

# 54. RULE AND REGULARITY

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## 1. TERMINOLOGY

The terms “Règle and “régularité” are very frequent in the writings of St. John Baptist De La Salle. Moreover, there are other related terms which significantly increase the indirect references to “rule” and “regularity”. The “Vocabulaire Lasallien” indicates 188 references to “règle” and 46 to “régularité” but one would also have to add other related terms which are indicated in the “Vocabulaire” as follows: “réglé” (31); “règlement” (6); “réglément” (adverb) 33; “règles” (46); “se régler” (18); “être réglé” (18); “régulier” (30); “régulièrement” (1). One also needs to refer to

their opposites which are indicated as follows: “dérèglement” (42); “dérégler” (2); “se déréglé” (1); “être déréglé” (48). Along with “régularité” one would have to add the terms “irrégularité” (2) and “irrégulier” (2). Consequently, either directly or indirectly, in total there are 484 references to the idea of “rule” and “regularity”. However, in De La Salle’s writing, this varied terminology has different meanings and, while the meaning in this study will be confined to “the norms which must be observed” in the community life of the Brother and to the “virtue” which inspires this observance, it is opportune to give a preliminary indication of the different meanings which he employs.

### 1.1. The term “règle” is used with different shades of meaning as follows:

- as a *methodological or pedagogical “rule or norm”* to teach different aspects in the school. Thus, for example, “on apprendra toutes les règles de la prononciation française”;<sup>1</sup> “les règles d’arithmétique”;<sup>2</sup>
- as a *norm of behaviour or conduct*: “une personne qui fait profession de suivre les règles de la tempérance”;<sup>3</sup> “prenez pour règle de ne jamais parler du boire ni du manger”;<sup>4</sup>
- *As an orientation or directive which should be followed*: “la règle la plus sûre et la plus raisonnable touchant les modes...”;<sup>5</sup> “il n’y a personne qui ne doive prendre pour règle de se peigner”;<sup>6</sup>
- as a *precept, commandment or practice of the Christian life*: “tout chrétien devant se conduire selon les règles de l’Évangile”;<sup>7</sup> “le vice... est contraire... aux règles de l’Évangile”;<sup>8</sup>
- as *rules or principles of politeness*: “l’Écclésiastique... expose, d’une manière admirable ce qui est selon les règles de la bienséance”;<sup>9</sup> “se servir des termes d’honnêteté pour garder les règles de la bienséance”;<sup>10</sup>
- as a *collection of rules of life for a religious order*: *St Benedict* “a donné une règle très sage” (à un très grand nombre de religieux);<sup>11</sup> “ce que dit Saint Augustin au commencement de sa règle...”;<sup>12</sup>
- with *reference to the specific practices or rules adopted in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools both with regard to community life as to the school*: “la volonté de Dieu qui leur est marquée par les règles de leur Institut”;<sup>13</sup> “on lira les règles les dimanches et fêtes”;<sup>14</sup> “Règles communes des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes”.<sup>15</sup> There is also specific reference to the “rules of the school”: “on fera lecture dans les règles d’école”.<sup>16</sup>

### 1.2. The terms “régulé”, “régler” and their opposites, “dérégulé”, “dérégler”

The meanings which De La Salle attributes to these terms can also be grouped according to the different shades of meaning:

- *orderly or good conduct* (or disorderly conduct); *ordered life, conduct or habits* (or disordered): les vertues morales, “servent à régler les moeurs”;<sup>17</sup> “il a une conduite extérieure, très sage et très réglée”;<sup>18</sup>
- *something that is established, commanded or stipulated*; times,<sup>19</sup> lists,<sup>20</sup> the hour,<sup>21</sup> prayers,<sup>22</sup> absences<sup>23</sup> etc.
- *at times it is applied to people*: “ne fréquenter que des personnes... bien réglées”;<sup>24</sup> “si on a un confesseur réglé et arrêté”...;<sup>25</sup>
- *sometimes it also refers to “virtues” or “interior*

*movements”* properly or badly “regulated”: “... le prétexte d’un zèle... mal réglé...”;<sup>26</sup> “autre passion moins réglée”;<sup>27</sup> “la sobriété... nous fait régler l’appétit”...;<sup>28</sup>

- on occasions it is used in the sense of *to “govern” or to “dispose”* in accomplishing something: “Dieu conduit et règle tout d’une manière admirable”;<sup>29</sup> “si on a la capacité de régler... une famille”;<sup>30</sup> “punir rarement... c’est un des principaux moyens pour bien régler l’école...”;<sup>31</sup>
- it is also sometimes used in the sense of *to regulate or to put in order*: ... the affections;<sup>32</sup> custody of the eyes;<sup>33</sup> conversation;<sup>34</sup> one’s interior life.<sup>35</sup>

### 1.3. The terms “se régler”, “être réglé”; and their opposites “dérégler”, “se dérégler”, “être déréglé”

The meaning attributed to these terms is somewhat similar yet distinct. For example:

- “se régler” normally applies to the way in which *one conducts oneself or behaves*: with children;<sup>36</sup> with regard to daily actions such as eating and drinking;<sup>37</sup> in mortification;<sup>38</sup>
- “se régler” is also occasionally used in the sense of *to be based on or to be supported by*: politeness must be supported by justice<sup>39</sup> and by charity;<sup>40</sup>
- occasionally “se régler” is used in the sense of *accommodating oneself to*: (pour les cérémonies de l’enterrement) “on se réglera en cela sur l’usage des lieux”;<sup>41</sup>
- finally, it is used as a synonym for *allowing oneself to be led or directed* and almost always with reference to the will of God;<sup>42</sup>
- on the three occasions that the words “dérégler” and “se dérégler”, are used they have the meaning of “disorder” be it with regard to communities<sup>43</sup> or to children.<sup>44</sup>

The expression “être réglé” has a couple of specific meanings which can be reduced to the following:

- the sense of *something established*: holidays,<sup>45</sup> school tasks,<sup>46</sup> the times for doing particular things;<sup>47</sup>
- in the sense of *to be controlled or regulated”, to have a sense of order*: “to do in an orderly way...”; prayers,<sup>48</sup> the community,<sup>49</sup> external actions.<sup>50</sup>

With regard to the expression “être dérégulé”, it is used in most cases with the following meaning:

- *disordered, out of order, outside the norm, breaking the rule*: “la gourmandise est un désir dérégulé des plaisirs...”;<sup>51</sup> “s’il renonce aux désirs dérégulés de la

*chair...”;<sup>52</sup> “ne vous point laisser aller à aucun mouvement déréglé”.<sup>53</sup>*

#### 1.4. The terms “Règlement” and “réglément”

On the five occasions in which the word “règlement” is used four of them carry the meaning of *normative or a list of rules*. Thus, for example, “règlement des jours de congé”;<sup>54</sup> or “le frère Directeur leur donnera à chacun un règlement”.<sup>55</sup> On the three occasions in which the adverb “réglément” is used it carries the sense of “*according to the established rule or regulation*”.

