

Cahiers lasalliens

TEXTS

STUDIES - DOCUMENTS

THE CONDUCT OF SCHOOLS A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

Brother Léon LAURAIRE, F.S.C.

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MAISON SAINT JEAN-BAPTISTE DE LA SALLE - 476, VIA AURELIA - ROME

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A COMPARATIVE APPROACH**

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PREFACE

“This Conduct was published as a guide only after a very great number of conferences which brought together the oldest Brothers of this Institute who were most capable of teaching well and had several years of experience. Nothing has been included which has not been tested and agreed upon, nothing whose advantages and disadvantages have not been weighed up, nothing whose failure or bad consequences have not been anticipated.”

(Preface of the 1706 edition of the Conduct of Schools)

INTRODUCTION

This is the third volume devoted to the “Conduct of the Christian Schools” drawn up by a group of the first Brothers of the Christian Schools and St. John Baptist de La Salle, at the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th.

In the first volume - *Cahier Lasallien 61 - A Contextual Approach* - we tried to put Lasallian schools into the social, ecclesial and educational context of France at the end of the 17th century and especially in that of an urban setting. These schools sought to respond to the educational and pastoral needs of the children of the working class. Against the background of similar work undertaken and pursued by others, these schools sought, and gradually established their own identity, which explains their uniqueness and specific character. Faced with various forms of misunderstanding and opposition their task was not an easy one. Despite these difficulties, they survived and prospered throughout the 18th century up to the French Revolution. The study of the context makes it much easier to understand the text, because the authors of the Conduct of Schools reacted directly to what they observed all around them, and first and foremost to the characteristics of the pupils they had in class. The practical comments which abound in the Conduct of Schools are a proof of the sharpness of their attention to detail; and the pooling of their personal experience made it possible to produce exceptional results.

In this first volume we tried also to show how these schools were geared to the specific needs of the working class and the poor. And this was done despite the serious problems of the age - the “*misfortunes of the times*”, as historians called them. In the midst of these difficulties, St. John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers succeeded in offering schools with a clear identity. They did so also with the firm intention of fitting into the urban society of the 17th century, into a post-Tridentine Church, and into an educational system in the process of being organised.

The second volume - *Cahier Lasallien 62 - A Pedagogical Approach* - is a short summary of the overall educational and pedagogical approach of Lasallian schools. This approach was the result of a process whose starting point was the identification and analysis of the needs of the children. This was a group effort, more reliable than individual input, and one which made it possible to implement suitable measures. Instead of relying on groping around unsurely, or on individual experimentation, possibly lacking in discernment, the Brothers looked for the best solutions, as we read in the quotation from the Preface of the 1707 manuscript with which this volume began.

John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers were probably aware of various past and present educational experiments, and had seen, perhaps, various texts and documents used in other types of schools; but their choices and decisions were based on first-hand observation of existing conditions. The methods they tried out may have been inspired by sources outside their schools, but they were adopted only after a trial period and if they withstood the test of time. This undoubtedly confers upon the Conduct of Schools a unique character. Theirs was not, however, an original approach: it was one adopted from the 16th century onwards by the Jesuits when they drew up the Ratio Studiorum; and, in a slightly different way, by St. Pierre Fourier and the Notre Dame Sisters.

We think, however, that these Lasallian schools - and therefore, the Conduct of Schools which describes them - have their roots in a period well before the first quarter of the 17th century, whether consciously or unconsciously, explicitly or implicitly. They are the product, as are all the other schools of the time, of the vast and complex development of education during the Renaissance, which continued throughout the 17th century. We think, therefore, that it would be useful to recall in broad outline the principal contributions of this period. The first part of this volume will be devoted to this.

On the other hand, in the second half of the 17th century, John Baptist de La Salle was in contact in various ways with other "Little Schools". Are there similarities and differences between their respective aims and undertakings? This is the question we shall attempt to answer in the second part of this work. And so we feel that "*A Comparative Approach*" - the subtitle of this third volume - will prove to be justified.

PART ONE

**THE EDUCATIONAL DYNAMISM
OF THE RENAISSANCE**

In education, there is no such thing as spontaneous generation. On the other hand, we observe that, at various points in history, there appear new educational ideas, different types of schools, different curricula and methods which tend to produce changes on the educational scene of a country or of a continent. The crystallisation of these changes can result in a new educational or pedagogical movement and take its place in history. One can demonstrate this quite easily by analysing, for example, what happened in a good number of countries in the second half of the 20th century. In our days, with the diffusion of ideas becoming more widespread and more rapid thanks to the means of communication, this phenomenon is so evident that it would not be inappropriate to speak of the globalisation of education.

This was the case also in the Europe of the 16th and 17th century, the starting point being the global cultural phenomenon known as the “Renaissance”. This movement affected various aspects of society, including education and pedagogy in all the countries of western Europe. This highly complex movement found its expression through:

- a new anthropology and philosophy of education
- the creation, organisation and multiplication of new educational or academic institutions, more or less similar in different countries
- the exchange of ideas and approaches, but also of educational methodology, thanks in particular to the geographical mobility of the great educators and thinkers of the time. We shall come back to this. There was a sort of educational “International”.
- A veritable birth and organisation of educational systems in European countries as a whole - models sometimes exported across the ocean in the wake of conquests.

- And finally, a significant increase in the literacy rate and in the percentage of children of both sexes and of all social backgrounds attending schools.

The causes, the factors involved and the expressions of this educational dynamism, as well as the ideas of its principal representatives have been widely analysed. In France, it was at the end of this rich period that St. John Baptist de La Salle appeared and the *“Conduite des Écoles chrétiennes”* (1706) was composed. One can legitimately ask to what extent the Lasallian educational movement shared in this global movement, benefitted from it, and possibly helped to focus and reinforce its tendencies. The aim and ambition of this work is to provide some answers to these questions.

The fact is that the “Conduct of Christian Schools” did not appear on an empty educational scene, but at the end of a long period of evolution in educational thinking and institutions. In such a context, is it possible, is it relevant, to speak of “the sources” of the Conduct, that is, of borrowing from earlier works? It would be risky to do so. On the other hand, it is possible to analyse and compare slightly earlier writings or those contemporaneous with the Conduct.

We need also to take into account the way in which the 1706 manuscript - the first version of the Conduct - was drawn up. It is unlikely that the *“the oldest Brothers of this Institute who were most capable of teaching well”*, as the Preface says, had before their eyes during *“a very great number of conferences”* (meetings) earlier documents from which to take passages. On the other hand, since educational ideas of any given age spread imperceptibly in quite large sections of society, and especially among those who are involved in education, it goes without saying that these ideas can be found in the works of several authors. Another mistake would be to attribute exclusively to John Baptist de La Salle the authorship of the content of the “Conduct of the Christian Schools”. It was the brainchild of the group of Brothers: John Baptist de La Salle wrote it. Written evidence is sufficiently explicit in support of this view.

We will not confuse chronological anteriority and sources of inspiration, despite a number of obvious similarities and resemblances.

Chapter 1 - The Renaissance: a break and innovation

A long educational tradition

Gaul benefitted from Roman organisation, including where education was concerned. The Roman educational system was well organised and established throughout the Empire. The fall of the Roman Empire in the West (in 476) brought with it the disorganisation of the administration in place. It was only very gradually, and because it was the only structured and organised social body there was, and needed to train its own leaders, that the Church undertook to create a new educational system.

The episcopal, parish and monastic schools which gradually came into existence in the early Middle Ages formed the foundations of this new system. This system, enhanced over the years and added to in response to the new needs of society - and modelled on the defunct Roman system - comprised: "Little Schools" for the teaching of the rudiments; "Colleges" for the study of grammar, rhetoric and dialectics; and universities for higher learning.

But for ten centuries - from the 5th to the 15th - the development of education was held back by the absence of easily communicable documents. It required the invention of printing, at the end of the 15th century, to give it a new and tremendous impetus. Of course, as in the case of every new invention, time was needed for the benefits of the written word to be acknowledged and to spread. This happened in the 16th century and, combined with other favourable factors, led to the birth of modern humanism, which we know as the Renaissance. The educational renewal of the 16th century took place within the context of a whole series of economic, political, ideological, religious and cultural changes. All these changes created new needs, refined tastes and proclaimed a new understanding of human beings. It was a humanist view of education which generally speaking sought to replace that of the Middle Ages by opposing it.

The Middle Ages had in fact been open to the cultural influence of the Greeks, Romans, Hebrews and Arabs, but had integrated what it took from them into a Christian humanism, in thrall first and foremost to what the Bible said. In the first centuries of Christianity, certain fundamentalists rejected anything that did not figure in Holy Scripture. Fortunately, they were in a minority. It is important to stress in this mediaeval educational system the essential role of the monasteries whose surprising and rapid expansion in western Europe is documented. Not only did they admit candidates in order to instruct them but, as copyists, they were responsible for the conservation and diffusion of ancient documents, playing an essential role in the conservation of the cultural treasures of ancient times. Episcopal and parish schools contributed to a lesser degree to this work of cultural conservation.

There are two moments of particular significance in this long period that we need to note: the advent of Charlemagne in the 9th century, and the birth of universities from the 11th century onwards. We know that Charlemagne's empire extended much further than the boundaries of present-day France, and hence its educational dynamism benefitted a large part of western Europe. As for the universities, they saw a steady procession of lecturers and students of a variety of nationalities. Sometimes, universities specialised in particular disciplines such as law or medicine. Few offered a complete course of studies, that is, theology, canon law, civil law, medicine and philosophy. These were only gradually established as faculties of advanced studies leading to a degree and a doctorate.

It is in this context that a European spirit and a Christian culture and spirit were gradually forged. The Renaissance criticised the Middle Ages for education characterised by its excessive encyclopaedism and its strictly religious inspiration which subordinated all knowledge to theology, bringing about in this way an anthropology which was truncated and even dangerous. It criticised it also for its purely formal aspect, for its satisfaction with the command of words and texts, assessed according to the criteria of logic and dialectics, to the point of falling into the excesses of nominalism. These dangers were reinforced by the fact there was very little development in the sciences. Teaching was limited normally to repetitive commentaries, lectures and fre-

quent “disputations” - a practice which was remarkably long-lived. This meant, therefore, verbal confrontation of ideas and interpretations - an empty use of language; a constant appeal to memory. But what else could people do in the absence of books?

However, instead of simply accepting the out-of-hand condemnation of mediaeval pedagogy expressed by some 16th century educators, we should stress that the present-day educational system in France is firmly rooted in mediaeval organisation, as is a certain concept of culture which has survived up to the present time.

The Dawn of Modern Times

The factors which sparked off the Renaissance are well known and were analysed a long time ago. We shall restrict ourselves to listing them:

- The first were geographical discoveries, helped by new means of navigation and which led explorers towards America (Christopher Columbus: 1451-1506), towards the Far East (Vasco da Gama: 1469-1524), and towards southern Africa. These discoveries were not entirely disinterested. They constituted a powerful stimulus for commerce and consequently for social development. They broadened horizons through the observation of new civilisations, so different from those of Europe.
- At the same time, a number of major scientific discoveries changed the traditional understanding of the universe - not without risks. While Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543) and Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) encountered few problems, others such as Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and even Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639) incurred the wrath of the Church.
- But the discovery of the greatest interest for us here is that of printing, in 1440, by Johannes Gensfleisch, known as Gutenberg (1399-1468). Printing became an extraordinary means of promoting culture and education, making available to teachers, students and the public, an increasing number and variety of printed books and other publications.
- Because the Church, as we have already said, had exclusive control of edu-

cation, whatever it did had immediate repercussions on education. That is why the Protestant Reformation which began in the first half of the 16th century had a profound and long-lasting effect on the education of children. This was because the Protestants wanted to make it possible for all the faithful to have direct access to the Bible. The best well-known Protestants were noted for their interest in schools: Martin Luther (1483-1546), Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), John Knox (1505-1572) and John Calvin (1509-1564).

- The spread of the Reformation was one of the main reasons for calling the Council of Trent by the Catholic Church, which was held in three stages between 1545 and 1563. In its deliberations and decisions, the education of children occupied an important place. For example, the Council called for the setting up of Little Schools for the poor in all Catholic parishes. This was far from being the case at the time and would require much time before it became a reality.
- Taking advantage of the means offered by discoveries and a new spirit - that of the Renaissance - Protestant and Catholic schools competed vigorously against one another to provide schooling for children. However regrettable this competition may have been, it proved to be beneficial in the long run.

And so, the birth of the Renaissance triggered off a crisis in the educational system as well as in the whole of Europe. The advent of Modern Times was marked by growing pains. This period has been abundantly studied and we have no intention of doing so here. It is hardly surprising that the discoveries made, the international relations developed and the expansion in the arts and in the economy, stimulated people to have greater self-confidence, be more daring, and have an entrepreneurial spirit and greater freedom of mind. This was the birth of a new humanism, characterised by:

- its optimism and belief in progress,
- a very positive new approach to the individual, the person and society,
- the will to renew, to view the past with a critical eye, which resulted in new dynamism,

- an anthropology which placed man at the centre of the world, giving rise in this way to an individualism which heightened awareness of the specificity of the person - that of the adult first of all, and gradually, that of the child. This opened the door to a new concept of education and also therefore of the organisation of an educational system.
- Education was to make possible the knowledge of all things. Navigation, new scientific instruments and a new more rational and sometimes already experimental approach to reality helped this openness. As the means of procuring this knowledge, education could aspire to a universal dimension. Amos Comenius (1592-1670) advocated the education of the whole man and of all men.

These fine plans, these ambitious systems were not always implemented easily or rapidly. There remained many obstacles to overcome, beginning with religious dissension, a lack of financial resources and a lack of educational structures and trained teachers. However, the humanism of the Renaissance was the driving force behind a great educational movement to which the great educators of the 16th and 17th century were to a greater or lesser extent indebted.

In the following passage, Roger Gal¹ sums up rather well, we think, the importance of this renewal: *“Basically it was a change in the way people saw life and man himself and it was accompanied by a powerful feeling that the humanism which had proved satisfactory until then had serious shortcomings. A humanism would be born, centred on man and focused on the world of nature and things, and more confident about the natural fate of the individual. It would gradually make acceptable the view that man, envisaged in all his activities and achievements, is the most worthy object of study for humanism. In this sense, the Renaissance truly marks the birth of the modern era, but it would have consequences it had never foreseen and, perhaps, not wanted, but which were inevitable. The revolt against authority, the scientific spirit of observation, doubt, critical outlook, of affirmation of individuality in its development and its rights, the first of which being to achieve full personal fulfilment; and the demand for*

¹ Gal Roger: Histoire de l'éducation – PUF-PARIS 1966.

true freedom of thought, all this is clearly, if in a veiled way, present in the new tendencies. The development of these tendencies would little by little lead to a totally new kind of education". (p. 70)

The organisation of education

And so, centres of learning multiplied in Europe in the course of the 16th century. For this increase to be beneficial it had to be channeled and made effective. This is what happened during the Renaissance and the classical period. But the way this was done depended on the level of education involved:

At the university level: The 12th and 13th centuries had been a very flourishing period. More or less all over western Europe, famous universities were founded and developed, and attracted teachers and students. Each European country had its own famous universities, appreciated and consequently frequented by numerous cosmopolitan students. They formed a sort of international network, and were regulated by statutes and rules known by all and approved by Rome. But in the middle of the 16th century, at the height of the Renaissance, it was the level of education which evolved the least, and which proved to be the least creative. Of course, a few new universities did appear, and to these were added some Protestant academies, but nothing significant happened.

On the level of secondary education, the Colleges formed the best structured category of schools, These were organised as a network thanks to the international religious teaching congregations which ran them: the Jesuits, the Oratorians, the Brothers of the Christian Doctrine... These were partly indebted to the example of the Brothers of the Common Life, founded by Gerard Groote (1340 - 1384) whose expansion was remarkably widespread in northern Europe until the beginning of the 16th century. As Brother Martial André, FSC² recalls, they are "*the mediaeval ancestors of the teaching orders*". They created and disseminated the College model in Holland, first of all, and then in Belgium, north Germany and Strasbourg. We know that

² MARTIAL André, FSC: Les Frères de la Vie Commune: ancêtres médiévaux des ordres enseignants. Revue Belge de Pédagogie – Mai-Juin 1932 – 20 pages.

they influenced the Jesuits, Juan Luis Vivès, Jean Calvin...As Georges Rigault³ writes, the Brothers of the Common Life proposed also a model for primary schools in which *“they introduced a curriculum which would be adopted thence forward by primary education: reading, writing, basic arithmetic, the native language, everything that was immediately useful for young workers and craftsmen. Their minds were trained, their souls well provided for. Catholic dogma and morality were the foundation of education. Religion, which inspires knowledge and sustains the virtue of the teachers, penetrates the heart and renders the heart of the pupils more malleable. And, in accordance with the ancient tradition of disinterestedness and charity, the teaching of the Brothers was gratuitous.”* (As that of the Jesuits will be later in their Colleges) The influence of the Brothers of the Common Life explains the leading position of Holland in the field of pedagogy until the 16th century. In France, the work of Gerard Groote was known only by hearsay, and was applied only indirectly, mostly on account of the civil wars. In more global terms, however, it proved to be very beneficial.

In France, and in many other countries, **Jesuit Colleges** provided the benchmark. This educational institution was founded in Messina in 1548, bringing a new approach, and overturning the way things were done in the Middle Ages, especially in Catholic countries. The *Ratio Studiorum*⁴ drawn up progressively during the second half of the 16th century and published in 1599, based on a diversity of experiences and exchange of views, allows us to see the broad outline of a secondary education programme. A century later, there were 372 Jesuit Colleges in Europe. In this number, some establishments still included higher learning faculties, but the vast majority restricted their work to secondary education. Teaching was based on the Latin language and centred on the study of grammar, rhetoric and the humanities. What we learn first of all from these Colleges is their internal organisation, their habitual pedagogical approach, the discipline which characterises them, the personal

³ RIGAUTL Georges: Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes – Vol. 1, p.9 – Plon 1937.

⁴ Ratio Studiorum: Belin, Paris, 1997: French translation of Latin text. Introduction and Notes by Adrien Demoustier, Dominique Julia and Marie Madeleine Compère

follow-up of students, all this with a view to forming a social class of leaders and rulers for the various countries of Europe. A very important fact is that these Colleges served as a model, a benchmark, for the other sacerdotal congregations devoted to education: the Oratorians and the Brothers of the Christian Doctrine, whose establishments joined the network of the Jesuit Colleges in the 17th century.

On the primary school level: the Little Schools. Despite the vitality of the universities and Colleges, education reached only a very small minority of the population. Education, in fact, still often bypassed the working class, or what it offered them was very limited in its content. And this was the case despite the wishes and efforts of the Catholic Church and Protestant denominations which were all concerned about the instruction of the working class. Little Schools had existed since the early Middle Ages but they had never benefitted from the attention given to university education.

As a result of their great diversity, and of the multiplicity of generous but uncoordinated initiatives, Little Schools developed initially in a haphazard manner. From the middle of the 16th century, both Catholic and Protestant Little Schools began to increase in number, as can be seen from recent statistical research. And it should be mentioned that these schools catered for both boys and girls. The quality of these schools varied greatly, depending on the resources available and above all on the quality of the training of the men and women teachers that worked in them. Some of these schools were non-fee paying - called “charity” schools - where parishes or other benefactors covered the running costs so that the poor also could have access to them. Others were fee-paying, payment by parents made necessary by the need to pay the salaries of teachers. These schools offered a very limited curriculum, often dependent on how much the teachers knew. They taught only the rudiments.

They were intended above all for a working class clientele which was not destined to benefit from the kind of learning offered by the Colleges. Pupils intending to frequent the latter did not envisage attending first a Little School. For them, there were induction classes - “Little Classes” - run by the Colleges to prepare them for secondary school studies. This distinction

of clientele was reflected on a structural level throughout France; it meant an almost complete separation: Little Schools did not prepare pupils for admission to the Colleges; while these latter led naturally to admission to universities.

All the same, from the middle of the 16th century, working-class education provided by the Little Schools benefitted from the concerted and structured work of religious congregations. In France, these efforts were essentially directed towards the education of girls, thanks to the numerous teaching congregations for women which came into existence in the wake of the Council of Trent. It would be very difficult to draw up a complete list of them, but we know that some of them spread rapidly throughout France and are still pursuing their apostolate today⁵.

It was in this context that at the end of the 17th century the first congregations for the education of boys appeared, among them, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, in 1679. Their contribution to education figures in all histories of education in France. We shall return to it throughout the course of this work.

It is interesting to note also that the men and women founders of these teaching congregations were in the habit of drawing up a mission statement: aims, curriculum, methods, organisation, discipline... and these written documents are now one of the most interesting sources of information about the development of Little Schools during this period. This information can often be found in the “constitutions” which regulate the life and activities of the men and women religious concerned. We shall return to them - in certain cases - in the second part of this work. A case in point is that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools who, in addition to *“The Conduct of the Christian Schools”*, devoted a part of their *“Common Rules”* to educational matters. These documents are not always easily accessible, but they are essential if we are to have a precise idea of the nature of these Little Schools.

⁵ LELIÈVRE François & Claude: Histoire de la scolarisation des filles – Nathan, Paris 1991.
 SONNET Martine: L'éducation des filles au temps des Lumières – CERF, Paris 1987.
 FIEVET Michel: L'invention de l'École des Filles – IMAGO, Paris 2006.

The Renaissance: a break

We know that the Renaissance began on different dates in different countries. France was not the first country to become part of this renewal. For historical reasons - the Italian wars, for example - it was drawn into it by the example of Italy and the bedazzlement of François I by the achievements of the peninsula.

Even if the break with the Middle Ages, as various historians tell us, was neither complete nor sudden, there took place an important change in mentality, bringing with it a radical evolution in the way human beings were perceived, how their education was perceived, and in the kind of social behaviour that was expected of them. It is not surprising to find certain 16th century educators strongly criticising education in the Middle Ages. In France, for example, Rabelais and Montaigne come to mind.

One discovery of the Renaissance - which perhaps seems rather obvious to us - was that all human beings are educable, transformable. Hence the urgent need to offer to every man and woman a place and the means to become educated, be it in a school, a College or university. But not exclusively.

Chapter 2 - A European educational movement

Introduction

The Renaissance movement affected all the countries of western Europe in one way or another. One could probably describe separately the various manifestations of this renewal in each country, but to establish clear distinctions between them would be another matter, such are the obvious similarities.

Within this global movement the same is true of educational and pedagogical dynamism. There are no frontiers. It seems quite impossible to separate out the spheres of influence of the individual educators of the time, even if their influence was different in each case.

What we do know, on the other hand, is the extraordinary mobility of most of the great writers and of those who implemented their ideas - we shall give some examples of this - and that this resulted in some of them meeting and exchanging ideas. This conferred on what they did an international dimension. This is explained in part by the use of a common language - **Latin** - which greatly facilitated communication. Because of this, they were all able to frequent successively several places of learning and several universities. A case in point, is St. Ignatius Loyola. They were generally well received and invited to present their ideas at assemblies or through lectures. Latin, the language of communication and of learning, remained the language used in teaching and often in certain types of publications.

Of course, to be more precise, we would have to distinguish between Protestant and Catholic countries, but new pedagogical trends did not always take into account these new frontiers.

A few examples:

The Brothers of the Common Life, mentioned in the previous chapter, founded in 1381, were to some degree pioneers in the area which concerns

us here. Organised in communities composed of priests and lay persons open to humanism, they increased rapidly in number until the beginning of the 16th century, in the countries of northern Europe. Their Founder, Gerard Grootte, had studied for some time in Paris before becoming a very famous preacher in Holland and in the north of Germany. The Colleges which were founded through his influence had a marked effect on the educational system of these countries.

The Jesuits, from 1548 onwards and the opening of their first College in the south of Italy, in Messina, spread throughout the Catholic countries of Europe, creating hundreds of establishments there, all organised on the same model, one that would later be described in the *Ratio Studiorum*. With the expansion of the Company of Jesus, these Colleges were set up also outside Europe, in America, Asia...

We should add that this system of international networks included also other congregations for men and women, characterised by open-ended vocations and development. It is interesting to note the extent to which the international dissemination of pedagogical ideas and practices from the second half of the 16th century onward is indebted to the expansion of teaching congregations. It was only at the end of the period we are considering - the 16th and 17th century - that the schools of the Brothers of the Christian Schools came to be added to the long list of existing congregations.

Erasmus of Rotterdam (1467-1536) was considered to be the most brilliant student of the Brothers of the Common Life. As Brother André Martial wrote: "*His nomadic life criss-crossing Europe brought him into contact with all the contemporary celebrities, especially the teachers of Louvain, a university city where he had a pied-a-terre.*" Very well known throughout Europe thanks to his numerous writings, he turned his mind to all the essential questions concerning education: the training of teachers, the choice of methods, the choice of authors to comment on, and the practical details and procedures of teaching. It should be recalled that his small work on "good manners for children" was widely disseminated in Europe from the 16th century onwards, well before the "Rules of Christian Politeness and Civility" of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

Vittorino da Feltre (1378-1446). While in the service of the Duke of Mantua, he founded the “Casa Giocosa” - the happy home - which took in rich and poor alike. As was normal at the time, religious practices played an important part: Mass, the sacraments, prayer, the presence of God. But he insisted also on politeness, good manners, refinement and refined speech, as Erasmus, De La Salle and many others would do later. Work and supervision - we are still in the Middle Ages - were the preventive measures to avoid misdemeanors. But all this was to be permeated with joy, hence the name of his school. The strange thing is that he left nothing in writing describing his experiment; and it was his much-impressed and grateful pupils who related what they had experienced at his school. The quality of this pedagogy explains the great influence Vittorino da Feltre had in Italy, and the fact he was considered to be the greatest educator of the Italian Renaissance.

Before him and in a different context, **Raymond Lull (1213-1316)** was also a kind of pioneer in the field of education. Born in Mallorca, he travelled to Catalonia, France, Italy and even north Africa on three occasions. He was particularly zealous in spreading the Christian faith, especially in Muslim areas. He was imprisoned but always insisted on returning until he died, after a life which was exceptionally long for those times.

Juan Luis Vivès (1492-1540) is a special case: grandson of a convert rabbi, he found himself - because of current laws in Spain - in a legal situation which deprived him of any hope of achieving anything significant on a personal level. This explains his choice of exile in order to fulfil his ambitions and plans. He went to Montpellier and Paris to study, met Thomas More in Holland and became his friend; established contact with Erasmus and followed Thomas More to England, before returning to Spain and working in Portugal. Here he was prolific in offering his advice regarding education to various sections of society. Vivès is a good example of the international dimension of educational thinking during this period.

Amos Comenius (1592-1670), born in Moravia, he moved successively to Poland, the northern states of Germany, Holland, and made short visits to England and Sweden. He was a great educator and modern by the way he organised his schools; by his insistence on the holistic approach to the edu-

cation of the individual, and on taking into account the psychological development of the child; and by his teaching methods which were reputed to be easy, effective, economical and intuitive. His pedagogical works had a great influence in central and northern Europe.

Joseph Calasanz (1556-1648) also migrated from Spain to Italy, and in particular initially, to the Papal States. In Rome, he founded schools and Colleges, and his followers followed his example all over Italy and central Europe. The reputation of his work in Rome reached the ears of John Baptist de La Salle some decades later, as we learn from his correspondence with Brother Gabriel Drolin who was in Rome at the beginning of the 18th century.

Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639) is in a special category. Prevented from carrying out his plans because of long periods of incarceration in ecclesiastical prisons, he continued to be on excellent terms with Joseph Calasanz, whose works he praised and with whom he took refuge during his moments of freedom. He ended up by moving to France where he died.

In France, François Rabelais (1494-1553) left his mark on the first half of the 16th century by his two works: *Pantagruel* (1533) and *Gargantua* (1534), the contents of which ranks him more with educational utopians. Very reactive regarding the pedagogy of the Middle Ages, he advocated a humanistic education that was physical, intellectual and moral. But he called also for encyclopaedic knowledge so that people could completely fulfil themselves, revealing his support for an aspect of education he criticised violently. He travelled widely in the pursuit of his own learning but he never settled abroad permanently.

Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) did not open any schools, but his writings left their mark on the second half of the 16th century. They show him more concerned than Rabelais about the education of the individual, his balance and his happiness - somewhat to the point of selfishness - than about the acquisition of knowledge. This was a new kind of wisdom and it had a lasting influence. Montaigne wanted first of all to learn the art of living. Some aspects of this can be found in other countries, and therefore, one

needs to travel. And so he undertook voyages of discovery and observation, especially in Italy and Switzerland, to compare his ideas with those of others or, as he put it to “*scratch his brain*”. He even advised people to learn foreign languages in order to communicate better and increase their sense of tolerance.

These are a few examples of this “pedagogical International” which contributed to the spirit of the Renaissance. These European exchanges were not entirely new. During the Middle Ages, a number of famous scholars travelled to other countries and taught in various universities. Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure are an example of this.

In both these historical periods, people could therefore present their ideas, share their pedagogical experience, test it, and reveal their humanism. This could lead to correspondence, usually of great value for everyone, including men and women educators at all levels who, without having a similar influence, would devote their energy to practical school tasks. It is therefore very difficult for us today to untangle the origins of the educational ideas of such or such a person.

Three kinds of educationalists

The cultural renewal sparked off by the Renaissance gave rise, in particular, to a great number of educational institutions, writings discussing education and pedagogy, and ideas about changes in society. Without being hard and fast about respective positions, we can, we think, divide these educationalists into three groups, which are not opposed to one another in any way, nor exclusively distinct from the others. There are numerous similarities between the Practitioners, Theoreticians and the Utopians. Without wishing to draw up a complete list, but by way of example, we offer a few names:

The Practitioners include all those men and women who taught, opened or ran schools. Some of them wrote nothing about what they did - this is the case of Vittorino da Feltre, as we said earlier - but their work is known from other sources. Most, however, analysed and theorised about their practices, as for example, the Jesuits, Joseph Calasanz, the teachers of Port Royal, Pierre Fourier, Jacques de Batencour, Charles Demia, Nicolas Barré, Jean Baptiste

de La Salle. On the other hand, César de Bus, Vincent de Paul, François de Sales or Nicolas Roland wrote hardly anything. These Practitioners represent a vast amount of diverse experience and achievement. Many of them - especially where schools for girls were concerned - saw their work expand internationally and so had widespread influence. What we have here is practical application and concrete implementation inspired by founding or normative texts. Of course, all the texts on our list do not concern John Baptist de La Salle. Some concern the secondary education Colleges, the Jesuits, the Oratorians and, in part, Joseph Calasanz. Others, more numerous, concern girls' schools. We shall indicate later those which could have inspired Lasallian schools, and they will be considered in the second part of this work.

The Theoreticians: They reflected a lot about education and left us some works, sometimes very interesting ones, but they never applied their ideas in the concrete context of schools. They provided the inspiration for the practitioners. In this category we place Juan Luis Vivès, Montaigne, Erasmus, Comenius, Locke and Fénelon. Spread out over a period of time, mainly the 16th and 17th century, they constitute a group of people particularly rich in the field of ideas, philosophy and even educational practices. To appreciate the value or influence of their contribution, we need to take into account the fact they did not have the benefit of the contribution of the human sciences, in particular, of the educational sciences, to which we turn at will today.

From the period beginning with Juan Luis Vivès and ending with Charles Rollin (1661-1741), which writings could John Baptist de La Salle have read? It is difficult to say. Probably not many. And yet, in the course of his writings, he too offers a rich fund of educational ideas based on observation and the analysis of practice. And we need to look further than *The Conduct of Schools* and take into account also his *Meditations* as a whole, the *Letters* he sent to the Brothers and, of course, *The Rules of Christian Politeness and Civility*. In the second part of this work, we shall deal especially with those with whom he had more contact, because he knew of their writings and their work.

The Utopians: Utopia is a powerful component of the humanism of the Renaissance. There are traces of it in other educators who do not figure on

this list. It existed already in Juan Luis Vivès, Erasmus, Vittorino da Feltre, and later, in Montaigne and Comenius, even if we do not include them in the list of Utopians. And yet, all these writers believe in the perfectability of human beings through education; in the progress of humanity and the betterment of society; and in the benefits of culture made accessible to everyone, or at least to the majority. In our list of Utopians we include Thomas More, François Rabelais, Tommaso Campanella and Chennevières.

John Baptist de La Salle

- He was hardly a practitioner, but rather an observer of the Brothers in class, when he visited the schools and communities. From his biographers we know that he replaced some Brothers in class for short periods when they were indisposed; but we cannot call this a real experience of primary school teaching of working class children, something he was hardly trained to do. He was mainly occupied by the tasks inherent in his role of Founder or creator of the Society of the Christian Schools.
- He was a theoretician in various ways in his writings, as we have already said.
- He was certainly a utopian by his optimism, his confidence in the transformational possibilities of schools for the “children of the working class and the poor”, but also for the whole of society. Hence his model for schools able to better children on the vocational, personal, social and Christian plane. These schools contributed to the building up of a society that was more fraternal and just, and of a Christianity that was more inspired by the Gospel.

In conclusion:

We can look back on the long period of history which stretches from the precursors, such as Raymond Lull, Gerard Groote and Vittorino da Feltre, whose educational ideas survived and influenced subsequently other men and women educators; as far as John Locke, Fénelon, Madame de Maintenon and Charles Rollin, who were more less contemporaries of John Baptist de La Salle, whom historians consider to be the last of this long period.

While it is very difficult to establish filiation among these various writers, it is possible to use historical documents to look for similarities and differences, and to ask oneself why they exist. One reliable factor to take into account is chronology, in order to examine the anteriority and posteriority of certain elements. On the other hand, there are events or social or cultural phenomena, sometimes very complex, which escape the confines of the written word.

The establishment of comparisons or parallelism does not necessarily mean there has been direct imitation. We need, therefore, to exercise great care when we use the word “sources”, because they can be distant, indirect or unconscious.

Chapter 3 - The emergence of new educational concepts

In Europe as a whole, the 16th and 17th century were a particularly favourable time for the schooling and education of people - a movement born of and sustained by a powerful sense of optimism. In France this reflected the humanism of the Renaissance and of the classical period. From within this vast movement, we can discern the emergence of educational concepts, pedagogical methods and new educational structures, from which the men and women educators of the time - including John Baptist de La Salle - benefited more or less consciously.

We should like to mention some of these contributions to help us understand better the gradual organisation of educational systems in Europe, but without attempting to give an exhaustive presentation, which would require going into great detail and would go well beyond the scope of our aims. For each of the eight aspects we shall examine, we shall restrict ourselves to a few examples and some quotations which can give us some idea of the general spread of the phenomenon.

A concern for the working class and the poor

Unlike in the Middle Ages, the intention was not to educate only the rich and powerful of society, but to enable everyone to benefit from instruction. The justification for this ambitious undertaking differed according to the groups which promoted it - the Churches, the humanists, the public authorities, religious congregations...

As early as the 14th century, the Brothers of the Common Life promoted this idea in their "*convicts*" where poor students and others from well-off families trained to be priests. It is worth noting this took place two centuries before the Council of Trent (1545-1563) called for seminaries to be created. According to Georges Rigault (vol. I), in the houses of the Brothers of the

Common Life - as we have already said - *“the instruction of the Brothers is gratuitous in accordance with the ancient tradition of disinterestedness and charity”*.

In the 15th century, Vittorino da Feltre founded and ran a school in Mantua in which rich and poor together studied the humanities and good moral standards.

In 1523, Juan Luis Vivès published in London *“De rationae studii pueribus”*, a summary of his thoughts about education, in which, quoting in support of his views some great figures of antiquity (Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, St. Jerome) as well as his contemporaries and friends (Erasmus and Thomas More), he recalls that concern has to be shown for the poor. Two years later, in 1525, he addressed a petition - *“Du secours des pauvres”* - to the Bourgmestre of Bruges, in which he expressed his concern for the humble and the abandoned. There comes naturally to mind the *“Remonstrances”* of Charles Demia, which appeared more than a century later. In 1531, in his *“Traité de l’enseignement”*, Vivès repeats what he had said earlier, writing: *“We, whose role it is to give advice, should direct our zeal and our vigilance to the common people, just as previously they were directed to princes. This is what all studies tell us and this is the aim we should tend to. Since we have acquired learning, it is our duty to use it and make it beneficial for the community.”*

A few decades later, at Cavaillon, César de Bus adopted a similar attitude. He wanted to instruct *“the little people of Cavaillon”*, turning his attention by preference to poor children. *“Devoted to prayer, he was charitable to the poor, and on several occasions he was observed making his way to give his own food to some beggar asking for alms in the porch of St. Peter’s church... César de Bus wept over the misfortunes of his day, and demonstrated his charity by both his devotedness and his alms. In particular, he strove to promote the instruction of the most poor; he stressed the respect owed to their persons, organising social mutual aid. He wanted everyone to be able to live out with dignity their vocation as sons of God and heirs to the Kingdom”* (Pamphlet pp. 8 and 9).

These few examples bear witness to the continuity and universality of concern for the poor. We could quote various others. There was, in fact, a fairly widespread awareness, on the part of the powerful of society, of the needs of

the common people and the poor. Instruction was to deliver the poor from mass illiteracy, from a lack of moral formation, from ignorance of politeness and civility, from a lack of evangelisation. Following the Council of Trent, all the men and women founders of teaching congregations shared these same concerns, and John Baptist de La Salle, the last of a long line, was included in their number.

The task was not as straightforward as one might suppose. Centuries-old prejudices had to be overcome, and the world of the poor presented problems difficult to resolve. To see this, we need only to refer to the numerous works dealing with the history of the poor and of poverty in the 16th and 17th century.

Humanism marked by optimism and generosity

Fortunately, the Renaissance approached the question of instruction and education with a surprising degree of optimism. It can be said that humanists discovered the concept of the educability of the person - of the whole person - and set much hope on schooling to improve individuals and society. There was probably an element of strong individualism in this optimism, with its limitations and disadvantages, but there was also the valorisation of the individual, now enabled to leave behind the anonymity of the Middle Ages.

To valorise the individual means to help him develop, to promote him. Instruction and education contributed to this, because illiteracy, ignorance and the lack of social graces generate multiple and serious forms of alienation. They prevent individuals from asserting themselves, developing and living happily.

Of course, it is not possible to treat the Renaissance as a monolith - there were chronological differences and differences of expression from country to country. But here we are considering it as a global movement, recognising, however, that France lagged behind other countries considerably.

A utopian trend

This was one of the pleasant manifestations of this optimistic and generous humanism. With his *"Utopia"* (1516), Thomas More (1478-1535) set in

motion an educational trend even more optimistic than the Renaissance as a whole. Schooling and social education can pave the way for and enable the development of a perfect and ideal society. Utopia is the name of an imaginary island created by Thomas More, derived from the Greek word meaning “nowhere”. What he describes is a society governed and organised ideally which could be created through a suitable form of education for its inhabitants. But in Utopia, the individual is sacrificed for the good of the group and the promotion of social values. In this, Thomas More deviates from the concept of the individual we mentioned earlier. Despite everything, his thinking set in motion the trend of modern forms of utopia.

In the imaginary Abbey of Thélème, François Rabelais (1494-1553) describes an enchanting setting for life in society. But the earthy style of Rabelais dresses up his ideas in a particular way. His two works, *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, offer various insights into his thinking. The “*Lettre de Gargantua à Pantagruel*” would be a good starting point for a study of his pedagogical ideas: a sharp criticism of the Middle Ages and a new course of studies for Pantagruel. But the description of the Abbey of Thélème reflects a somewhat special point of view regarding the life of these “*free people, well-born, well-educated, conversing in polite company, whose members are naturally inclined and spurred on to perform virtuous actions and to refrain from vice, and this they called honour.*” Rabelais devotes several chapters to the Abbey of Thélème in which life seems quite idyllic: “*Their whole life was regulated not by laws, statutes or rules, but by their own will and free judgment. They rose from their bed when they thought fit, drank, ate, worked, slept when they wanted. No one woke them up, nor obliged them to drink or eat, or to do anything at all. This is what Gargantua had decided. And the only rule they had was summed up in the sentence: Do what you want.*” All this may seem unworkable (“utopian”), but not to Rabelais.

In this line of utopians we must, of course, include Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639), whose “*Città del Sole*” was a belated success, but which still rings true today, despite the considerable volume of work produced by the writer which brought him into conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities of his day, and cost him more than twenty years in prison. Even if it differs in

many respects from it, his “ is a direct descendant of the “*Utopia*” of Thomas More.

Because he was a contemporary of John Baptist de La Salle, we must mention also in this connection Monsieur de Chennevières who published his “*Mémoire*” in 1685, which is a plea in favour of the “*Establishment of seminaries for men and women school teachers in every diocese in France*”. The author describes himself as “A priest serving the poor”, and in a sub-title of his *Mémoire* he adds: “*The true and very easy means to ensure that soon there is only one flock and one shepherd in the person of Our Holy Father the Pope in the whole world; and only one sovereign King and universal Emperor above all the other kings and emperors in the world, by the grace of God, in that of our most Christian King.*” The sub-title could have been a little simpler! The text of Chennevières reflects a certain aspirations and presumptions on the part of the Parisian clergy at the time of John Baptist de La Salle. When this work appeared, De La Salle was still working in Rheims, but he had been asked to open a seminary for teachers, and he seemed to want to leave the provinces and settle in Paris, which he did in 1688.

The birth of schools for girls

At the end of the Middle Ages, the dignity of women was still being discussed. Did they have souls like men? Should equal treatment therefore be considered? It is clear in any case that their status and role in society were not those of men, and this had many consequences including those involving education. In the 17th century certain strange beliefs, fears and superstitions regarding women still persisted. There was the fear of occult powers endowed to them by nature; of witchcraft with its attendant accusations, often unfounded, trials, condemnations and executions. There is some ambiguity about all this, but as we know, ways of thinking change slowly. Numerous recent works have examined these social realities.

However, as early as the end of the 15th century there were some who advocated the education of women. Juan Luis Vivès was one of these. In his days, little attention was paid to girls and, generally speaking, the education of women was considered undesirable. In Louvain, in 1523, Vivès published

“*De institutione feminae christianae*”, a whole treatise advocating the proper education of women beginning at birth. To moral and religious education he recommended the addition of training in manual skills which came naturally to women in a family setting. Other writers followed in his wake in the 16th and 17th century. There appeared numerous women’s teaching congregations, and schools for girls multiplied. Although this expansion, however faltering and whatever its limitations, lagged behind the provision of schooling for boys, it did represent considerable progress.

At the same time as Vivès, his friends Thomas More and Erasmus were also in favour of the education of women. When it advocated the widespread opening of Little Schools, the Council of Trent was thinking also of the teaching of catechism to girls. Amos Comenius called for scientific and literary studies to be made available to women, because they are called to the highest offices. This period was marked by the birth and development of women’s congregations devoted to the education of girls, instigated by famous people such as César de Bus, Pierre Fourier, Charles Borromeo, Joseph Calasanz, François de Sales, Vincent de Paul, Jacques de Batencourt, Charles Demia, Nicolas Barré, Nicolas Roland, etc.

A little later, at the time of John Baptist de La Salle, we need to add the names of Fénelon (1651-1715) - in practice, a contemporary of De La Salle - and of Madame de Maintenon . The first is known for having always laid great stress on the education of girls, whose role in family life he always considered to be of fundamental importance. In 1681, at the age of 30, he published his famous “*Traité de l’éducation des filles*” in which he attempted a psychological analysis of girls. He suggested that, in their case, the pedagogical approach should be open and liberal, and suited to the temperament and to the particular dispositions of each one. He returned to this theme in “*Avis à une Dame de qualité sur l’éducation de Mademoiselle sa fille*”, and his influence continued throughout most of the 18th century.

Madame de Maintenon (1635-1719) - also a contemporary of De La Salle - is known especially for her foundation in 1684 of St. Cyr, a boarding school for 250 noble but poor girls. She devised a typically feminine kind of education, based on women’s work, and a predominantly recreational form of phys-

ical and moral education. Like Fénelon, Madame de Maintenon advocated education based on gentleness and patience, but not excluding vigilance. St. Cyr survived up to the French Revolution, that is, almost a century.

It would clearly take too long to mention all the main women's congregations in France during this period. Other works have done this. It is quite evident that their work and influence went far beyond what was achieved by Fénelon and Madame de Maintenon.

As the ecclesiastical directives of the time recalled every now and then, all mixed education was strictly forbidden. In his *"Traité historique des Écoles"* (1678) Claude Joly, Precentor of the Diocese of Paris, sharply condemned all infractions of this prohibition. This helps us to understand why John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers took charge only of boys' schools. But De La Salle was no stranger to girls' schools, as can be seen from his relations with the Sisters of the Child Jesus, founded in Rheims by Nicolas Roland, and with Nicolas Barré, the founder of the Rouen Sisters. A less well-known episode, but one mentioned in his biography, is the help he gave the founder of the "Ladies of the Christian Union" in Mende - Anne de Lescure - to organise her schools and to draw up a Rule for her congregation. So much so, that these Ladies of the Christian Union considered him as their co-founder.

The emergence of the concept of childhood

Its emergence was slow but its discovery was of capital importance for instruction and education. We can see how slow and hesitant it was from the time it took to put an end to the mixing of ages in classes, which took place at the end of the 17th century. It seemed normal in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, even in universities, to admit students of different ages. This practice continued during the 16th century, as can be seen from the documents presented by Fr. de Dainville, SJ, in his work (See bibliography).

By setting up schools with three classes - or exceptionally two - De La Salle reveals his desire to reduce these differences in age and create more homogeneous teaching groups. But this was at the end of the 17th century, by which time the concept of childhood was already largely understood.

There was no lack of pioneers in this field. As early as 1275, Raymond Lull published his first great pedagogical work entitled *“Doctrina pueril”*. In the 15th century, Vittorino da Feltré called for close attention to the needs of individual pupils, as well as great consideration and solicitude. It was like a call for a personalised pedagogical approach: children need to be protected, helped and followed-up individually. Platina, one of Vittorino da Feltré’s pupils, summarises his master’s approach in the following words: *“The harmonious development of the body and mind was the constant concern of the master of the Casa Giocosa. Making sure that the nourishment of his young charges was healthy and regular; that their timetable allowed for appropriate time for work and relaxation; and even that pupils were able to benefit from summer breaks in the most salubrious area around Lake Garda; he had for them all the solicitude of a father”*.

In this connection, as early as the beginning of the 16th century, Juan Luis Vivès published his *“De ratione studii puerilis”*, which was a plan or programme of humanist education. In his *“Dialogues d’enfance”*, the same author examines the psychology of children. Like Erasmus, he insists on the importance of breast-feeding, because of the intimate bonds which form during this period between mother and child; and also on the differences in individual talents, an aspect which would influence the humanist concept of education of the Renaissance. Vives entitled one of his other works *“Linguae Latinae exercitatio”* which certain authors refer to as *“Dialogues d’enfance”*, a work which went through many editions and was translated into various languages. In it he sets out his approach to education. His aim is above all didactic. He rejects both mediaeval manuals and the critical pedagogy of Erasmus. He bases his educational approach on everyday life. In his work he shows erudition, introspection, observation of daily life and includes an introduction to child psychology. We may find the concept of the child he presents to be excessively pessimistic, but it was widely shared by educators in the 16th and 17th century. Vivès wanted to give education a psychological basis, which made him the first systematic educationalist of modern times. He has even been called *“the father of modern psychology”*.

According to Erasmus, a teacher must make himself loved: *“It is a great pity*

when the way a teacher acts makes a child take a dislike to studying, before even he has been able to understand the reasons for loving it. The first step in teaching is the affection a pupil has for his teacher. With time, the child who first loved studying because of his teacher, will love his teacher with all the love he has for his studies”.

Montaigne, unlike Rabelais, wishes a pupil to be wise rather than erudite. Education should make people think, and form their judgment. This can be achieved through gentleness. He loathed constraint and corporal punishment. He wanted to make virtue attractive, but did not exclude effort and a sense of duty. He offers an number of interesting and already modern educational guidelines. Although he does not particularly like children, he advises they should be treated with “*strict kindness*”, which excludes severe constraints and corporal punishment. This does not preclude being demanding in their regard, in order to help them form their personality and their character; while at the same time, accustoming them to use their initiative, and allowing them to act freely, in order to study their behaviour. So we see that Montaigne was quite clearly an optimist at a time when the prevalent attitude towards children was one of mistrust and pessimism.

Montaigne reveals also profound humanism and openness. Pupils need to travel in order to discover the world in all its diversity, and acquire a spirit of tolerance. Unlike Rabelais, he wishes to attain the balance of a “well-formed mind”, an expression widely repeated in France ever since. A balanced judgment is better than a mass of accumulated but perhaps not well-understood knowledge. Very logically, Montaigne attributes paramount importance to observation, because personal judgment comes before memory. And so, one must observe nature and human diversity by travelling; use languages to communicate and “*pit one’s brain against those of others*”; observe the human condition as reflected by the change in customs in the course of history. Of course, Montaigne had in mind well-off pupils and not those of the working class or the poor. His pupils were to be vigorous in body, character and conscience. But there seems to be no room for the heart: there is not much awareness of others, of the family, no esteem. There is a backdrop of egoism. And yet, Montaigne insists on the need to make children participate in their

own education, instead of undergoing it by constraint. This aspect would become increasingly important in educational thinking as time went on. "It is good to make a child toddle in front of you to see how fast he goes, and to judge how much you have to stoop to adjust to his strength. You should not ask the child simply to recite the words of his lesson, but to say what they mean; and the benefit he has drawn should be based not on what he has remembered, but on his judgment. And what he has just learned should be dressed up in a hundred different ways and applied to as many different subjects, to see if he still understands and has assimilated it". (Like the stomach which has to digest food.) One should freely borrow ideas from writers: *"Truth and reason are common to one and all, and do not belong either to those who said them first nor to those who said them afterwards. Bees fly from flower to flower, but the honey they make afterwards is all their own: it is not thyme nor marjoram. And so, he will transform and mix together what he has borrowed from others, and from it he will make something which is his own, namely, his judgment. The sole aim of his school, his work and study is to form it"*. For Montaigne, therefore, what is important is to develop initiative, form personal judgment, avoid knowledge based purely on books, and to multiply contacts with other people.

The 9th Principle of Radtke (1571-1635) is *"Let us make ourselves loved"* and make education interesting. The 10th Principle - which prefigures the thinking of Comenius - is that *"All children should go to school"*. This was daring at the time, especially since it referred to poor children, but it was also very generous. In reality, this was far from being achieved, because only very few children went to school, for a multiplicity of reasons.

Amos Comenius (1592-1670), in his *"Grande Didactique"* sets out a number of important principles governing education. Regarding the children, we can note that education should be fundamentally Christian - Comenius was a priest and a member of the Moravian Brethren and, as Michelet says, *"the first evangelist of modern pedagogy"*. It should begin at an early age; it should start as soon as possible. In this connection, we should remember that the admission age to schools varied greatly, and very few children began at six or seven years of age, while many stayed on until well past adolescence.

Education should be mixed: all children should be taught together in school. This was a daring point of view, almost revolutionary in his day, since mixed education was forbidden by the Church. And social mixing was limited because of economic, cultural and social segregation. Education should be universal: this also was a generous point of view. Comenius proclaimed that all had a right to education, a holistic education which develops all the faculties. These different principles bear witness to a profound concern for children and to a desire to offer them a better educational service. As Piobetta said, speaking of Comenius: *“As he wanted all children to receive an all-round education which would train all their human faculties, Comenius thought that they should all be led forward together as far as it was possible, so that they could encourage and stimulate one another, help one another to become more refined, and acquire all the virtues, including modesty, helpfulness, fraternity and solidarity”* (See Jean Château, pp. 111-112).

The emergence of the concept of childhood was therefore gradual and quite slow, stimulated in large part by schools themselves. What brought about this awareness was bringing children together in classes. It had been a long process, beginning with the notion of the child as a miniature adult on reaching seven years of age. School, the classroom, made it possible to realise that a child differed from an adult, not only physically, but also intellectually and psychologically. He could not therefore be treated as an adult. Allowances had to be made for his limited abilities, and his ignorance in all areas. But it took time before the pedagogical consequences of all this were realised.

John Baptist de La Salle was one of those who understood that differences in age had to be reduced in classes. From the very start, he wanted schools composed of three classes: junior, intermediate and senior, making it possible to divide the children up more by age. However, he did not achieve homogeneous groups because of the differing ages of children on admission. He understood also that a learning process had to be established and followed that was based on learning by progressive stages. The first part of “The Conduct of Schools” is a striking illustration of this. It is interesting also to note signs of psychological insight and awareness of differences in character in the chapters of the Conduct of Schools devoted to punishments, absences,

and classroom monitors. On the other hand, John Baptist de La Salle stressed how important it was for his teachers to adjust their language and explanations so that their pupils could understand them.

The decisive period for this emergence of the concept of childhood was the second half of the 17th century, around the year 1680. This view is supported by such writers as Philippe Ariès, Neil Postman, Alain Renaut, Dominique Julia and Egle Becchi, and so on. In this period educational psychology impacted on the grouping of pupils, on learning by progressive stages, on the approach to punishment, absences, classroom monitors, all of which became general practice in all schools. This development heralded the changes in the approach to pedagogy which would occur in the 18th century. Jean Jacques Rousseau would use different language to speak of children. It should be added, that the concept of childhood would rapidly modify parent-child relationships in the family context.

The search for an educational system

At the end of the 17th century, there was no lack of suggestions regarding how schools and Colleges should be organised, and no lack of practical experience. We shall consider a number of examples later on in this volume. The authors of the *Conduct of Schools* were perhaps inspired by the ideas of some of the proponents; and it is not surprising that this text is the most complete document regarding the organisation of Little Schools. In fact, the whole of the *Conduct of Schools* is characterised by this concern for organisation:

- the first part is devoted to the organisation of the teaching programme
- the second part, to the organisation of school life and relations.
- the third, to the sharing out of jobs to ensure the smooth running of the school.

Certain other educators we have mentioned did not attach great importance to the internal organisation of schools. A case in point is Vittorino da Feltre who preferred to create and maintain an atmosphere of harmonious and serene conviviality, conducive to the development of each individual. He was satisfied therefore with a minimum organisation of time and space. Rabelais

was more interested by what was taught than by the institution. As for Montaigne, he said he was opposed to the collective teaching he had known, and preferred the use of private tutors.

