

3B. L'ASSOCIATION IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE INSTITUTE

Summary:

1. Towards an association. – 2. Association in the early days of the Institute. – 3. Association after the death of the Founder. – Conclusion.

“Without understanding it very well, you have come because God Himself was seeking you out, and because you were beginning to find Him, and because in the depths of your heart, you wanted to love Him, praise Him and to devote yourself completely to His service“. (Prologue to the Rule, 1966).

To some degree, these words reveal the sentiments which we believe to have inspired De La Salle and the first Brothers to establish the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. By their personal commitment, they demonstrate the desire to let themselves be taken up completely in the service of that God who had sought them out in this growing society, putting their beings, their hearts and their wills at the disposal of all. Almost without realising it, De La Salle had allowed himself to be led by God, who guides all things “wisely and gently”, then, “one commitment led him to another, without his being able to foresee it from the outset”.¹ He let himself be led by the hand of God as did these teachers who endeavoured to embrace the project put forward by Nyel and set in motion by the good will of the Canon of Rheims.

1. TOWARDS AN ASSOCIATION

It is useful to re-examine the events which were shaping the first steps of the origins of our community: we must bear in mind that these took place in Seventeenth Century France, in the city of Rheims; we must recall the early concern of our Father in the affairs of the schools; how the departure of Nyel left the first teachers and the venture of the schools, abandoned; the efforts of De La Salle to put some order into the lives of the teachers and into the service which they rendered to the

children of Rheims; when he invited the teachers, for the first time, to eat in the house of his own family, in order, eventually, to bring them to live with him, with the aim of attaining a “genuine way of living in community”.²

This is where we find the very seeds of a community which came together on the basis of a plan and will of God, “Who had foreseen it from all eternity”,³ and Who would lead them to express, in a much clearer manner, their commitment to the plan of salvation.⁴ In this way, up to the year 1686, this small community sought to express its desire to be consumed fully in the service of God, by pronouncing vows of obedience.⁵

All this is related by the first biographers.⁶ De La Salle had gathered the “principal Brothers”, in order to hold an assembly, probably in May 1686 in Rheims. The retreat-assembly began on Pentecost Sunday and lasted until Trinity Sunday: one of the reasons behind this was to study the question of vows. As Maillefer tells us, the Brothers wanted to make vows of obedience and chastity. It is probable that the vow of poverty was not discussed. De La Salle convinced the Brothers to make only the vow of obedience, and this happened probably on 9th June, 1686.⁷ Nor is the question of the duration of the first vows perfectly clear. The biographers talk about one year to three years.⁸ It seems more reasonable to us that the vows were made for one year in the early years of the Institute. If we accept that the biographers allowed themselves to be influenced, in their telling of this event, by what happened in 1694, we could, with good reason, deduce that both accounts were superimposed and that the formulas of vows of this first profession have not come down to us.⁹

These first professed members of the Society threw themselves into its development and growth

in Rheims, Rethel, Guise, Laon and eventually, Paris, where they arrived in 1688. However, along with this, problems emerged: deaths and retirements of the Brothers and no postulants entering, the first lawsuits in Paris, the crisis in the teachers' training college and the poor state of the founder's health, which brought him almost to the brink of death. One or other affair caused the small emerging community to totter. It is against the background of this situation that the so called heroic vow originated, a vow by which De La Salle associated himself with two Brothers in order to carry on the work they had started, and which was pronounced on 21st November, 1691. In this ceremony, which inspired hope in "the remnant of Israel", the vow of association appeared for the first time in our Community.¹⁰ It arose as a response in which total self-giving was expressed. In the mind of those who made it, this was the solution to the ills which were crushing society and those children and abandoned youths.¹¹

Blain tell us about the situation in which the "heroic vow" came to light as the expression of those who were trying to support and sustain a building threatened by ruin during the very course of its construction. As a result of his prayer and reflection, De La Salle was inspired to associate himself with two Brothers whom he considered as being the most ready. By association, De La Salle, Vuyart and Drolin sought to sustain the budding community, an act which, they were aware, demanded completely generous responses and irrevocable commitment, and which would ensure the establishment of the Community.