#### 1.5. The words “régulier”, “irrégulier”, “régularité”, “irrégularité”

The word “régulier” is used 30 times while “irrégulier” is used twice. Both words are used in two senses only:

- on three occasions “régulier” is used to denote a type of religious order such as “*Canons regular*”;<sup>56</sup>
- on every other occasion the words signify people, attitudes or practices which are consistent with the observance of a rule. For example: “*les engage à mener une vie régulière*”;<sup>57</sup> “*soyez très régulier dans toutes les observations de communauté*”;<sup>58</sup>
- “*Régularité*” is used 46 times and “*irrégularité*” only twice and on all occasions it has the meaning of the virtue of observing the rules given by the community. For example: “*Vous savez que la régularité dépend de celui qui conduit*”;<sup>59</sup> “*de se rendre le modèle des autres par la régularité*”.<sup>60</sup>

## 2. THE TEACHING OF DE LA SALLE ON THE RULE AND ON REGULARITY

In the writings of St John Baptist De La Salle, the words “Rule”, “rules” and “regularity” are used in the sense that was current in the religious life of his time. The Rule is the “*form of life*” (*formula vitae, forma vivendi*) of particular religious orders, particularly from the 16th century when dependency on the four ancient monastic “Rules” was removed. This form of life quickly expressed itself in “*Constitutions*” but frequently the two aspects were linked in “*rules and constitutions*”. Through usage the term “Rule” came to signify the collection of practices which gave uniformity to the life of a society or community of consecra-

ted people. The term was also applied to each of the prescriptions or points which made up the Rule. Regularity is the observance of a Rule and is considered a virtue equivalent to fidelity in the observance of the norms of the community (cf. “*Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*”. Règles et constitutions religieuses, pp. 287, 288, 299). The “religious rule” is defined in the “*Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique*, (ed. 1965, p. 539) as follows: “*On donne le nom de règle à l’ensemble des principes généraux qui réglementent la vie des religieux et tendent à les conduire à la pratique de la perfection chrétienne, en tenant compte du but particulier poursuivi par chaque institut. La règle est souvent complétée par les constitutions, ou ensemble de dispositions particulières par lesquelles la règle est précisée et adaptée aux circonstances*”. In general one can say that De La Salle’s use of terms such as “*Règle*”, “*règles*”, “*régularité*” etc. is consistent with these descriptions.

De La Salle did not develop a long speculative study on regularity and the rule. He did however summarize his essential thought in two chapters of his writings. One of these is Ch. XVI of the *Common Rules*<sup>61</sup> and the other is the short treatise “*On Regularity*” in the *Collection*.<sup>62</sup> Both present a synthesis of his thought on regularity and on the rules with the treatment in the *Collection* being more systematic than the chapter in the Rule since there, as was to be expected, he added some very specific practices for the life of the community which go beyond the doctrinal. Nonetheless, the theological content of the opening paragraphs of Ch. XVI is extremely rich. Moreover, throughout his other writings he insistently repeats some of the key ideas expounded in the two chapters previously quoted with the result that, if one set aside the teaching presented in these chapters, one could equally reconstruct his thought by threading together the references to regularity and to the rule which are scattered throughout his other writings.

### 2.1. Chapter XVI of the Common Rule and the chapter from the Collection “On Regularity”

#### 2.1.1. Chapter XVI of the Common Rule

This chapter was added to the Rule by De La Salle in the revision which he made after Assembly

of 1717. In the first four articles of the chapter he develops a brief, but solid, teaching on regularity centred on the following points:

— The foundation of regularity is the commandments of God which are summarized in the love of God and of one's neighbour (art 1).

— If regularity is separated from both of these commandments it is of no use for salvation (art 1).

— Regularity is established in communities to facilitate the observance of the commandments of God by its members; eg. silence, respect for superiors, reserve with regard to the world, modesty and recollection etc. (art 1).

— The Brothers have great esteem for regularity and consider it as the primary means of their sanctification:

\* because it enables them to observe the commandments

\* because it preserves them from temptations

\* because God channels his grace through it in a special way (art 2).

— Regularity is the first support of the community and irregularity the primary source of its destruction and the loss of its members (art 3).

— Consequently, one must give preference to the Rule of one's own Institute before any other practice unless it be a commandment of God or of the Church (at 3).

— Thus, one must apply oneself to the observance of the Rule (art 4)

— desiring to fulfil the will of God, which is manifested in it, exactly and in everything (art 4).

### 2.1.2. *The chapter in the Collection "On Regularity"*

The Collection contains a short treatise which outlines the principal virtues which the Brother must practise. One of these virtues is Regularity and, while in his treatment of it here De La Salle changes the order that we have seen above in the Ch. XVI of the Rule, the fundamental ideas are repeated:

— Regularity is the foundation of good order, peace and union in the community

\* because it unites the affections of its members

\* because it unifies its conduct

— The more faithful a community is with regard to regularity

\* the greater is the presence of the spirit of God in it

\* the more graces God grants it

\* the more its members live their vocation with satisfaction and with the blessing of God

— Regularity consists in observing the rules and practices of the community in the manner and order indicated and at the times prescribed.

— The Rule must be observed as representing the will of God and thereby safeguarding one's vocation and ensuring fidelity to God's call.

— The model of regularity is Christ who fulfilled the will of the Father in everything.

— Regularity has also to be observed in those things which appear unimportant since the will of God is to be found in all things, great and small.

