

71. CONDUCT OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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1. THE SCOPE OF THE THEME

1.1. Meaning of the word "conduct"

Like many French words, *conduite* (conduct) has a number of meanings. According to the context in which it is used, it can mean the behaviour of a person, and then there are moral, social or religious connotations; or it can mean directing or accompanying a

person, a group, a scheme or an institution. These are the two meanings given by 17th and 18th century French dictionaries. They stress, in particular, direction, accompaniment and ordering.

Here are some examples : "To entrust the conduct of one's children to a trustworthy person. To direct a

child during its youth" (P. Richelet's dictionary). "One says : the conduct of a State, of a family, of a young man" (A. Furetière's dictionary). "The act of leading, conducting, guiding a person. It is said also of the way of behaving oneself and of the way each one controls himself" (*Grand Vocabulaire français*). "Ordering, directing, the action of a person who conducts" (Trévoux dictionary).

1.2. Use of the word by De La Salle

The *Lasallian Vocabulary* includes the use of "conduct" as a noun 378 times, as a verb 186 times, and in the expression "to be led" 6 times. To these we should add the verb "to conduct oneself" used 99 times. In all, therefore, the verb or noun is used 669 times, and readers of Lasallian writings should have no difficulty in working out which of the two meanings mentioned above is intended in any particular case.

In the article on *Conduct* in the present work, L. Marsh and A. Houry have summarised the Founder's thinking very clearly on this point. They describe it in terms of a dynamic relationship between God and the pupil through the intermediary of the Superior (or Director) and the Brother (or teacher).

The ministerial nature of the Brothers' Institute explains the relatively frequent use of these terms in its Founder's writings. There is no need to return to this matter.

1.3. The "Conduct of the Christian Schools"

The word takes on an even more precise meaning in the expression "conduct of the Christian Schools", which is the title given to a work published for the first time in 1720, but of which we possess a manuscript copy going back to 1706. *Cahiers Lasalliens* 24 published both texts in parallel form, which makes a comparative reading much easier.

Outside of the title, the complete expression "conduct of the Christian Schools" is found only once and that in the preface of the same work. On the other hand, the expression "conduct of schools" occurs four times, once in the body of the work and three times in another Lasallian work, the *Common Rules*.

In other texts where the expression "conduct of schools" is used, the reference is not to the work, but to the way Directors, inspectors and teachers fulfil their task of running schools and looking after pupils.

1.4. Major characteristics

For the sake of convenience, we shall use the initials CE (*Conduite des écoles*) from now on to refer to this work. Its contents have been analysed already in other articles published in the *Lasallian Themes*.

For example :

- **Persons involved in the Christian Schools** in articles entitled Director, Christian teacher, Apostle, Exercises, Ministry, Employment, Reward of the teacher, Vigilance, Virtues of a Teacher, Zeal, Child-Pupil-Disciple, Artisans, Poor, Disciples, Gratuity, Parents of the pupils.

- **The educational establishment as a whole** in articles entitled God's work, School, Association, Brothers of the Christian Schools, Formation.

- **Material taught** in articles entitled Silence, Instruction, Education, Formation, Decorum and Christian civility.

- **Relationships in school** in articles entitled Companies, Pupil-teacher relations, Heart, Correction, Gentleness, Example-edification.

- **The Christian formation of children** in articles entitled Christian, Devotion, Disciples, Guardian angels, Reflection, Spirit of Christianity, Prayer, Hymns, Catechism, Duties of a Christian.

42 articles in all, to which we could add others dealing primarily with the Brother as a religious, but which refer also to his ministry, as one might expect, since the Founder wanted no distinction to be made between the life of his Brothers and teachers and their work.

Our intention in this article is not to analyse the contents of the work called *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, topic by topic, but to touch on some of its major characteristics, and in this way try to show where and how this work is intended to "lead" pupils.

2. TEXT AND CONTEXT

Just like any other educational work, the CE did not simply appear out of the blue. It was the result of a long process of educational and scholastic evolution, and the expression of the educational needs of a given period. Although it responded to the educational needs of the children of the working class in its own particular way, it was not the first work to do so and, in many instances, it was based on previous work in this field. Before looking at its contents it would be useful to place it in its historical setting.

2.1 Education in the 17th century

In the France of the 17th century the educational world was in a state of effervescence. In brief :

- On the one hand, higher and secondary education had already reached a high level of organisation. The major universities had updated their regulations and these served as a model for new and minor universities.
- On the other hand, ever since the end of the 16th century, secondary education in colleges had had an excellent charter drawn up by the Jesuits, the *Ratio Studiorum*. Many non-Jesuit colleges had adopted it in part, and the teaching they offered satisfied their clientele.
- However, primary or popular education, as found in the "Little Schools" and the "Charity Schools", was not yet properly organised. Each new founder or foundress of a teaching institution or congregation had to produce regulations, formulate educational principles and methods of teaching. And so, between the first edition of St Pierre Fourier's *Règles* in 1617 and the appearance of the CE a century later, a considerable number of publications appeared reflecting the great interest in this field. De La Salle knew these publications and took his inspiration from them.

This has already been studied, either in a general way by historians of primary education in France (see bibliography), or in a way more directly connected with the CE by three authors : Georges RIGAUT in his *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères...* (vol. I, pp. 1-131 and 540-598); Br Yves POUTET in his thesis *Le 17^e siècle et les origines lasalliennes* (vol. I, Part 2) and in *The origins and characteristics of Lasallian Pedagogy* (Manila, 1997); Br Saturnino GALLEGU, more succinctly, in *Vida y pensamiento de San Juan Bautista de La Salle* (vol. I, ch. 5 & 6).

It would be difficult to determine the full extent of what the author of the CE borrowed from his various

predecessors as this may have included both broad outlines and detailed material. The following works deserve special mention, however :

- *Les vraies constitutions des religieuses de la congrégation de Notre Dame*, Part 3 : On the instruction of lay women, by St Pierre Fourier;
- *Remontrances, Avis important, Règlements pour les écoles de la ville et diocèse de Lyon*, by Charles Démiat, written between 1666 and 1688;
- *Statuts et Règlements*, by Nicolas Barré, 1685;
- *L'Instruction méthodique pour l'école paroissiale*, by Jacques de Batencour, published in 1654 and 1685.