But many others were keen to suggest ways of organising schools and studies in a more logical and strict manner:

- There was Juan Luis Vivès who, in 1531, in Belgium, published several important texts in this connection, such as “Les Disciplines” and “De corruptis artibus”, which are veritable treatises on university pedagogy, and which are considered to be the most important of that period.
- Shortly afterwards, there were the Jesuit Colleges, whose influence, as we have already mentioned, was decisive in Europe and beyond for the establishment of a true system of secondary education. The model provided by the “Ratio Studiorum” - the title alone is enough to indicate the aim of the work - served as a point of reference for all the others.
- Radtke worked in Germany, Holland and England to establish a series of principles governing the organisation of studies. It is worth noting some of them:
 - Teach everything following a natural order
 - Learn only one thing at a time
 - Often repeat the same thing
 - Seek uniformity in everything
 - Start from an example
 - Proceed by a process of induction.
- The great organiser of the educational system as a whole was without doubt Amos Comenius. His “Grande Didactique” described itself as “*the universal art of teaching everything to everybody*”. To achieve a form of education that proceeded by progressive stages, that was continuous and basically simultaneous if sometimes mutual, Comenius proposed a precise systematic arrangement. This involved four stages:
 - Up to 6 years of age: Nursery school at home.
 - From 6 to 12: Primary school in each village.

- From 12 to 18: A Latin school or “gymnasium” in each town.
- From 18 to 24: An academy or university in each region.

Several other works by this same educationalist - one on languages, one on pictures and its six concentric manuals - complemented the “*Grande Didactique*”, and facilitated its implementation. This was the first attempt to systematise pedagogy.

Our brief survey shows there was a general trend to organise an educational system. What we think is really new about this, is that, unlike in the Middle Ages, it was the teachers who from then onwards would decide how to organise education. Students no longer had the great latitude they had enjoyed in mediaeval universities. They had to adjust to the system otherwise they laid themselves open to the sanctions envisaged for recalcitrants.

Schools teach civility

Ancient times and the Middle Ages had their forms of politeness, courtesy and civility. Because so few children went to school, this form of education affected only a small privileged minority. The Renaissance brought about a change and schooling spread, in particular through the Little Schools which opened up education to the new clientele of the lower classes. Erasmus played an important part in this rebirth of civility thanks to his publication of a short work entitled “*Civilité puérile*”, composed in the last years of his life. This work had much success and was rapidly translated into French, English and German. Its influence spread to the whole of western Europe. This concern for education in civility and decency was not restricted to schools: the whole of society prided itself on its civility and decency.

It is not surprising that this collective concern appeared among men and women teachers. Civility became an obligatory component of the curriculum of all schools, including those for the lower classes. But, were all the teachers capable of providing a kind of education they had not necessarily had themselves?

Restricting our examples to the chronological beginning and end of the period that concerns us, we can note that Vittorino da Feltre at the beginning of

the 15th century wanted “to teach (children) to speak elegantly and live decently”. At the end of the 17th, John Locke (1632-1704) wrote: “To think and act nobly is not enough. The child must first of all learn not to want to hurt the feelings of his neighbours, and then to behave himself always in society with ease and affability. He must never be disdainful, nor betray his contempt by his bearing, because by doing so he betrays himself. The modest man, the true gentleman, is one who knows himself and values himself at his proper worth. It is by knowing oneself that one learns to know others, and to show tolerance in all imaginable circumstances” (See Jean Château, p. 34).

For John Baptist de La Salle, civility is a constant and essential component of the education offered by his schools, for schools should promote a society which is non-violent, peace-loving, civilised, and therefore fraternal. For him, it was one of the dimensions of the acculturation that was offered to the children of the working class and the poor. But there was a precondition: the teachers had to know and practise the “*Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*”, the title of a work he published in 1703, a few years before the first manuscript of the “*Conduct of Schools*”. The importance of the educational aim justifies and explains the abundance of details regarding civility in the latter text. It was not easy to provide such an education. It made great demands on both pupils and teachers, the latter, even in this connection, having to set an example and to provide a model. The fruit of much thought and following on from a long line of publications beginning with that of Erasmus, John Baptist de La Salle’s work surprisingly proved to be a best-seller, and this continued to be the case for two centuries.

Using the native language

Education in the 16th and 17th century was still widely conducted in Latin, even in European countries which did not have a Latin-based language. On the one hand, this facilitated exchanges and the mobility of university teachers and students. On the other, it was a kind of male privilege men were loath to lose. It took time for Latin to become accessible also to women, even beyond this period, as the history of secondary education in France reveals. Also, of course, those who did not go school did not know Latin, and contin-

ued to use their national or regional language. But teachers had recommended the use of the native language in teaching already in previous centuries.

For example, Raymond Lull insisted on the use of people's own or common language as the medium for learning. Much of what he wrote was in his own Catalan language, but he did not reject Latin which continued to be the language of culture and of global communication.

According to the already quoted Georges Rigault, in the 14th and 15th century, the Brothers of the Common Life taught the local native language in their primary schools, that is, Dutch and German. Also they published numerous small and attractive pious and religious texts in these languages.

Montaigne, speaking of a private tutor, attaches much importance to the native language and to modern languages. He himself was taught in Latin by a German tutor who could not speak French! This was before he went to a College, an experience he disliked greatly. Later, he travelled around Europe - Paris, Lorraine, Germany, Switzerland and Italy - observing closely whatever he came across. His library contained works in Latin, French, Spanish and Italian.

Among the "principles of the method" which he sets out in his *"Didactica Nova"*, Radtke states *"that it is good to learn first of all using one's native language"*, because he wanted to combat the cult of Latin. In this he was successful, and this was his most useful innovation. Amos Comenius followed the same path and advocated education using first of all the native language, then using the foreign languages of the neighbouring countries, and finally using Latin. In Madame de Maintenon's St Cyr, the girls learned to read in French. The Port Royal Little Schools (1637-1660) had some rather special characteristics. These schools did not survive very long; they admitted a limited number of pupils; they hired carefully chosen teachers, and they offered education inspired by Jansenism. This last characteristic led to their suppression. They taught reading in French, and later, composition, style and elocution. When the pupils studied Latin they used a grammar composed in French. In this connection, it is worth consulting the work of Frédéric Deforge devoted to these Little Schools, and especially parts 2 and 3.

According to John Locke, the pupil should first of all learn to speak his native language correctly. He should learn how to reason by discussing the simple things that surround him in everyday life. When he knows how to express himself well in his native language, he can start learning a foreign language. Latin comes next, and remains useless for many pupils. You would think you were reading John Baptist de La Salle!

We should add, of course, that the use of the native language was an important aspect of girls' schools in the 17th century and in the following centuries. It continues to figure - but in second place - in the type of education promoted by Jacques de Batencourt and Charles Demia.

Sometimes John Baptist de La Salle has been hailed as the one who established the use of French instead of Latin as the medium for teaching. In a sense, this true; and we spoke of this in the second volume on the Conduct of Schools (Cahier Lasallien 62, chapter 4), quoting from the *Mémoire* he wrote to defend his point of view. The examples we have just given show that the reality was more complex. These examples show that Latin was running out of steam in several countries, especially in education for the lower classes, where native languages were taking over. This was not the case, however, in the Colleges and universities, where teaching in Latin continued to be the norm. One could add that the *lycées* created in France after the Revolution, at the beginning of the 19th century, continued to allocate much space to the Classics.

In conclusion:

Whether they were Catholic or Protestant, schools in the 16th and 17th century were basically concerned with the Christian formation of pupils. Protestants saw schooling as a necessary stage in gaining personal access to the text of the Bible. The Council of Trent assigned to schools as their primary aim the teaching of catechism and morality to children, and through them, to the whole family.

The religious purpose of schools was recalled by all the educators of this period. Like his predecessors or contemporaries, John Baptist de La Salle wished to form above all "true Christians", in schools which moreover he

called “Christian Schools”, and which he expected to develop in the pupils faith, a sense of the Church, interiority, knowledge of the Gospels and Christian values.

Chapter 4 - Three distinct educational entities

Introduction

This emergence of new educational concepts helped to define the outline of what we commonly call an educational system, even if some important elements in the light of what we now know are missing. There was less centralisation and control, and probably also less unity and homogeneity. But as a consequence, there was more diversity, and more room for initiative and autonomy. The State played no part in this, since all education depended on the Church.

This dynamic development of education took a multiplicity of lasting forms and was remarkably successful both by its quality and extent in all areas of education. Since we are principally concerned here with the 1706 text of the “Conduct of Schools”, we shall try to place it into this general context by turning our attention in particular to the educational situation in France.

As in neighbouring countries, but with a few characteristics of its own, the spread of literacy increased greatly from the 16th to the 18th century in all sectors of society. To have an exact idea of what was happening, it is essential to understand that, at this time, there was no school system standardised, organised and controlled by the State, but a great number of initiatives with the common characteristic of being dependent on the Church. It was only at the end of the 18th century, that is, as a result of the French Revolution, that the responsibility for education was transferred to the State, without however, the total disappearance of the freedom of initiative on the part of the Church. From this, there came about the long-lasting duality of State and private education.

But let us not get ahead of ourselves. When John Baptist de La Salle began to involve himself with schools in 1679, there were in France in fact three distinct educational entities.

Colleges and universities

In the Middle Ages, university education came into existence and was organised. It was intended for young men from well-off families: nobles, leading citizens and candidates for the ecclesiastical life. Gradually, there developed two levels of studies, closely connected, and normally available in the same university towns: the liberal arts level and the advanced faculties level⁶.

Students who completed the whole programme of studies were able to obtain successively the Bachelor of Arts degree, a Master of Arts and a Doctorate. This was the programme followed by John Baptist de La Salle, first at Rheims and then at the Sorbonne in Paris. None of this, however, inspired him to devote his life to education.

Autonomy of the Colleges and of the Liberal Arts

From the middle of the 16th century, thanks in particular to the Jesuits⁷ who conceived and created the College model, there came into existence a “secondary” form of education, which was quite autonomous, but which always offered access to higher learning. After prolonged, diversified and rewarding research, the Jesuits published in 1599 the “*Ratio Studiorum*”, a veritable charter of secondary education⁸. The Oratorians and the Brothers of the Christian Doctrine evidently took their inspiration from this pedagogical approach, such was its success. These Colleges opened their doors to the sons of well-off and influential families, and prepared them for posts of responsibility in the society of the Ancien Régime. Recent studies of the clientele of these schools reveals that pupils from the lower classes were such a small minority that they cannot even constitute a meaningful statistical category⁹.

⁶ The Liberal Arts: Trivium grammar, rhetoric, dialectics; *Quadrivium*: geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music. Advanced Faculties: theology, philosophy, Canon Law, civil law, medicine.

⁷ The first Jesuit College was opened in Messina in 1548. Others followed all over Europe including France.

⁸ Regarding this, one can consult the text of the *Ratio Studiorum* (Latin text, French translation) in a recent publication, Editions Belin, Paris 1997.

Fr. Charmot, S.J.: *La Pédagogie des Jésuites: Ses principes et son actualité*. Éditions Spes, Paris, 1943.

Fr. de Dainville, S.J.: *L'Éducation des Jésuites: XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles*. Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1978.

⁹ W. Frijhoff and D. Julia: *École et Société dans la France d'Ancien Régime*. 1975. *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*.

The hegemony of Latin

Unquestioning the dominance of the Latin language - a male prerogative in the society of the day - Colleges offered an approach and a curriculum in keeping with the aim of educating the whole person. A reading of the *Ratio Studiorum* bears this out fully.

Because of their specific character and their social thrust, Colleges were organised to function in an autonomous fashion. This may possibly be a little difficult for us to understand, accustomed as we are to seeing secondary education following on quite naturally from primary education and leading to higher studies. At that time, however, because education was based to a great extent on the study of texts by famous authors - from Antiquity or contemporary - learning how to read was an essential preliminary in order to begin this work. Colleges were led as a result to organise the teaching of reading and to create “College admission classes”. Pupils were admitted directly to these classes, whatever their age, at the beginning of their school careers, without first attending a primary school.

Colleges used Latin as their teaching language, the language to work in and as the language of culture. The first years of schooling were devoted to the study of Latin grammar. This was nothing new, as for a long time already so-called “grammar schools” had been in existence. The Latin language had to be mastered as a precondition for following other courses profitably.

The pedagogical approach

Much attention was given to the education of the whole person:

- Holistic human education preparing the young person to enter society and for his leadership role in that society. Colleges formed the elite, the leaders, those who made decisions.
- Christian education by:
 - twice- daily prayer,
 - twice-weekly catechism,
 - Christian or moral references during commentaries of texts,
 - daily Mass, liturgies of feasts, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament,

- the presence in each establishment of a spiritual director for the pupils, and regular confession,
- the activities of Marian Congregations...
- Artistic education provided by volunteer Academies, theatre productions, celebrations...

These educational components confirm what we were saying: what was most important was the formation of individuals with a view to developing their ability to command and to organise; and not the acquisition of technical, vocational or scientific skills. These affirmations need to be qualified, however, when speaking of the Oratorian Colleges, especially in the 18th century, which were more flexible and more open to new disciplines¹⁰.

The structuring of the teaching programme prefigures that of the *Lycées* from the 19th century onward. The reform of secondary education undertaken under the First Empire was largely inspired by 18th century structures, in particular, by Oratorian Colleges, given that the Jesuits had been expelled from France in 1763. In the *Lycées* of the 19th century, classical languages still held a dominant position, and it was not until the second half of the century, under the Second Empire, that the modern secondary school curriculum appeared.

Little Schools for boys

Little Schools already had a long history: they had been in existence for twelve centuries. The origin of the Little Schools can be found in the parish, diocesan and monastic schools we mentioned earlier, as many of them had survived after the creation of the universities and Colleges. They were intended for boys from the lower classes. In the second half of the 16th century, individual teachers began to open new schools, usually with the authorisation and even the support of the precentors. This reflected a growing concern for the instruction of the common people. As we said in chapter 1, the combination of a number of factors explains this interest in the lower class-

¹⁰ MM. Compère: *Du Collège au Lycée: 1500-1850*. Gallimard-Julliard 1985.
Or, MM. Compère and D. Julia: *Les Collèges Français: XVI^e - XVIII^e siècles*.

es. Because of cultural, economic and religious factors, the need for schooling became increasingly urgent. The response, initially mostly uncoordinated, also took extremely diverse forms.

There were, however, a number of shared characteristics. For example:

- The same lower-class clientele, which constituted the vast majority of the population which had no access to the Colleges, nor to decision-making or executive positions in society.
- The aims and curricula they proposed. Their aim was to provide Christian formation, and the influence of the Church - of the Churches - continued to be preponderant. To attain this aim, their most important means was teaching to read. This was the minimum in a list of basic subjects. To reading (usually in Latin) could be added writing and basic arithmetic. The choice of subjects depended essentially on the ability of the teachers themselves, and this at a time when teacher-training was more or less non-existent.
- This basic education enabled the boys who benefitted from it to take up executive positions in the organisation of a society which was in the process of economic and political development. The manufacturing and service sectors of the economy were expanding greatly, and the opportunities for employment in these areas were multiplying.
- So, these initiatives were numerous, diverse and sometimes anarchic. The precentors appointed by bishops tried to establish some order¹¹. Claude Joly's work published in 1678 is very instructive in this connection. It reflects all the usual worries, concerns and reactions of a precentor of the time.
- Schooling in the Little Schools did not usually lead to admission to the Colleges. Socially, they were worlds apart: the education each provided was quite distinct. It was against this background that primary education was born in France. Despite the political and administrative changes that took place subsequently, primary education was progressively organised, a

¹¹ Claude Joly's work - he was the Precentor of the Diocese of Paris for many years - is very instructive in this connection: *Traité historique des Écoles Épiscopales et Ecclésiastiques*, Paris 1678.

process which began at the time of the French Revolution, and then continued under the First Empire, under the Education Minister François Guizot, after 1880, and up to the middle of the 20th century.

Schools for girls

As we said in the previous chapter, one of the great educational novelties of the Renaissance was the creation of schools for girls. We will not go again into the reasons for this nor into the way it happened. It is easy to see how fundamentally important this was for European society and civilisation.

Difficulties to overcome

However, although the opening of such schools seems today to be quite a normal way forward, at that time, there were various difficulties that had to be overcome:

- Cultural difficulties: women were not considered to be equal to men. Their social status and functions differed. It was discussed whether they should be given the same instruction as men, enabling them to lose their inferior social status. But very soon it became clear they should be forbidden to learn Latin: this was to remain a male privilege. Some years later, in France, Molière would demonstrate on stage, in two of his classic plays *“Les Précieuses ridicules”* and *“Les Femmes savantes”*, the excesses that women would indulge in if they were educated. All the same, very early on, as we have already said, famous educationalists declared they were in favour of education for girls. There was Luther in Germany, Vivès in Spain and Erasmus in Holland. There followed many others all over Europe.
- Even in the Church, a pessimistic view of women persisted, a view based on a collection of various theological considerations. These views surfaced at various times in the 16th and 17th century. For example, the responsibility of a woman for original sin; the presumed occult powers of women and the murky world of witchcraft... The success of a battle for the schooling of girls was not a foregone conclusion. Fortunately, there was the position adopted by the first Protestant Reformers, imitated a little

later by the Fathers of the Council of Trent. They provided a powerful stimulus for the opening of schools for girls.

Remarkable expansion

This encouragement was matched by a growing expectation and demand for schooling. Mixed education was strictly forbidden by the Church, and schools for girls came into existence as separate institutions, encouraged by the foundation of numerous religious congregations for women in the different countries. There had been a turnaround in policy: the Church now reckoned that the dangers of ignorance were worse than those of learning. Thanks to her education, the mother of a family could play an essential part in the human and Christian education of her children. Her role as a catechiser would be singled out by the Council of Trent.

The fact that the new congregations for women - by a decision of the Council - had to be cloistered, created a particular problem, but one which could be solved: convents or monasteries ran two kinds of school: fee-paying boarding schools for girls, and a free day-school for poor girls. This separation was often marked by some disparity, but the system worked and expanded rapidly. The percentage of literate women rose appreciably in the course of the 17th and 18th century, almost to the point of equaling that of men.

Different schools

The major women's congregations of the 16th and 17th century drew up some very interesting detailed descriptions of their schools. These texts bear the title of "Constitutions" or "Rule of Life". Intended for a well-defined group of teachers - the members of the congregation concerned - these texts sometimes remained confidential or had a restricted circulation. Some of them have been the object of detailed historical studies. Even recently, Michel Fiévet¹² has published an analysis of schools run by the Ursulines, the Notre Dame Sisters, the Daughters of Charity, the Père Barré Sisters and by Charles Demia. But there were many others.

¹² M. Fiévet: *L'invention de l'école des Filles*. IMAGO 2006.

Leaving aside inevitable variations, it would be easy to highlight aspects which are common to the schools as a whole, because they all shared the same social, cultural and ecclesial context. One could also compare these texts with those we have mentioned concerning lower-class schools for boys. But this would serve only to keep alive pointlessly certain ambiguities, since we are dealing here with two quite different educational entities. This point is highlighted by certain historians, such as Martine Sonnet and Françoise and Claude Lelièvre¹³.

These schools were different, for in schools for girls:

- The educational aims were different: girls had to prepare themselves to become pleasing and charming wives; to know about household chores so as to be able to run the household efficiently; and to give their children a Christian upbringing. Their education was more personal than career-oriented.
- Consequently, the curriculum was different in some ways:
 - Reading was included obviously because it was indispensable for everything else;
 - It was often done in French;
 - Christian formation: catechism, moral behaviour in view of their role as mother;
 - Good manners, civility and social graces: dancing, music, singing, acting...
 - So, there was little room for writing, arithmetic, and of course, for Latin.

This distinction between boys and girls persisted in France up to the middle of the 19th century¹⁴. As Françoise and Claude Lelièvre point out: *“The education of girls at that time could not have had as its primary purpose preparation for employment ; quite the contrary. Women, even if educated, had to stay ‘in*

¹³ M. Sonnet: *L'éducation des filles au temps des Lumières*, Cerf, 1987
E and Cl. Lelièvre: *Histoire de la scolarisation des filles*, Nathan 1991.

¹⁴ A plaque on the wall of the administrative building of Lyons University 1, recalls that it was only in 1861 that the first girl obtained her baccalaureate. She was Julie Victoire Daubie (1824-1874). She had fought for this right and had to wait until the age of 37 to sit the examination.

their place' and if possible 'at home'. In the period stretching from the Ancien Régime to the end of the 4th Republic, the education of girls was manifestly and explicitly different from that of boys: it is clear that it was qualitatively and quantitatively inferior to it." (op. cit. p. 6)

Martine Sonnet¹⁵ is of the same opinion: *"Girls spend less time than their brothers acquiring rudimentary knowledge, and achieve more rarely than they do complete mastery of what they study... The basic reading and writing skills taught to the girls by their teachers have to be studied further outside of school, otherwise they are forgotten. Girls from the lower classes are evidently the first to pay the price of an uncompleted basic education. People are always in a hurry to take a book or a pen out of their hand and in their place put a needle and thread."* (Op. cit. pp. 250-251)

Attitudes changed a little from the 18th century onwards, when the philosophers insisted on the equality of men and women. But practically speaking, very little changed where schools were concerned.

"All in all, the extent of female education in the middle of the 17th century was still very limited. For girls, there was no equivalent to what the Colleges provided for boys. Some writers have sometimes presented the boarding schools run by convents as offering a secondary education, as opposed to the elementary education offered by their day schools, but this is a mistaken view: the girl boarders did not learn Latin, nor anything else that characterised the curriculum of the Colleges. In any case, it is difficult to see how the religious Sisters could have taught them something they themselves did not know. The education received by the boarders was more refined - in line with the social status of the intake - but not more advanced than that received by the girls in the day school. The most cultured women of this time owed their culture to their family background, as in the case of Madame de Sévigné, who had Ménage as her Latin teacher¹⁶."

¹⁵ M. Sonnet: *L'éducation des filles au temps des Lumières*, p. 250.

¹⁶ See in this connection the above works by M. Sonnet, F and Cl. Lelièvre, or by G. Duby and M. Perrot: *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, vol. III; or by R. Chartier-MM. Compère-D. Julia: *L'Éducation en France du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle*; or by F. Lebrun-M. Vénard-L. Quéniart: *Histoire générale de l'Enseignement et de l'Éducation en France*, vol II.

Conclusion

When, at the beginning of 1679, John Baptist de La Salle was asked by Madame Maillefer and Monsieur Nyel to help them open schools for poor boys in Rheims, there were in place three quite distinct educational entities :

- The Colleges for boys from well-off families,
- Various kinds of Little Schools for working-class boys,
- Schools for girls, run by either by communities of women religious, or by lay women teachers.

It is important to remember that these three entities functioned independently, with no links between them. And this was the case not only in the period from the 16th to the 18th century. Despite the changes which took place, these three educational entities persisted until the last quarter of the 19th century, despite successive reforms and educational legislation.

As John Baptist de La Salle himself admitted in his *“Memoir on the Beginnings”*, and despite the close ties he had forged with Nicolas Roland - to the extent that he had been chosen by him to be the executor of his will - he had never envisaged becoming involved in running schools. He became so as a result of a series of circumstances, and against his wishes, after meeting Adrien Nyel. This is a fundamental detail which is forgotten only too often when speaking of the origins of Lasallian schools.

Because of his previous studies - a doctorate in theology from the Sorbonne - and his status as a priest and a canon, De La Salle could have worked in education in a College or a university, but it was not what he wanted. As the executor of Nicolas Roland's will, he had to take the necessary steps to obtain official recognition for the Sisters of the Child Jesus, recognition from the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of Rheims, and he succeeded in doing this quite rapidly. Even if he continued to help out the Sisters by saying Mass, he showed no inclination to involve himself in their schools. And it was despite himself, that he supported Adrien Nyel's undertaking to open schools for poor boys. And so, it would be historically inaccurate to believe that, from as early as 1679, he had a precise idea of the type of school and of the religious institute he wanted to found.

To speak without distinguishing between the three educational entities we have presented would serve only to create confusion. They were, in reality, three quite self-contained educational systems. Little Schools did not aspire to imitate the Colleges, did not target the same clientele, did not have the same aims, and did not have the same curriculum nor the same teaching methods. Nor did these Little Schools take their inspiration from the schools for girls, even when these had been founded before them. This is understandable and can be explained if one takes into account the status of women at this time. And this is not to disparage in any way the quality of schools for girls.

Chapter 5 - The first Lasallian schools

Introduction

It was in this educational context - very briefly outlined in the preceding chapters - that the first Lasallian schools appeared in 1679, in Rheims. How they began is relatively well known thanks to the first three biographers of Saint John Baptist de La Salle: Bernard, Blain and Maillefer¹⁷, all three of whom had the privilege of personally knowing John Baptist de La Salle, and of using the “Memoir”¹⁸ written by him, describing the beginnings of his educational work. Unfortunately, the Memoir was lost as it was passed from one biographer to the next, and all we have are a few fragmentary but revealing quotations regarding De La Salle’s personal feelings regarding the schools. We shall return to this later.

From the beginning, several persons played a decisive role in the appearance of the first schools for poor boys in the city of Rheims, in particular, Madame Maillefer and Monsieur Adrien Nyel, whose contribution should be remembered. On the educational level, Lasallian schools were naturally heirs to the preceding period. It would be difficult - probably impossible - to know to what extent De La Salle was influenced by his educational predecessors. However, his own life and education allows us to think that he knew about

¹⁷ Ver Cahiers Lasalliens:

- 4: Frère Bernard: Conduite admirable de la divine Providence en la personne du vénérable serviteur de Dieu Jean-Baptiste de La Salle. Manuscrito de 1721.

- 6. F. E. Maillefer: La vie de M. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, prêtre, docteur en théologie, ancien chanoine de la Cathédrale de Reims et Instituteur des Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes. Édition comparée des manuscrits de 1723 et 1740.

- 7 et 8: Jean-Baptiste Blain: La vie de Monsieur Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, Instituteur des Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes. Édition Princeps – Rouen 1733.

¹⁸ Los primeros biógrafos hacen referencia a esa “Memoria” y dicen haberla utilizado. Se pueden descubrir algunos pasajes en su relato, pero el documento mismo ha desaparecido y es muy lamentable.

them. We should recall also that John Baptist de La Salle was in personal contact with a number of other founders of schools for the working class in the 17th century:

- **Nicolas Roland:** his friend and adviser over a long period, including in the context of the chapter of the cathedral of Rheims of which they were both members. It would seem that Nicolas Roland would have liked to involve his young colleague in the work of providing schools for poor children, but he never managed to win him over.
- **Nicolas Barré:** whom De La Salle chose as his spiritual director in 1680, and whose biographers have preserved for us some fragments of correspondence covering the crucial years of the foundation of Lasallian schools.
- **Charles Demia:** whose private diary bears witness to the relationship established between these two founders of schools in the early 1680s¹⁹. Demia's "*Règlements*" were quite well known beyond the confines of the archdiocese of Lyons. His "*Remontrances*" likewise influenced several of the persons we have mentioned: Barré, Roland and De La Salle.