— In order to acquire the virtue of regularity one must view the practices of the community from the perspective of the will of God.

### 2.1.3. *Fidelity to the Rule*

Another section of the Collection is devoted to the "Reflections which the Brothers may make on the means of becoming interior". One of these is entitled "Fidelity to the Rule" (R 116) and it gives three reasons for this;

— because it is the primary means of sanctification in a community

— because the graces of God are received in a community in proportion to fidelity in the observance of its rules

— because one advances in perfection more through fidelity in the observance of the Rules than by any other means.

### 2.1.4. *The Guide for Reddition*

Section 14 of the Guide for Reddition, which was added to the end of the 1711 edition of the Collection, proposes an examen on various aspects of regularity: "... S'il a de l'estime pour les Règles de l'Institut, s'il les a observées exactement, ou s'il a manqué à quelques-unes et quelles elles sont, si souvent, si rarement et combien souvent depuis sa dernière Lettre, de quelle manière il les a observées, si ç'a été avec ferveur ou lâcheté, si toujours, si souvent, si rarement et en quelles occasions, l'un ou l'autre, s'il y trouve de la difficulté, si à toutes, si à quelques-unes seulement, quelles elles sont et pour quelles raisons..." (CL 15, p. 125).

### 2.2. *References to the Rule and to Regularity in the writings of De La Salle*

We have suggested that a synthesis of De La Salle's thought on regularity, similar to that outlined in the Rule and in the Collection, could have been made from the many references in his other writings. Such a synthesis could be summarized in 8 parts.

### 2.2.1. *The Brothers have a Rule which they have adopted as a community*

De La Salle indicates this in the Memoir on the Habit as follows: "... Cette Communauté se nomme ordinairement la Communauté des Ecoles chrétiennes... On y vit avec règles, avec dépendance pour toutes choses, sans aucune propriété et dans une entière uniformité".<sup>63</sup> The norms by which they govern themselves are called the "Règles communes des Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes".<sup>64</sup> They were rules which were adopted by the community itself after many discussions and exchanges of ideas, a process which is indicated in the biographies of the Founder. Moreover, he himself alludes to the process in a letter to Brother Gabriel Drolin in Rome when he says: "... The Brothers are preparing to have an Assembly from Ascension until Pentecost in order to organize many things in relation to the Rule and to the government of the Institute".<sup>65</sup>

### 2.2.2. *The first and principal rule is the will of God*

This is repeated insistently in the writings of De La Salle as a basic principle of conduct. In the "Rule of the Brother Director" he speaks of "l'exécution de la volonté de Dieu comme la règle de toute leur conduite"<sup>66</sup> while, in speaking of obedience, he says "... car Dieu ne fait cette grâce qu'à ceux qui n'ont plus de propre volonté, et qui regardent la sienne comme la Règle et le principe de toute leur conduite".<sup>67</sup> In the meditation for the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost he writes: "La Loi et la volonté de Dieu nous doit servir de Règle, et non pas l'exemple des autres, ou la considération naturelle et humaine que vous avez pour eux".<sup>68</sup>

### 2.2.3. *The will of God is expressed in his word: consequently, the Gospel must be the fundamental rule*

This idea is repeated various times in his writings. Sometimes it is applied to the Christian in general: "L'Évangile... c'est la règle de tous les chrétiens",<sup>69</sup> at other times it is applied directly to the Brothers as in, for example, "... que le Nouveau Testament... serve de règle de conduite et à vous et à ceux que vous instruisez".<sup>70</sup>

### 2.2.4. *The Rule is the expression of the will of God*

This is clearly expressed in Ch XVI of the Rule: "... Chacun des Frères s'appliquera particulièrement à ne rien faire qui soit ou qui puisse être contre la Régularité... voulant faire en tout, et très exactement la volonté de Dieu, qui leur est marquée par les Règles et les Pratiques de leur Institut".<sup>71</sup> The same thought is expressed in the "Rule of the Brother Director" as follows: "... Il fera cas de manquer ou de voir manquer à un petit point de régularité en quelque chose voulant que la volonté de Dieu qui lui est marquée par les règles et par les usages de l'Institut...".<sup>72</sup>

### 2.2.5. *Regularity is the exact observance of the rules of the community*

The Collection states that "la régularité consiste à observer les règles et les pratiques de communauté".<sup>73</sup>

### 2.2.6. *Each member of the community must esteem the rules and endeavour to observe them*

This is one of the recommendations on which De La Salle is most insistent especially when he is writing to the Brothers or when he proposes the theme to them in his meditations: "Soyez donc fidèle à bien faire vos règles";<sup>74</sup> "soyez très attentif à observer exactement vos règles";<sup>75</sup> "... vous devez garder toutes vos règles avec exactitude".<sup>76</sup> Such quotations could be multiplied.

Among the points for the examination of conscience, in the Collection, section IX indicates: "... Si on a de l'estime pour les Règles, si on les observe exactement; si on a manqué à quelques-unes...", which is very similar to the text quoted in 2.1.3 above on the Guide.<sup>77</sup>

### 2.2.7. *Regularity draws down the blessings of God and is the means of advancing in perfection*

"... On avance dans la perfection par la fidélité à l'observation de ses règles";<sup>78</sup> les inspirations de Dieu "portent à observer les règles";<sup>79</sup> "...vous trouverez qu'il vous aidera (Dieu) tant pour la régularité que pour la soumission";<sup>80</sup> "... c'est la régularité qui attire la bénédiction de Dieu sur une maison";<sup>81</sup> "... la régularité étant le principal

moyen que Dieu donne pour s'y sauver",<sup>82</sup> etc. In theme X of the topics of conversation for recreation which are indicated in the Collection the following is stated: "... De l'avantage et de l'assurance probable qu'ont de leur salut ceux qui vivent dans la Société, et qui ont le bonheur d'y être engagés et d'en observer les Règles".<sup>83</sup>

#### 2.2.8. *The observance of regularity depends in large measure on the director of the community*

... Le Directeur veillera "que tous y gardent les règles qui y sont prescrites" (with reference to recreation)<sup>84</sup> "... vous savez que la régularité dépend de celui qui conduit" he wrote to a Director;<sup>85</sup> "... son premier soin à l'égard des frères sera de les établir et maintenir dans un véritable esprit de foi, et de leur faire regarder l'exécution de la volonté de Dieu en toutes choses comme la règle de toute leur conduite".<sup>86</sup> The Brother Director "ne souffrira dans aucun des frères rien qui soit ou qui puisse être contre la régularité...".<sup>87</sup> etc.