This stipulated gift of self becomes deeper, causing those to experience the profound sense of what the incarnation is, what generosity will come to mean, and to learn how to make sacrifices for the welfare and for the establishment of the Society, as they persevere in their set intention until death.¹² It was a personal life plan adopted in common and by association. The terms and the circumstances of the heroic vow lead one to suppose that it was a secret vow. This supposition is upheld by the fact that Bernard and Maillefer do not mention it at all. In this sense, we can apply the words of Blain in his depiction of the vow of 1694, over which it appears the facts have been superimposed.¹³

We shall pay special attention to the formula of the heroic vow, as it is the first known text in which the vow of association appears.

The internal structure of the heroic vow, which can be seen in the formula, consists of:

A. *An Invocation*: An invocation to the Blessed Trinity, made on the day of a liturgical feast as was customary at this time;¹⁴

B. *An Aim*: The offering of self in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity by consecration has, as its aim, a precise mission: the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools. It should be noted that it is a consecration that is both personal and community-based, endorsed by the words: "we consecrate ourselves";

C. *Means*: The means chosen to achieve personal and community-based consecration is the vow of association and of union made by each of the signatories. Here, association is in a personal and specific form, as the names of the associates are made distinct in the formula. It is an association formed by clearly defined individuals.

D. *Content*: The objective of the consecration and the means are clearly stated. Association and union are vital for the common pursuit, honestly and without any human consideration, of the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools, in the best way possible.¹⁵ This establishment of the Society is taken on as a collegiate project, which means doing, unanimously and by common consent, everything that they believe in conscience to be the best for the society. It is worth pointing out the community dimension which here acquires consecration and association as expressions of the gift of self to God.¹⁶

E. *Consequences*: Basically two:

1. to remain in the Society until death or until the complete establishment of the society without being able to leave it, even though the Society consist only of the co-signatories.

2. to be prepared to beg for alms and to live on bread alone.

From what we have seen so far, we can state that each one offers up his personal liberty to embrace a common project, which will be carried out even if it means undergoing the greatest material

deprivations, as an expression of his gift of self to God, which each has felt called to make. Thus, the association is based on the declaration of a total dedication to God, to an evangelical project for the poor, espoused by the whole community.

F. Ratification: Finally, the associates show evidence of loyalty and confirm the deed with their signatures, as a seal of solemnity and of absolute trust in God.¹⁷

It would not be long before the fruits of this generous and trusting dedication would make itself felt in the young community. The Brothers feel moved to request De La Salle to allow them make a perpetual vow in the Society. Although the problems of the Community had not diminished, the act of kenosis had been achieved, the position of the "remnant of Israel" was such that the number of Brothers had increased to about thirty¹⁸ and apparently, their generosity had also increased. This, then, was the state of the Institute at the start of 1694: the Brothers commenced their reflections on the feasibility of making a perpetual commitment. The house at Vaugirard started to function and here the training of the novices took place, and it was here that the assembly which approved the way of life, followed by the members of the community, was approved.¹⁹

It is interesting to make another comparison of what the biographers tell us. It is possible that Blain exaggerated things²⁰ and Maillefer, who never manages to be clear on this point, demonstrates clearly that the enterprise of making a perpetual commitment comes from the Brothers and is the fruit of their prayers and of their reflections.

2. ASSOCIATION IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE INSTITUTE

The Brothers had thought that their temporary commitments were transient and because of this they wanted to make perpetual commitments. Let us consider, because we have to, what antecedents exist to show that the older Brothers could have already renewed their vows of obedience over a period of eight years? However, from the very start, De La Salle showed himself reluctant to accept this proposal. Because of this, he invited his

Brothers to make a four month-long reflection/retreat to which he invited those he considered to be the most capable and ready to make perpetual vows: 12 were invited. The main aims of their reflection would be to seek out the will of God together and to prepare themselves, inwardly, to carry it out and to come to a mature decision. On Pentecost Sunday, 1694, the retreat would start in Vaugirard, and would end on Trinity Sunday, with the making of perpetual vows.

Following the same analytical method that we applied to the heroic vow, we shall indicate the schema which we seem to perceive in the final vow formula of these Brothers:

A. Invocation: an invocation to the Blessed Trinity, the feast on which the vows were to be made.

B. Aim: The aim is to consecrate oneself entirely to God, to keep, together and by association, gratuitous schools. This is expressed, in this instance, in a personal sense, under the formula: "I consecrate myself".