Also, it is interesting to note that Nicolas Barré and Charles Demia, in their respective "*Règlements*", refer explicitly to school or pedagogical arrangements taken from a widely-diffused earlier document, "*L'École Paroissiale*", a document published several decades previously. This document seems to be the common source for boys' schools. On the other hand, we should point out that the "Conduct of the Christian Schools" contains no reference to this document, because its source is different: it is the lengthy experience of the first Brothers themselves, analysed and shared by them in the course of numerous "*conférences*" (meetings).

As we have recalled in previous chapters, we need to be very careful when dealing with the texts of Fourier, Barré and Roland, because they refer to girls' schools. In fact, there are no references to the teaching approach of

¹⁹ Ver sobre el tema el Cahier Lasallien 56, del Hermano Yves Poutet: « Charles Demia: Journal de 1685 à 1689. Présenté, transcrit et annoté ». Rome 1994.

these schools in the writings of John Baptist de La Salle. De La Salle's dealings with Roland and Barré are centred more on choice of life and the overall thrust of his schools.

The zeal of Madame Maillefer

In chapter 5 of his biography of De La Salle (see Cahier Lasallien 4, p. 23), Bernard speaks of Madame Maillefer sending Adrien Nyel to Rheims *"to bring about the establishment of the same kinds of gratuitous schools"*. Herself a native of Rheims, but living in Rouen with her husband who was interested in the education of young people, she had established a school in Darnétal, and wished now to extend the benefits of education to Rheims. A few years previously, she had met Nicolas Roland when he had come to give the Lent sermons in Rouen, and they had arranged that she would send Adrien Nyel to open some schools for poor boys. Their plan came to nothing because of the death of Nicolas Roland. A few years later, she resurrected her plan, believing she could rely on the support of John Baptist de La Salle, a distant relative of hers by marriage. The first meeting of Nyel and De La Salle took place in the house of the Sisters of the Child Jesus, in March 1679. Regarding De La Salle's behaviour on this occasion, the biographer notes, *"He commits himself without thinking to becoming the support of this new establishment"* (CL 4, p. 25). The biographer then goes on to stress that this was God's work. De La Salle committed himself without realising yet that it was God who was choosing him and involving him in a long-term commitment.

Maillefer (see Cahier Lasallien 6, pp. 29 and following) describes John Baptist de La Salle's efforts to obtain the recognition of the Sisters by the city and the archbishopric of Rheims, after the death of Roland, and states, *"he found himself committed to work for the establishment of gratuitous schools for boys"*. Like Brother Bernard, the writer attributes all this *"to the finger of God who was guiding his steps"*. He then quotes the Memoir written by John Baptist de La Salle himself: *"God who conducts all things wisely and gently, and who is not accustomed to impose his will upon people, wishing me to commit myself completely to taking care of the schools, did so in an imperceptible manner and in a short period of time, so that one commitment led to another, without*

my having foreseen any of this initially". (p. 31) Madame Maillefer envisaged, therefore, setting up gratuitous schools in Rheims, and had already contacted Nicolas Roland in 1674: "*Monsieur Nyel was recommended to her as being a skilful person who had a particular talent regarding these kinds of establishments. It was he whom Fr. Barré, a Minim, had used some years previously to establish some in Rouen and elsewhere*". (p. 33). And so Madame Maillefer sent Adrien Nyel to Rheims with the intention of introducing him through the intermediary of the superior of the Sisters of the Child Jesus of Rheims whom she knew already. The biographer then goes on to describe Nyel's meeting with De La Salle. De La Salle had absolutely no intention of establishing schools: all he wanted was to help Nyel with his negotiations, because he knew that Rheims was a difficult and risky place to do business. He offered even to put him up in his own house for the sake of discretion and to make things easier for him. De La Salle acted therefore with prudence, and this seems to be a character trait, but while doing so "*he committed himself without realising it*" (p. 35).

Jean Baptiste Blain (see Cahier Lasallien 7, pp. 146 and following) devoted several chapters to the arrival and work of Adrien Nyel in Rheims. He also states that Nicolas Roland had envisaged opening gratuitous schools for poor boys, once he had established those for girls, but had not been able to carry out this plan. It was therefore the intervention of Madame Maillefer and the arrival of Adrien Nyel which made its implementation possible. He insists, quite rightly, on the fact that John Baptist de La Salle had no plans at all to establish schools. An interesting thing about Blain's work is that it introduces Madame Maillefer to us at some length, speaking of her worldly life, her radical conversion, her subsequent behaviour marked by her search for humiliations and mortification, and also of her great tenderness for the poor. "*As Madame Maillefer was involved in all good works, she was among the first to support the zeal of Fr. Barré to establish Christian schools. She founded one for girls in Darnétal, a large town almost at the gates of Rouen, a place full of merchants and very crowded because of the factories established there. It was the success of this school which led to the establishment other similar schools for girls, and inspired the establishment of schools for boys.*" (p. 159) Blain says also that

Madame Maillefer wanted to do the same thing in Rheims, and contacted Nicolas Roland *“hoping to bring to fruition a plan which would, without her knowing it, provide an opportunity for the establishment of the Institute of the Brothers.”* (p. 160) When Nicolas Roland died, she looked for someone to replace him: *“In order for the plan to succeed, a man was needed therefore who was zealous and skilful, flexible and clever. The person she found with these qualities was Monsieur Adrien Nyel, a native of Laon, and aged about 55 at the time. Nature had endowed him with the necessary talents for these kinds of tasks. Lively and energetic by nature, he was always ready to be the first one to break the ice, and to undertake some new enterprise. Moreover, he was not a newcomer to the kind of work for which Madame Maillefer considered him suitable, because he had tried his hand at it in Rouen, where he had successfully started up gratuitous schools for boys, and he had greatly helped with their establishment. To provide for his upkeep and for that of the 14 year old boy who accompanied him, the pious lady promised to pay them an allowance of 100 ecus annually, and made out a promissory note to this effect.”* (p. 160)

Reading the accounts of the three biographers, it becomes clear that they all used the same source - the “Memoir on the Beginnings”, written by John Baptist de La Salle. This leads them to use more or less the same or similar expressions. All three insist on the part played by Providence, including in the meeting between Adrien Nyel and De La Salle in 1679. It was usual to speak in terms of Providential intervention in those days. It was also the kind of language used by De La Salle himself in the Memoir. In it he gives a spiritual interpretation of the part he played in the foundation of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

None of this diminishes in any way the role or merit of Madame Maillefer. This God of Providence uses human intermediaries to carry out his plans. Nyel also is one of his intermediaries. If he was chosen and sent to Rheims, it was first of all because of his experience in running “gratuitous schools for boys”. It was also the sign that the schools for girls, already established in that city by Nicolas Roland and the Notre Dame Sisters, were not the model envisaged. We need to look more closely therefore at what Adrien Nyel did in the city and surrounding area of Rheims in the six years he spent there.

The decisive role of Adrien Nyel (1621-1687)

It is interesting to read what Blain wrote on the death of Adrien Nyel. He portrays John Baptist de La Salle as being very affected by it. He wants prayers to be said for the deceased as a sign of gratitude and wishes all the existing Brothers to participate. *“Monsieur De La Salle did this, and one can say that he owed him this in all justice, for I would venture to say that Monsieur Nyel is the person in this world who was of the greatest service to him. Was it not in fact this man that the hand of God used to open for Monsieur De La Salle the path to the most eminent sanctity? If this simple layman had not made an opening for the Christian and Gratuitous Schools; if he had not urged the pious Canon to look after them and ensure their establishment; it is probable that Monsieur De La Salle would not have made the great sacrifices which have been reported. The pious Canon would have remained as he was; he would have continued to live as a saint as he always had; but there are degrees of sanctity, and it is likely he would not have reached the high point he attained”.* (CL 7, p. 282)

Let us say that Blain was responsible for the spiritual interpretation of the events which marked the life of John Baptist de La Salle, but what he wrote is more than likely true. Until Nyel's arrival in Rheims in 1679, De La Salle gave absolutely no sign of intending to involve himself in founding schools. In a certain way, he was even allergic to the idea, as he himself wrote in his Memoir:

“It was because of these two events, that is, the meeting with Monsieur Nyel and the suggestion made to me by that lady, that I began to involve myself with schools for boys. Up to then, the thought of doing so had never entered my mind, but it was not as if no one had suggested it to me. Several of Monsieur Roland's friends had tried to plant the idea in my mind, but it had never taken root there, and it had never entered my mind to act on it...” (CL 7, p. 169).

So the three biographers agree on how schools for poor boys were opened in Rheims, and how the responsibilities were shared by Adrien Nyel and John Baptist de La Salle. De La Salle did not impose a pre-established plan for the schools, but he acted prudently and sensibly so as to ensure new foundations would not fail. He knew that their success depended essentially on the quality of the teachers. So he drew up some rules for his first group of teachers,

and organised meetings to train them. He even looked for a house to lodge them and make them live together. But Adrien Nyel remained in a way in overall charge. This is illustrated by the opening of the second school in the parish of St. Jacques in Rheims, in September 1679, and by the hiring of new teachers. Soon after, a third school was opened in the parish of St. Symphorien. Nyel showed dynamism and competence. Perhaps, De La Salle thought he was going too fast!

As far as we are concerned, what is most important is that Adrien Nyel had a great deal of experience organising new schools and the kind of teaching approach used in them. Neither he nor De La Salle showed any interest in looking for and copying already existing ways of running schools. De La Salle was already acquainted with the schools run by Nicolas Roland's Sisters. He probably had occasion to visit those of the Notre Dame Sisters in Rheims, even though none of the biographers mentions this. But there is nothing to show that he took inspiration from them. The first Lasallian schools started without any major problems and were a success. The merit for this is due for the most part to the competence of Adrien Nyel. And there was better still: the renown of these schools spread very quickly beyond the confines of the city walls and reached Charles Demia in Lyons, as is noted in his Diary. This dynamic momentum survived even the crisis that befell the first group of teachers. This was another of those famous episodes which marked the beginnings of the Society of the Christian Schools. It was at this time also that John Baptist de La Salle took as his spiritual adviser Fr. Nicolas Barre of Rouen, whose extensive experience of schools for the lower classes went back many years. The correspondence between them reflects some of the personal decisions made by De La Salle. Nyel spent three fruitful years in Rheims. In 1682, the Town Council of Rethel asked him to open a school for boys, which he did without hesitation. Later we find him in Guise and Laon. In this way he gradually moved away from the influence of John Baptist de La Salle, and at one point, he was responsible for schools in Laon, Guise and Rethel. He did not feel bound in any way to De La Salle, and did not envisage becoming part of the "Society of the Christian Schools" which was taking form.

As Georges Rigault, the Institute historian, wrote: *“On October 26th 1685, he returned to the Hôpital Général in Rouen. The authorities gave him the title of “Superintendent of schools for the poor”. The task he faced was to put establishments, which were collapsing, back on their feet, and to breathe new life into drooping spirits. The returned traveller no longer had the strength to undertake this work. But his return after his apostolic journeys, and after all the work he had undertaken together with Saint John Baptist de La Salle, can be seen as a harbinger of things to come. He had served as a link between Normandy and Champagne, and he had brought to Rheims the message from Rouen...”* (G. Rigault, vol. I, pp. 156-157).

Canon Blain also gives an assessment of Nyel’s capabilities: *“Nature had endowed him with the necessary talents for these kinds of tasks. Lively and energetic by nature, he was always ready to be the first one to break the ice, and to undertake some new enterprise. Moreover, he was not a newcomer to the kind of work for which Madame Maillefer considered him suitable, because he had tried his hand at it in Rouen, where he had successfully started up gratuitous schools for boys, and he had greatly helped with their establishment.”* The biographer stresses also and quite rightly that Nyel went to Rheims intending to establish gratuitous schools for boys, and not in order to found a teaching Institute. When he thought his work there was done, he moved on, leaving De La Salle to continue alone.

His task, however, was not easy. The authorities in Rheims did not want any new schools to be established within the city ramparts. At that time, space in towns was often very limited and therefore jealously guarded. As the biographer Bernard wrote: *“The city authorities had put many obstacles in the way of establishing schools for girls, and they would never have been established without the backing of the Archbishop. If they saw moves by strangers to establish schools for boys, they would obtain information about all their plans and could very well send them away, for fear they might set up some new school despite their efforts”* (Bernard, p. 25).

Initially, work was in fact shared out between De La Salle and Nyel. On returning from a pilgrimage to Liesse, Nyel felt that it was up to him to establish schools. Of course, history has upheld that De La Salle was a facil-

itator, and Bernard invites us to “*admire the kindness and charity of our holy priest who, under no obligation, received and advised so charitably a stranger he did not know, doing so in order to procure the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He committed himself unwittingly to support this new establishment.*” (p. 25) The same writer stresses the sharing of tasks by the two men, and states clearly that the schools made a good start thanks to Nyel’s experience: “*Having therefore set up this school, Monsieur Nyel returned from time to time to see his charitable benefactor, whose relationship with him had not cooled in the least, and who sought to help him in any way he could, without being obliged to do so except by reasons his charity suggested.*” (p. 28) A little further on, the same biographer includes an important paragraph which reflects what is said in the Memoir on the Beginnings: “*It was in this way that God used these two persons, that is, Monsieur Nyel and Madame l’Évêque from Croyères, to induce Monsieur de La Salle to take charge of these schools to which he gave no thought, as we have already said, and as he himself states in his manuscript. It is true, however, that several persons whom he knew and who had been close to the late Monsieur Roland, had suggested to him a number of times that he ought to establish schools for boys, just as Monsieur Roland had established schools for girls. But this suggestion had never registered in his mind, and he had never occurred to him to act upon it.*” (p. 30)

It is worth dwelling a little on the life and educational work of Adrien Nyel. He was 36 when he settled in Rheims in 1657, and he worked there promoting schools for the poor. He persevered in this work for 22 years, acquiring in this way a considerable amount of pedagogical experience in the low-class setting of the Hôpital Général. It is quite understandable, therefore, that he was chosen to organise schools for poor boys in the city of Rheims. He was the man for the situation. In Rouen, he had gained the trust of the authorities. This could only have been because of his competence and dedicated approach. We should not then be astonished if De La Salle in his turn trusted him and gave him a free hand where his activities were concerned. One factor needs to be borne in mind: in 1679, De La Salle was 28 years old, and Adrien Nyel was 58. Nyel had a great deal of experience; De La Salle was well aware of his limitations regarding school matters. If only because of his

education in civility, De La Salle showed great respect for his elder, already almost an old man, given the demography of the time. The freedom of action and the initiatives of Nyel - opening schools at Saint Jacques, Rethel, Guise and Laon - bear witness to this. The biographers themselves sometimes refer to a certain instability on the part of Nyel. Perhaps there was some truth in this, but it is difficult for us to judge today. Earlier, he had in fact given proof of stability by his 22 years in Rouen. Sent to Rheims to open schools for poor boys, he opened schools. This was only reasonable. It does seem his temperament was different from that of De La Salle. That is another problem. Georges Rigault sums up his impression of Nyel in the following way: *“Nyel was an educationalist, and in carrying out his duties as Superintendent he had clearly proved how capable he was: he could control a class, teach systematically and, as a fervent Christian and very knowledgeable about his Faith, he would leave behind him the reputation of an exceptional catechist.”* (Rigault, vol. I, p. 135). Moreover, in Rouen, he opened several schools and trained the teachers who taught in them. He was efficient and worked rapidly. This conferred on him great authority in educational matters. He also acquired a certain freedom of movement as a result, which explains his availability when Madame Maillefer wanted to send him to Rheims. On the other hand, Blain thought as follows: *“Monsieur Nyel, while suited to running schools, was not suited to organising teachers: he was absent from the house too much; he was not sufficiently careful to ensure that regulations were observed in it, nor rigorous enough to offer personally to others a domestic and family example, and therefore one of the required regularity.”* (CL 7, p. 170) But De La Salle considered community life to be essential... The sharing out of tasks between them fell into place quite naturally therefore.

The gradual commitment of John Baptist de La Salle

It is thanks then to his three first biographers that we know precisely the circumstances in which John Baptist de La Salle was led to involve himself with schools for poor children. The “Lasallian Chronology” for those years enables us to date exactly the stages of this commitment. As we said earlier, Madame Maillefer and Monsieur Adrien Nyel were, in their own way, the instigators of this commitment. But we can say, without any exaggeration, that De La

Salle was constrained and forced to make it, even if later he would see in it the hand of God. In the Memoir on the Beginnings, he states quite clearly his initial reluctance: *“It had not occurred to me before to do so...”*

He was caught unawares by his first meeting, in March 1679, with Adrien Nyel and by Madame Maillefer’s letter the latter had brought. As a very courteous person, he did hesitate to be of service: he was happy to help and advise Nyel with his negotiations, and he spontaneously offered to lodge him in his own house, because he saw this would guarantee success. He even initiated the negotiations. All this is justifiable and understandable if we put it into the rather special context of Rheims at this time. The authorities, as we have already said, were not in favour of the establishment of new schools within the city ramparts. But it did not occur to De La Salle that he was beginning to involve himself in a permanent way: *“If it had occurred to me that the care I was taking of the teachers through pure charity (and this detail is important if we are to understand the meaning of what he was doing, which was taking an interest in the situation of the teachers) would oblige me one day to live with them, I would have put a stop to everything. As I quite naturally considered those I had to employ in my schools, especially at the beginning, as quite inferior to my valet, the very thought of having to live with them would have been quite unbearable”*. (CL 7, p. 169)

“The care I was taking of the teachers through pure charity”. This general statement, apparently vague and without significance, actually refers to a series of concrete actions:

- Christmas 1679: he lodges the teachers in a house leased for them,
- April 1680: he keeps the teachers in his own house from morning to evening,
- June 24th 1680: he invites the teachers to join his family at table,
- April 1681: he organises a spiritual retreat for the teachers,
- June 24th 1681: he lodges the teachers in his own house,
- June 24th 1682: he goes to live with them in rue Neuve, in two houses leased for this purpose.

While Adrien Nyel was busy opening and organising schools, it is clear that

De La Salle was involving himself with the teachers even to the point of sharing their life. He had become aware that the smooth running of schools depended above all on the quality of the teachers, and therefore, on the quality of their training. And so he began to train them. In this way he became increasingly involved in what would be called the “**Society of the Christian Schools**”. This proves also how, from the very beginning, the community aspect and the establishment of a small network of schools was important for De La Salle. In 1691, the term “**Association**” began to be used. Without having yet adopted this name, what was being set up had all the characteristics of a community enterprise. And it was in this setting that the “Conduct of Schools” would be drawn up in the course of a “*very great number of conferences*”. The biographer Maillefer (his nephew) describes this process on pages 70 to 89 of his work, in a series of paragraphs, entitled as follows: “*He thinks of bringing the teachers to his own house*”, “*he invites them to dine with him*”, “*M. De La Salle lodges the teachers in his own house*”, “*He sets about training his teachers in virtue*”, “*He leaves his family home with the teachers*”, “*He prescribes for them a common life*”, “*Most of the teachers grow disgusted*”, “*M. De La Salle encourages those who remain*”, “*He makes them wear distinctive clothing*”, “*He makes them adopt the name of Brothers of the Christian Schools*”.

There then follows a short but very dense paragraph on the union characterising these teachers, these Brothers: “*The Brothers (that is what we shall call them from now on) had only one heart and one soul. They lived together in great peace, helped one another with tender and compassionate charity. They held everything in common, personal interest was not a consideration, in such a way that by the regularity of their conduct they reflected vividly the life of the first Christians. They retained one weakness, however, through which the demon could surprise them: concern for the future.*” (p. 89). This last sentence sets the scene for following pages which give an account of the crisis of 1683. The schools had been running now for four years. Adrien Nyel, even if he lived quite near, had left Rheims. It was left to De La Salle to look after the teachers and the schools. The crisis we refer to here, described at length by Blain also, would be marked by some decisive interventions on the part of Père Barré, De La Salle’s adviser.

In the meantime, however, John Baptist de La Salle thought he could distance himself a little from the schools. Blain writes: *“The opening of the schools in Rheims having been as successful as he had wished, he believed that God had nothing more to ask of him, and he withdrew. However, M. Nyel came to visit him from time to time, to benefit from his advice and to ask him for help. The charitable Canon helped him but that was all. They saw each other without any thought for the future, and without knowing how God would use them to further his plans.”* These words are important because they show the extent to which De La Salle still felt that the establishment of schools was none of his concern. His upbringing did not allow him to refuse to give the help he was asked for. This explains the behaviour of Nyel, that is, his plans to open new schools and hire new teachers. It should be noted that up to 1681, the year he defended his doctoral thesis, De La Salle was still a “student”.

When Adrien Nyel, believing his work completed, returned to Rouen on October 16th 1685, John Baptist de La Salle naturally found himself left with the overall responsibility for the few existing schools and the teachers who worked in them. This unforeseen and unwanted situation, led him to make some personal radical decisions regarding the future of his own life. This was not without its difficulties and required serious discernment, and so he turned to Nicolas Barré for advice. This resulted in his giving up his canonry, choosing to concern himself with schools, and subsequently, distributing his personal goods to the poor. The biographer Blain records some very significant passages from the correspondence between these two men, especially during the crisis of 1683.

Nicolas Barré enjoyed an excellent reputation and, like Adrien Nyel, was 30 years older than John Baptist de La Salle. He had a long experience of dealing with schools for the poor. His advice to De La Salle was to practise detachment. The latter in his turn tried to induce his teachers to follow this same advice, but with no success. The episode, as recounted by Blain, is not without its pungency. After much discernment, De La Salle committed himself resolutely and with great courage to schools. The forty years that followed would be devoted to the service of teachers and of poor children within the framework of the Society of the Christian Schools. This turning point

occurred, according to Blain, “*at the end of 1682, it became clear to Monsieur De La Salle that God was calling him to take charge of the schools*” (CL 7, p. 193).

In summary, the biographers show us a John Baptist de La Salle:

- Involved in the human and Christian education of the teachers. He leads them to modify their behaviour, rid themselves of their boorishness, pray and live together according to a set of regulations. These are however still lay teachers and not religious. Their case is not exceptional in the 17th century.
- If Blain says that De La Salle accompanies the teachers to school, it is through solidarity, especially when they attract the mockery of the inhabitants. He makes no mention of any pedagogical or teaching involvement on his part.
- If the schools acquire a good reputation so quickly, it is thanks to the improvement in the behaviour of the teachers and good organisation.
- In fact, De La Salle begins then what he will do for the next 40 years: something that he considers essential - the training of teachers.

From Nyel to teamwork

John Baptist de La Salle, therefore, was drawn into working with schools almost against his will. Although initially this was restricted to Rheims, Adrien Nyel's drive was such that his work rapidly spread to beyond the city bounds. Another characteristic was De La Salle's concern for the human and Christian formation of the teachers, and it was this concern that led him gradually to involve himself. It should be noted also that De La Salle took care not to make the teachers' decisions for them. He included them in discussions and decisions which concerned them as a group. This characteristic approach to work is one which the Brothers have always considered to be essential. It was this collective approach which gradually gave birth to the **Conduct of the Christian Schools** after a long process of analysis of teaching practices. The Brothers looked for what was best. Jean Baptiste Blain describes at some length a meeting of the senior Brothers in 1686 which clearly demonstrates this approach. (see CL 7, pp. 232-233): “*He called a meeting of the twelve senior Brothers to decide some important points*”.

- Nyel left for Rouen in 1685 and died there.
- But the manner of “running schools”, as the “Common Rule” of the Brothers describes it, is the work of De La Salle.
- Unlike the isolated situation of the teachers of the Little Schools, those in De La Salle’s schools always worked as a small team.
- To this was added very quickly - and at the instigation of John Baptist de La Salle - community life, which by its very nature, made discussions, exchange of views and even mutual advice, much easier.
- The follow-up of each school was guaranteed: by Adrien Nyel in the early years in Rheims, then by De La Salle, and later by inspectors and school visitors.
- There is some organisation and regulations, but none of it is established in a *a priori* manner. Things are tried out first and then analysed. This lasted for many years.
- An approach evolved which experts nowadays would call “research and development”.
- Practices were analysed and systematised at annual meetings held in September, when school holidays took place. The school calendar in those days offered no other possibility. In the language of the time, that is, in line with its etymology, these meetings were called “conferences”. They were meetings at which views were exchanged and debated, but they also laid down guidelines and made decisions.
- As the Preface of the Conduct of Schools says, these conferences brought together *“the oldest Brothers of this Institute who were most capable of teaching well and had several years of experience.”* (Preface 0.0.2). So what is sought is quality. It’s not a question of ‘anything will do’.
- It is a process involving the analysis and evaluation of different practices, especially when the number of schools increases. The aim is to keep what is best: *“Nothing has been included which has not been tested and agreed upon, nothing whose advantages and disadvantages have not been weighed up, nothing whose failure or bad consequences have not been anticipated.”* (Preface 0.0.2).

- During this period - which lasts several years - new aspirant-teachers are trained during their novitiate, and are mentored by an experienced Brother for several months before they are allowed to face a class on their own. For this period of preparation, De La Salle wrote the “Memoir on the Habit” and the “Rule of the Formator of new teachers”. These texts predate the Conduct of Schools.
- The aim is to achieve standardisation and consistency in the network of schools. This will be very explicitly the aim also of the Conduct of Schools: *“It was necessary to draw up this Conduct of the Christian Schools so that there may be uniformity in everything, in every school and in every place where there are Brothers of the Institute, and that practices there may always be identical”* (Preface 0.0.1). This was the basic requirement for the establishment and maintenance of a genuine network. People had to work as a team; the mobility of its members had to be made easy (they became interchangeable); and consistency had to be maintained. This was a new approach to the teaching profession. It envisaged the possibility of diversity, openness and availability. There was a common plan to which everyone was committed, and not simply local, restricted and individual jobs to be done.
- This research-and-development approach became a normal or permanent working practice. It had a specific focus: the educational and pastoral needs of young people, especially of the poor, whatever form that poverty took. This concern was carefully monitored at all levels by the Institute. In this connection, the decisions of the 1717 General Chapter regarding the revision of the Conduct of Schools are a good example of this vigilance. It continued to be shown in subsequent General Chapters in the 18th and 19th century, even in times of great difficulty, such as the suppression of the Institute of the Brothers by the French Revolution, and the dispersion of the Brothers resulting from legislation hostile to teaching congregations in 1905.

One can say, therefore, that if the Conduct of Christian Schools was in a way the product of the dynamic development of schools and education in the 16th and 17th century, certain changes, made subsequently in the text throughout

the 18th and 19th century, reflect changes occurring in society, the economy and the educational system. For the Institute of the Brothers, the concern will always be to respond to the needs and the realities of life affecting young people. This is intentional pragmatism, quite characteristic of the Lasallian spirit.

This research-and-development approach favoured by John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers was not something new, even if it was and remains at the very heart of their identity. Moreover, they did not lay exclusive claim to it. There were predecessors, such as the Jesuits in the 16th century who adopted this approach and used it for even a longer period before publishing their *Ratio Studiorum* in 1599. There were the Notre Dame Sisters and St. Pierre Fourier who did likewise before drawing up the “Constitution” in 1640. And Pere Barre’s Sisters, whose experience of working in parish Little Schools formed the basis for the “Statutes and Regulations” of 1685.