Apart from this synthesis, based on recurring expressions in the thought of De La Salle, there are also indirect references to the "rule" and to "regularity" in countless community practices or virtues such as, for example, in silence, obedience, mortification, contact with people, the ministry of the school, exercises of piety, etc. According to De La Salle, everything which occurred in the community had a reference to regularity since the Rule "regarded" all the daily exercises and activities of the Brother. Fidelity to the Rule is the road to sanctification and it was this consideration which gave rise to his celebrated statement: "... Ne faites point de différence entre les affaires de votre état et l'affaire de votre salut et de votre perfection. Assurez-vous que vous ne ferez jamais mieux votre salut et n'acquerrez jamais tant de perfection qu'en vous acquittant bien des devoirs de votre état; pourvu que vous le fassiez en vue de l'ordre de Dieu".<sup>88</sup> It may be that the teaching on regularity expounded in the Collection was taken from other authors, and probably from Canon Roland (Rigault, *Histoire générale de l'Institut*, Vol 1, p. 474), but the fact is that De La Salle had deeply assimilated it and so repeated it whenever he had the opportunity.

Moreover, he lived it in his own life. Thus, Blain (2, 316-317)) speaks of "... la parfaite Régularité

de l'Instituteur des Frères". He first expresses his concept of regularity in the following terms: "... Je regarde la régularité parfaite, comme une vertu universelle qui influe dans toutes les autres, qui les met en mouvement, qui assigne à chacun son temps, son lieu et sa mesure, qui en règle la durée, la manière, et qui en ordonne l'arrangement, la pratique et toutes les circonstances. En cela elle paraît avoir un grand rapport à la justice...". He then moves on to speak of De La Salle: "... Il a été un parfait modèle de Régularité. Ami de l'Ordre et de la Règle, il serait difficile de détailler jusqu'où il a porté cet amour, et avec quelle exactitude il s'est lui-même renfermé dans la discipline et l'observance régulière. Quelques-uns des Frères qui l'ont le plus connu, et qui ont eu le bonheur de vivre plus longtemps avec lui, prétendent que la parfaite régularité a été son caractère distinctif et que rien ne les a plus édifiés en lui, que cette attention continuelle qu'il avait à se renfermer dans les règlements, sans jamais en sortir, comme dans la prison de la propre volonté..." (Blain 2, 317).

### 3. THE WRITINGS OF DE LA SALLE WHICH CONTAIN THE WORD "RULE" IN THEIR TITLE

#### 3.1. "Les Règles que je me suis imposées"

These rules were handed down to us by Blain who indicated that he had copied from the original with the words: "... Le voici tel qu'il est" (Blain 2, 318-319). Unfortunately, the original copy of the Rules has been lost. Before listing them Blain himself comments; "... C'est une pièce que nous fait regretter toutes les autres que son humilité a eu soin de nous dérober. La divine Providence l'a laissée entre les mains de ses Disciples, pour leur être un éternel monument, un exemple toujours vivant, et un motif toujours nouveau d'imiter la Régularité de leur Père..." (p. 318). The text has been published as an appendix in CL 16, pp. 101-102 while the text is also presented by Y. Poutet who, however, does not follow the order but rather groups the rules according to themes.<sup>89</sup>

There are difficulties in precisely dating the document but there are indications which point to a

particular period. In effect they speak of “the community” and of the renewal of consecration to the Blessed Trinity but do not speak of the vow of obedience etc. They are considered by some people to be resolutions made during a retreat. Thus, for example, Y. Poutet<sup>90</sup> suggests that this rule of life could have been adopted during the retreat with the Carmelites of Louviers, in Garde-Châtel, in August 1686 which is also suggested by S. Gallego.<sup>91</sup> Poutet, however, also suggest that the document may date back a year earlier to 1685.

What appears beyond doubt is that De La Salle was inspired to adopt these Rules by a work of P. Julien Hayneufve, S.J., entitled “Méditations pour le temps des exercices qui se font dans la retraite des huit jours, sur le sujet de Vingt-quatre Vérités et Maximes fondamentales, qui monstrent le progrès de la Vie spirituelle, et qui en sont le parfait Règlement, selon l’Ordre et la Déclaration qui se verra dans le dessein de cet Ouvrage”. (Paris, Sébastien Cramoisy et Gabriel Cramoisy, 1645, 298 p.). Gilles Beaudet has produced an interesting study in *Lasalliana* (N° 20, 3-4-5) in which he compared the suggestions offered in Hayneufve’s book for the various days of the retreat with the resolutions adopted by De La Salle. He also believes that these resolutions could have been made during a retreat. It should also be noted that, in the Collection, De La Salle took a good part of his “Considérations que les Frères doivent faire de temps en temps, et surtout pendant leur retraite”<sup>92</sup> from Hayneufve’s book.

### 3.2. The Common Rules of the Brothers of the Christian Schools

#### 3.2.1. *How the Rules evolved*

Studies based on the biographies indicate various stages:

1. **1682: the Exercises.** By this time it was almost three years since De La Salle had made contact with Adrian Nyel (Lent 1679) and the first teachers had been recruited in Rheims. During this time his life had taken an improbable course — he had taken care of the teachers, looked for a house for them, brought them into his own home to feed them, seated them at his own table and then gone to live with them. From the time that he

began to be directly concerned with the teachers he attempted to order their lives with timetables and practices appropriate to the work in which they were daily involved. From the time that they were living together the daily rule was more involved and related to more activities. Maillefer says that De La Salle had drawn up “une règle uniforme pour toutes les heures de la journée” (MC 20; MAR 31). However, the teachers were unable to live in this way and they left but De La Salle quickly saw another group of teachers arriving at the house in the Rue Neuve “qui avaient de la force, de la ferveur et de la piété” (MC 26), “du talent pour l’école... aussi bien que de la disposition pour pouvoir demeurer en communauté” (Bd 47). In his biography, Bernard says “ce fut aussi au commencement de cette année qu’on commença ce qu’on appelait en ce temps-là les exercices qui sont les mêmes qui se pratiquent aujourd’hui dans toutes les maisons de l’Institut”.