C. Means: The means chosen to achieve consecration are the vows of obedience, association and stability in the Society. Here, again, association is made a reality, as each one of the Brothers who are associated and who made a common commitment, are named.

D. Content: Those who have made vows seek the Glory of God, as far as is possible and as required by Him. They promise to keep, together and by association, gratuitous schools, wherever they may be sent and to carry out any task assigned to them in the Society, whether by the body of the Society or by the superiors.

We must emphasise personal availability to look after the free schools, the task of discerning God's will and paying careful heed to His summons, as the concept of 'belonging' which the word body gives rise to, the complete abandonment of self to the superiors and to the Society, and the personal availability to carry out any given work.²¹

E. Consequences: These may be summed up in the following two senses:

1. To be prepared to live on bread alone and to seek alms, in order to achieve the maintaining

association that he had made and lived out for all those years. Although the vow of association is not mentioned in the letter, its spirit is present in all its force: it is only by virtue of this association that he understood that his Brothers could demand, with the force of authority, his taking charge and his presence. De La Salle returned to Paris and found that the fulfilling of his task was God's will, just as in the past he found that the divine will demanded his generous gift of self. As Bro. Michel Sauvage points out, "It was association that restored life to De La Salle in his vocation",³³ in this instance of a superior elected by his Brothers to guide the destiny of the Society.

The same basic elements of the heroic vow are revealed in the internal structure of the letter of 1714:

A. *Invocation*: This is addressed to De La Salle under the heading of "our very beloved Father".

B. *Aim*: The purpose of addressing themselves to De La Salle, the only one who can help to save the mission of founding the schools, is with God's greater glory, the good of the Church and of the Society in mind.

C. *Means*: The means of achieving the objective is that De La Salle should resume the government of the Institute, the holy work of God, making it clear that the work is carried out in the body of the Society.

D. *Content*: The fact that the Institute is being governed by its elected superior, means that God pours out the necessary gifts and graces through the medium of its leader, and this redounds to the great benefit of the Church.

E. *Consequences*: As a result, De La Salle has to resume the government of the Society, in accordance with the association which unites them, and because of the vow of obedience pledged to the body of the same.

F. *Ratification*: De La Salle's associates, by virtue of their signatures, show evidence of their intentions, their care and their order.

De La Salle's followers, imbued with his spirit,

reminded him of the difficulties they had lived through together, as well as their desire to allow themselves to be consumed for the founding of the free schools. They reminded him that he belonged to the community and that he had dedicated himself in it to carry out the work of God, and that, with the power that comes from association, he sought to announce salvation to the poor and abandoned. We cannot doubt that this language touched the heart of De La Salle deeply and was the impetus that directed his steps to Paris. Once again, the vow of association, which originated as a response to troubled times, emerges as an essential characteristic of the community.

3. ASSOCIATION AFTER THE DEATH OF THE FOUNDER

After the death of De La Salle, the Brothers wanted to obtain recognition for the Institute through Papal approbation and letters Patent from the King of France, all of which would allow the Brothers to exist as a legal entity. On occasions, we had believed that it was in this process, and more exactly in the Bull of Approbation, that the explicit mention of the vow of association disappeared. In line with the research carried out by Bro. Maurice Auguste,³⁴ we can understand how the change from: "to keep together and by association gratuitous schools" to "to teach the poor gratuitously" came about. This step, having come from the pen of the Brothers, reaffirms our belief that association was defined in a practical endorsement, which is to keep free schools. In other words, the early Brothers understood that the profound meaning of our vocation, which is that of looking after the most needy and the poor, depends, of necessity, on association which maintains the free schools.

We can read a description of the community of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in a manuscript, found in Rouen, and dated 1721, which is very close to the first testimonial handed over to Fr. Vivant, in order to start negotiations with the Holy See for obtaining approval for the Institute.³⁵ It is interesting to note that in this manuscript the vow is stated as "to keep schools by association and gratuitously", making it farther on, equivalent

to the vow "of teaching gratuitously". The manuscript treats the vow of association and the vow of teaching gratuitously, in an explicit way, as synonymous and the first time that we see it in this form, is in this document.

