scepticism and absolute clarity of thought was to set the tone for French intellectuals even to the present. Descartes believed he had proven the existence of God beyond the shadow of a doubt, but Pascal wrote, in reference to Descartes, that “the god of geometers is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Nonetheless, Descartes’s leading disciple and expositor was an Oratorian priest, Nicholas Malebranche, who believed that Descartes had placed religious belief on an unshakable foundation.

Cardinal Richelieu died in 1642. If any time in the period 1560-1660 could be called an age of gold, it was probably the eighteen years of his ascendancy. Louis XIII survived him by less than a year.

Despite France’s long-standing anti-Habsburg policies, during a lull in the hostilities Louis XIII had married the Spanish Princess Anne of Austria (the Habsburgs being the house of Austria). She proved an obstacle to Richelieu’s anti-Habsburg policies, a fact which is the basis for the fictional intrigues of the Three Musketeers, chivalrously fighting for the noble queen against the sinister cardinal.

Louis XIV, whose seventy-two-year reign was to be the longest of any monarch in European history (exceeding Queen Victoria by eight years), was only five when his father died in 1643. Once again the familiar scenario was replayed -- a boy king ruled by an unpopular foreign regent.

Anne’s unpopularity was intensified by her close association with the Italian Giulio Mazarini, now called Mazarin, who was Richelieu’s successor. (Mazarin was a cardinal but may not have been a priest, and may have been secretly married to Anne.) Mazarin had come to France as papal nuncio but had been wooed away from the papal service by Richelieu, who recommended him as his successor. Mazarin was less skillful than the masterful Richelieu but was by no means inept.

In 1648 there erupted a full-scale rebellion in Paris, called the Fronde of the Parlement, triggered when Anne moved against the Parlement for having failed to register several decrees of taxation. The word *fronde* means a boy’s slingshot and was originally used in contempt, as though *frondeurs* were merely unruly school boys. The Fronde drove the royal family out of Paris to a hunting lodge, and it was this experience which caused Louis XIV, when he came into his majority, to

abandon Paris and to build his great palace-city at Versailles on the site of the lodge where he had once taken refuge.

The Fronde of the Parlement was followed by the Fronde of the Nobles, which drove Mazarin out of France and threatened Anne's control of her royal son. The cardinal gathered troops in the Netherlands, however, reentered France, and triumphed over his enemies. It was the last organized assault on royal power until the Revolution.

In 1659 France concluded the Peace of the Pyrenees with Spain, a treaty which formally ratified the triumph of France over the Habsburgs and symbolized its emergence as the greatest power in Europe. Saint Vincent died in 1660. A convenient date for ending this "age of gold" is 9 March 1661, marking the death of a far different kind of churchman, Giulio Mazarini. The great religious flowering of the first half of the century had at best a tenuous connection with the political fortunes of the French nation. The undisputed political golden age which dawned with Louis XIV's decision not to appoint a successor to Mazarin was to see in many ways the cooling of the intense religious fires which had been kindled amidst what must often have seemed to contemporaries like full-scale social and political disintegration.

"It is enough to love God to be very learned."

*Saint Vincent de Paul, Conference to the Daughters of Charity,
2 August 1640.*