2. **1684: Règlements.** Seeing that there were various communities located in different places — Rheims, Rethel, Guise, Laon — De La Salle saw the necessity of having a uniform style of life. Initially he proposed a trial period and it was only after a number of years when he was then in Paris that “... il rédigea ses règlements par écrit, après s’être donné tout le temps nécessaire pour peser tout avec maturité” (MR 60-61; MC 40).

3. **1694: Règles.** However, since 1684 the practices of the Brothers and in De La Salle’s own life reflected the experiences which they had undergone.

— **1686:** The first Assembly was held in this year and took place before the first profession of vows. In an animated discourse De La Salle proposed to the Brothers that they consider the appropriateness of «s’engager par quelque voeu à vivre en communauté selon les règles qui étaient en usage parmi eux” (MC 41; MAR 62). Blain situates this Assembly in 1684 and says that “qu’on y convint de quelques règlements”; “que le premier article touchant les règles et les constitutions auroit été prématuré s’il avoit été agité dès lors” (Blain 1, 233).

— **1691:** That the rules were already in use, even if not yet in written form, is confirmed by an incident related by the biographers with regard to De La Salle. While he was ill in Rheims he would not allow his grand-mother, Mme Moët de Brouillet, to visit

in his room “pour ne pas transgresser les règles de la maison qui interdisaient l’entrée aux personnes de son sexe” (MC 57; MR 85).

In 1691 when he had established Vaugirard in Paris, De La Salle took great care to ensure that the rules were scrupulously observed.

— **1694:** Between 1692 and the first months of 1694 “quand M. de La Salle vit que son noviciat était bien établi sur les règles qu’il y faisait observer, il jugea qu’il était nécessaire de les rédiger par écrit, pour les rendre fixes et les perpétuer parmi les Frères de son Institut. Il s’y prépara par de longues prières, des jeûnes fréquents et de rudes pénitences, et plein de l’Esprit de Dieu dont il se sentait animé, il en composa un recueil. Ensuite il assembla les Frères des deux communautés de Paris et de Vaugirard, leur enjoignit d’y faire leurs réflexions et de lui dire ce qu’ils y trouveraient à retrancher ou à ajouter” (MR 105-106).

There were some Brothers who wanted to moderate some practices and De La Salle told them that, while he personally would not change them, he would submit them to the judgement of three experienced superiors in Paris and abide by their decision. “Et c’est sur leur approbation que les règles furent dressées dans l’ordre où on les voit subsister aujourd’hui...” (MR 106). All agreed to the modifications of those consulted but De La Salle wanted all the Brothers to approve them too so this was the next step. Around the feast of Pentecost, in 1694, he called all the Brothers together for the annual retreat and to renew the vow of obedience. La Salle “à la fin de la retraite leur présenta le recueil de ses Règles qui furent lues et approuvées unanimement” (MR 107). All the commentaries are unanimous in agreeing that this text remained unchanged until 1717. The text is known by the name of the *First Rule*.

#### 4. The Rule of 1718 which is known as the **Second Rule**.

The principal Brothers of the Institute had been called together to an Assembly in St Yon on Pentecost Sunday 1717. The main purpose of the Assembly was to elect a Superior after making their annual retreat. That it was also the intention to revise some of the rules can be seen from De La Salle’s letter to Gabriel Drolin in Rome, dated 5th December 1716, in which he wrote: “The Brothers are preparing to have an Assembly from Ascen-

sion until Pentecost in order to organize many things in relation to the Rules and to the government of the Institute” (L, 32, 10).

Brother Barthelemy was elected Superior and Maillefer then adds the following: “Le lendemain (de la Trinité de 1717) on se ressembla pour faire quelques observations sur les règlements, afin d’y ajouter ou retrancher ce qui paraîtrait nécessaire, avec cette restriction néanmoins qu’on n’arrêterait rien qu’auparavant on n’eût pris l’avis de M. de La Salle, aux lumières duquel on se rapporterait de tout ce qui serait statué. Ainsi, quand tout fut examiné et discuté, on le pria d’y mettre la dernière main. Il promit d’y travailler et s’y appliqua effectivement avec beaucoup d’attention, de sorte qu’en peu de jours, la Règle fut rédigée dans l’état où elle est aujourd’hui, et fut envoyée dans toutes les maisons pour y être observée uniformément par tous les Frères de l’Institut” (MR 273).

De La Salle quickly set about a final editing of the newly-corrected texts and had it finished by the end of the year. In 1718 copies were made bearing the signature of Brother Barthelemy on each sheet and these were sent to each house of the Institute.

#### 3.2.2. *The oldest extant copies of the Rule*

— In the Archives of the Mother House (SBf) there is a manuscript entitled “la Pratique du Règlement journalier”, comprising of 32 pages, 19.5 by 15.5 cm, one of which carries the title with the text presented on the following 21 pages. The pages are numbered in pencil from 1 to 21. The manuscript bears the date “9th March 1713” and it appears to contain the main aspects of the first rule in detailing the various community exercises.

— With regard to *the First Rule*, there is one manuscript copy which we know of, bearing the date 23rd September 1705 and entitled “Regles Communes de l’Institut des Frères des Ecoles Chretiennes”. It contains 83 sheets, 17 by 11.5 cm, bound in parchment. The handwriting appears to be that of Brother Antoine, Jean Partois, although this is not altogether certain, who joined the Institute in September 1686. The manuscript is preserved in the Municipal Library in Avignon.

— With regard to the *Second Rule*, we have one extant copy dated 1718 which was sent to the community in Troyes, containing 124 pages, 19 by

14.5 cm. The handwriting corresponds with that of Brother Michel (Vincent Floquet) who joined the Institute in 1705 and who acted as secretary to the Superiors in various capitular assemblies. The initials of the Superior General, JTFB (Joseph Truffet, Frère Barthélemy), are to be found at the bottom of the page on the principal side of each sheet. The manuscript is preserved in the Archives of the Mother House.