Other documents, written with the same purpose as before, appeared in 1722. One is the "Abrégés" and the other is the "Supplique non corrigée". The new elements of the development referred to above are found in both of these documents. In the "Abrégés", it is stated that the schools will always be run in an associated form, but the vow of association to keep gratuitous schools is not included. In the "Supplique non corrigée", the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously is added, as we know it today in the Bull. With these documents as a background, we can understand better the wording of the definitive Petition and the reply to it in the Bull of Approbation, "In Apostolicae Dignitatis Solio". A study of both documents leaves no doubt that the Apostolic See approved of what the Brothers were seeking. The texts are almost the same, except for some variation in the wording which alters neither the meaning nor the substance.

Finally, with the Bull of Approbation, association is expressed as a means of running the schools, fulfilling its meaning with the vow of teaching the poor gratuitously, as is stated in its sixth and seventh articles. In accord with what we have stated in the present work, we could not talk about a change in the spirit of association which seeks the salvation of poor children through education, just as it had come to be identified with the community. We think that it is simply a question of a variation in expression, with the same substance, but which retains, with all the strength of the spirit of association which forms part of the fundamental intuition, all of which serves to confirm the substance of the vow of association.

We find no special mention of the vows in the known editions of the Rule, such as those of 1705 and 1718. It is only in the 1726 edition of the Rule that the chapter on the vows is inserted, as a way of making the text conform to the Bull of Approbation of 1725. However, it is possible to refer to two texts of the first Rule and these preserve unchanged, in three versions, aspects which concern

the essence of the vow of association.³⁶ In these excerpts, the Institute is defined, in itself, as a Society and, therefore, its members are associates. The end purpose of this association is to keep free schools, as is vowed and is understood as fundamental to the Institute. There is no doubt that these texts are connected with the oldest tradition of the Congregation and its spirit is identified by the life and work of its members, all of which determined the Rule. On the other hand, the vow of association is mentioned in both of the texts of 1705 and 1718, as we have seen above.

When the text of the Rule of 1726 was adapted, the chapter on the vows was included, without changing the earlier versions. In this Chapter XVIII, which speaks of the obligations of the vows, we notice that "teaching children gratuitously" means the same thing as "keeping schools by association". Both concepts are incorporated in the same vow and with the same outcome: to teach children and to give them Christian education, without receiving any material recompense. It is the very meaning that the free gift of salvation has, a gift which we Brothers have received from Jesus Christ, and which, in the same way, we must share freely with those for whom we are responsible.

We already know about the close unity which has been established between education and salvation in Lasallian doctrine, and how this work of God is carried out, in these times, in the Christian school. We can find a parallel between the monastic life, where the work of God is to sing the Office and praise God within the monastery, and the work of the Brothers, where God is praised by means of teaching the most needy, a work carried out in the Christian school. In this way, the school becomes for the Brothers a theological location where life is consecrated to the education of the poor, where association is the form of life and where witness is given to the Risen Christ.

The formula of vows used in the Rule of 1726, continues in the spirit of association, without mentioning it specifically, in order to comply with the prescriptions of the Bull and to be in harmony with the substance and meaning with which the word association was charged. We must state once more that this expression is a continuation of the Lasallian tradition and spirit, and is by no means,

a breaking away or a change of direction. Its expression is completely in line with the living tradition of the Institute, as embodied by De La Salle and his first followers and lived with active fidelity by their successors.

Conclusion

It is clear that association, which is genuine and proper to the Institute, cannot be interpreted without reference to the personal 'journey' of De La Salle and his followers, nor can it be taken in isolation as a response depending on, and set in motion by, the educational and salvational needs of the poor of their day. Association is more than a simple classification of a vow or a term of casuistry. It is more than a vow; it is a way of life; it is a dynamic of relationship; it is a way of being; it is a distinctive sign which constitutes the identity of the emerging community. In this sense, we think it important to reflect on the words uttered by De La Salle in the "Account of the Beginnings", in which he interprets his personal history and how the Lord of History, and of the poor, operates in him. He tells us: "God who conducts all things wisely and gently, and who is not at all accustomed to force the inclinations of men, wishing to draw me altogether into undertaking the care of the schools, has done so in a quite imperceptible way and in a short time, such that one commitment has led me into another without my having foreseen it in the beginning".³⁷

In the life of De La Salle, association has been an actual sign of the way in which God has guided his life, of the way in which he came to make a commitment and to risk his life on behalf of the plan with which God inspired him for the benefit of the poor. In this power of association, he could discern the unceasing calls by means of which the Spirit was able to give flesh to the will of God, making reality of a mystical project. He found out the way to give life to God's salvific design for all men, and he was able to follow the will of God, making a Gospel response to the times in which he lived, to his church and to his people.