2.2. Internal logic of the work

Another way of studying the CE is to examine it as it stands and as it first appeared. This can be done on three different levels.

2.2.1. ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT ITSELF

One can attempt to analyse the contents with the help of present-day pedagogical knowledge and terminology. This has been done, in particular by historians of education in France. This approach makes it possible to indicate the various courses offered to pupils, the organisation of work and of class groups, the kinds of relationships in class and in the school, the means of establishing and maintaining order and discipline, the various checks and especially the assessment of learning, the behaviour expected of teachers and pupils.

The interest of this kind of study should not be minimised, but it is important to indicate its limitations, and to point out the inherent risks, especially that of giving interpretations that are incomplete, or even partly erroneous, because we are dealing here with educational practices belonging to a society which has long since evolved.

Such an approach does not make it possible to appreciate the full value of the work, and especially the spirit that inspires it. Moreover, the physical aspect of the work is such that it is likely to provoke lack of interest and even rejection. The inherent problems and style of the text make it a work of the early 18th century and not of our times.

2.2.2. LIGHT THROWN ON THE CE BY OTHER LASALLIAN WRITINGS

The CE is a work which contains the theoretical basis of an undertaking and a mass of empirical observations and concrete practices, but which does not set out to explain completely and in detail the aims and spirit of the kind of school wanted by De La Salle. We know that his approach was not normally one of deduction from existing theories: his theories arose out of experience. This was true regarding the progressive organisation of the Institute, the drawing up of the *Rules* and the writing of the CE. The contents of the work begin to make more sense if they are analysed in the light of the *Common Rules*, the *Meditations*, the *Rules of propriety and Christian politeness*, and even of the *Duties of a Christian*. Many passages in the *Letters* cast light on the work also because of their concrete references.

It is through these writings, in a scattered and unsystematic way, that De La Salle indicates what the educational aim of his schools is on both the secular and the Christian plane; he explains what behaviour is expected of teachers and pupils and in what kind of spirit the educational process should take place.

2.2.3. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The CE was written at a time when two powerful movements — the acculturation and evangelisation of the ordinary people — were at work in 17th France. These two movements continued to develop during the course of the century, side-by-side with the increasing royal control of the country and within the context of a reform of the Church inspired by the Council of Trent.

After pursuing a wait-and-see-policy for several decades, the Church in France changed its attitude completely towards this Council, and this change was accompanied by an evolution in society, morals, culture and the practice of religion. This evolution was brought about to a considerable extent by schools.

If we consider the Church and society in 17th century France, we can identify a number of educational needs resulting from the following facts:

- The **precarious economic situation** of an enormous proportion of the population, due to certain events and circumstances such as bad weather, epidemics, wars, social differences, etc., as well as to widespread ignorance — 80 % illiteracy rate in 1680 — and a lack of professional qualifications, which condemned the poorer social classes to live from hand to mouth.

At the same time there was clearly economic and professional progress with the expansion of manufacturing, commerce and administration, which brought in its wake an increased need for workers in tertiary employment, in the so-called service industries.

- The **lack of basic education** for the common people was reflected in everyday behaviour by social relations, characterised by roughness, violence and lack of social graces. It was against this background of violence that efforts were made to promote propriety, politeness and decent behaviour. Education too made its contribution by its “civilisation of manners”.

- **Religious ignorance**, whose evil consequences had been severely condemned by the Council of Trent, affected the majority of baptised Christians — a paradox in a Christian society! We are not talking here of the religious feuds which so characterised those times — protestantism, jansenism, quietism, gallicanism — but of innumerable and generalised forms of popular misbelief, often accompanied by superstitions. This is a point stressed by all historians: popular schools as well as colleges and universities saw their task in terms of the christianisation and moral renewal of young people, and through them, of society as a whole.

It is in the light of this widespread and complex situation, translated into terms of scholastic and educational needs, that the contents of the CE are best understood. We need to read this work, therefore, on these three levels simultaneously.

3. VOCATIONAL TRAINING

3.1. The needs of the pupils

The children of artisans or of workers with no fixed employment needed training and a qualification which

would enable them to have a real chance of getting a job to earn their livelihood and move up the social ladder.

We know that the craft confraternities, later called corporations, trained their own apprentices. There was no question, therefore, of the “little schools” and of those of De La Salle offering their pupils specific training in manual or technical skills.

This was not the case regarding “tertiary” employment. Public administration, manufacturing establishments and businesses needed an increasing number of accountants, writers, copiers, clerks — their work generally known as “the writing profession”.

Schools could train pupils for these jobs so long as they could master the necessary skills. In many of the “little schools” this was not possible as they restricted their teaching to reading and catechism. On the other hand, Lasallian schools made it their business, among other things, to teach their pupils these skills.

3.2. The curriculum in the CE

The kind of school established by the Brothers with the guidance of De La Salle had a vocational purpose. This purpose is clearly expressed in various Meditations and especially clearly in chapter VII of the Rules: “They will teach pupils to read: 1. French, 2. Latin, 3. handwritten letters. They will teach them also spelling and arithmetic, doing everything in the way prescribed [...] in the first part of the *Conduct of Schools*” (RC 7,4f).

From a careful reading of the first part of the CE it is possible to draw up a list of the courses offered to the pupils, and see how they were organised and distributed in the daily timetable. Each week, 20 hours were allocated to learning reading, writing and arithmetic. It is a little surprising that the article quoted above from the *Rules* makes no mention of writing, whereas the CE gives a detailed description of the course.

The vocational purpose of the school is mentioned also elsewhere in the *Rules*, in the chapter “On Absences”, in which the Brothers are recommended to be insistent with parents who are hesitant about sending their children to school: “The way to remedy the negligence of parents, especially of poor parents, is first of all to speak to them and explain to them about the obligation they are under to have their children instructed; telling them about the harm they do them by not having them taught reading and writing; showing them how much this can harm them, because they will never be capable of doing any work, not knowing how to read and write” (CL 24,186 = CE 16,2,18).