— *First printed Rule*: “Règles et Constitutions de l’Institut des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes, Approuvées par Nôtre Saint Pere le Pape Benoist XIII, A Rouen, de l’Imprimerie d’Antoine Le Prevost, ruë Saint Vivien. M.DCC.XXVI. Avec Approbation et Permission des Supérieurs”. 21 x 16 cm., 122 p.

### 3.2.3. *De La Salle as the author of the Rule*

The process of elaboration of the Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools leaves no doubt as to its author bearing in mind that it was the fruit of a permanent process of dialogue and discernment between De La Salle and the Brothers. Léon de Marie Aroz describes this process in the following way: “Il est le fruit d’une concertation permanente entre le Fondateur et ses disciples, d’un partage communautaire en vue d’un plus grand bien personnel et social. Les suggestions parties de la base ou inspirées par M. de La Salle, discutées en des assemblées plénières — 1684-1686, 1694, 1717 — après les avoir soumises à l’épreuve du temps (1682-1694, 1694-1717) ont été assumées par le Fondateur, par lui revues et ensuite codifiées. Sauf les chapitres doctrinaux, — le merveilleux chapitre sur «l’Esprit de l’Institut» et celui non moins remarquable sur la Régularité, entr’autres, qui portent l’estampille de son inspiration théocentrique — les chapitres restants sont l’oeuvre du «commun anonyme», chacun apportant ses lumières, son point de vue, modulé par l’inspiration de l’Esprit, la méditation, l’attrait de la grâce et sa responsabilité vis-à-vis de Dieu et de ses Frères. Rien ne fut retenu qui n’eût été vécu (ms Bernard, p. 76); la pratique devint vie. C’est avec ce matériau humain que M. de La Salle rédigea son code de perfection qu’est la Règle de l’Institut, la loi du religieux” (CL 40<sup>1</sup>, 207).

Nevertheless, in the Apostolic process on the “Writings of the Venerable John Baptist de La

Salle”, the attribution of the Rule to De La Salle was categorically rejected. Cardinal Gousset, Archbishop of Rheims, who was entrusted with examining the writings of the Founder, concluded: “Je crois que ni les règles d’une sage critique, ni celles de l’équité, ne permettent... que ces écrits puissent être regardés comme étant son ouvrage...” (Letter to Cardinal Lambruschini, Rheims, 27th July, 1851). The Congregation of Rites decreed that none of the works which bore the name of “the servant of God” were attributable to him, not even the Rule, since Cardinal Gousset, interpreting the declaration made by Brother Barthélemy at the end of the 1718 Rule in the strictest fashion, indicated that it could not be attributed to De La Salle as his own work according to the strictest interpretation given to this by the Sacred Congregation.

The rejection of the claim to authorship of his works facilitated the development of the process of the Cause for his beatification but subsequent studies were to prove that such a rejection was a major error. Curiously, with regard to the Rule, it was the discovery of the manuscript of 1705 in the Municipal Library of Avignon, by Brother Saturninus in 1897, which corroborated what the biographies said about the editing of the rules. That the Institute itself was clear about the authorship of the Rule is revealed in the letter of Brother Timothy at the end of the 1726 edition: “Nous déclarons être selon que le Serviteur de Dieu Monsieur Jean-Baptiste de La Salle nôtre Vénérable Instituteur les a composées, et ensuite mis en ordre du consentement des Frères Directeurs de notredite Société...” (cf. CL 40<sup>1</sup>, pp. 205-208).

### 3.2.4. *The Contents of the 1718 Rule (CL 25)*

A glance at the titles of the chapters is sufficient to indicate the aspects of life with which the Rule was concerned:

1. De la fin, et de la nécessité de cet Institut
2. De l’Esprit de cet Institut
3. De l’Esprit de Communauté de cet Institut et des Exercices qui s’y feront en commun
4. Des Exercices de Piété qui se pratiqueront dans cet Institut
5. Des Exercices d’Humiliation et de Mortification qui se pratiqueront dans cet Institut
6. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se com-

porter dans les Recréations

7. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter dans les Ecoles à l'égard de leurs Ecoliers

8. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter dans les Corrections qu'ils pourront faire aux Ecoliers

9. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter dans les Ecoles à l'égard d'eux-mêmes, à l'égard de leurs Frères, et à l'égard des Personnes externes

10. Des Jours et des Tems que les Frères feront l'Ecole, et des Jours ausquels ils donneront Congé aux Ecoliers

11. De l'Inspecteur des Ecoles

12. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter à l'égard du Frère Directeur

13. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter envers leurs frères et de l'union qu'ils doivent avoir entre eux

14. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter avec les Personnes Externes

15. De la manière dont les Frères doivent se comporter

16. De la Régularité

17. Des Voeux

18. De la Pauvreté

19. De la Chasteté

20. De l'Obéissance. Du silence

21. De la Modestie

22. Des Malades

23. Des Prières que l'on doit faire pour les Frères morts

24. Des Voyages

25. Des Lettres

26. De la langue Latine

27. Exercices Journaliers

28. Exercices particuliers des Dimanches et Fêtes

29. Exercices Particuliers des Jours de Congez

30. Ce qui doit se pratiquer d'extraordinaire dans les Exercices Journaliers certains jours de l'année

31. Règlement Journalier pour le tems des Vacances

32. Règle pour le tems de la retraite commune qui se fera pendant les vacances.

Rénovation des voeux (formule)

Accompanying letter

### 3.3. The "rule of the Brother Director"

De La Salle was very conscious of the fact that the observance of the Rule in a community depended in large measure on the Director. Besides this the Director also had special responsibilities with regard to the Brothers, to people outside the community, to the school, and to community life. Consequently, it is probable that he very quickly considered the drawing up of a series of rules of

conduct for the Directors of the houses. We do not know exactly the specific way he came to draw these up but undoubtedly it will not have been very different from the way he followed in the elaboration of the Common Rules. In other words, the lived experience preceded the editing and this was accompanied by an exchange of opinions by all those concerned before arriving at the definitive form of each prescription. Later, when the Rule was then in written form, certain prescriptions were modified in the light of suggestions made by the Directors themselves. This process is not specifically mentioned in the biographies but it was his characteristic way of working.<sup>93</sup>