Summing up, it is by association that we can best appreciate the charism which enriches the Church through De La Salle. If we could describe

the essential elements of our charism, they would appear in the following statement:

The Founder, faced with the needs that he discerned in the poor and abandoned, associated himself to others who were attracted by the same reality, and "together" they devoted themselves to striving to educate them, as a means of bringing them to salvation. This is the way they chose to consecrate themselves to God who called them through the needy.

The practical means of breathing life into the charism experienced by Saint John Baptist De La Salle, was to be, in his own times, the Christian school. Today, we believe that we must retrace the Founder's journey, and this demands that we keep the essential elements of his charism alive. The heritage that we have received from him through association is undeniable in this process. It is in association and by association that we must continually return, to attempt to discover the salvific needs of the poor of our day, and this will demand that we seek the educational alternatives of our time to ensure that our less-favoured ones will come to Glory. It is precisely this: bringing the spirit which inspired our Founder, alive, now, in our time.

¹ *Memoir of the Beginnings* - Blain 1, p. 169.

² "The behaviour of these teachers, in this new house, bore clear witness that M. De La Salle had been inspired by God to make them come there; for they were much more organised in certain things than they had been before: as in the first place, going to bed; 2. in prayer; 3. at Holy Mass and in taking their meals" (Bernard, p. 35).

³ Bernard, p. 22.

⁴ 1 Tim. 2,4.

⁵ Here, we understand that the "vow" only means a simple promise, reserved within the society, and without any canonical connotation, and nor is there any implication of "entry into the religious life". Cf. C.L. 2, pp. 65-68.

⁶ From what we can see, there was uncertainty among the first biographers about the date of the making of the first vows. It seems most likely to us that it was in 1686. The vows were definitely temporary and were vows of obedience only. Cf. C.L. 2, p. 34 & foll.

⁷ It is possible that one of the outward reasons for not making vows of chastity was that these were reserved to the Sovereign Pontiff under the old form of Canon Law. It could have been unwise to have chosen a vow of this nature under the conditions that obtained in the growing Society. The above-mentioned vow of obedience carried the force of obligation among its members and submission to the Superior of the Institute, which is the force of a vow private to the members of a society. Bro. Maurice has examined this question in C.L. 2, pp. 12-36 and 66-69.

⁸ Bro. Maurice draws our attention to this question in C.L. 2, pp. 34-36.

⁹ We must realise that at the time when the first biographies were being written, witnesses of this time were not available. The more reliable testimony of Gabriel Drolin could only have been taken around 1730. Cf. Poutet's Thesis 1, p. 734.

¹⁰ In the *Dictionnaire Universel* of 1701, Volume 1, we find association defined as: "by common consent agreement, by which two or several persons come together to provide mutual assistance, or to act in common, or to live more conveniently....An association is entered into by simple consent". The meaning is limited, but it does give us the notion of a plan drawn up in common and sustained by simple agreement.

¹¹ In this ceremony, we can discern the biblical position of the "remnant of Israel". When the whole people distanced themselves from Yahweh, some of them remained faithful to the Lord, setting themselves up as a sign of hope and as a seed of grace for the conversion of the people. Cf. 11, Cr. 34,9; 34,21; Esdr. 9,15; Is. 10,20; 11,16; 42,15; 50,20; Ez. 9,8; Mi. 2,12; So. 2,9; Rm. 9,27, *passim*.

¹² The thoughts expressed in the heroic vow call to mind the thoughts of the Incarnation, the donation and the pascal offering of Our Lord, as expressed in Philipians 2, 6-11. The heroic vow can be read in a paschal vein: "...He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form,..."

¹³ Cf. C.L. 2, p. 20 and C.L. 11, p. 54.

¹⁴ Many Orders, Congregations and Communities which lead a common life pronounced their commitments with an invocation to the Most Holy Trinity, although they generally used to add an invocation to the Blessed Virgin or to their holy Patrons. Cf. C.L. 2, pp. 56-57 and 43.