And there is also the famous passage: “When parents withdraw their children from school at too early an age, when they are still not sufficiently instructed, and make them work, they must be told that they will do them great harm. For the sake of making them earn a mere pittance, they will make them lose a far greater advantage. They must be shown clearly how important it is for an artisan to know how to read and write well for, however little intelligence he may have, if he knows how to read and write, HE IS CAPABLE OF EVERYTHING” (CL 24,187 = CE 16,2,22; my emphasis).

The expression “he is capable of everything” may seem excessively optimistic unless one is aware of the socio-professional situation at the beginning of the 18th century, and of the lack of qualified people to take up the posts that were becoming available.

The detailed description of these courses occupies the first chapters of the CE, which deal in turn with “lessons in general”, reading, “writing”, “arithmetic” and “spelling”.

3.3. Characteristics of the curriculum

What is important at this point is not to dwell on a description of methodology, but to consider the thinking behind the training given. This has much in common with the present-day “instrumental learning” approach, and has the following characteristics :

3.3.1. USEFUL AND PRACTICAL

It is easy to imagine what the daily tasks of these pupils will be once they are employed. Their work will be simple, but precise: reading, writing, calculating in connection with administrative, juridical or accounting documents, most of them handwritten, according to the techniques of the day, and often difficult to read because of the numerous abbreviations.

It was useful, therefore, to go so far as to teach pupils to decipher manuscripts. This was the aim of Lesson 9 “Of handwritten letters” and, in particular, of article x: “Of registers” (CL 40,42 = CE 3,10). This lesson advises teachers to be prudent and stresses the importance of progression in the learning process. The detailed nature of this course is highlighted by the fact, indicated in the 1706 manuscript, that it is divided into “six orders”, whereas only two or three were allocated to learning to read. The expression “six orders” does not only indicate six progressive stages, each stage lasting normally a month, but it highlights

also the exceptionally long time required to become competent in dealing with "Registers". Further information regarding the meaning of the term "register" can be found in the chapter in the CE dealing with spelling (CL 24,73 = CE 6).

3.3.2. VOCATIONAL

By this we mean that the immediate aim of the courses given was utilitarian and not cultural, and was not intended to provide a body of theoretical knowledge. It is clear that a school and teaching of this type had their limitations, but they did provide a rapid way of mastering reading, writing and arithmetic. Such skills would enable pupils to do the work for which they had trained with greater concentration and speed and almost instinctively.

At a time when would-be teachers were judged on their ability to read, write and count (the last two skills were often very weak), it was ambitious on the part of the schools to wish to make all pupils acquire mastery in all three skills.

3.3.3. OF HIGH QUALITY

The CE explains in its early chapters how to strive for and achieve precision and perfection in the mastery of reading, writing and arithmetic. On the basis of examples, the pupils are required to repeat exercises over and over again till their work is perfect. This process ensures that what they learn is properly assimilated and will not be forgotten (CL 24,26 = CE 3,2,12). The CE shows much insight, in particular when it speaks of the means of teaching reading (CL 24,25f = CE 3,2,16f) and correcting handwriting (CL 24,60f = CE 4,10f).

"It should be noted that it is very important not to let a pupil stop learning the alphabet before he knows it perfectly. Otherwise, he will never learn to read properly, and this will cause a lot of trouble for the teachers who will have to teach him subsequently" (CL 24,26,6 = CE 3,2,13).

3.3.4. SOLID AND LASTING

Today, as in the 18th century, we realise that this type of teaching imposes the need for a great deal of repetition if the material is to be learnt thoroughly. This is sometimes referred to as "over-learning". The CE normally uses the word *répétition*.

For example: "When a pupil has difficulty in remembering a letter, he must be made to repeat it over and over again, and he must not move onto another line until he knows this letter as well as all the others perfectly well [...] When a pupil has learnt all the letters of the alphabet, and before he is moved on to the second card, he will spend several days studying the alphabet as a whole. He will be made to read the letters in no particular order so that it can be seen whether he knows all the letters and knows them very perfectly" (CL 24,26,4f = CE 3,2,12f).

There is a great deal of pedagogical wisdom in the following: "It is much better to be first or among the first of a lower grade than to be among the last of a higher one" (CL 24,23,10 = CE 3,1,31).

One of the consequences of wanting material to be known thoroughly is that it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to assess the assiduity of the pupils: "However, before sending pupils away for one reason or another, the inspector will speak a number of times with the parents to explain to them how important it is for their children to attend school assiduously, because, unless they do so, it is almost impossible for them to learn anything, since they forget in one day what it has taken several to learn" (CL 24,190f = CE 16,2,35).

3.3.5. CHECKED AND ASSESSED

In its description of how lessons should develop, the CE suggests various pedagogical means to stimulate or maintain the interest of the pupils during lessons taught according to the simultaneous method. For example, the pupils are questioned frequently to prevent their attention wandering, and there is much repetition. All this is intended to ensure the progress of the pupils. Progress and levels of attainment are checked thoroughly. This is done by means of monthly evaluations which decide whether a pupil changes "order" (course level) or starts the same "order" again (CL 24,21f = CE 3,1). There were in fact two assessments: that of the teacher, who checked the progress of his pupils, and that of the inspector of schools whose responsibility it was to change "lessons".

It was a double safety-check for the pupil himself and the parents. As the CE said, it was important for parents to see that their children were not wasting their time in school, and that the teaching was effective.

tive. In this connection, it is worth reading the following extracts from the CE which explain why children sometimes miss school through the fault of their parents :

“The second reason for pupils missing school lies with their parents. Either they neglect to send them to school, not taking the trouble to make sure they do so, and do so regularly C this attitude is fairly typical among poor people; or the idea of sending them to school leaves them indifferent and cold, since they are convinced that their children learn nothing or very little there; or because they make them work” (CL 24,186 = CE 16,2,17).