Blain indicates that the writing of this rule took place "vers l'année 1700"<sup>94</sup> without being more specific. A manuscript copy was sent to each house and the Director had to read it during spiritual reading on Thursdays and Sundays. Moreover, it was to be read publicly in the dining-room on the first Thursday of every month during mealtime. This was not easy since, at times, such a reading indicated certain faults of the Director with the consequent embarrassment. De La Salle received some complaints with regard to this as well as suggestions that it should not be read in public but he did not give way maintaining the practice "avec une fermeté inflexible".<sup>95</sup>

Blain says<sup>96</sup> that by 1686 the weekly fast by rota had been established in all communities. Each Brother fasted on the day that he went to communion and the objective of this mortification was "pour demander à Dieu de dignes Frères Directeurs".<sup>97</sup> It was in the assembly of the "Frères anciens" (Blain) in Paris, probably in 1710, that it was agreed that weekly fast for all should be on Friday. The biographers note that De La Salle did not break his own daily fast for this intention and they indicate that he continued this practice for four years including Sundays and feasts irrespective of how solemn they were.<sup>98</sup>

At the Assembly of 1717 — in which Brother Barthelemy was elected Superior and the days following Trinity Sunday were devoted to a revision of the Rule — the theme of the Rule of the Brother Director was also covered. The 16 members of the Assembly were Directors and they resisted the temptation to modify the norms of their own Rule. Throughout 1718 the communities re-

ceived copies of the Common Rules and the Rule of the Brother Director and the latter Rule, like the Common Rule, was authenticated by the initials of Brother Barthelemy on each sheet. Our knowledge of this Rule comes from the copy sent to Saint-Denis where Brother John Francis was Director. At the end of the Rule, in the accompanying letter of Brother Barthelemy, one finds the date 3rd October 1718. There are no extant copies of the original edition with the text of 1700. The copy that we do possess contains 20 pages, 19 x 15.5 cm, of which 14 carry text.

The contents of this Rule is divided into three parts. The first part corresponds to the title — the Rule of the Brother Director — but there are two other parts which are more general: one deals with the clothing of the Brothers and the other deals with food. This copy is preserved in the archives of the Mother House and has been reproduced in CL 25 as a continuation of the Common Rules. S. Gallego suggests that this work should be considered in conjunction with two other writings which the experts attribute to the Founder and whose authorship can be deduced from an examination of the texts. The two works are “Advice of John Baptist De La Salle to Brothers with responsibilities” (9 pages, (ACG: BO 776-1) and “The Qualities which the Brother Directors of the houses of the Institute must possess in order to carry out their functions well” (4 pages, ACG: *ibid*).

#### 3.4. “Les Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité Chrétienne

De La Salle wrote various educational and pedagogical works. Without doubt daily contact with the school and with the Brothers made him aware of the lack of existing provision. He was undoubtedly aware of other books but did not consider them appropriate for school and, faced with this difficulty, his response was to develop the texts himself which he felt necessary for the schools. Blain tells us that it was during a period of enforced rest when he was recovering from “housemaid’s knee” that he set about writing some of these works. However, the work required much longer time, as much to develop and structure the texts as to correct and edit them and, undoubtedly, before editing them he gave much con-

sideration to the subject and to the contents.

The fact is that he already had this very important work, containing 264 pages, written in 1702 because on 2nd November of that year he sought permission to publish a number of works which he had written. The permission was sought from Abbot Bignon, who was responsible for the examination of books for publication, and among the texts presented was precisely “Les Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité chrétienne”. The printing proofs were prepared by a printer in Troyes which indicates that on a previous journey to this town he had consulted the printer about a possible publication, had left the original with him and that the necessary time for the preparation of a book of 264 pages had now elapsed. However, the type of lettering used in the preparation of this work was not the same as that in the other texts. It was a kind of gothic print which is very difficult to read to-day and was also very difficult to read then. The book was intended to be used in the Christian Schools for reading with the more advanced pupils and consequently it appears that this particular typology was chosen so as to give the pupils practice in it.

As indicated above, the permission, requested by “the superior of the Christian Schools” was sought on November 2nd 1702 after which developments unfolded rapidly. Thus, for example, on December 26th 1703, the Censor, Ellies du Pin, declared that among the works he had read was “Les Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité chrétienne” and that he had found everything in it in conformity with the Catholic faith, piety and good custom. On January 23rd a 5 year permission for publication was granted and on 28th of January the Royal Warrant was granted in Versailles. On February 6th the book was registered with the Guild of Printers and Booksellers in Paris under the signature of one of the trustees, Trabouillet, while on February 15th the book appeared in Troyes with the date on the last page and with the phrase “la première fois” indicating that it was a first edition. The other books for which De La Salle was granted publication permission on the same date were to require more time before being printed. Some, in fact, to be delayed for months.

This book, which was sold in Rheims by François Godard, Bookseller, rue des Tapissiers,

was for school use, as is indicated on the title page with the words “à l’usage des Ecoles chrétiennes». According to the level of the pupils other books were also used in the same way so that the pupils had practice in reading and at the same time learned about politeness or about religion etc. “Les Règles de la Bienséance” was used with those who were proficient in reading and in the penultimate level; “... those who could read French perfectly and were in the third level of Latin...” (Conduct, 39). However, this work was to go beyond the School and very soon more editions were produced with the gothic lettering abandoned while the book itself became known as “Civilité”. Thus, through the pupils the book came to be widely known and there was a great demand for it. In De La Salle’s own life-time we know of four other editions – 1708 (Paris-Rivière); 1713 (perhaps in Troyes); 1715 (Ruán-Besogne); 1716 – (Troyes-Paris, Widow Oudot). The last two were produced in norm lettering while there is also mention of a 1711 edition of which there are no extant copies (CL 19, p. IV, note 4).