PART TWO
COMPARATIVE APPROACH

The circumstances surrounding the appearance of the first Lasallian schools, and the ways in which this happened, are well known to us, thanks to the three first biographers. The actual text of the “Conduct of the Christian Schools” which describes their organisation and how they functioned appeared only a quarter of a century later. This was a constant feature of John Baptist de La Salle’s behaviour: you must not be in a hurry to make rules; let time and experience do their work; trust the ideas of the people concerned, in this case, the teachers, the first Brothers. “Give time to time” is an apt expression in this context. One cannot help recalling at this point that, at that time, 25 years was also the average life-expectancy of the French population. It is a fact also that the small number of Brothers who joined the Institute in its first years died without ever knowing the text of the Conduct of Schools.

The 1706 text, which remained in manuscript form, did not make any specific references to immediate predecessors, such as Batencour or Demia. Demia, on the other hand, in his “Règlements” refers several times explicitly to the text of the “École Paroissiale”.

If the 16th century was characterised by the dynamic expansion of schools, the 17th can be said to be the century in which schools were organised for working-class boys and girls. In the case of schools for girls, documents are numerous, as are the women’s teaching congregations founded during this period. In the case of the boys, three documents marked the second half of the 17th century:

- 1654: *“The Parish School, or the manner of teaching well children in Little Schools”* by a priest from a parish in Paris. The text was printed by Pierre Tarca, “printer for the Archbishopric of Paris, and sworn copier for the

University, in rue Saint Victor, at the Golden Sun, by Royal Privilege.” The work had great success and was widely distributed outside the capital. The fact that a revised version of the text was published in 1685, when its author had already been dead for a long time, gives some idea of the importance of this work. Everything leads us to think that Charles Demia and John Baptist de La Salle knew of it, since both had had close relations with the parish of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet which was the source of this work.

- **1685:** *“Regulations for the Schools of the City and Diocese of Lyons, drawn up by Charles Demia, priest, Promoter General, delegated by the Archbishopric, and Director General of the said Schools”*. As we pointed out earlier, Demia admitted a number of times the contribution of the “Parish School” to his “Regulations”, while maintaining the specific nature of his schools and their adaptation to the situation in Lyons, but without limiting himself strictly to the archdiocese, since his “Regulations” were distributed well beyond its confines. Other schools or dioceses took their inspiration from them.
- **1706:** *“The Conduct of the Christian Schools”*. The culmination of a long process of research and reflection, of numerous meetings of groups of Brothers with John Baptist de La Salle, the text had a very limited circulation for about fifteen years until the first printed edition in 1720. It is, however, the 1706 manuscript text that we shall use here. Its links with the “Parish School”, in certain areas, seem more evident than those with the “Regulations” of Charles Demia. It is true that, after 1688, John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers who worked at St. Sulpice (in Paris) had many opportunities to observe the results achieved in the schools of the St. Nicolas du Chardonnet parish. The schools in Lyons were much further away.

These three documents, therefore, cover between them the second half of the 17th century. The second part of this work would like to attempt a *comparative approach* to them, by considering the principal features of the thinking behind the Little Schools. If there are similarities, there are also variations. Is there any sign of overall progress, of a progressive structuring of French elementary education?

We are quite aware we are leaving aside any comparison with texts concerning schools for girls. We have already explained the reason for this, but clearly, such a comparative approach could be made.

The special case of the Pious Schools of St. Joseph Calasanz.

John Baptist de La Salle did not know Joseph Calasanz, who died in 1648. Founder of the Clerks Regular of the Pious Schools, he arrived in Rome in 1592 and soon after founded schools there. His work was such that Pius XII declared him "Patron of Christian Schools for the working-class".

The profound attachment of De La Salle to Rome and the papacy is well known. In a French ecclesiastical world divided up into Gallicans, Jansenists and Ultramontanes, De La Salle sided clearly with the third category. He was interested in everything that happened in Rome. A significant passage from his Testament speaks of this. Addressing the Brothers of the Institute, he *"recommends to them above all things to have always complete submission to the Church, and especially in these difficult times, and to show they are not in any way disunited from our holy Father the Pope and the Church of Rome, remembering always that I sent two Brothers to Rome to ask God for the grace that their Society would always be entirely faithful to it."* The two Brothers in question left for Rome in 1702. One of them returned fairly quickly. The second, Brother Gabriel Drolin, remained there for 26 years. We have in our possession a whole series of letters sent to him by John Baptist de La Salle. In the one dated February 11th 1705, John Baptist de La Salle mentions that he has heard of the Pious Schools of Joseph Calasanz. They had in fact been in existence for a good century already. They were schools for boys, and they catered for the poor. Of course, in the meantime they had spread over Italy and central Europe as far as Poland. But there none in France. So De La Salle asked Gabriel Drolin, *"Please get precise information about the Institute of the Fathers of the Pious Schools; what their rules are, their method of government, how widespread they are, if they have a Superior General, what powers he has, if they are all priests, if they collect fees. Find out all you can about them, and let me know in the fullest possible detail."*

John Baptist de La Salle, therefore, wanted to know a lot of things. Even if

he had heard of the Calasanz Fathers, he knew very little about them. Was he thinking about how he should organise his own Institute? And yet, in 1705, the identity of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools had been defined ever since 1694. This was true even if that identity had not been well understood by certain members of the French clergy, as is proved by the difficulties encountered in dealings with various ecclesiastical authorities, and which continued to increase until the crisis of 1712-1714. The identity and the profile of the schools were clear and precise without being inflexible. The Conduct of Schools would undergo some modifications in 1717, as is attested in the first printed edition in 1720. But perhaps the century-old experience of the Pious Schools could offer some interesting insights.

The Calasanz schools, although using an approach different from that of De La Salle, had several classes, and therefore several teachers. The teaching programmes were graded. Some of them had been in place for more than a century: they were a guarantee of quality. The differences were obvious: the use of Latin, the extension to secondary education... We should note also that the questions put to Gabriel Drolin focused essentially on the Institute of the Pious Schools, the Rules which governed it, its method of government, the situation and expansion of this Institute, its clerical nature. Regarding their schools, De La Salle was interested in their gratuity, and not so much in their teaching methods or programmes.

Unfortunately, we do not have Gabriel Drolin's answer, but there does not seem to have been any follow-through, and so we are left to conjecture. Also, the history of the Pious Schools is well known, as is the educational approach they favoured from the 17th to the 20th century. A comparative approach in this connection would distract us considerably from the aim of the present volume.

Chapter 6 - Schools for the working class: the school intake

Introduction

The Renaissance witnessed the appearance and the subsequent spread of general interest in providing education for everyone. This meant, in particular, concern for the needs of the working class and, in particular, of the poor. This concern was clearly stated by Amos Comenius in the 17th century, when he declared that the whole man and all men should be educated. But this concern had already existed before then:

- among Protestants from the first quarter of the 16th century onwards,
- among Catholics following the Council of Trent (1545-1563),
- among certain humanists with liberal views.

But, as is generally the case, it took time before intentions were translated into action. At the beginning of the 18th century, at least in France, little had been done. This is borne out by research into the numbers attending school: around 1690, more or less 20% of the total population had attended school, but there were great variations depending on social background. This limited success should not be allowed to obscure the progress that had been made, or the dynamic expansion of education taking place and which would continue and would be consolidated in the course of the 18th and 19th century; or the generous commitment of men and women teachers working in schools for the lower classes, and in particular, of the numerous women's congregations created during this period.

Since the school intake was drawn from the working classes, we may find the usual class numbers envisaged somewhat surprising: John Baptist de La Salle envisaged 60 or 70 pupils per class; Jacques de Batencourt went as high as 100! One may well ask how could any effective work be done in such con-

ditions. But it explains in part the meticulousness of the practical organisation of work and the strictness of the discipline mentioned in the Parish School and the Conduct of the Christian Schools. These texts also advise dividing up these classes into smaller and more homogeneous groups, which was some progress. But these groups were all in the same room, so the succession of activities had to be planned to ensure that all pupils made progress. This arrangement was a distant forerunner of divided-up classes or ability groups. Charles Demia spoke of “bands”, De La Salle of “lessons” and “orders”.

To understand this situation, we need to understand also:

- The purpose or overall aim of schools for working-class children: to be able to educate the greatest number possible of poor children. But there was a shortage of men and women teachers.
- It was necessary, at the same time, to respond - and this is not a contradiction of what is said above - to an increasing demand from families for schooling. Even if not everyone was convinced of the need, the realisation of the benefits of schooling was gaining ground.
- But two necessary preconditions had not been met: a sufficient number of trained teachers, and suitable premises for running a school. These two conditions were linked. We see how very much aware John Baptist de La Salle was of these preconditions, and how he sought to remedy their absence.

So the school-intake was working-class, and poor according to the criteria defining poverty at that time - the inability to support oneself by one's work. In practice, there were many degrees and kinds of poverty, but overall, the pupils were poor. This meant that schools survived on minimum resources, classrooms were very sparsely furnished (the texts we are referring to describe their contents), but great care was taken over the health and hygiene of the pupils; and classrooms had plenty of light and air, and were regularly swept.

In the Parish School

Jacques de Batencourt devotes a large part of chapter 3 of the Parish School

to the “admission of children to school” (pp. 55-67). It speaks of the pupils who can or cannot be admitted. Even if it recommends “*having more compassion for the poor*” (p. 57), this is not a free school. Pupils pay the teacher, the amount depending on their home situation and the subjects they study. These fees paid by parents are necessary for the upkeep of the teachers. But they can also ensure free schooling for the poorest pupils. We find on pages 57-58 a fine passage on the “shameful poor”, as they were called in those days. They were admitted without being charged, but this was done very discreetly and with sensitivity, so as not to hurt their feelings.

There was absolutely no question of mixed education. It was strictly prohibited by the ecclesiastical authorities, who periodically reminded people of this prohibition. Civil authorities were of the same mind. We can read the same thing in Claude Joly’s “Historical Treatise on Schools”. In it he rails against failures to abide by this obligation. But his work appeared almost thirty years after the publication of the Parish School.

There are two particular aspects which characterise the Parish School: the priority given to pupils living in the parish over those coming from other parishes; and the possibility of accepting “heretical children”, that is, Protestants. The year is 1654. Peace exists between Catholics and Protestants, despite occasional instances of tension. This was the result of the Edict of Nantes of 1598. “*Inasmuch as it is not permissible for those of the RPR (Religion Prétendue Réformée - so-called reformed religion - as it was called at the time) to conduct public schools; and given that for this reason they have to send their children to our schools, and that a number of men and women teachers refuse to admit them; we have instructed them and do now instruct them to admit them and to accept them on condition they will not allow them to bring with them any bad catechism or other books suspected of heresy, and we order them to make them learn the ordinary catechism and the prayers and reading, as they do Catholic children, and to treat them with the same humanity and gentleness, on the pain of dismissal.*” (p. 55) Earlier in his work, Batencourt had specified the attitude the teacher should have towards his Protestant pupils: “*If there are heretical children in his school, he will show them great affection, directing them with all kinds of civility and benevolence, in order to win them*

over to Jesus Christ; and he will act in a similar manner even towards their parents who bring them and visit them.” (p. 18)

There are, however, a number of conditions governing the admission of Protestants: they are not to bring any non-Catholic books; they must accept to be catechised and instructed in the faith and in the Catholic, apostolic and Roman religion; they must attend Mass, vespers, catechism and other forms of instruction in the parish. The common view at the time was that *“the children being docile at their age, they are ready, like soft wax, to receive whatever shape or seal one may wish to imprint upon them, and they can be easily induced and persuaded at their age to accept heretical practices.”* (p. 19) If the child is stubborn and refuses to comply with what the teacher offers, he is sent back to his family, because bad example can *“harm some members of his little flock.”* (p. 19)

Prudence needs to be shown when pupils come from another school, or who return after having left or having been expelled earlier from the school. It is important to know why these changes occurred. There is no wish to readmit difficult or unstable children, because they could upset the smooth running of the school. But *“nevertheless, more compassion should be shown towards the poor if they show goodwill regarding the future, than for others; and likewise even for children who, while not poor, have been abandoned by their parents, either because they are dead, or because they have neglected them.”* (p. 57)

Children born in the parish have priority, but children from other parishes can be admitted also, on condition that there is room for them, and that other teachers who also need employment are not disadvantaged. In addition, children from other parishes must not be detrimental to those of the parish, and must fit in with the parish calendar: *“Regarding the poor from other parishes, they will not be given free tuition, if not enough children from the parish apply to meet the required number, since it would not be just to give to strangers the bread of the children. Regarding the others, they will be admitted and required to bring the usual remuneration as in other schools in Paris, and elsewhere, what is usual where one is.”* (p. 58).

Written by a priest, the Parish School suggests also, that if any pupils with

“extraordinary talents” are admitted to the school, they should be discreetly steered towards the ecclesiastical state. There is a mention of “tonsured children” - they were not exceptional at the time - and instructions are given regarding how they should be treated.

At the admission interview, all kinds of information about the child was gathered: his family history, his abilities, his plans for the future. It was the beginning of a process of getting to know him so that the school could adapt as much as possible to his ability. This information was entered into a “Register” which served as a permanent record of all this and facilitated a subsequent follow-up of the pupil. Demia and De La Salle would write the same thing.

Batencourt also proposes that the teacher “confers” with the parents accompanying the child to the admission interview. The purpose of this was to inform the parents about how the school functioned. The child would have to comply. One could speak of a school-family contract. It was a good opportunity also to show parents the list of books the pupil would need, explain arrangements for lunch and the afternoon snack, speak about the cleanliness of clothes and mention other practical details connected with the running of the school. One feature, characteristic of Batencourt and Demia, is the visits paid by school delegates to pupils’ homes. We shall come back to this point.

Charles Demia: Regulations for the schools of Lyons

In the “Remonstrances” (1666), Charles Demia sketches out an analysis of the bad conditions in which the poor live. This text had a profound effect on Nicolas Barré, Nicolas Roland and John Baptist de La Salle. He offers a radical analysis of the situation of the poor. For example: *“What do people think is the reason for all the licentiousness and jealousy in homes, for so many houses of ill-repute in the town, for so many new-born infants abandoned at the hospital, for so much dissolute behaviour in public, if not the lack of care for the education of girls who, having been left in ignorance, have fallen into idleness and then into lying, indocility, inconstancy, and finally into destitution, which is the most common reef on which the virtue of this sex founders ?”*

As Gaëtan Bernoville says so rightly in his biography of Nicolas Roland: *“It would be condemning oneself to a complete misunderstanding of the work of a saint Pierre Fourier, of a Demia, of a Nicolas Barré, of a Nicolas Roland, and later, of a saint John Baptist de La Salle, not to see that it all stemmed from a distressing vision of the religious ignorance and the profound misery of working-class children. Intelligent people? No doubt, but above all, big-hearted, consumed by love of souls. The educational approach has meaning for them and is of interest only to the extent that it conveys the essential message more successfully, that is, the spirit of Christianity.”* (p. 104)

The Parish School was not concerned solely with boys' schools, but also with girls' schools of the same kind. Charles Demia envisaged also and organised these two types of schools. He also speaks of the precautions to be taken when “admitting children” (p. 17). He also considers it essential to establish a relationship with the parents, and to organise follow-up visits to the homes of pupils, so as to check on their progress and on the benefits of their schooling. He is noted also for organising two types of schools: those for the poor and those for the rich. Knowing that the poor did not particularly like to send their children to school, and that the children themselves were not keen on going to them, he lists a number of ways of attracting these children and of enabling these schools to continue functioning.

“Foreword on the beginning and progress of the schools of the diocese of Lyons”

- In 1664, Demia was made responsible for visiting the parishes of Bresse and Le Bugey. He found there an abysmal ignorance. The children of Lyons - of the “lower classes” he said - are very dissolute, through lack of instruction. *“This made him decide to devote all his attention to introducing catechism and discipline into schools”*.
- In 1666, he published the “Remonstrances”: one school was established, then a second, and finally one in each district of the town. It was funded by 200 livres from the town; help from the archbishop, and a contribution from Demia himself.
- The archbishop, seeing the success of these schools, appointed on

December 2nd 1672, a “Director” for the management and overall charge of the schools, with the power of delegating to other persons the task of maintaining these schools.

- In this way a Board was set up which initially met three or four times a year, and then once a month.
- The Provosts of the Merchants and Magistrates of Lyons obtained “Royal Letters Patent” in May 1680, the Letters being registered on March 19th 1681.
- By 1677, Demia was convinced of the usefulness of schools for girls, and he set up an “Assembly of Pious Women to watch over the perfection of the schools for this sex”.
- The members of the Board and some teachers visited regularly the parents of pupils, to check on the benefit pupils were drawing from the instruction they were being given.
- This was therefore an organisation which was gradually being formed and which continued to function after the death of Charles Demia, and during most of the 18th century.
- *“The Regulations for schools for the poor and for those for the rich have often been requested by many dioceses and towns of the Kingdom, which wished to have copies for their own use and to establish similar schools based on this model”.* (cf. Règlements, p. 6). *“Finally, we can assure the public we have not included in all these Regulations anything that is not practised exactly in the schools, and whose use over a period of 20 years has not proved useful.”* (id., p. 6) We should note in passing that the Preface of the Conduct of Schools would say something very much the same: experience guarantees success.

The clientele of the Lyons schools

“Regarding the admission of children to schools: to be eligible, children need to have been reduced to begging, or their father and mother to receiving bread given as alms; or they must be manifestly poor and not have the means to have them instructed without causing themselves great difficulty. Precise information will need to be gathered regarding this, and if the child is not seen to eligible, he

should be sent away, this being absolutely necessary. The admission of children from rich families should be seen as the ruin of these schools. Likewise, children with rabies, scrofula or other contagious diseases will not be admitted, as the general good takes precedence over that of individuals.” (Règlements, p. 14) This text is followed by some specific instructions: *“Poor children can be admitted for 8 days as they wait for official authorisation from the Director of the Board. Poor children admitted in this way cannot be sent away before the Director who gave them the authorisation has been consulted.”* (id., p. 14)

It is interesting to note also the following remarks about the admission of pupils: *“When some children ask to be admitted to the school, it will be advisable sometimes not to admit them too easily so as to make them keener to be admitted. In this connection, the Director could say to them that he would see if there was any room for them; that he feared they were not sufficiently well-behaved, or that he feared they would be a bad example for the others. He could tell the parents of the children that he feared that they were not doing enough to ensure the education of their children, that they did not make them pray to God, nor recite their catechism. This method should be used when prudence dictates, and when it will not put the children off completely from joining the school. When the Director sees that the parents and children are well disposed, he will give them the admission note in accordance with the Regulations of the Board.”* (id., p. 17)

Means of funding the schools for the poor

Charles Demia suggested some ways, but they did not depend on him. The situation, therefore, was somewhat unpredictable and called for the use of the imagination to ensure that teachers were paid and schools continued to function. We read in the Regulations:

“Use for them undependable funds and restitutions which have to be used in charitable institutions, a part of the obligatory alms, the 1/24th of the tithe, fines imposed by judges, confiscated funds, the revenues of certain confraternities, with the bishop’s permission. Give a part of one’s profits or earnings allocated to the poor, or pious bequests to them. Endow a part of a teacher’s upkeep. In parishes where there are no schools for the poor, contribute towards the

instruction of a certain number of poor pupils. Make collections or put a collection box in churches...

Ways of attracting children to schools for the poor

- *“obtain bread for their lunch and afternoon snack, soup or some other offerings which will make them stop thinking about going out to beg.*
- *Convince well-off families to provide dinner once or twice a week, or each month, to some poor children.*
- *Give the children the leftovers from meals in private houses or communities, which are often given to the poor. The children could come and collect these leftovers: one carrying a little bell, the others with recipients.*
- *Give them old, worn clothes, linen, which are not used. They could be collected in the parish.*
- *Give these children a chance to earn some money: grape-gathering, harvests, helping at funerals, baptisms, acting as acolytes on Holy Thursday, at the washing of the feet; and on other occasions, on which they would be fed and paid.*
- *Organise “enrollers” in each town district to recruit their companions.*
- *Give away some pictures, alms or prizes when admitting children so as to attract them, but at the same time create some problems about admitting them. The poor do not appreciate what does not give them some trouble.*
- *Find work for the children: buttons, lace, knitting.*
- *Look after not only the children who attend the schools and do well, but also after their parents, by finding them work.*
- *Parish priests, preachers, confessors, local gentry, judges, barristers, lawyers, merchants and others... should be urged to contribute in their own area of responsibility to the support and advancement of such a holy undertaking. An Assembly of Pious Women could be set up to watch over the vagrants, orphans, idlers, poor and others eligible to be admitted to the schools, with a view to persuading their parents to send them there.*
- *Set aside certain days and times to make clothes for the children in the schools, and mend old clothes, following more or less the following order of events:*

- *One of the women would be delegated to get some girls from the schools to ask people to contribute what was necessary for this work. They would distribute what was collected to others, and would be responsible for collecting their work.*
- *Work would begin and end with prayer.*
- *Silence would be maintained, and while they worked some girls from the schools would read to them.*
- *There would be a collection box for whatever alms they might want to give.”* (pp. 42, 43, 44)

John Baptist de La Salle

It is not in the **Conduct of the Christian Schools** that we will find information about the clientele of the first Lasallian schools, but rather in the *“Common Rules of the Brothers of the Christian Schools”* of 1705. This set of rules for the Brothers comes slightly before the first manuscript copy of the *Conduct of Schools* (1706). The first chapter of the *Common Rules* is entitled: *“Of the end and necessity of this Institute”*, and gives us some very clear indications regarding the clientele of the schools:

“The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is a Society in which profession is made of keeping schools gratuitously...” (CR 1. 1)

“The end of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children, and it is for this purpose the Brothers keep schools, that, having the children under their care from morning until evening, they may teach them to lead good lives, by instructing them in the mysteries of our holy religion, and by inspiring them with Christian maxims, and thus give them a suitable education.” (CR 1. 3)

“The necessity of this Institute is very great because the working class and the poor being usually little instructed, and being occupied all day in gaining a livelihood for themselves and their families, cannot themselves give the instruction the children need, nor a suitable Christian education.” (CR 1. 4)

“It was to procure this advantage for the children of the working class and the poor that the Christian Schools were established” (CR 1. 5)

“All disorders, especially among the working class and the poor, arise from their having been left to their own devices and having been very badly brought up in childhood. This is almost impossible to remedy at a later age, because the bad habits they have acquired are abandoned with great difficulty and almost never entirely, whatever means one takes to destroy them, whether frequent instruction or the use of the sacraments. And since the principal fruit to be expected from the institution of the Christian Schools is to forestall these disorders and prevent their evil consequences, it is easy to imagine the importance and necessity of such schools”. (CR 1. 6)

The quotation is somewhat long, but it is a good alternative to the long commentaries one could make. At various times in his writings, John Baptist de La Salle speaks of “the working class and the poor”, and elsewhere he says simply “the poor”. These were working-class socio-economic categories, and these paragraphs of the Common Rule reflect also the awareness that the Brothers of the time had of the needs of these pupils and of the means of responding to them. The Conduct of Schools speaks of these means at some length.

In the Common Rule, other chapters return to the topic of the school and describe the attitude the Brothers should adopt in their teaching and educational work. This is especially true of chapters 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. By contrast with the Parish School and Demia’s Regulations, here we find the inclusion of an “Inspector of Schools”. This special function was introduced at the very beginning of the network of Lasallian schools. This can be explained by the fact that one and the same community - led by a Director - could be responsible for several schools. It was this that brought about the creation of the role of Brother Inspectors. Another reason for this was that John Baptist de La Salle’s schools had several classes. There was a need therefore for someone in charge to coordinate the work of the teachers.

“The admission of pupils”: The Conduct of Schools, in part 3, chapter 22, also speaks of the admission of pupils. This chapter is strangely similar to chapter III of the Parish School, so much so that one cannot help thinking that Batencourt had inspired the Brothers and John Baptist de La Salle himself. The Conduct also speaks of:

- Collecting information about new pupils,
- Sorting out the new entrants in order to decide who should be admitted and who should be refused admission,
- Having a long and detailed interview with the parents - whose presence is obligatory when pupils are signed on - so as to give them all the necessary information regarding the running of the school and its requirements; but also to discover the motivation of the parents and their plans for the future of their child. All this information helps the child to fit into the school and promises a fruitful and personalised education.

The same concern: three different solutions

Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle are all concerned with enabling or making it more easy for children from the poorest families, including beggars, to have access to schools. Their thinking or research leads each one of the three to adopt a different solution, although the common denominator remains ensuring free education for poor families. Briefly, these were the three solutions:

For Jacques de Batencourt:

- Rich and poor mingle in the same school.
- But the school has to provide the man or woman teacher with a livelihood. And to them must be added an assistant-teacher.
- They are therefore fee-paying schools. Families that can must pay fees.
- Not the same amount for everyone, but tailored to ability to pay. The amount is negotiated at the time of admission. A number of criteria govern the calculation of the amount.
- But there remains the case of the poor, including the “ashamed poor”, as they were called in those days, who hide their situation. These need to be identified and reassured, because they do not want others to know about their situation. Much discretion and sensitivity is required to convince them. They offer to admit their children free of charge without the others knowing.

For Charles Demia:

- Two types of school were established: fee-paying schools for sufficiently well-off families.
- Non-fee paying schools for the poor. The latter were identified by consulting the “Poor Register” which every parish normally had. This social aid system functioned within the framework of the Charity Board which coordinated help for the poor. John Baptist de La Salle’s schools benefited also from it, as we shall see later.
- For Demia, inclusion in the Poor Register was a necessary condition for being admitted to the non-fee paying schools.
- There remained, however, the problem of paying the teachers. We saw earlier that much effort and ingenuity was needed to resolve this problem. After having suggested a variety of practical ways of doing this, Demia considers even funding the free schools by using the resources of Protestant emigrants, seeing that the State confiscated their goods. Demia’s Regulations appeared in the same year as the Edict of Fontainebleau which suppressed the freedom granted in 1598 by the Edict of Nantes. This gave rise to emigration on a vast scale.

John Baptist de La Salle does not deal with this problem in the *Conduct of Schools*, because, as we recalled earlier, the Brothers ran schools which were free for everyone, and this was “essential for their Institute”.

- De La Salle’s reasoning was based on the primary aim of his schools and on the thinking of St. Paul:
 - the primary aim is the preaching of the Gospel
 - St. Paul says the Gospel must be preached to everyone free of charge
- De La Salle is well aware that some families probably could pay fees, but he thought gratuity ought to apply to everybody.
- He makes a radical choice to have gratuitous schools.
- To resolve the problem of the upkeep of the teachers and the running of the schools, De La Salle chooses an approach different from that of his two predecessors. He has recourse to kinds of sponsors who promise to

pay each year a sum of money regarded necessary and sufficient for each of the Brothers working in the school.

- We know that initially the sum was 150 Livres, but this amount changed in keeping with the cost of living. Since these sponsors contributed the necessary funds, they were naturally called “founders” of the schools. They were well-off persons, parishes, dioceses, etc.
- We should add that these sums of money were not handed directly to the teachers, but to John Baptist de La Salle and were administered by the community. With the increase in the number of schools, De La Salle was led to appoint a bursar for his Institute.
- Despite some difficulties, which we know about from the first biographers of John Baptist de La Salle, this financial set-up functioned up to the middle of the 19th century, and was modified only slowly and in response to pressure from the civil authorities.