“If it happens that parents complain that their children are learning nothing or very little, and say they want to take their children away because of this, the following measures should be taken to avoid this undesirable outcome: 1. No teacher unable to teach writing should be put into a class where pupils learn writing; 2. Steps should be taken not to put or leave in any school teachers who are incapable of fulfilling their duties properly or teaching well the children entrusted to their care” (CL 24,188 = CE 16,2,22).

3.3.6. SUITED TO THE INDIVIDUAL

It should not be forgotten that De La Salle and the Brothers were among those who organised simultaneous teaching at a time when individual teaching and private tutoring were still predominant. They had to be pioneers, in fact. The following outline will give an idea of how they organised things :

- When children are admitted to school, their abilities should be evaluated so that they can be put into the group best suited to their capacity. This process is described at the beginning of the third part of the 1706 manuscript of the CE.

- The school, that is, all the pupils in the school, should be divided up into two or three relatively homogeneous groups regarding age and level. These groups are called “lower”, “intermediate” and “higher” in chapter 9 of part 2 of the 1720 edition of the CE: “Of the structure and uniformity of schools, and of the furniture suitable for them” (CL 24,218-228). This kind of division into groups which seems obvious nowadays, was an innovation in the primary education of the times.

- Each of the groups should be divided up according to “lessons” and “orders” into homogeneous sub-groups for each subject taught.

- Each month, the progress of pupils should be evaluated. This will make it possible to follow up each pupil throughout the year and adapt teaching to his rate of learning and needs.

- The material being taught should be divided up step by step, into units or according to difficulty, as explained in part 1 of the CE. This approach reflects in a concrete way the “division rule” proposed by Descartes in his *Discourse on the Method*.

It can be seen, therefore, that the teaching provided was tailored to the needs of the individual pupil. This approach may seem very elementary to the teachers of today, but it suited the needs of the times, and this made it so successful.

4. THE HUMAN EDUCATION OF THE PUPILS

4.1. The spirit of the time

The humanist movement born of the Renaissance exalted man, his learning and his mastery of the world. At the end of the 17th century, however, it still affected only a minority of people : rich people who lived a life of ease; people who had access to so-called intellectual or humanist culture; people who, because of their social background, had been initiated into the refinement of civilised life and good manners; in other words, as we would say nowadays, privileged people. The situation of the common people, the vast major-

ity of the population, was quite different. This explains why the efforts made in the the 17th and 18th centuries to acculturate this section of the population reflected also the desire to educate socially, to civilise. The verb “civilise” can be understood in two ways. It can indicate either access to civilisation in general, or the adoption of behaviour patterns typical of the 17th century, that is, “propriety and politeness”. See J. Pungier’s article in *Lasallian Themes 1*.

In the days of De La Salle there were two distinct and even opposed cultures : intellectual culture and

popular culture. Without going into details, we can say that they were different in almost everything. However, overall technical, economic and cultural progress heralded profound changes in the lifestyle of the common people. Since the leading proponents of intellectual culture were also those who had wealth, power and initiative, these tended quite naturally to impose it upon the people.

To throw some light on the terms “propriety” and “politeness”, we can look at some definitions. These will enable us at the same time to judge what was at stake, or what was the ambition of the acculturation process. We take our definitions from the *Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle* (supervised by François Bluche, Paris, Fayard, 1990).

BIENSÉANCES (propriety): “Sign of politeness, courtesy. Furetière calls *bienséance* ‘what is proper for something, what gives it grace, what embellishes it’. [...] There are *bienséances* proper to general politeness, others suited to rank. [...] Without *bienséance* there is no true politeness. The Court is the place *par excellence* for *bienséances*”.

POLITESSE (synonymous with *civilité* = politeness): “The importance of politeness is great at a time when, within a numerically restricted group, human relations play a primary role. Although relatively homogeneous, this group has different elements in it: gentlemen [= *honnêtes*], talented people [= *de mérite*], high society, galant, that is, elegant persons. [...] Politeness in fact affects all social situations and at the same time safeguards indisputable hierarchical differences”.

4.2. The needs of the pupils

The elite were understandably aware of the need the children of the working classes had to be educated. De La Salle expresses this as follows at the beginning of the *Common Rules*: “All disorders, especially those of the artisans and the poor, normally arise from the fact that they have been left to their own devices and have been very badly brought up from an early age. It is almost impossible to put this right when they are older, because the bad habits they have picked up are lost only with great difficulty and almost never entirely, however much care one takes to destroy them, either through frequent instruction or the use of the sacraments. And since the principal benefit that should be expected of the institution of the Christian Schools is that these disorders should be forestalled and their

bad effects prevented, it is easy to realise how importance and necessary it is” (RC 1,6).

As we can see, the Rule needs only a few lines to describe the situation, indicate its negative consequences and affirm the deputising role of the school in education.

The preface of the *Rules of propriety and Christian politeness* recalls the great distance that separates the children of the artisans and the poor from the ideal of the gentleman (*l'honnête homme*). This is why the Christian schools as envisaged by De La Salle, like all other schools of the time, attempt to educate children in propriety and politeness: “Christian propriety, therefore, consists in good and orderly behaviour which is reflected in one’s speech and external actions; is inspired by a sentiment of moderation or respect or union and charity regarding one’s neighbour; and which takes into account the time, the place and the persons with whom one is conversing. It is this propriety in dealings with one’s neighbour which is rightly called politeness” (CL 24, Preface = RB 0,0,9).

4.3 The human education of the pupils

It is interesting to read the chapter of the *Common Rules* (1705 ms) entitled: “Of the way in which the Brothers should behave in school”. The behaviour of the teacher described in it is intended to be a concrete example for the pupils to see.

And so we read in articles 13 and 15: “They will watch over themselves very carefully so as to do only what is good and proper in the presence of their pupils, and especially not to allow anything to be seen that suggests levity or anger.[...] They will take care, by their appearance and external behaviour, to give their pupils a constant example of moderation and of all the other virtues they have to teach them and make them practise” (CL 25,37).