¹⁵ The insistence, on establishing the Society contains, in our view, two aspects. In the deepest of these, the purpose is to serve the most needy children through education, which is carried out, in practice, by means of a facility which they transformed, viz. the school.

¹⁶ When we speak, in this context, about consecration, we do so with the meaning of a personal offering to God who calls us, of a generous gift of self, made in association with others, of an oblation which gains full meaning in the word 'for', and in no way as a consecration which suggests entry into the religious life, making vows of religion, having canonical rank and status.

¹⁷ We must recall, at this stage, that the signatories had already pronounced their vow of obedience, which was renewed up to the present time, on the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, and which had become customary in the Society, possibly since 1686.

¹⁸ It is calculated that in 1694, there were no more than 30 Brothers.

¹⁹ In 1694, the manner of spending the time of recreation was put before the Brothers for their consideration. Cf. Maillefer Re. 106-107. Gallego 1, p. 262.

²⁰ It is clear that Blain exaggerates when he claims that the perpetual vows of 1694 were made in secret. Surely, he is interpreting later events, the vows made at Vaugirard, in the light of the heroic vow of 1691. Moreover, on the contrary, he states that the Register of Vows, was started at this profession. This record is kept in the archives of the Mother House and is reproduced in C.L. 3. Another of Blain's exaggerations occurs

where he points out that De La Salle wrote "Roman Priest" after his name; it is evident from this register of vows that the Founder simply signed himself 'De La Salle'. Cf. C.L. 2, p.25, note 2 and p. 26, notes 1 to 4.

²¹ It should be noted that the idea of the body of the Society appears for the first time here, although we cannot determine precisely those who represent the body. We presume that they are those entitled "principal Brothers", but neither is the method of determining them clear.

²² We must take into account that De La Salle, Vuyart and Drolin had already renewed their vows of obedience on the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, to which the vow of stability was actually added.

²³ Bro. Maurice Auguste states that the word "seventh" is recorded in the minutes, and because of this, the date of the minutes could well be the "sixth". Cf. C.L. 3, p. 10.

²⁴ It was De La Salle's constant preoccupation to provide the Institute with a superior elected from amongst themselves, in order to avoid the temptation of the clergy to interfere in the Institute by installing a priest as superior. Presumably because of this, it was clearly placed on record in the election minutes that the community will not have a priest, nor anyone who has received sacred orders, as superior. Cf. C.L. 3, p. 10.

²⁵ Maillefer Re pp. 109-110.

²⁶ This text is reproduced in C.L. 15.

²⁷ The determination of the precise date of the writing of the Collection is still doubtful. We are acquainted with an edition, the first 58 pages of which were preserved from an older edition. There is no doubt that the whole book was written in various stages. For more information, consult C.L. 2, p. 61, notes 2 and 3.

²⁸ Viz. the vows of obedience, stability and association.

²⁹ *Livret des premiers voeux*, AMG.

³⁰ "...and vow to unite myself and to live in society with the Brothers who are associated to keep, together and by association, gratuitous schools wherever I may be sent, and I promise and vow to do this even should I be obliged to beg for alms and to live on bread alone..."

³¹ For a deeper study of the vow formulas which are kept in the Archives of the Mother House (AMG), consult C.L. 3.

³² His interior feelings of dejection made him answer a Brother who came to visit him in order to beg him not to give up the work he had started: "God be blessed, my dear Brother! What are you thinking of to address me in such a way? Don't you know that I am not sufficiently able to command others? Don't you know that several of you do not want me any longer as their Superior? They are right, because I am very incapable".

³³ Conference given at Parmenie, on "La Lettre 1714".

³⁴ Cf. in C.L. 11 and the documents referred to in this study.

³⁵ It is thought that a similar memorandum in Rouen had been put into the dossier addressed to Jean Vivant in 1722. Cf. C.L. 11, pp. 124-131.

³⁶ Cf. final note, No. 17.

³⁷ Bernard, p. 33. ["Dieu, qui conduit toutes choses sagement et suavement, et qui n'a point coutume de forcer l'inclination de hommes, voulant m'engager tout à fait à prendre le soin des écoles, l'a fait d'une manière fort imperceptible et en beaucoup de temps, de telle sorte qu'un engagement (qui) m'a conduit à un autre, sans l'avoir prévu dans le commencement".

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Translated from Spanish by Bro. Aidan KILTY