Jacques de Batencourt, Demia and John Baptist de La Salle were all three concerned about how to make their schools accessible to poor children. But they were not the only ones in the 17th century. We need to mention also parish priests and the teachers who established and ran “Charity Schools”; the schools opened in the General Hospitals for the children who were confined there with their parents; and of course, the women’s teaching congregations which admitted poor girls also, especially in their “day schools”, in addition to running boarding schools for girls from more fortunate families.

In practice, after the Council of Trent, it was the Church as a whole, as the body responsible for education and giving aid to the poor, which encouraged and facilitated these initiatives to help poor children.

Chapter 7 - Schools become organised

An appropriate educational framework was needed for the school clientele we have just briefly described. What existed already was not suited to the aims proposed, or was inadequate to respond to the increase in demand for education which existed in the country.

Private tuition or individual teaching, which were still very much the rule, had proved to have their limitations and disadvantages. Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle would each successively make essential contributions to the creation of a new educational system for boys. We can identify the most important ones from their writings and from their achievements.

The first task was to organise the schools. We shall describe some of the steps that were taken. We need to bear in mind that Batencourt and Demia thought in terms of a single class and one teacher, helped by an assistant, while the Conduct of Schools drawn up by John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers envisages schools with several classes and several teachers, usually three in number, but occasionally two or four. This is the basic difference between them, and from it stem many practical consequences. The following are five important aspects of this organisation of schools.

Isolation as a means of self-protection

Isolation enables the school to function better and therefore be more effective. The school is seen as an institution standing apart. There is reason to believe that the rules governing the running of the schools, drawn up by Demia and De La Salle and relating to a well defined network of schools and teachers, were strictly observed. The situation was no doubt different and varied greatly in the parish schools inspired by Batencourt's text. We should not think therefore that these schools were in any way uniform. Our emphasis on the isolation of the schools does not contradict the descriptions we

find in history books on schools, because in practice, schools assumed a multiplicity of forms.

Batencourt entitled the second chapter of his text: *“The position and furnishing of the school”* (pp. 47-55). Regarding the location of the school, he specifies: *“as far away as possible from other buildings, not giving onto the street, but behind a building, as near as possible to the parish church for attending services.”*

We find something similar in the three texts studied here. That is not to say that the same conditions prevailed in all the Little Schools. Historians have described at length the diversity of school buildings. (See Cahier Lasallienn 62, chap. 1) Where buildings were not particularly suited for use as schools, it was not possible to isolate them in the same way. Why should they be isolated? Schools were still a relatively new institution. Some people could find them strange, their curiosity could be aroused and they might want to go and have a look at them. We know from other sources how inquisitive people were, especially working class people, whose knowledge of the rules of civility was limited. Some historians, such as Arlette Farge, refer to these kinds of inquisitiveness which militated against the desire to protect to a certain extent one’s personal and family life from prying eyes. In order to be able to work in a calm atmosphere in school, it was sometimes necessary to isolate oneself, to move away from people. Very often, Little Schools gave directly onto the street. There was no playground, no space to act as a barrier. They were at the mercy of noise, town traffic, pedestrians, street vendors, carriages of all kinds, and so on.

One consequence: have as few doors as possible giving directly onto the street. All three writers speak in terms of one single door. In the Conduct of Schools, several classes are involved, but they are arranged in such a way that they can communicate with one another inside the school building, so that there is only one door giving onto the street, even for entering and leaving the school. Given this, the importance of having large windows is stressed, in order to provide sufficient light and ventilation. These windows, however, should be sufficiently high so that people outside cannot look in.

This school entrance door remains permanently closed while the pupils work

in class. As unforeseen circumstances can occur, next to the door there is a pupil “Doorkeeper”. This is one of the “Officers” appointed by the teacher. His job is open the door if the need arises and to close it again immediately. If an outsider wishes to come in, the Doorkeeper must inform the teacher and give the reason for his visit. The admission of outsiders to the school is governed by a whole series of rules. We need to bear in mind also that Little Schools did not have the financial means to hire administrative staff or servants to screen outsiders who wished to enter the school. Recourse to the use of keys and pupil officers can be seen as a simple and economic solution.

The ability of the school to function is therefore protected. This may be understandable in the context of the times, but it is no doubt regrettable to the extent that it may have helped to create an impression that schools needed to be separated from the rest of society. As we know, in the middle of the 20th century, a great deal of insistence was needed to ensure that schools were not cut off from the neighbourhood and out of touch with life.

A similar situation prevailed in girls’ schools in the 17th century, further complicated when convents had two groups of pupils - day pupils and boarders - and a cloistered community. Communication between the three groups had to be prevented. The bunch of keys played a very important part in everyday life.

The practical arrangement of schools

Jacques de Batencourt devotes chapter 2 of his text to *“The arrangement and furnishing of the school”*. A dozen pages are filled with practical details. Demia, on the other hand, does not have a special chapter on this question. Perhaps he relied, as elsewhere, on the indications given in the Parish School. He mentions it specifically on a number of occasions. As for John Baptist de La Salle, we find in the first edition of the *“Conduct of the Christian Schools”* of 1720 a chapter entitled *“Of the structure and uniformity of the schools and of the furniture that is appropriate”*. It is chapter 9 of Part II, the last one which deals with the means of establishing and maintaining order in the schools.

This chapter mentions a few practical arrangements, such as, for example:

- moving from one class to another
- the height of windows giving onto the street
- the “fine and good” lighting that is needed to facilitate work. Batencourt had already said that the classroom “must be big and spacious... in case heat causes a stench and subsequently makes the teacher and pupils ill”. There need to be windows on at least three sides or even four, wide open during lessons in summer, but firmly closed in winter because of the cold, which make it possible also to ensure security during the night.
- the floor area of the classroom must be proportional to the number of pupils. The Conduct of Schools gives precise dimensions.
- desks and benches must have precise measurements depending on the age of the pupils.
- ink wells should be provided for those learning writing. Ink was still a rare commodity, so it had to be provided for the pupils.
- something important and new, because of simultaneous education: display panels showing the alphabet, syllables, French and Roman numerals, punctuation, addition and subtraction sums, that is, the rudiments of reading and arithmetic.
- chairs for the teachers and furniture for putting away and storing teaching materials, however elementary they may be.
- decoration of the walls, basically of a religious or pious nature.
- because of the harsh winters - it was one of the minor glaciation periods - Batencour speaks of a fire place surrounded by a number of benches so the pupils could warm themselves. Later, there would be stoves which would be a feature in schools for a long time.
- even holy water at the entrance, and a little bell played their part in the way the school was run.
- Even more important were the two “boards” mentioned by the Parish School which were used to check on the presence of pupils in school. One board contained the names of all the pupils in little slots. Absences were marked by moving the names concerned. This system would be adopted

by the Conduct of Schools. The other board was identical, but the names in the slots were those of the class officers.

It was no doubt Batencourt who was the first to draw up this list of things which could help in the running of a class. Demia and De La Salle followed suite, sometimes introducing variations, especially the latter, because his schools had several classes. One could wonder about the usefulness or the reason for these practical instructions. The basic reason for them was the transition from individual tuition to simultaneous teaching. There was a new educational scenario, and its implications had to be taken into account. These precursors - Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle - wanted to help the teachers, even if they knew that many of them would not be able to meet their expectations. The concerns or professional considerations behind these lists of requirements were, therefore, the following:

- a search for something that was simple and that worked
- conditions which ensured effective teaching and learning
- a certain degree of “comfort” for the pupils: the avoidance of noise, organisation of space, provision of light...
- not cutting off direct communication between the teacher and his pupils, but on the contrary, facilitating it, especially in the case of new pupils.

We do not wish to overstate the importance of the material side of things, but rather to emphasise their novelty at the time, and their usefulness in an educational world without resources. Individual tuition, of course, did not involve much furniture or teaching materials. Pupils often brought their own reading books, and few learned to write. When it came to larger groups of pupils and the first attempts at simultaneous teaching, standard teaching materials for a whole class or a group of pupils became a concern.

So it was natural for Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle to devote a part of their work to the material aspects of their schools. **Batencourt** asked for classes to be *“large and spacious, proportional to the children taught in them. For example, measuring 26 feet long, 17 to 18 feet wide, and 12 feet high, for 100 children, in case heat causes a stench and subsequently makes the teacher and pupils ill, especially in Paris where the air is very bad.”* **Demia**, while saying lit-

tle about school equipment, speaks of “*books for teachers and pupils*”. We are told also that, among the books a teacher should have, should be “*The Parish School*”. In the 1720 edition, “*The Conduct of Christian Schools*” also devotes a whole chapter to the size of classes and the furniture they should have to facilitate the work of the pupils.

Organising time and space in schools

In the system of individual tuition, the school timetable was minimal: the teacher simply indicated when the work would begin and end. During this period, he would turn his attention to each pupil in turn. In practice, as one can well imagine, he had little time to devote to each of them, and the amount of time given to each remained vague.

Simultaneous teaching, on the contrary, especially in a class divided up into a number of groups or by attainment levels, called for exact and precise planning of activities. This may remind us of schools with only one class, which still exist.

The Parish School devotes, therefore, chapter 5 to “*The daily practices of the school*” or “*The daily school timetable*”. It deals successively with:

- The morning session: presentation of the morning timetable
- The afternoon lesson.

It would be tedious to look at this chapter in any detail. It speaks evidently of reading, writing, catechism, daily attendance at Mass. **Charles Demia**, generally speaking, reproduces the indications found in the Parish School.

The Conduct of Schools does not restrict timetable details to any one particular chapter. Consequently, it is not easy to reproduce with any degree of certainty the timetable of the various school activities. One needs to read the whole of the first part of the work, devoted to the various subjects studied, to reproduce a likely timetable. This timetable would have to take into account a factor mentioned in the text, namely, that an exercise may last more or less long depending on the number of pupils in the group: each pupil must have the time to take part in the learning process. This is realistic pedagogy, simple common sense. And since there are several class-

es in the school, the diversity and complexity of the timetables is even greater.

But as with Batencourt and Demia, there are two fixed points: the time the school day begins and ends is more or less identical for all: about 7 o'clock in the morning and 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Of course, these times vary by half an hour, depending on whether it is winter or summer, because of the hours of daylight essential for work, given the lack of artificial light.

The daily timetable is therefore very similar for the three writers. A small point in passing but of some pedagogical interest, is that the pupils enter the classrooms before the arrival of the teacher, in both the Parish School and in the Conduct of Schools. This makes it necessary to have in place school monitors/officers to supervise and check, to ensure that everything goes well in the teacher's absence. In the Conduct of Schools there are three officers: a pupil called the "Inspector", helped by two "Supervisors". This system is based on a certain degree of trust, but this trust is not naive. Good order is essential and there is organisation to preserve it.

To return to daily timetables, we should note that the arrival of the pupils at school can be staggered over half an hour, whereas they all leave at the same time, and it is a solemn and staged departure. Pupils have to become accustomed to behave in an exemplary manner in the streets of the town, in order to give a good example of civility to the population.

Regarding the use of space, there is nothing we do not know already. In order to facilitate the separate work of each homogeneous group, pupils need to be put into groups to ensure this work proceeds in an orderly fashion. So pupils of the same standard need to be put into the same group. This calls for an organisation of the space in the classroom. What complicates things is rather the fact that the composition of these groups can vary according to the subject studied. The same pupil can be more advanced in reading than in writing, or arithmetic... Apparently, these variations concerned only a minority in each group, but it was considered important to offer each individual instruction suited to his needs.

Organising class groups

The working class clientele of schools in the 17th century - even if it was composed solely of boys - was very mixed and diverse. Also, for a multiplicity of reasons, the numbers involved were excessive. In De La Salle's schools, we read of 60 or 70 pupils per class, in Batencourt's, 100 or even more; and Demia envisaged the possibility of 200 pupils per class, but this never happened.

All this can work only if groups are well organised. It is an unstable world which needs to be regimented. Absenteeism is a serious problem. All three writers speak of it and attach great importance to it. The Conduct of Schools devotes a very fine chapter to this problem, and gives an interesting analysis of this current social blight, speaking of its causes and possible remedies - a detailed and already a very shrewd analysis.

When individual tuition is abandoned, as it was by Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle, pupil groups have to be organised if one is to achieve a minimum of order and effectiveness. This also changes the teacher-pupil relationship. It is no longer a personal relationship, but a collective one which can engender anonymity. And yet, our three writers insist on the need to acquire personal knowledge of each pupil, however numerous they may be.

At the same time, the transition to simultaneous education makes it possible to have a whole group of children doing the same work. In order that this can work, two conditions at least have to be in place: learning has to be organised in successive and progressive stages; and pupils have to be put into more or less homogeneous groups. These were the requirements in the 17th century, even when schools had only one class. As we have already said, in Batencourt's and Demia's schools, an easier solution was to appoint one or two "assistant teachers".

This is why:

- Batencourt subdivides the class according to subjects: reading in Latin, reading in French, writing.
- Demia speaks of "*equal ability groups of 8 to 10 pupils*".

- De La Salle proposes a more systematic form of organisation given that his schools have several classes. Overall progress is based on 9 “lessons” in reading, beginning with the study of the alphabet and ending with the reading of manuscript texts. Other subjects - writing, arithmetic, spelling - are grafted onto on this indicator of progress. But each “lesson” is in turn subdivided into two or three “orders”, depending on the progress of the pupils who are successively “beginners”, “mediocre”, that is, average, and “advanced”. This series of subdivisions makes it possible in practice to form quite homogeneous groups.

To complete this description, we need to mention also the pupil “officers” appointed by the teacher, whose task was to ensure that this whole process ran smoothly. We shall return to this. It was in fact a practice already in place for a long time in schools and Colleges. The Ratio Studiorum of the Jesuits spoke of it as early as the 16th century, and it had become general practice.

The management of the pupils involved also the allocation of these homogeneous groups to particular places in the class. The Conduct of Schools speaks of this in the following terms: *“There will be in all classes places assigned to all the pupils in all the “lessons”, so that all those of the same “lesson” are in the same place, which is always fixed, unless this “lesson” is transferred to another class”*. (chap. 23). This arrangement may appear surprising by its constraint on the pupils, but obviously it was not necessary in homogeneous classes.

Batencourt says something which the modern reader may find surprising. The writer explains that it is appropriate to separate the rich from the poor *“putting those of modest means together, and the poor together”*. The same idea is repeated in another passage in the text dealing with the *“Tables and benches in the school”*: *“The school is divided into three parts. The first and the most honourable will be for those who learn Latin, or who are dispensed from learning it... seeking by this small separation to satisfy everybody: well-off persons are not happy to see their children (and quite rightly so) put with the poor who, ordinarily, are ridden with vermin, their clothing is full of dirt, as is their speech and behaviour. In places where there are over 100 children, if there is space available, the poor can be put into a separate room”*. (p. 52-53) We are speaking here of the 1650s. Ways of thinking about the poor had not yet been properly

“reformed”. They evolved during the 17th century, and attitudes in particular towards the poor changed notably.

Demia did not have to face this problem since he proposed having separate schools for the poor and the rich, that is, those who could pay and in this way ensure a salary for the teacher. In De La Salle’s schools there was no question of countenancing the least discrimination between poor and rich, and no one was asked to pay fees.

Another aspect of using the class-group system, was the imposition of silence, a necessary condition in order to be able to work. The *Conduct of Schools* advocates, then, and generalises the use of signs - and therefore, of the signal - for communication between teachers and pupils. This system is far from being as rigid and dehumanising as some authors are quick to say. When teachers and pupils are used to it, it becomes a simple, familiar and effective means of communication, accompanied by looks, a basic set of gestures, in a word, by body-language. It is not in any way a condemnation of verbal communication. It is rather a necessity imposed by the particular situation of a class containing separate groups. When the teacher addresses a particular group, he does not want to disturb the work of the others, which would inevitably happen, if he spoke out loud.

In the classes described in the *Parish School*, the *Regulations* and the *Conduct of Schools*, the level of learning is therefore more important than the age of the pupils, unlike more recent usage. This age-old custom seems more realistic, especially at a time when there was no fixed age for beginning schooling. So, differences in age may have been great initially. Also, children continued their schooling for longer or shorter periods. Other factors played a part also as, for example, the fact that young people normally began their apprenticeship - outside the school - at the age of 14. They had to complete their schooling before then.

It took a long time for ages in a class to be standardised. This process was not completed in the 17th century. It is evident that the creation of schools with several classes - as, for example, by John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers - was a good way to achieve more homogeneous groups. In the *Conduct of*

Schools, pupils are normally divided up between the junior, intermediate and senior class. Within each of these classes, the pupils are divided up on the basis of the 9 reading “lessons”. Overall, of course, the result is a division of the pupils by age, especially with the subdivisions of the “lessons” into “orders”, as we have already mentioned.

Establishing and maintaining discipline

The organisation of the school supposes naturally a certain number of rules governing running procedures and behaviour, in other words, discipline. Without it, it is pointless hoping for order, efficacy in work or good personal relations. This is the unchanging experience of all teachers or educators.

As Jean Vial notes in his work, *“Teachers: twelve centuries of history”*: *“All illustrations of the period and the calendars in the Book of Hours, whenever they referred to childhood, showed a school teacher holding in his hand a birch or a stick. It was always there.”* (p. 54)

At least three factors need to be taken into account regarding schools in the 17th century:

- The school population at the time of Batencourt had not yet really assimilated the need for behaviour that was the norm in school, or expected by the teachers. Breaches of discipline or deviant behaviour could occur spontaneously and unexpectedly. For the good of the whole, they could not be tolerated.
- Large groups of pupils in a confined space further increased the risk of a loss of control. There were no theories about this at the time, but it is a well-known phenomenon and one that has been since well analysed. The more people there are in a limited amount of space, the more likelihood there is of frustration, aggression and consequently, of spontaneous violence. One should avoid confining too many pupils in a small space. And yet, the schools and classes of the time suffered from a lack of space, despite what the three texts under consideration here say.
- Repressive means, in use in society, reflected the nature of inter-personal relations based on force, authority and constraint. Probably they were due

also to a lack of thought regarding punishment. Those in authority easily had recourse to the use of force, that is, to corporal punishment. This had been the case in society in general, and in the home, for centuries. It was true of the Colleges and schools, with their use of punishments. To take offence three centuries later is the height of hypocrisy.

Quite often, in books on the history of schools in France, writers have unjustly exaggerated the harshness of this discipline. Batencourt can be considered as the most severe in his punishments. He was closest to the Middle Ages. Thirty years later, Demia, on the contrary, insisted on the need for gentleness towards children, because this was the way to win them over. And twenty years later, De La Salle and the Brothers set out a policy regarding punishment which, if teachers respected its principles and methods, made in practice the application of the envisaged punishments impossible. But Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle lived in this context and all three spoke of punishments in different ways.

They lived also in a context in which order in a school was essential. It had powerful religious connotations: order in the world, in society and therefore in schools, was the will of God. It took on a kind of sacred dimension. This can be seen quite clearly in the chapter on “Punishments” in the *Conduct of Schools*. Similar ideas can be found in the *Parish School*. These texts explain clearly that the pupil at fault must become aware that his behaviour is offensive first of all to God. Not first of all to the teacher or his companions, although the latter are of particular importance in the circumstances.

Jacques de Batencourt

He broaches the question of punishments from the very first chapter of the *Parish School* which speaks of the “qualities of the teacher”. His reason for doing so is quite revealing. It is a valuable indication of the inspiration and sentiments which lead a teacher to administer punishments. It is also an indication of how far the teacher can go when punishing. For example, in the section devoted to the “charity of the teacher”, the writer slips in a paragraph entitled “*Punishment of exchange of blows*”, in order to show that violence seriously offends charity, and the text goes on to say that, after punishing the

culprits, “*he will make them make up*”. Without reconciliation, punishment would have no sense. It has to improve the situation that existed previously and lead to mutual forgiveness.

But it is especially in the article about “The justice of the teacher” that he develops his ideas about punishment at greatest length, in ten or so pages. From the very beginning, Batencourt states that punishment - which he calls “vindication” - must be administered using moderate means. “*Regarding this point, the teacher must be careful to chastise the faults of his pupils at a prudent time and place, and show moderation in the chastisements and punishments he administers to them. He will never strike them on the head with the birch, nor with his hand; nor will he pull their ears, their nose or their cheeks, to avoid the serious consequences this might lead to. Also he will not allow himself to become angry for whatever reason, for fear it might lead to excessive punishments; and he will never use harsh language towards them, nor bully or strike them, or insult the children for no reason or inconsiderately.*” (p. 39-40)

The text goes on to speak about the way to administer punishment: it should be exemplary and done in public, so as to be dissuasive. At least, that is what is hoped will happen. Here is what §6 says about “*The way to punish the children*”: “*When the teacher punishes a child at school for some fault, publicly and as a deterrent, he will announce with the necessary prudence and circumspection, the reason for the punishment, so that, on the one hand, all the others see the justice of it, as well as the punishment imposed for the misdemeanour of their companion; and on the other hand, that the punishment will make them afraid of committing the same fault lest they have to suffer the same fate. However, he will not mention thefts, impurity or other sins which scandalise a child, unless such faults are already known.*” (p. 41) This passage is worth quoting in full because it provides the teachers of the time with a good summary of the aims of punishment: a deterrence, its justification, dissuasion, discretion. Philippe Ariès speaks of this in his well-known work “*The child and family life under the Ancien Régime*”.

And Batencourt continues with a long paragraph on the punishment of new pupils. It calls for discernment in order not to discourage them from coming to school. On the other hand, if corporal punishment is too harsh and inef-

fective, one can have recourse to public humiliation. *“Those who are so hard and naturally ill-disposed, who have no fear of the birch and never cry, or at least, are never seen to shed any tears, either during, after or before the punishment, should be punished more vigorously, with a fresh green birch, but not excessively, lest they become impervious to beating and become finally incorrigible. One should even try to reach such children, by love and fear in turn, by locking them up, by depriving them of food, to move them to be good, instead of bullying them further. And when none of this works, after insistently praying to God for them, after speaking to them privately to see if there is some secret sin which holds them back on this evil path (in this case, they should made to confess it), and finally if this is not effective either, the teacher should tell the parents to order him to do so, and if they do not provide the necessary remedies, the child should be sent back to them.”* (p. 40) So the ultimate punishment is expulsion from the school. This is the case also for Demia and De La Salle.

The recourse to humiliating forms of punishment is indicative of the age and of the evolution of the concept of childhood in society, and of how children and pupils were perceived. The change in this relationship (between society and children) would not take place for some decades after Batencourt. He mentions next some possible alternatives to corporal punishment. One can:

- *“embarrass or shame them some way, privately or in public,*
- *make them lose their place,*
- *make them kneel down and remain there for a considerable time, in the middle of the school, or stand bare-headed on a bench*
- *put them in the donkey stall, put the donkey collar on them, put other pieces of donkey harness on them, and make the others make fun of them”.*

The “donkey stall” is mentioned only by Batencourt. He gives the following details: *“There should be a place behind the door or in the most sordid part of the school, where a small hayrack with some hay has been placed, together with a short length of horse bridle. Lazy pupils should be put there. There should also be hanging there an old dunce’s cap made of cardboard, with two large donkey ears attached, which should be placed on the head of the lazy pupil; also a board a foot square on which should be painted or attached the picture of a donkey with*

a rope to lead it. There should also be there some old pieces of drugget mat, used for covering the back of a donkey, and the pupil brought to this place should be made to put on these fine donkey clothes, and made to walk around the school with a broom on his hand. He should also be tied by his arm to the hayrack in the donkey corner, for as long as the teacher thinks fit, and all the pupils should be made to jeer at him". (p. 53-54) We should note that this passage was not included in 1685 edition of the Parish School, an indication that attitudes towards children had evolved. Humiliation was considered excessive.

The Parish School goes on to attempt a short psychological analysis of cases where pupils should be corrected: those who are hard, naturally ill-disposed, spoiled children, sneaks, stubborn children. Differences in attitudes have to be taken into account to achieve any results. But the most important section no doubt can be found in §8 on page 43, where the writer speaks of the way to administer punishment. He identifies three stages. First, in order not to be mistaken, the teacher must exercise prudence and carefully examine the accusations levelled at the pupils. Next, he must make the pupils admit their misdemeanour and accept they deserve the punishment: that is essential, *"because the worst thing that can happen to a pupil and to a teacher is to punish a child for no reason: they will remember this as long as they live and draw no benefit from it."* (p. 43) And finally, prevent them from crying out during the punishment. In such cases, it is better put off the punishment until the pupils concerned accepts it. Lastly, *"he should make him ask pardon, on his knees, of God, of the teacher and of all the pupils he has scandalised."*

Charles Demia

The Regulations of Charles Demia do not devote much space to the question of punishment. But we can pick out some interesting points. When a pupil does something good or something bad, the teacher awards him with a good or a bad mark, noting this down in a register. When a certain total of marks is reached, the pupil is rewarded or punished on certain days of the month. So punishments are usually deferred. We should note also that the assistant teacher is not allowed to punish when the teacher is absent. But, basically, Demia relies on chapters VI and VII of the Parish School. He rec-

ommends that the use of punishment should be avoided as much as possible, and that rewards should be more frequent. Lazy pupils, instead of being mocked as if they were donkeys, should be stimulated by a desire to be rewarded. And so, the teacher should try *“to win over the heart of the child before administering punishment to him, pointing out the greatness of his fault, the punishment it deserves, the benefit he will obtain from doing penance in this world and in the next...and other similar things. He should not punish if it is possible any child he has not induced to accept the punishment. He will recognise this acceptance when the child undergoes willingly the punishment without resentment or great resistance. Such an experience is enough to illustrate the marvellous fruit of this practice.”*

John Baptist de La Salle

A few preliminary remarks:

- De La Salle and the Brothers of the Christian Schools wrote the Conduct of Schools at the very beginning of the 18th century, that is, 50 years after the publication of Batencourt’s Parish School. During the intervening half century a considerable and radical change occurred in the way of perceiving and treating children.
- According to several historians, it was then that the concept of childhood saw the light in the West. This represented considerable progress. It gradually modified the relationship between adults and children, first in the context of the family - paternal love, filial love, pampering make their appearance; then in schools where a new teacher-pupil relationship evolves; and in society in general. The change in the attitude towards punishment is a good indication of this evolution.
- But this change is evidently not uniform in all families, nor in all schools. This is clear when one reads the sections on punishment in the Parish School and the Conduct of Schools. De La Salle, like Batencourt, insists on good discernment when administering punishment, because pupils differ. A suitable and personalised approach is needed.
- This does not do away with the need for establishing general rules of discipline, nor a collective approach, and seeking to ensure equitable pun-

ishment. On the other hand, it is clear that the writers of the *Conduct of Schools* worked in an educational context different from that of Batencourt, and that they benefitted from the changes that had occurred in the intervening half century. That is why the text of the *Conduct of Schools* on the question of punishment is much more complete, longer, more precise and more coherent than those of Batencourt and Demia.