The CE reminds the teacher also that his own conduct must be exemplary in front of his pupils if he wishes to foster in them “polite and decent” (*civil et honnête*) behaviour. Let us have a look at three aspects of this education.

4.3.1. SELF-CONTROL

Chapter 1 of the CE gives four pages to this topic, describing the way in which pupils should enter the school when the doors are opened, and how they should behave outside the school. As they wait in the

street, “they should not make any noise by shouting and singing”. As they come and go, “they will not be allowed to disturb their neighbours in any way whatsoever. Care will be taken that they walk so calmly in the street [...] that those who pass them will be edified” (CL 24,2 = CE 1,1,4).

Similar behaviour is required during lessons, moving about in the classroom and leaving school (CL 24,93f = CE 8,6). Calmness and recollection are called for in the church (CL 24,2; 24,5; 24,84f = CE 1,1,7; 1,2,3; 8,1f) as is good posture during writing lessons (“Of the way of learning good bodily posture”, CL 24,54 = CE 4,6).

A particularly sensitive aspect of this education is correction. One can guess what a high degree of self-control one must have in order to accept corporal punishment, understand the good reason for it, and then thank God and the teacher for it. The aim of correction was always the conversion of the pupil. The text, however, suggests that the “beneficiaries” often found it difficult to accept (CL 24,162f and 169f = CE 15,6,18f and 15,7,1f).

4.3.2. INTERIORITY

“All our external actions, which are the only ones which can be regulated by propriety, must always be and be seen to be characterised by virtue. [...] When giving them rules of propriety, they must never forget to teach them that they must always be practised for purely Christian motives and for those that have in view the glory of God and salvation. [...] They will take care to induce them to do so because of the presence of God” (CL 19, Preface = RB 0,0,3; 0,0,5; 0,0,6).

This concern for training in interiority, which is explained so well in the preface to RB, is found also in the CE. It is the basis of article 1 of chapter 1, and is referred to in several of the articles that follow (CL 24,2f = CE 1,1,7f).

It is reflected also in the insistence that pupils be recollected during the recitation of prayers and during

Mass. No one was to disturb this recollection, not even the teacher, who was to restrict himself to setting an example even if he thought he ought to call someone to order. See in connection with this the three chapters dealing with prayers, Holy Mass and catechism (CL 24,75f = CE 7f).

Training in interiority can be seen even more clearly at two particular points of the school day: correction of recalcitrant pupils (CL 24,140f = CE 15) and the daily examination of conscience (CL 24,77f = CE 7,2). The “stubborn pupil” is invited several times to recollect himself and admit his fault. As for the “examination” of conscience included in the evening prayer, it takes up again and continues the “reflections” that accompanied morning prayer.

4.3.3. POLITENESS

De La Salle was aware of the importance of propriety and politeness in everyone’s life, and he wished to include them in the education of young pupils. After publishing the *Rules of propriety and Christian Politeness* — a work that was a great success in bookshops for two centuries — he used it as a text for teaching reading in school. It was used in the 8th reading lesson or level, when pupils “were able to read French and Latin perfectly. [...] This book includes all duties towards God and parents, as well as the rules of civil and Christian propriety” (CL 24,39 = CE 3,9,1-2).

The purpose of this kind of reading was to fill the minds of the pupils with ideas they had already begun to put into practice. This can be seen, for example, in the chapter “Of lunch and the afternoon snack”, in which De La Salle writes: “You have to make them understand [the parents] that if you want them [the pupils] to eat at school it is in order to teach them how to eat properly, in moderation, with good manners and to pray to God before and after having done so” (CL 24,7f = CE 2,1,10).

5. THE SOCIAL TRAINING OF THE PUPILS

In the 17th century, just as nowadays, the purpose of schools was to prepare pupils to take their place in society and to make this process easier. This concern can be seen in the writings of De La Salle. There are

several passages in his *Meditations* which speak of the need that pupils have to take up an active position in society and in the Church, while being fully aware of the obstacles of all kinds that stand in their way.

5.1. A violent social context

Each age, as it comes along, thinks that it is particularly violent. We have only to think of the present century as it comes to an end. Violence, however, whatever its form, is a hallmark of every century.

In the 17th century, there was great violence, both potentially and in practice. Historical studies (some are mentioned in the bibliography) have described its causes, manifestations and consequences. This violence needs to be borne in mind, because, in those days, educational establishments of all levels were thought of as means of eradicating this evil seed from the hearts of students.

In *Lasallian Themes 1*, the article on *Correction* shows how the educational system progressively provided itself with the preventive and repressive means through which the modern concept of school discipline expresses itself.

5.2. The violence of the pupils

One of the problems facing De La Salle and his Brothers was how, in practical terms, to deal with explosions of violence, aggressive behaviour and confrontational attitudes and reactions, so as to develop more fraternal relationships marked by mutual acceptance, respect, mutual help and even positive goodwill.

There is no doubt that violence existed among the Brothers' pupils. An indication of this is the chapter "On corrections", as is also especially the list of "five vices which must never be pardoned, and which must always be punished by the stick or strap" (CL 24,140f = CE 15).

The second vice, called "fighting" (*batteries*) was punishable by the most severe chastisements, which seems to prove that serious fights did in fact break out among the pupils. "All those involved in the fight will be punished in the same way. If two or several pupils were involved in the fight, they will be punished together. If the fight was between a pupil and someone not from the school, the teacher will carefully try to discover whose fault it was, and he will not punish the pupil unless he is certain of his guilt. [...] If pupils have been involved in a fight at school, they will be given an exemplary punishment. The teacher will make them understand that this is one of the worst offences they can commit" (CL 24,158 = CE 15,6,3f).

In the pages that follow, other forms of violence are mentioned, more verbal than physical: they characterise the children as being "naturally impudent and insolent" as well as "stubborn". Such observations give an idea of the uncouthness of these children who had just begun school, and of the difficulty they had in living peacefully together and submitting to the rules of community life (CL 24,161f = CE 15,6,14f).

5.3. Educational measures in the CE

In a certain way, all the second part of the CE, entitled "Of the means of establishing and maintaining order in schools" is an attempt to find means to overcome tension and violence. For the sake of clarity, we can group these means under three headings, according as they are preventive, repressive or constructive.