The first edition prepared for girls appeared in 1722 in which what was exclusively male was omitted and additional special sections were added for girls. From 1729 the official edition suppressed the feminine sections and dealt exclusively with males. There have been numerous editions of this work as has been indicated in the “Edition critique des Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité Chrétienne” Paris, Liget, 552 pages) produced in 1955 by Brother Albert-Valentin, in which he attempted to indicate the known editions numbered at that time as 176. However, this is certainly incomplete since not even the first edition, which was only discovered in 1960, is listed and it could be that there are other editions of which no extant copies remain. Moreover, as Y. Poutet has shown, there have also been forged editions.<sup>99</sup>

Books on courtesy were not uncommon in De La Salle’s time but it is obvious that he did not find them suitable for school use perhaps mainly because of their more general orientation. He undoubtedly took aspects from other works as Gallego recognises: “... he made no attempt to hide the fact of taking inspiration from others; however, he selected, adapted, developed, organized didactically and, above all, christianized the norms

of good upbringing. Courtesy appears as the spontaneous expression of charity and not as the veneer of hypocrisy”.<sup>100</sup> In speaking of this work, Blain comments: “... On prétend que M. De La Salle est de tous les Auteurs qui ont écrit sur ce sujet, celui qui l’a fait avec plus de succès: Il a sù y employer pour preuves des Exemples tirez de la Sainte Ecriture et des Pères de l’Eglise, et faire entrer dans le détail des devoirs de civilité et de bienséance, les pratiques de l’humilité Chrétienne et les maximes de l’Evangile. Aussi faut-il, avouer que de tous les ouvrages du saint Prêtre, celui-ci est le plus travaillé». <sup>101</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> CE 35 C.
- <sup>2</sup> CE 74 B.
- <sup>3</sup> RB 103 B.
- <sup>4</sup> RB 7 E.
- <sup>5</sup> RB 63 B.
- <sup>6</sup> RB 7 E.
- <sup>7</sup> RB 3 D.
- <sup>8</sup> RB 150 B.
- <sup>9</sup> RB 192 A.
- <sup>10</sup> RB 246 E.
- <sup>11</sup> MF 111,1.
- <sup>12</sup> RC 16.1.
- <sup>13</sup> RC 16.4.
- <sup>14</sup> RC 2,10.
- <sup>15</sup> RC 1.
- <sup>16</sup> RC 27. 11.
- <sup>17</sup> DA IX B.
- <sup>18</sup> RB 185 A.
- <sup>19</sup> CE 53 C.
- <sup>20</sup> CE 133 B.
- <sup>21</sup> R 210. 18.
- <sup>22</sup> DA 477 D.
- <sup>23</sup> CE 180 B; 181 C.
- <sup>24</sup> DA 176 C.
- <sup>25</sup> I 115 A.
- <sup>26</sup> EM 118 D.
- <sup>27</sup> RC 21.,3.
- <sup>28</sup> Da 186 E.
- <sup>29</sup> Da 16 D.
- <sup>30</sup> Da 387 D.
- <sup>31</sup> RC 8.1.
- <sup>32</sup> Da 147 D.
- <sup>33</sup> RB 17 A.
- <sup>34</sup> MD 30,1.
- <sup>35</sup> R 187.13.
- <sup>36</sup> CE 166 D.
- <sup>37</sup> Db 138 R.
- <sup>38</sup> R 218.11.
- <sup>39</sup> RB 159 E.
- <sup>40</sup> RB 160 C.
- <sup>41</sup> RC 23.3.
- <sup>42</sup> R 85.21; 87.2; 87.20; RC 4.4.
- <sup>43</sup> MD 60,3; MD 56,3.
- <sup>44</sup> R 57.7.

- <sup>45</sup> CE 196 B.  
<sup>46</sup> FD 8 A.  
<sup>47</sup> R 49.4; 49.12.  
<sup>48</sup> Da 442 C.  
<sup>49</sup> L 58.7.  
<sup>50</sup> RB 11 C.  
<sup>51</sup> Da 176 B.  
<sup>52</sup> Da 228 B.  
<sup>53</sup> MF 85.2.  
<sup>54</sup> CE 115.  
<sup>55</sup> RC 15.1.  
<sup>56</sup> Da 316 D; MF 135,1; MF 153,2.  
<sup>57</sup> MD 76,3.  
<sup>58</sup> R 159.19.  
<sup>59</sup> L 35.2.  
<sup>60</sup> MD 75,1.  
<sup>61</sup> RC 16.  
<sup>62</sup> CL 15, 159-161.  
<sup>63</sup> MH 1.2.  
<sup>64</sup> RC 1.  
<sup>65</sup> L 32.10.  
<sup>66</sup> FD 6 B.  
<sup>67</sup> MD 12,2.  
<sup>68</sup> MD 75,2.  
<sup>69</sup> I 77 E.  
<sup>70</sup> MF 170,1.  
<sup>71</sup> RC 16.4.  
<sup>72</sup> FD 5 F.  
<sup>73</sup> R 159. 16.  
<sup>74</sup> L 49. 11.
- <sup>75</sup> MD 42.2.  
<sup>76</sup> MD 69.2.  
<sup>77</sup> R 24. 9.  
<sup>78</sup> R 117.6.  
<sup>79</sup> MD 64;1.  
<sup>80</sup> L 35.9.  
<sup>81</sup> L 36.10.  
<sup>82</sup> MD 72,1.  
<sup>83</sup> R 63.20.  
<sup>84</sup> FD 6 E.  
<sup>85</sup> L 35.2.  
<sup>86</sup> FD 6 B.  
<sup>87</sup> FD 5 E.  
<sup>88</sup> R 184.9.  
<sup>89</sup> POUTET, Y., "*Le XVIIe siècle et les origines lasalliennes*, 2, p. 745.  
<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 745-747.  
<sup>91</sup> GALLEGO, S., "*Vida y pensamiento de S.J.B. De La Salle*", Vol 1, p. 189.  
<sup>92</sup> Cf. CL 16.  
<sup>93</sup> CL 8, 146.  
<sup>94</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>95</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>96</sup> CL 8, 145.  
<sup>97</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>98</sup> CL 8, 146.  
<sup>99</sup> POUTET, Y., "*Les Livres pédagogiques de Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*". *Revue d'histoire du livre*, 1980, 36-41.  
<sup>100</sup> O.c. 2, 837.  
<sup>101</sup> CL 8, 457.

### Complementary themes:

Community; Decorum and Christian Civility; Director; Exercises; Formation; Modesty; Mortification; Renunciation-Detachment; Silence; World and relations with the world.

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