- But contrary to what one might think, and to what may have been written, he is not the most severe, nor the hardest on the pupil. On the contrary. The long and detailed deliberations which took place, made it possible to put in place boundaries, safeguards, with a view to moderating the severity of certain teachers. The aim was not to say how to punish, but on the contrary, to see how **not to punish**.
- On the other hand, we need to see the chapter on “Punishment” within the wider context of the whole second part of the *Conduct of Schools*, entitled “*Means of establishing and maintaining order in schools*”. Nine means are proposed, all of them preventive. Only punishments are repressive and should not be used unless the 8 other means have not worked. That, of course, could happen. The 9 means of promoting order in school are as follows:
 - The vigilance of the teacher.
 - The signs (the silence which ensues and the Signal which is used).
 - The catalogues.
 - Rewards.
 - **Punishments**.
 - Assiduity of pupils and their punctual attendance.
 - Regulations for holidays.
 - The establishment of several “officers” and their fidelity to fulfilling all their duties properly.
 - The structure, quality and uniformity of schools and of the appropriate furniture.
- It is clear that the 8 means, apart from punishment (but even punishment, in a certain way, by being dissuasive and a deterrent) are above all

preventive. They prevent the uncertainty, the hesitation, the doubts, the dysfunction which create reasons for agitation and aggression in groups, and consequently, violence. We should add that the first part of the Conduct of Schools which deals with the organisation of the curriculum, and the third part which specifies the functions of the Inspector of schools, contribute also in their own way to the smooth running of life in school.

To avoid repeating the same things, we refer the reader to Cahier Lasallien 62, chapter 12: “If necessary, to restore order”, pp. 226-244, which deals with the subject of punishment in the Conduct of Schools.

Chapter 8 - Learning the rudiments

To understand what led Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle to organise their schools in such detail, we need to bear in mind that they wanted to create the best possible conditions for learning the rudiments. Not all the schools, of course, managed to achieve what was proposed in the texts, given that not all the teachers had the ability or the means to do so, but the aim remained clear. What we now call basic learning, was called learning the “rudiments” in the schools of the 17th century.

As Philippe Aries says (op. cit., p. 327) in the chapter devoted to the Little Schools: *“There are three categories of subjects included in the curriculum of Little Schools in towns in the 17th century: reading and singing, civility, and reading and arithmetic. To varying degrees, these subjects were taught also in rural Little Schools, which multiplied in the 17th century.”*

Jacques de Batencourt

He devotes the third part of the Parish School to the subjects he wants to offer to the pupils. He entitles this part: *“What should be taught at school, which is knowledge.”* He gives an outline of the aims to be pursued by schools - and definitely his schools - when imparting this knowledge: *“Since Little Schools are seminaries for teaching Christianity, whose primary purpose is to lay the foundations of doctrine and Christian virtues, one uses knowledge or the principles of Latin and French grammar, as a means to achieve this aim more easily and more completely. Because it is much easier to instruct a child [in religion] who knows how to read, and to perfect him in the practice of virtue, than one who is unable to do so. All the more so, since books serve as permanent teachers for those able to use them, and they can easily, by using good ones and rejecting bad ones, become perfect Christians as the days go by, and so enjoy the Eternal Sion in the next life. The first thing therefore to be found in the principles of grammar, is being able to read; the second, being able to write; the third, know-*

ing and understanding languages; the fourth, the way to use them well; the fifth, the way to explain and teach them. The first two belong especially to the Little Schools, as well as the beginning of the third, but only for the few children preparing for entry to the Colleges. Here, in our first chapter, we shall speak of the best way of teaching children to read Latin and French.” (p. 143)

Modern readers are probably surprised by this passage. School subjects appear to be simply a pretext or incentive for attracting and keeping children, with a view to giving them a Christian education. The way Demia and De La Salle expressed themselves was quite different: they attributed to profane subjects their proper value. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) did, however, advocate the opening of Little Schools - one in each parish - as a means of giving a Christian education to children and of catechising them. Batencourt is part of that context.

After this preliminary declaration, the writer goes on to the teaching of the various subjects. With regard to reading, he advocates the synthetic method: going from the simple to the complex, taking one's time, grading the difficulties carefully, because the pupils are young and it would be a mistake to go too fast. The following passage introducing the first chapter reveals a great deal of educational common sense. Having recommended “*not to confuse the children by mixing Latin with French*”, he goes on to say “*by wanting them to make progress by teaching them so many things at the same time, one makes reading for them so confusing, that apart from the fact it takes them so long to learn it, they never learn to read Latin or French, resembling a house which has never had foundations, which looks dangerous and needs rebuilding. To proceed therefore in an orderly fashion, one should 1. Teach the little children to recognise letters, 2. To put them together to form words, 3. And then to link words together to form sentences in Latin, and then to read French properly*” (p. 143)

So the progression is clear. The pupil begins with the alphabet, then goes on to the syllabary (hence the importance of syllabaries in the 17th century), and then he begins to learn to read with the help of increasingly complex books. This same process can be found in Demia's Regulations and in De La Salle's Conduct. All three go into great detail regarding the progression.

They differ, however, when it comes to choosing the language through which to learn. Batencourt and Demia give priority to Latin and then move onto French. De La Salle opts resolutely for French and allocates only two months of the teaching programme to reading in Latin, and only when “*pupils have learned to read properly in French*”. He gave his reasons for his choice in a Memoir addressed to the bishop of Chartres. We quoted from it in Cahier Lasallien 62 (see pp. 78-81). To back up his choice, De La Salle had to compose a syllabary in French.

Batencourt’s point of view is radically different: “*Before children are taught to read in French, they must know how to read in Latin in all kinds of books, because reading in French is based on reading in Latin, as it contains the same letters and syllables. If a child is made to learn to read in Latin and in French at the same time, it will create great difficulties for the teacher, and the child will take a long time to learn and, quite often, not having learned to read properly in Latin, when he begins reading in French, he forgets the first as he learns the second. This is something that happens almost never when a child is well accustomed to reading in Latin before being introduced to French. Consequently, children need to know how to read properly in Latin before being given a little French book...*” (p. 150-151)

Both theories put forward valid arguments. It is true that French is based on Latin. The choice is dictated by the educational aims pursued.

The Parish School proposes seven progressive stages for learning to read:

1. The first alphabet
2. The syllabary
3. The second book for spelling (NB. In Latin, prayer book)
4. Third book to read in Latin
5. Reading in French
6. Increasingly difficult books
7. Reading manuscripts

Let us note in passing the following remark: “*When they can read the book on civility properly* (books on civility were printed in Gothic characters), *the*

teacher should begin to show them writing, and then he should make them read manuscript papers or parchments, giving them initially the better written ones, and then go on giving them documents increasingly difficult to read.” (p. 153) The Conduct of Schools says much the same thing.

Charles Demia

In chapter III of his Regulations, Demia sets out the “*Method to teach reading in Latin and French, writing, arithmetic*” (p. 24-29). The text is therefore relatively succinct. He uses the same divisions as Batencourt. Learning to read comes first, as it is the reference point and basis for learning all the other subjects.

He requires the teacher to divide up “*his school* (i.e. the class) *into different classes, based on the ability of the pupils, some of whom are learning letters, others syllables, others words, and others sentences,*” etc. (p. 24). Applying this principle, the text speaks in detail about the constitution of 8 “classes”, each of which is subdivided into a number of “bands” (i.e. homogeneous groups). For reading, there are 17 “bands”, progressing from the alphabet to manuscript texts; and 5 other bands for those learning writing.

As we have already said, the Conduct of Schools speaks of “*Reading Lessons*”. There are 9 of these and, from the third onwards, each Lesson is subdivided into “orders” (beginners, intermediates, advanced). All together, there are 22 orders. As with De La Salle’s predecessors, the process progresses from the “alphabet board” to “manuscript letters”.

Writing

Jacques de Batencourt

“While they are learning civility and manuscript letters, the teacher will make them read some book printed in gothic characters”. “When they can read properly the book on civility, the teacher must begin to teach them writing.” (p. 153)

Charles Demia

Demia puts writing after Class 7, and allocates it to Class 8 which has 5 bands which progress as follows:

Band 1: forming letters

Band 2: forming syllables

Band 3: forming words

Band 4: writing a line

Band 5: writing two or three lines

The aims are therefore quite modest. It is not a question of calligraphy, theoretically the monopoly of the Master Writers, as Batencourt acknowledges. However, Demia does include some advice regarding how to learn to write well. It focuses on:

- posture of the body
- the different elements of writing
- the way to guide the hand of pupils learning to write
- the correction of writing exercises
- creating emulation by subjects and by copies
- good care of the paper, avoiding smudges.

John Baptist de La Salle

In the *Conduct of Schools*, pupils begin to write when they already know how to read French properly, that is, after the 6th Lesson, or reading in the 3rd book. The *Conduct* devotes a whole chapter to learning how to write, a long and very detailed chapter which develops all the aspects we have just listed in Demia's work, and many others.

The writing programme is very ambitious. There is no insistence on spontaneous writing, which is obvious, but attention is focused on calligraphy which is the object of 8 "orders" on round hand writing, and 5 "orders" on Italic writing. This programme clearly encroaches on the monopoly of the Master Writers, which gave rise to serious conflict between the Brothers' schools and this Guild, leading to the ransacking of schools and court cases which De La Salle lost. Despite all this, De La Salle never gave up, because he considered that learning this skill represented an important vocational advantage for the pupils.

Spelling

Batencourt says very little about it, and this is no doubt understandable given the date of publication of the Parish School. In the middle of the 17th century, French spelling was very fluid, varied a lot, and was not standardised. Teachers therefore had to be prudent when teaching this subject. Batencourt devotes only one paragraph to this question, in an article devoted to *“the means of correcting and examining writers”* (p. 161). The fourth paragraph is entitled *“The manner of learning spelling”*. When they are able to write correctly, the pupils are given *“some story or speech to copy from a French book, and are recommended to omit nothing of what they find written there”*.

It is not much. As Batencourt explains: *“To discuss here the best spelling is so controversial at the present moment, that I prefer to say nothing...”* The pupil therefore is limited to copying what is in a book, until such time as spelling rules are clarified. Batencourt was no doubt right not to involve himself in a complicated argument.

Charles Demia, on the other hand, devotes four pages to spelling even though he is still unsure what is correct French spelling. *“The teacher should steer a middle course between the old spelling and that of some modernisers who are disfiguring the language...”* (p. 28)

But all the same he makes pupils learn general spelling rules. He adds a certain number of specific remarks about the French language and its spelling, and he wants pupils to be made to learn these rules by heart. *“The teacher could dictate to them texts on the rules they have learned, and which he has explained, and then he should correct their work, pointing out the mistakes they have made... He should reward those who do best. But the principal means is to make them copy very correct texts.”* (p. 29)

In the Conduct of Schools, De La Salle devotes a short chapter to spelling which, he says, pupils should start studying when they reach the 7th “order” of round hand writing and the 4th of Italic writing. The chapter consists of only four paragraphs. As in the case of his predecessors, the techniques are simple: copying texts rather than a theoretical approach based on spelling

rules, which as yet had not been completely standardised in France. However, a common and accepted way of spelling was gradually being established. On the other hand, we know how complicated this spelling was. *“The way to make them learn spelling should be to make them copy handwritten letters, especially those which can be useful for them to learn to do, and which they will need to do in the future, such as promissory notes, receipts, workers’ contracts, deeds, bonds, powers of attorney, farming leases, house-letting leases, summonses, reports, and...”* (Conduct 6.0.2)

In the following paragraph he adds: *“At the same time, the teacher will make them write down what they remember of the catechism they have been taught during the week, and especially on Sundays and Wednesdays...”* (Conduct 6.0.3)

They can also write down the catechism text they have learned by heart without looking at the book. The teacher must correct these spelling exercises, and then the pupils have to rewrite their work making the necessary corrections.

Arithmetic

Batencour

The Parish School devotes chapter III of the third part to this subject. The chapter is entitled *“Counters and figures”*, and deals with each in turn. *“As there are children in the school from all kinds of social background, they need to be taught to do business with people.”* (p. 164)

“When the children begin to be able to write two lines properly, they should be taught by the writing teacher to count, first with counters, and then with figures, and in order to do this in an orderly fashion...” (p. 164) Counting with counters means that each pupil should come to school with *“a little pouch containing 36 copper coins or counters, or old pennies which are no longer legal tender...”* (p. 164). The writer is prudent, specifying coins which are no longer legal tender, to avoid misappropriation by dishonest pupils who would use their coins for pocket money. These coins helped pupils to learn how to handle coins and even money in general. The aim is very practical, especially for the future tradesmen in the class.

Next, Batencourt speaks of “*The way to count with figures*”. He states that this method is even more useful and shorter than the first. Figures are used, which have to be studied first, especially Arabic numerals, which are in common use in everyday life. Pupils begin by studying one-digit numerals and then numbers up to 1,000, and then very large numbers. Next they learn addition, and the text gives a few specific examples. Finally, pupils learn to “prove” their answers, to demonstrate the accuracy of their calculations. Overall, the course in arithmetic never goes beyond a very elementary level.

Charles Demia

Demia also restricts himself to a very brief presentation: twenty or so lines only, in which he gives seven short instructions.

- Children first learn to count on their fingers, and then up to 100;
- then up to 100 in 2's, 3's, 5's, 10's and 20's.
- They need to know properly three kinds of figures in current use: Roman numerals, finance figures, Arabic numerals. For this there should be small squares of wood with numbers painted on them. With these, pupils can play with one another, and this helps them to learn.
- Counting by numbers: 10's, 100's up to a million.
- Doing calculations by putting several figures together.
- Teach the rules of arithmetic “*following what is to be found in the best writers on the subject*”. (p. 29), and explain the use of these rules in practice.
- Display the rules on the “black table” - probably a display board - so that more advanced pupils can copy them into their exercise books, and even compose new ones.

John Baptist de La Salle

In the *Conduct of Schools*, chapter V is entitled: “Arithmetic”. It is quite a short chapter but full of detailed instructions. It is a more substantial treatment of the subject than Demia's. A few details regarding the arithmetic lesson will give us a clear idea of the method used.

- First of all, a board is used which is large enough for the rules of arithmetic to be written on it. This board is hung in the best place in the class

for all the pupils to be able to see it. It is painted black so that chalk can be used to write on it.

- In arithmetic lessons, there are pupils from different “Lessons” (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division) according as they are more or less advanced.
- The teacher writes a rule for each “Lesson”, and pupils copy the rule onto “a little book consisting of a piece of blank paper folded into four”. Pupils begin to learn arithmetic when they have reached the 4th “order” of writing in round hand, and the 2nd “order” of Italic writing, but this depends on the decision of the Director or the School Inspector, because they are the ones who have made the monthly evaluations, and are able to assess the standard of each pupil.
- Arithmetic is not given much space on the weekly timetable: only half an hour on Tuesday and Friday afternoon.
- As for the learning process, the pupil learns the rule for his “Lesson”, saying it out loud. *“While a pupil is learning the rule for his Lesson, the teacher will ask him a number of questions about this rule, to help him understand and memorise it better.”* (Conduct 5.0.11). The teacher questions also some other pupils to check if they are paying attention and if they understand.
- If the pupil who is at the board makes a mistake, *“the teacher makes a sign to another pupil of the same Lesson or of a more advanced Lesson to correct him...”* or he corrects him himself.
- The teacher has a register and ensures that all do the exercise. In addition to the exercises done in this way in common, pupils are encouraged to invent other sums for themselves to see if they understand them completely. The teacher corrects these exercises, explains them if necessary and questions the pupils.

This way of learning arithmetic has all the characteristics we usually associate with the Conduct of Schools: the concern for efficacy and attention to detail and quality of the learning. The progress made since Batencourt and Demia is very clear.

The method for teaching Latin

As we have already mentioned, Batencourt and Demia give priority to reading Latin over reading French, while De La Salle takes the opposite view. This explains why the third part of the Parish School includes a 4th chapter entitled: *“A method for teaching the principles of the Latin and Greek language”*. The author justifies this choice as follows: *“Among the children in the Little Schools, there are always some in towns, small market towns and large villages, who are gifted and can go further in their studies. That is why it is good, when this can be done, that school teachers who have studied, know a good method to teach their pupils the principles of the Latin and Greek language, and enable them to go to some good College, in the 5th or 6th class, to be among the best there, especially in Paris, where parents quite often are more concerned and attentive to having their children taught Latin than catechism and the religious instruction necessary for a good Christian.”* (p. 167)

So the pupils concerned here are those with particular abilities, who could perhaps go on to a College where they would have to cope with teaching given entirely in Latin. It was wise to prepare them for this. But the choice of these pupils called for a great deal of prudence. In the first paragraph of the chapter, Batencourt advises that the following criteria should be applied: *“If they have good judgment, a sufficiently bright memory, are quite quick-witted and have the necessary means to continue their studies. If they are sufficiently proficient in writing to write their lessons clearly and correctly every day.”*

Batencourt goes on to explain a method for teaching Latin, devoting a good fifteen or so pages to it, in which he speaks successively of verbs, agreement, method of composition, and the way to make the children benefit. Overall, he advocates a positive approach involving emulation, places of honour, small rewards, marks for diligence. This does not mean lazy pupils are not punished.

This chapter in the Parish School has no equivalent in Demia's Regulations, and even less so, in the Conduct of Schools.

Conclusion

As we see, the school curriculum is limited to tool subjects. By comparison with present-day schools, there are no scientific or artistic activities in addition to the core subjects, except perhaps learning plain chant in Batencourt's schools, or hymn singing in those of Demia and De La Salle. A way to cheer up school life a little.

Because of this, 17th century schools well deserve the name of "rudimentary schools". It should be said also that Colleges made no provision either for scientific or artistic activities.

Our three writers give priority to reading: it is the foundation, the door to all other learning. It is the necessary condition for the study of the Catechism, which is the primary purpose of the school in the eyes of the Church. There remains the choice whether to learn to read first in French or Latin. Both Batencourt and Demia hesitate. Not so De La Salle, who opts resolutely for French, and gives the reasons for his choice in a Memoir we quoted in Cahier Lasallien 62. For the other subjects - writing, arithmetic, spelling - choices and methods can vary regarding particular points.

But we can note definite progress between the Parish School and the Conduct of Schools. In the latter text, the formulation of the subjects is much clearer and more detailed. We would be right, however, to think that De La Salle owes a lot to Batencourt. Also, the aims or demands of the Lasallian schools regarding the various subjects are clearly higher, so it would not be excessive to say that they went beyond what was rudimentary and sought quality in all things. So, in the second half of the 17th century, there was global progress in the field of education.

Chapter 9 - A Christian School

Learning the rudiments was not the primary aim of these schools, although this statement should be qualified in the light of the changes which occurred in this connection in the period between the Parish School of 1654 and Conduct of Schools of 1706. The quotation from Batencourt's text in the previous chapter is clear proof of that.

To understand the situation, we need to go back to the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Despite the numerous difficulties that arose in the course of it, the interruptions, the fresh starts, the change of venue, the internal confrontations between theologians of different hues, this Council succeeded in achieving a great deal.

As we have already said, one of its concerns was the instruction of the faithful in Catholic doctrine. The idea spread that, in order to ensure one's eternal salvation, one had to know, and therefore memorise, the basics of Christian doctrine. As printing was already well established, two good ways of ensuring this religious instruction were the proliferation of schools for the working class, and the publication of summaries of doctrine, which very quickly became known as catechisms. The Council asked Catholic parishes to open schools, and the Pope to complete drawing up a catechism. The Pope, Pius V, did so in 1566, and immediately other theologians followed suit, some of whom gaining a great reputation in the Church.

As members of the clergy, Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle, founded their schools basically in response to the Council of Trent. They allocated as a result a place - some would perhaps say an excessive place - to religious formation and to various forms of piety in the organisation of their schools.

One might be astonished at the amount of time there is between the end of the Council (1563) and the publication of the Parish School in 1654 -

almost a century! This French delay in the implementation of the decrees of the Council of Trent was due to other complex reasons, well-known to historians, but too long to be enlarged upon here: political reasons for rivalry with Rome, and for rivalry for pre-eminence between royal and papal power, a consequence of the Concordat of 1516 signed by François I and Pope Leo X. As the decisions of the Council of Trent were not accepted by the Parlement of Paris, it was only in 1615 that the Assembly of the Clergy of France overrode this refusal and decided to implement the principal decisions of the Council. Fifty years had passed since its closure!

And so religious and Christian formation naturally figured among school activities. It had an important place, even one which had priority. That is why the Parish School devotes the whole of the second part to the Christian formation of the pupils, that is, four consecutive chapters entitled as follows:

1. Instruction and catechism.
2. The practice of piety.
3. Processions.
4. Prayers.

Charles Demia's Regulations devotes 3 chapters to this:

1. Chapter 4: Ordinary exercises performed during the school day.
2. Chapter 5: Special exercises performed in schools during the year.
3. Chapter 6: Prayers for schools.

The Conduct of the Christian Schools - *the title itself is significant* - devotes four chapters in its first part to activities of a religious nature:

1. Prayers
- 2, Holy Mass
3. Catechism
4. Hymns

In this connection, we refer the reader to Cahier Lasallien 62, chapter 6: "*The Lasallian school: the nursery of true Christians*". In the course of a good twenty pages, we give a summary of Christian formation in Lasallian schools.

But we should not linger on chapter headings. It is more significant to consider the importance of the time allocated to religious activities in the school timetable as a whole. The amount of time is quite considerable. In the *Conduct of Schools*, we can calculate that the teacher spends about 40 hours a week with his pupils, half of which are devoted to religious activities. This supposes the involvement of the teachers, and hence adequate training to make them competent to tackle difficult subjects. Such schools could be envisaged only in a society “in Christendom”. Ecclesiastical power was encouraged and supported by the civil power of the “Most Christian King”, as he was called at the time. It is true that 17th century society in France was not characterised to the same degree by religious pluralism as it is today. There was, of course, the problem of the Protestants. By the Edict of Nantes of 1598, Henri IV had made possible a great expansion of Protestantism, including in schools. Up to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, Catholic and Protestant school had developed relatively peacefully side by side.

We should note that Demia makes no mention of Protestant children in his Regulations, but Jacques de Batencourt, thirty years earlier, showed he was aware of the duality of religions. He took it into consideration in the Parish School in a serene and tolerant manner. We can see this in chapter 3 which is entitled “*The admission of children to the school*”, which begins precisely with a paragraph devoted to the “*children of heretics*”. As for John Baptist de La Salle, he writes a *Conduct of Schools* clearly meant for Catholics. He would, however, have to face the problem of Protestant children head on at the beginning of the 18th century when royal authorities asked him to take charge of schools in the Cévennes, at Alès, Uzès and Les Vans, for the conversion of young Protestants. And the task was not an easy one!

Overall, however, the works of all three were written for Catholic schools, for the denominational schools explicitly requested by the Council of Trent for the Catholic world as a whole. We can identify three basic elements of this Christian formation:

1. The catechism, the central element.
2. The frequently repeated prayers to bring about a sort of total immersion.

3. Integration into the Church, especially at parish level, through a variety of liturgical occasions.

The Catechism

In the introduction to the third part of his work, Batencourt reaffirms that *“the Little Schools are Christian seminaries in which the basics of doctrine and Christian virtues are to be taught.”* (p. 143)

Catechism is basically teaching doctrine. It is learned in parish schools. It is intended for all pupils throughout their schooling, since it is the essential mission of the school. Batencourt shared the general view of the times that *“it is impossible to believe unless one is instructed”*. Not in the sense of becoming learned, but in that of knowing Catholic doctrine. At that time, the verb “to instruct” normally referred to religious instruction, *“and one cannot act without knowing”*. In the Parish School, the author speaks of three kinds of catechism:

- “Catechism for the last quarter of an hour”. This is pious instruction, based on either a catechism book, or a spiritual reading text. It can offer instruction about confession or communion. It can serve to prepare prayers, for attending Mass, the recitation of the rosary, or even for studying the diocesan catechism.
- Although it was short, this catechism of the last quarter of an hour had to be well prepared by both the teacher and the pupils. The lesson consisted in two or three well-prepared questions being asked. These were repeated several times so that they would be understood and memorised. The lesson ended with a short story connected with the topic treated.
- The official diocesan catechism, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, or on the vigil of a feast which falls on a weekday. The catechism is explained and learned. The pupils practise while waiting for the teacher to arrive, by reading out loud, and they can read a pious book, as mentioned by the author, such as *“The Christian Teacher”* or *“The Life of the Saints”*. The teacher prepares himself for the catechism lesson by a moment of recollection and personal prayer. Then, all the class prays together, during which pupils must adopt a respectful posture. Catechism lessons must

never be disturbed, not even by the unexpected arrival of some outsider. All these details underline the importance attached to this school activity. Pupils must be attentive and recollected, otherwise they are punished. During the second half-hour of the catechism lesson, it is time for questions. Pupils are required to give short answers and are made to repeat them so as to memorise them. The Parish School mentions “*the Catechism of Bellarmine or that of M. de Richelieu*” as the source of these questions. The third part of the catechism lesson consists in the recitation of the lesson the pupils have had to learn. Those who have not learned it are harshly punished: the birch, the donkey dress, the hay-rack... On the other hand, those who know their lesson well are rewarded. After the recitation, the teacher gives explanations, and the catechism lesson ends with a story.

- A third kind of catechism was that of “*the Mysteries of the year through pictures*”. It took place on a day near to the feast in question, lasting “*a complete afternoon*”. The Parish School gives quite a long list of annual feasts. And Batencourt adds that he has published an “*Instruction Formulary for each of these days.*” Every teacher can therefore have one and the pupils can learn these Instructions. These lessons also are characterised by dignity, seriousness and solemnity.
- The Parish School contains a more substantial treatment of catechisms on ordinary and extraordinary confirmation, the sacrament of Penance and Holy Communion.

Charles Demia

We should not be surprised to note many similarities with the Parish School, since as Demia’s text says, it “*follows the method prescribed in the Book of the Parish School*”. (p. 21). On Saturdays and the vigils of feasts, the teacher gave a catechism lesson to the senior pupils on subjects chosen by the Community Prefect. On Wednesdays, it was the turn of the younger pupils, on prayers and the rudiments of the faith. The texts used were different. We read of the catechism “*the Director had had printed*”, “*The Family Method of teaching catechism*”, and above all, of the “*Clerical Treasure*”, an important work by Charles Demia. Sometimes, catechism took place in the church or in some

place more spacious than a classroom. When this happened, teachers in neighbouring schools were informed *“so that those who wished to attend could do so in greater comfort, and as an incentive to come, the Board would provide the pictures necessary”*. (p. 21)

In Demia’s Regulations we find the same serious approach as in the Parish School to the method of teaching catechism. For *“the trouble the teacher should take to teach them to read and write is and was only, as it were, a means of attaining more easily the principle aim proposed, that is, to preserve their baptismal innocence and to form good workers”*. (p. 21). The text also encourages pupils to recite their catechism to their parents, to recite evening and morning prayer as a family, to study and to work hard. Official family visitors will come to enquire about them, and there is even provision for calling parents to school to check on this, and *“some alms will be given to those who know most”*.

To extend to others the benefits of the catechism, teachers *“can admit to their catechism classes poor children not belonging to the school, who are of an age to make their first communion, unless this is done in a chapel...”*

John Baptist de La Salle

Chapter 9 in the first part of the Conduct of Schools is devoted to catechism. The organisation proposed there is much the same as we find in the Parish School. It speaks of three kinds of lessons:

- On ordinary class days, the lesson lasts 30 minutes,
- On the vigil of holidays and feast-days which fall on a weekday, it lasts 60 minutes,
- On Sundays and feast-days, 90 minutes.