5.3.1. PREVENTIVE MEASURES :

ESTABLISHING A CALM ATMOSPHERE

The second part of the CE begins with a list of the "nine principal things that can contribute to the establishment and maintenance of order in schools" (CL 24,115f = CE 11). The one we would like to highlight is the first, "the vigilance of the teacher", which consists, among other things, "in enforcing very strict silence in school". If there is good order in class, the atmosphere becomes such that impatience, aggression, conflicts and anything likely to provoke the underlying violence is forestalled. In this connection, we can refer to what was said earlier about the acquisition of self-control and interiority.

There were times when great care had to be taken in case fighting broke out and spread among the children, as for example, when the children were waiting to go into school or were on their way home. In this connection it is worth reading chapters 1 and 11 of part 1 which deal with going into and leaving school.

This explains both the constant presence of the teacher in school (except for the first half-hour of the morning) — "So that the children being under the care of the teachers from morning till night..." (RC 1,3) — and the way in which the work was organised so that at no time the children were idle. The children were permanently occupied. There was no free time or recreation. The proverb "Idleness is the mother of all vice" was taken very seriously indeed.

5.3.2. REPRESSIVE MEASURES TO SET AN EXAMPLE

Here we are referring to the long chapter 5 of part 2 on correction that we have already quoted. Something can go wrong even in the best organised of worlds. That is why there are punishments and penances listed for all kinds of misdemeanours and not only for violence.

In the 17th century, there was both a strong belief in the value of training and formation through good example, and a fear of the contagious nature of evil. Punishments and chastisement were public in the belief that this would have a dissuasive effect on others.

5.3.3. CONSTRUCTIVE MEASURES :

ESTABLISHING PEACEFUL RELATIONS

The ambition was to educate pupils in propriety in the way De La Salle understood the term in the preface to the RB, where he speaks of "propriety which affects one's neighbour", or when he says: "Propriety and politeness really exist only in the practice of moderation and respect regarding one's neighbour" (CL 19, Preface = RB 0,0,15).

The title of part 2 of the work is significant also: "Of the external signs of respect or special affection one should show in the various actions of one's life, to all the persons in whose presence one performs them and with whom one may have dealings" (*id.*).

There is also the following recommendation he makes to fathers, mothers, masters and mistresses: "If they teach them and make them practise propriety that is shown to one's neighbour, they will induce them to give these signs of benevolence, honour and respect only as if they were giving them to members of Jesus Christ and to living temples animated by the Holy Spirit" (CL 19, Preface = RB 0,0,6).

Such words reveal a Christian view of humanity that invites mutual respect inspired by a religious viewpoint. The meditation for the feast of St Louis, King of France, is similarly inspired, and invites us to consider the individual as an integrated whole :

"Your mission requires you to labour for the good of the Church and that of your country. Your pupils are already members of the State, and will soon be endowed with full citizenship. You will work on behalf of the Church by making them true Christians, submissive to the teaching of their faith and to the truths of the Gospel. You will contribute to the good

of your country by teaching them to read and write and all that pertains to your functions. But you must join prayer to your exterior efforts, for failing this, your action will have little effect" (MF 160,3).

Among the means of establishing peaceful relations, the CE spends much time speaking of silence and the use of the "signal" (CL 24,122-132 = CE 11,3 to 12,7). It advocates also more positive means such as :

- spontaneous relationships formed by the pupils outside of school. De La Salle sees them as very important, especially when he speaks of the influence of good and bad company. However, teachers have very little influence on this sort of relationship.

- officially established relationships in the classroom which have a practical purpose and leave little room for spontaneity. These depend on the initiative of the teacher and are his responsibility.

- the responsibilities given to the pupils described in the chapter entitled "Class Officers" (CL 24,204f = CE 18). The 1706 manuscript speaks of 15 different responsibilities entrusted to the pupils (if we include the "inspector" of the "supervisors" mentioned in the same paragraph). The 1720 edition mentions only 10. De La Salle adopts a practice that is already widespread in Jesuit colleges and which was advocated by Batencour and D emia.

It would appear that the purpose of these responsibilities was practical : "There will be several officers (= monitors) in the school who will fulfil a number of different functions which the teachers should not and cannot fulfil themselves. [...] All the officers will be appointed by the teacher in each class on the first day of school after the holidays" (CL 24,204 = CE 18,1-2).

It is difficult to say how many pupils in all did these little jobs, because this varied according to the age and size of the class. What was involved, however, was a small area of responsibility and a precise task which helped the good running of the school as a whole. By fulfilling these tasks, the children were able to acquire a kind of professional conscience, concern for others, a sense of service and responsibility. All these were qualities useful in adult life and especially in the "writing profession" which the best of the pupils would enter. It might be interesting to study to what extent the qualities required for the various re-

sponsibilities, which are indicated by the CE, were a good basis for the exercise of these professions and others.

Other kinds of relationships were formed among the children in school. For example :

- The help given to fellow pupils with difficulties during class reading, arithmetic or catechism exercises. Although hardly significant, these forms of help were of a positive nature (see CL 24,25; 24,71; 24,99f = CE 3,2,10; 5,0,13; 9,2).

- The solidarity shown when pupils were asked to start an order all over again in order to help their weaker companions : "The day before the lesson is changed, the teacher will take care to know which pupils, in agreement with the Brother Director or Inspector, cannot be changed, either for their own good, because they are too young, or for the good of the class and of the lesson, in order to ensure that some pupils remain behind to help the others. They will take means to make sure that the pupils are happy to remain in the lesson or order in which they are" (CL 24,23 = CE 3,1,30).

We should not minimise the importance attached to the relations between the pupils and their home environment. This comes out clearly in the passages

of the CE, which show interest in the parents of pupils and in the membership of their family in a craft guild with its particular needs : work, markets, feasts, pilgrimages... See the article by S. Scaglione and E. Costa in *Lasallian Themes 2 on Parents of the pupils*.

Then there is the relationship of the pupil with his parish, in particular, by his attendance at Mass and reception of the sacraments of penance and Eucharist. See "Attendance at parish Mass and vespers" (CL 24,95f = CE 8,7).

The response of the school to violence consisted, therefore, in maintaining an atmosphere of Christian faith and in teaching the children :

- to mix peacefully with the other pupils and show mutual respect;
- to help one another in their school work;
- to be concerned for others, the responsibility in particular of the "visitors of absent children";
- to work voluntarily for the smooth running of the group, by taking on responsibilities and other forms of mutual help;
- without, however, cutting themselves off from their natural groups, such as their family, their parish and their craft guild.

6. FORMING TRUE CHRISTIANS

Although, for the sake of convenience, we speak of the *Conduct*, or, at most, of the *Conduct of Schools*, we should not forget that the complete title of the work is *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, the last part of the title representing the most important aspect of the work in the eyes of its initial author, St John Baptist de La Salle. If we are to understand this work completely we must take this last aspect into account.

6.1. In a context of religious ignorance

France liked to consider itself a Christian country, but the reality was not always edifying. No doubt daily, weekly, monthly and yearly life was closely linked with the liturgical calendar and was marked by Christian practices. It was also tightly controlled by the Catholic Church through the powers it held and the responsibilities exercised by its hierarchy.

We should remember that the Church was the first of the three social orders, and that the Church, for historical reasons going back to the destruction of the Roman Empire in the West, had numerous and important responsibilities including that of educating. The hold it had on the population at all levels of the social scale was, therefore, very great. In spite of this, the vast majority of the lower classes were ignorant of Christian doctrine and morals.

As early as the end of the Middle Ages, voices were raised denouncing the depth of religious ignorance even among the clergy. The Council of Trent, which ended in 1563, insisted on the need to train priests. This led to the creation of seminaries. In France, it was only in the first half of the 17th century that the first seminaries appeared, and only in the second half that they became widespread. The creation

within the royal circle of the “Council of Conscience” at the instigation of St Vincent de Paul, had a beneficial influence on the choice of candidates for episcopal sees. At the same time, the appearance of numerous treatises on religious subjects, the expansion of ecclesiastical libraries, regular pastoral visitations, the meetings of deanery chapters and spiritual retreats, all served to improve the cultural, spiritual and pastoral standards of priests.

By training its clergy the Church sought to christianise its faithful. Beneath a thin layer of Christian language and worship there lay deeply rooted superstition. It was not disbelief in the strict sense of the term, but rather misbelief, a mixture of Gospel truths and pagan traditions. Despite the pastoral efforts of the Church, the 17th century always remained characterised by the practice of sorcery and magic. Where there was some knowledge of the Christian religion, it was never sufficiently understood or assimilated to modify behaviour or ways of thinking. We can understand the extent of this ignorance and its consequences, when we realise that the clergy of the day considered it as an intrinsic cause of damnation.

The basic task of the Church was, therefore, to christianise or evangelise people properly. Among the various means used to achieve this aim there was the widespread distribution of popular tracts couched in edifying and moralistic language, holy pictures, preaching, parish missions, the teaching of catechism, etc. The overall pastoral thrust of the Catholic Reform movement was fortunately supported by the various companies and societies of priests, the clergy as a whole, the new religious families of men and women, the hospitals and the educational establishments of all levels.

As far as we are concerned, let us concentrate on this last aspect: the school which was wanted and organised by the Church, at a parish or diocesan level, as a place where children, and through them their families, could be catechised and be given moral principles. Even when the courses were limited in scope and attended only for short periods, schools offered two subjects in their curriculum: reading and catechism; and the first was an essential introductory step to the second. We should not, therefore, be astonished at the importance attached in Lasallian schools to the religious instruction and Christian formation of pupils.

6.2. The aims of De La Salle

There are a number of meditations, such as the one for the feast of Pope St Gregory, in which De La Salle summarises the responsibilities of the Christian School regarding the religious formation of children: “It is true that your mission does not require you to preach the Gospel to infidels, but you are expected to teach children the truths of religion and to impregnate them with the spirit of Christianity, which is no less important than to labour for the conversion of pagans” (MF 109,3).

It is important to note that there is a twofold task: instruct and impregnate with the spirit. These two aspects are mentioned in other texts, such as the meditation for the feast of St Remi: “Your mission does not consist in making your pupils Christians” — it is understood they are already baptised — “but rather in making them true Christians. This is all the more necessary as it would avail them but little to have received baptism if they did not live according to the Christian spirit” (MF 171,3).

In this connection, we could read all the MR which speak at length of the ministerial process of announcing salvation in Jesus Christ. There is also chapter 1 of the *Common Rules*, entitled “Of the end and necessity for this Institute”, and in particular article 3: “The end of this Institute is to give a Christian education to children, and it is for this purpose that it runs schools so that children, being in the care of the teachers from morning till night, these latter can teach them to live well by instructing them in the mysteries of our religion, and by inspiring them with Christian maxims and thus give them an education suited to their needs”.

It is interesting to note how De La Salle sees Christianity as knowledge and action. This explains what he writes in his Preface to the *Duties of a Christian towards God*: “We owe God four things of which we acquit ourselves in the Christian religion. We must know him, adore him, love him and obey him. We know God through faith, we adore him through prayer and sacrifice, we obey him by observing his holy commandments and those of the Church, and by avoiding the sins he forbids us. We cannot love him unless we have his grace which makes us pleasing to him, and this grace is given to us only by prayer and the sacraments” (CL 20,ii,j = DA 0,0,4).

And so, it is not enough to be a nominal Christian: we must become true Christians. In his article in *Lasallian Themes 1* entitled *Christian*, C. Bueno highlights the progression from the first position to the second. De La Salle comes back frequently to this idea of “true Christian” and of “true disciple of Jesus Christ”. He does not minimise the importance of knowing and memorising Catholic doctrine, but this is not enough for him: he wants it to be accompanied by personal conviction and the everyday behaviour that flows from it.