The text indicates the contents of each lesson, and this is quite similar to what we said above about the Parish School. As for the method used, it also consists of a series of questions and answers - what we call the “socratic method”. The Conduct of Schools does not contain a detailed section on catechism concerned with the three sacraments of confirmation, penance and Eucharist, because that went without saying and was the subject of cat-

echism lessons on Sundays and feast-days. But what we do find repeated here is what Demia wrote regarding the admission of outsiders to catechism lessons. The children in question had never attended school or were already working as apprentices, and had never had religious instruction. In addition, De La Salle established “the Sunday School” in Paris for these kinds of children, a school which did not restrict itself to catechism and religious formation, but also provided an opportunity to learn how to read and write.

To help his teachers - the Brothers of the Christian Schools - John Baptist de La Salle published three volumes entitled “Duties of a Christian to God”. In them, the Brothers could find a more detailed treatment of Catholic doctrine and so complete their own religious formation. For the use of the pupils, he published the Long and the Short Summary, complying in this way with the wishes of the Church: learning basic doctrine by heart. But also, we can find a great deal of advice for the Brothers in the Meditations as a whole, written by De La Salle, and in particular, in the sixteen Meditations for the Time of Retreat, from which it is obvious that these schools exist for the service of the Church. To avoid all doctrinal errors, the Brothers had to prepare in advance the questions they wanted to ask the pupils, and even submit them for approval to the Brother Director.

Catechism occupied quite clearly a key position in the formation of pupils. This is evident from the texts of Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle. But it was not the only element of Christian formation.

The practice of piety

For **Batencourt**, “the practice of piety” is the implementation of what has been taught in catechism lessons. He devotes chapter II to it under four headings:

- The obligation of children to serve God.
- What should be done during vespers on Saturdays.
- Observance of what must be done on the vigil of big feast-days.
- What must be done on Sundays.

In chapter IV, he indicates the various prayers which are said in school: the

prayer before and after the morning lesson; the prayer said on the hour; a list of other prayers said during the course of the day; the special prayers such as: the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament as it carried past, prayers for the sick, for the dead, for a newly-baptised child, and even a prayer for when it thunders.

Charles Demia also speaks at great length of various forms of piety. He devotes first of all chapter 4 of the Regulations to the “*Ordinary exercises which are performed in school time*”. The text describes entering the school, the manner of saying the prayer, and then the prayer said at the end of the morning. All this reflects what we find in this connection in the Parish School and, later, in the Conduct of Schools.

The same is true of walking from the school to the church, and from the church to school: it is a real little and well-organised procession. A sentence in §7 describes the atmosphere that is desirable for this. It is said by one of the school “officers” to his companions before they leave the school: “*We must, my dear companions, go to Holy Mass modestly, as if we were going to Calvary; assist at it with attention and devotion; offer it to God for the solace of the souls in Purgatory; and ask him for the necessary graces for ourselves and our neighbours.*” (p. 35) This procession to the church is accompanied by the singing of a canticle, a hymn or by something else.

The afternoon lesson ends in a similar way, by a prayer and by the following recommendation: “*We recommend you, my dear companions, for the love of Jesus, to leave the school modestly; to return quickly to your homes, without making any noise in the streets, and not stop except to bow to the Most Blessed Sacrament; to study your lessons properly, recite your catechism to your parents, and to come back early tomorrow to school or for Holy Mass.*” (p. 35)

We find therefore that all three authors wish to give an example of “civil” behaviour to the local population. What a contrast with the boisterous and uncouth ways of the age!

In the Conduct of Schools, chapter 7 speaks also of “Prayers”. There is no point in repeating what we have just said. Two things need to be stressed, however:

- Article 2 speaks of “*the reflection during morning prayer and the examina-*

tion of conscience at the evening prayer". This is an exercise with religious connotations which is a particularly interesting means of forming gradually the judgment and moral conscience of the pupil: it is a daily invitation to think about his own life, behaviour and eventually his own values. That is why the "*Morning Reflection*", with any necessary adjustments, has been a long tradition in Lasallian schools. It is a very formative exercise for the individual.

- Article 4 insists on "*the posture that the teacher and pupils should have during prayers*". We should not forget how serious this activity was. It was also a reminder that a dignified posture was dictated by the propriety and civility which the school wished to instil into its pupils.

All the same, this multiplicity of daily prayers seems to be excessive in the daily lives of pupils. However, it should be remembered that reading was learned from religious books, recommended in the texts of the three writers, or chosen by those in charge of the schools. So, school days were somewhat austere, even if they ended with the singing of a song. This austerity was intentional as a means of maintaining order, not only in school, but also on the streets and even in the homes of the pupils. There was no question of relaxing just because the teacher could not see you.

Integration of pupils into the Church

The Little Schools - as we have said more than once - were wanted by the Church, and considered as an important element of its overall pastoral care. This is the clear message we are given by the works of Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle. Certain areas of Christian formation are focused clearly on the integration of the children into the Church. This integration is basically on the parish level. In various ways, schools are attached to parishes:

- In Batencourt, this is explicit: "*The Parish School*", and we have already spoken of this in connection with the admission of pupils. Priority was given to pupils living in the parish, but this was not exclusive.
- Overall, this was also the case Charles Demia's schools in Lyons.

- In the case of De La Salle's schools there is more flexibility and openness: they admit pupils from several parishes. However, the first schools opened in Rheims and Paris were clearly attached to a parish in order to benefit from the protective authority of the parish priest.

As a result, the parish church or the church nearest to the school - depending on the text concerned - becomes a point of reference for the teachers and the pupils, as the timetable of the school must fit in with that of the church. A case in point is the time of the daily Mass: it is a Mass for the parish and not only for the school. It is true also of the various church services on Sundays and feast-days. Consequently, the school does not organise its own liturgies, but takes part in those of the local church. The pupils are mixed in with the other parishioners.

Without going into great detail, let us recall the main occasions when this integration into the Church took place:

- We have recalled, in passing, with what care the teachers had to make their pupils study the Diocesan Catechism. This is one particular element, but a significant one, because in the Church, the bishop is the guardian and guarantor of the Catholic faith in his diocese. The catechism he chooses is the expression of this faith and becomes therefore a point of reference.
- Likewise, the preparation for the sacraments and their reception are the external signs of this participation in the life of the Church. Batencourt and Demia insist a lot on the role of the school in this work of sacramental formation. The Conduct of Schools does not contain any similar section on this topic, but includes it in the catechism lessons for Sundays and feast-days. This question was very topical in the 17th century Church, especially where Penance and Communion were concerned. It is therefore not surprising if it was spoken of at such great length.
- Batencourt and Demia have a lot to say about parish processions which the pupils could take part in. To judge how important these were, we need to recall that in the 17th century the Church in general wished to use these public manifestations of Catholic faith and piety to edify the

population. Unfortunately, initially it came up against the well-established custom of having boisterous and disorderly processions, far removed from the good example it sought to provide. It wished to restore order. There are some famous contemporary illustrations which give a good idea of what happened. It is interesting to note that Batencourt accuses children of being the cause of this disorder. Was this true? That is why he recommends his teachers to “line the children up well” and make them walk in an orderly manner. He also has a number of things to say about annual processions, those which stay inside the church and the cemetery which, in some places, surround it; and processions which go a long way.

The Conduct of Schools, dealing with a clientele largely made up of sons of craftsmen, is more concerned with feast-days and pilgrimages having to do with the Craft Guilds. In order not to cut the children off from these Guild celebrations, the text makes provision for “authorised absences” so that they can take part. A wise measure promoting social integration.

The Mass. As the three texts state clearly, pupils are taken daily to the nearest and most convenient church to attend the parish Mass. The texts deal at some length with the behaviour demanded of the pupils during Mass. We know moreover that in those days the congregation was expected to remain passive. This was perhaps difficult for the young boys, hence the strict vigilance recommended to the teachers, and the organised, respectful and silent entry into the church and a similar departure afterwards. It is easy to imagine that these children were closely observed by the adult faithful, especially on Sundays and feast-days when the congregation was larger.

In summary, we can say that the means devised to provide pupils with a Christian formation were very numerous. We may well ask ourselves, however, whether the quality matched the quantity. This no doubt depended on the training of the teachers. When we consider the school activities as a whole, we are given the impression that they sought to influence strongly the attitudes and behaviour of the children. This was thought possible, given the

theory of “soft wax”. Almost throughout the whole school day, the pupil was reminded of his duties as a Christian. Was this enough to develop lasting habits, to create a Christian habit ?

Chapter 10 - Sharing tasks: the officers

Faced with a numerous and very mixed class, burdened with a very heavy timetable of class teaching, and obliged to perform a great variety of tasks, the teacher needed help. In the Parish Schools and in the schools in Lyons, a partial remedy was provided in the guise of one or two assistants. Normally, these were responsible for a particular subject, especially writing. This lightened the load of the class master appreciably. In Lasallian schools, as we have already said, the classes were more homogeneous as the school was divided up into several classes. There were no assistants, therefore.

Another way of lightening the load of the teacher was to have recourse to the use of “officers”, pupils appointed by the teacher to do certain tasks. Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle used this means. We should say straight-away that the appointment of such officers was not restricted to these schools. Other schools had used them and continued to do so. The number and the titles of these officers varied, but the pedagogical thinking behind them was similar.

Jacques de Batencourt

In chapter 3 of his work, Batencourt devotes articles 5 and 6 to the “various school officers” appointed by the teacher to do certain tasks. And he provides a list of them. He justifies the existence of these officers using a fairly military comparison, explaining that the teacher should be helped to keep order, as *“in a kingdom, an army, a town, a family.”* The text goes on to speak of complementarity and subordination in the ranks of these officers: *“This is exactly what should be done in a school, where the teacher, who is the leader, must make use of his pupils (as we see happening in the Colleges and the best organised schools) not only to help him to lead their companions, but also by conducting themselves with perfect virtue and learning, through emulation and affection.”* (p. 67) So these offices are given *“only to those who have deserved*

them by their work, or by their virtue, and they will be changed from time to time to encourage each and everyone to aspire to that position by their piety and diligence". (p. 67)

In article 5, the author speaks above all of the ranks which are conferred on deserving pupils. These are honorific and are not related to the offices set up to help the teacher in his work. These ranks are conferred on those studying Latin and those learning to write. On the other hand, article 6 deals with the "ordinary officers" who are appointed each month and whose names are entered on the board listing them. They are chosen not on the basis of their school work "*but on that of the ability the teacher recognises they have to exercise well the function he wishes to assign to them. They will be more or less numerous according to the number of pupils he will have to teach.*" (p. 69)

Next, he describes each of the officers. For each office, Batencourt gives a detailed description of the office concerned; outlines the usual tasks to be performed; recalls the qualities the officer should have; and invites the teacher to encourage him in his work. His explanations are sometimes quite long, as for example, concerning the "observers" who have the delicate task of maintaining order in class.

The text lists 11 offices in addition to that of the assistant teacher. One office which seems to be particularly important is that of the "visitors". Batencourt - and later Demia also - gives these visitors the task of visiting regularly the families of the pupils. It is therefore an important responsibility. These officers have to be carefully chosen. John Baptist de La Salle did not keep this practice of visiting families, although he wished to have ongoing relations with them. The visitors he speaks about, visit only absent pupils from their part of town, in order to find out why they are absent and when they are likely to return to school. This involves the parents less, but is important for the schooling process of the pupils.

Charles Demia

Demia's text is more brief regarding officers, even though the number of offices is the same as in Batencourt. Justification or the explanation for having them is practically non-existent. The author introduces the subject by

saying simply: *“The number of officers will be greater or smaller according to the number of pupils in each school. One pupil can perform the tasks of several officers in a small school.”* (p. 30) For the rest, Demia’s explanations are to a large extent the same as Batencourt’s. We see, however, that Demia includes in the list of officers the two assistant teachers, who teach writing and reading respectively. They in fact head the list of officers, but they are not pupils. The text adds even that the reading assistant teacher *“will take over the functions of the teacher in his absence”* (p. 30).

These pupils who are entrusted with important responsibilities are not left to their own devices. They are followed-up, trained and helped by the teacher. Demia, for example, specifies: *“The teacher will instruct and question the officers sometimes about their functions to see if they know them well. The appointment of these officers can take place every six months or sooner if necessary, and the teacher will make them say some prayers beforehand so as to impress upon them a greater esteem for these offices, as well as to stir up in them greater emulation, which will lead them to perform their duties well. Candidates for these offices should be given a period of probation.”* (p. 31)

The article in the Regulations concerning the officers ends with quite a long paragraph on *“The Order of the Holy Gospel”*. This is not really about other offices. *“In each school, a certain number of “knights” can be appointed members of an order called ‘The Order of the Holy Gospel’, and can carry as a mark of their rank the Gospel of St. John”*. This is therefore more a rank than an office for the benefit of the class as a whole. These knights serve as militants in and outside the school - at home, in the neighbourhood, in the parish...They commit themselves to live quite an austere life and to recite a number of special prayers.

This Order is organised and has a hierarchy. It is headed by the General of the Order; next there are the Inquisitors, and the Master of Ceremonies. Each rank has its own privileges: a rather questionable privilege is the right to use the birch or ferule on pupils who misbehave. Other privileges are more honorific such as *“walking in the ranks of the highest dignitaries in processions and at reviews.”* (p. 31)

Four unusual titles in Demia's text still catch the eye of the reader:

- The Prefect of Modesty. His role is to serve as a model or example during prayers. For this purpose, he is given a place where all the class can see him.
- The Master of Novices. He is responsible for breaking-in new pupils. A very good idea for helping these pupils settle in.
- The Cantors: they intone what is sung in school.
- The Enrollers, responsible for recruiting new pupils from among orphans, and dissolute and destitute children, none of whom has anyone to enroll them in the school. This is a particularly noble example of showing compassion for the most abandoned. In the *Conduct of Schools*, a similar role is given to the "Visitors of absent pupils" when they meet children in the street who are not attending any school.

John Baptist de La Salle

Like his two predecessors, De La Salle speaks of "School Officers". Chapter 18 of the *Conduct of Schools* is devoted to this. Its introduction is brief but very explicit: *"There will be a number of officers in the school to perform several different functions which teachers cannot and ought not to perform themselves. (The 14 officers are then listed) All these officers will be appointed by the teacher in each class on the first day school is held after the holidays. Each teacher will consult the Director or the Inspector of Schools regarding this matter; and if in the future he needs to change them or one of them, or appoint others or one other, he will follow the same procedure."* (*Conduct* 18. 01 and 02).

There follows a relatively short description of each of the offices. This description consists of:

- the specification of the task
- a brief profile of candidates suitable for appointment
- the observation and discernment necessary before making the choice
- possible regular changes of officers in the course of the year.

In all three works, we see the double advantage of having these offices:

- They make an effective contribution to the good running of the school - order, discipline, efficiency, a good atmosphere - while at the same time lightening the load of the teacher.
- They contribute also to the personal formation of the officers, making them acquire and assimilate attitudes, behaviour and values, such as, a sense of responsibility, a certain degree of independence, solidarity with their companions, interpersonal skills and conscientiousness. Officers are not therefore forced to be simply passive and execute orders.
- In the case of certain offices, the responsibility placed on these children, aged between 10 and 14, seems heavy. This is true, for example, of the office of Inspector or of Visitor of absentees; and to a lesser extent, of that of Doorkeeper, Keeper of the Key, and Bell-ringer.

To complete our commentary as a whole, here are the lists of the offices in each of the three works. The similarities between the lists will be evident, even if some of the titles are different:

In the Parish School:

Intendants, Observers, Admonishers, Tutors, Reciters of Prayers, Sweepers, Writing Officers, Writing Collectors, Doorkeepers, Almoner, Visitors and the Assistant Teacher.

In Demia's Regulations:

Intendants, Decurions, Cantor, Sweepers, Almoners, Visitors, Prefect of Modesty, Master of Novices, Enrollers, Vingtaniers, Dizaniers, Assistant Teacher for writing, Assistant Teacher for reading.

In the Conduct of Schools:

Inspector, Supervisors, Bench captains, Reciter of Prayers, Sweepers, Distributors and Collectors of Paper, Distributors and Collectors of Books, Doorkeeper, Keeper of the Key, Almoners, Visitors of Absentees, Holy Mass server, Aspergillum carrier, Rosary carrier, Bell-ringer.

Conclusion - Teacher-training: the condition for success

As the second part of this work shows, there were numerous similarities between the works of Batencourt, Demia and De La Salle. This is not surprising since their schools catered for the same working-class clientele, pursued comparable educational aims, and were part of the dynamic pastoral campaign of the post-Tridentine Church.

But there is another essential area in which the three authors were in total agreement, and with which we wish to conclude: they were all convinced that the success of the school depended above all on the quality of the teachers; that is, on their initial and continuing formation, their personal commitment to their work as teachers, and on the follow-up given them as they went about their work.

Of course, we know of other persons in the 17th century who shared their views. We can mention Pierre Fourier, Nicolas Barré, Nicolas Roland, or the community of priests in the parish of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet in Paris. We know that Fr. Adrien Bourdoise had founded a seminary for training priests in this parish, and in 1649, a League of Prayer, the Association of St. Joseph, to pray for *“teachers who would do this work (in schools) as apostles and not as mercenaries”*.

For his part, Chennevières wrote: *“No one has ever heard or said that there has ever been in France since the creation of the world, any academy established for the purpose of forming and training good school teachers, capable of instructing well and forming first and foremost the minds of the children, apart from some small attempts which no longer exist. It is true that some pious persons, filled more with zeal and goodwill than with ability and power, made it their duty to establish something for this purpose, but not receiving any support in such a noble and holy enterprise, they were unable to complete it!”*

The picture painted by Charles Demia is not brilliant either: *“...nevertheless, most unfortunately, we see today such a holy and noble employment open to first-comers, to whom, because they know how to read and write, and are crippled and destitute (although in addition depraved), is regularly entrusted the care of young people, without realising that in order to help out an individual, harm is being done to the public at large. The fact that there are no established places where to announce this noble idea and to provide oneself with good teachers in need, causes this employment to be open to contempt, often being taken by wretches, strangers and worthless persons who cannot inspire piety, ability and decency, which normally they do not have, unless they have learned it and have been trained in a house established for this purpose.”* (Important notice regarding the establishment of a kind of seminary for the training of schoolmasters).

Jacques de Batencourt

When it was published in 1654, the Parish School was intended for all the men and women school teachers who wanted or could acquire it and put it in practice. What Batencourt wished was therefore the following: *“That is why it would be desirable for all prelates, precentors, deans, parish priests, to take care to provide good men and women teachers in the places which depend on them. They should be carefully chosen so that they observe exactly the regulations they are given. Parish priests and assistant priests in large villages and hamlets should watch over them carefully, visiting them for this purpose at least once a week. And as for large towns, an equal number of schools for boys and girls should be established, and provided with a man or woman teacher and an assistant for each one. In order to maintain order, it would be appropriate if there were a principal prefect sent by the bishop (in Paris, it is the precentor, and elsewhere in many cathedrals and collegiate churches, the dean) to visit at least once a month, assisted by their promoter and secretary, the schools, teachers and pupils. Following each visit, after having duly noted the shortcomings of one and all, the prefect should assemble all the men teachers and their assistants for a meeting, and the women teachers and their assistants for a separate meeting, to point out and correct the faults and the infringements of the established regulations he has noticed on his visit...”* (Taken from the Foreword of the Parish School) So it is right at the beginning of his work that Batencourt draws attention to the

fundamental question of the formation and follow-up of teachers. We note also that Charles Demia, who we know took his inspiration to a great extent from the Parish School, implemented these recommendations by creating the School Board, regular visits to the schools, and monthly meetings for the teachers.

Batencourt had no mandate, no authority, to establish training for teachers. He limited himself to wanting it and suggesting it. But it is significant that he devotes the first chapter of his work to the “Qualities of a teacher”, underlining in this way the importance he attached to them. Of course, in doing so, he uses a theological approach, speaking of theological virtues (faith, hope, charity); cardinal virtues (prudence, temperance, strength, justice), and adding humility as the basis for all the rest. But this is an ambitious profile that he draws up. Teachers who managed to assimilate these eight virtues and practise them in their daily lives and work - in the way proposed by the work - would certainly become high-quality educators. It was an ideal portrait: but, in practice...?

In any case, we know from other sources that the parish of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet was concerned about training and accompanying the teachers appointed to teach in schools in its jurisdiction. That was its ambition: the schools were worth only as much as their teachers. As we have already said, another interesting point about Batencourt’s text is that it spells out the pedagogical consequences of each of the virtues it advocates. This makes the way the author visualised the Christian teacher much more concrete.

Charles Demia

Charles Demia saw the situation in quite a different light: the schools he created and for which he was responsible lay within a clearly defined area. It was a set-up easy to control and, as we have already said, he was able to bring about what Batencourt could only dream of. This is evident from the very first chapter of his Regulations, devoted to the School Board, which he established and which continued to function after his premature death. Each of the sixteen members of this Board had well-defined functions, all of which together contributed to the good running of the schools. Initially, this Board

met every three months, but this was soon increased to once a month. During these meetings, the members discussed such things as school studies, the books used or those which ought to be used, discipline, religious questions... The Lyons city archives contain the minutes of these meetings up to 1740.

Chapter 2 of the Regulations speaks of the teachers and specifies their general duties, their choice, their recruitment, their initial formation. To have an idea of what Demia had in mind, it is enough to recall some of the expressions used in the text. Teachers should be pious, men of prayer and frequent the sacraments. They should be modest in appearance, temperate in their eating, prudent in their behaviour, hard-working and shunning idleness, gambling and other worldly amusements; avoiding especially the frequentation of women and girls and familiarity with them, and of all persons of little virtue. They need to know the method of teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, and of teaching catechism. They must make a retreat before beginning their employment, and then observe the Regulation faithfully, continue to be very zealous for the salvation of their pupils, have equal charity for all, bear gently and without impatience their imperfections, avoid all aversion and any natural inclination, *“never insulting them or speaking to them with anger, annoyance, contempt, and avoiding even using ‘tu’.”*

As for the choice of teachers, they should be chosen from the “St. Charles Community”, and if there are none there, the person chosen should first spend some time in that Community *“to be tested and instructed in his duties before taking them up”*. The choice of teachers was made by the Director of the Board, that is, by Demia himself as long as he was alive. He gave them a contract for one or three years and, if the Board agreed, this contract was renewable every three years. During the time of their employment, the Board kept an eye on their lifestyle, their morals, behaviour and their ability to teach.

But Demia’s concern for teachers was not limited to these considerations. His primary concern was training. He was profoundly convinced that men and women teachers need to be prepared for their work. He wanted this to take place throughout the Kingdom of France. Hence his *“Important announce-*

ment regarding the establishment of a kind of seminary for the training of school-masters". This reminds us of the text of the Remonstrances. Demia wanted to inform all the authorities in the country. And without waiting for his ideas to be taken up, he established in Lyons the "St. Charles Seminary", named after his patron saint Charles Borromeo, who himself had worked in Italy setting up schools. Established in 1671, therefore quite early on in Demia's career, this Seminary obtained Letters Patent ten years later. In it, teachers were trained in methods of teaching the rudiments by the study of the Regulation of Schools, and by numerous religious exercises.

This seminary was intended, as a rule, for young lay bachelors, in the hope some would become priests. It admitted sometimes practising teachers who had never had any initial training. Once appointed, teachers were followed up, the accompaniment being provided by members of the School Board. However, following the death of Demia, the Seminary gradually evolved into a seminary for priests - which led to the disappearance of its involvement in running schools.

Parallel to the schools for boys, Demia created also schools for girls and founded a religious congregation which still exists and continues its work in schools.

In summary, Charles Demia was a forerunner of great significance. We should pick out as being of particular interest the School Board, the training of teachers, the highly organised system of inspection of schools, the attention given to relations with the parents of pupils, the establishment of the Regulation of schools, and the periodical assemblies for the teachers to discuss problems they encountered.

John Baptist de La Salle

John Baptist de La Salle was not outdone by his two predecessors. What is remarkable about his life, is that from 1679 - when he was led to help Adrien Nyel - up to his death in 1719, his main concern was the formation and accompaniment of the teachers. As we explained earlier, the idea had not occurred to him earlier, but one commitment had led to another. For him, the early stages were not easy, nor were they easy for his teachers either, who

considered his demands excessive and abandoned him. This discouragement no doubt casts light on the mentality of many Little School teachers at this time: stability was not their strong point. When the second group of teachers arrived - apparently of much better quality and highly motivated - the work of formation had to begin again. Success was not guaranteed, as we see from the crisis of 1683 involving the teachers and De La Salle himself. This difficult episode - described at length by the biographer Jean Baptiste Blain - led De La Salle to reflect seriously and to make some radical renunciations to demonstrate his genuine solidarity with the teachers, by espousing the economic precariousness and insecurity of their situation.

The outcome was a success. After the tentative steps of the early years, the small community of teachers from Champagne was able to organise itself. With the opening of a novitiate, a junior novitiate, and a seminary for country teachers, we see the beginning of a process of initial formation, which subsequently had its successes and failures, but to which De La Salle devoted most of his attention and energy. We can speak therefore of initial formation structures. They are clearly of great historical interest because, even if they were not the only ones in existence in France at that time, they are structures which remained in place throughout the 18th century, survived the French Revolution, and served as a point of reference after 1830 for the establishment of State and private teacher training colleges.

The Memoir on the Habit, written by De La Salle, is a basic source of information about these first attempts to set up initial formation. These obviously reflect their times and may seem over simplistic in their organisation and contents. They did produce however some remarkable primary school teachers during the whole of the 18th century. They were teachers whose value was recognised by the French Revolution itself when it voted through the suppression of the Brothers' Institute. The various studies published on the first achievements of De La Salle cannot replace having recourse to his own writings, and especially to: the Common Rule of the Brothers, the numerous Meditations, Letters, the Memoir on the Habit, the Conduct of Schools, the Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility. From these works, one can glean numerous expressions which build up the profile of the Christian teacher De

La Salle envisaged - one who was committed to the human and Christian education of poor children.

Rather than dwell on the structures and contents of this formation, we feel it would be more significant to pick out from the works of De La Salle some characteristics of the formation offered to the teachers or the Brothers. In this way, we can highlight its internal coherence, its historical interest and its relevance for today, without however failing to understand the limitations of a plan 300 years old. John Baptist de La Salle was convinced that:

- formation is the key to success in education
- the teacher must become a model pupils can identify with
- formation must be holistic
- team formation is necessary, as well as formation for the educational team
- also continuing mutual formation while teaching
- formation is never completed: it needs to be ongoing.

Where the formation of teachers is concerned, De La Salle was not first and foremost a theoretician who worked on his texts in the privacy of his office. His ideas, his convictions, his advice to the Brothers, spring from the classroom, from real life, from the practical needs of pupils, and from repeated meetings with the Brothers. In three aspects at least, De La Salle involved himself directly in the formation of the teachers and the Brothers:

- By his writings: the twenty or so works he published were intended first of all for the Brothers to help them to do their work.
- By his direct and personal accompaniment: the accompaniment of community life, of the monthly exchange of letters with each Brother from 1694 onwards, and of visits to the communities and schools.
- By the enhancement of the prestige of the profession. For the historical reasons we have outlined, teachers of Little Schools in the second half of the 17th century had a very negative image socially. From the very beginning of his work, De La Salle had to face this reality, which did not correspond at all with how he envisaged a Christian teacher. It is one of his glorious achievements to have fought stubbornly to restore the good

name of teachers, by making them aware again of their dignity. This awareness came precisely from their formation, from the quality of their teaching, and from their place in society and in the Church.

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