We see this in an extract from MR: “To be saved it is not enough to be instructed in the Christian truths that are purely doctrinal. As we have said already, faith without works is dead; it is like a body without a soul. [...] It is not enough to provide children with the spirit of Christianity and teach them the mysteries and doctrines of our religion. We must teach them also the practical maxims that are found throughout the holy Gospel” (MR 197,2).

6.3. What the CE proposes

A preliminary observation: of the 40 hours the children spend in school each week, half are devoted to activities of a religious nature. To these should be added scholastic activities: we will stress their para-religious nature at a later point. It is more the atmosphere than school activities that creates an environment conducive to the Christian formation of the pupils. We summarise the detailed description given in the CE.

6.3.1. A RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

The classroom is a place that is meant to encourage piety. Its decoration is austere and consists almost exclusively of pious objects: “In each classroom there will also be a paper crucifix, a picture of the most Blessed Virgin, of St Joseph and of the holy Guardian Angel, as well as the five rules indicated in article 5 of chapter 2 of this 2nd part” (CL 24,227).

In the article “Rules whose infraction will be punished”, the CE gives five reasons for correction and specifies: “These five things will be indicated in the rules which will be displayed for this purpose in different parts of each classroom. Each of these rules will be phrased as follows: 1. You must not absent

yourself from school nor come late without permission. 2. You must apply yourself in school to study your lesson. 3. You must always write without wasting time. 4. You must follow catechism attentively. 5. You must pray to God with piety in the Church and in school” (CL 24,130f = CE 12,6).

In this way, pupils always had a reminder of their duties before their eyes in class, and a stimulus to behave in a particular way.

6.3.2. RELIGIOUS TEACHING

De La Salle is quite clear about his aims, as the following extracts show:

“They [the Brothers] will make it their first care to teach their pupils the morning and evening prayers, the responses for Holy Mass, the catechism, the duties of a Christian, the maxims and practices that Our Lord Jesus Christ has left us in the Holy Gospel” (RC 7,5).

“They will not accept or keep any pupil in school who does not attend catechism on Sundays and feasts as well as on other days when there is school” (RC 7,8).

“You have been chosen by God to succeed the Apostles in the work of teaching the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and in imprinting his holy law on the mind and heart of children. This you should do by teaching catechism, which is your chief function” (MF 145,3).

“How fortunate you are in having been called to teach children their religion and to instruct them daily in the catechism” (MF 150,3).

The CE takes up these guidelines and describes how the daily catechism should be organised, including the slight changes occurring on the vigils of holidays, Sundays and feast days. The whole of chapter 9 of the first part is devoted to this. Four and a half hours each week are spent teaching pupils the doctrine of the Church, the mysteries of faith, the liturgical feasts and their meaning.

This teaching is not exclusively theoretical: “During every catechism lesson he [the teacher] will not fail to propose some practices to his pupils, and to instruct them as thoroughly as he can regarding morals and the way one should behave in order to live as a true Christian” (CL 24,102 = CE 9,3,4).

In order to maintain and improve his skill as a catechism teacher, his "chief function" (MF 145,3), the Brother must continue to study and try to improve himself all the time. This exhortation is a recurring theme in De La Salle's Meditations.

We can say, therefore, that the Lasallian school made an important and original contribution to the French catechetical movement of the 17th century. Without going into detail, we can recall that the Founder himself wrote five catechisms under the overall title *Duties of a Christian towards God*.

6.3.3. TIMES FOR PRAYER AND LITURGY

The CE speaks of religious exercises that had to be performed during school time in addition to catechism. These included "the daily prayers which are said in school" (CL 24,75f = CE 7,1f), and others "that are not daily" (CL 24,78f = CE 7,3). A number of pupils, one per class in turn, recite the rosary "in a place set aside in the school for this purpose". On certain days of the year, there is a visit to the Blessed Sacrament exposed in church. Morning and evening prayers are recited together by everybody. When the bell rings on the hour every hour during the day, the pupils listen as a pupil reads out a pious thought.

There was also daily Mass in the nearest church, if possible at the end of the morning. Chapter 8 describes in detail the behaviour prescribed for the pupils during Mass as well as during their procession to the church and back. Everything is done in an orderly fashion, in silence and with dignity, to the great edification of the neighbourhood and faithful.

Several of the responsibilities entrusted to the pupils have to do directly with religious practices:

- the reciter of prayers,
- the pupil responsible during Mass rehearsals to speak the priest's part and who is called the "minister of the Holy Mass",
- the rosary carrier and his assistants,
- the aspergillum carrier (CL 24,206 and 242 = CE 18,2 and 18,5).

Elsewhere, there are instructions "Regarding attendance at the parish Mass and vespers". It is important to accustom the children to take part in parish liturgies and not to make them rely on the school: "They will even inspire them with great esteem and

special affection for the offices of the Church, and especially for those which take place in their parish" (CL 24,95 = CE 8,7,2).

6.3.4. CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOUR

From the moment pupils arrive at school in the morning till the moment they leave at night they perform a multiplicity of religious signs and gestures.

When they enter: "Their hat should be off and, taking holy water, they should make the sign of the holy Cross[...] When they are in the middle [of the classroom], they will bow low to the crucifix [...] then they will kneel down to adore God and say a short prayer to the Most Blessed Virgin. When they have done this, they will get up and once again bow in the same way to the crucifix" (CL 24,2f = CE 1,1,9). As the teacher is absent when this takes place, the children must be familiar with this ritual and be willing to perform it.

Similar behaviour is prescribed for pupils when they are corrected: "When a teacher has been obliged to discipline a pupil by punishing him, he will return to his place and the pupil will kneel down quietly before him with his arms folded, and thank him for correcting him. He will then turn towards the crucifix to thank God and to promise him that he will not commit again the fault for which he has just been punished. He will not say all this out loud. The teacher will then tell the pupil to return to his place" (CL 24,172 = CE 15,7,17)."

During prayers and catechism, pupils are expected to have a serious, calm and pious attitude. "The teacher will make sure they do not fidget, do not change posture, that they do not lean on either the bench in front nor on the bench behind, and that they do not touch them, and that they do not sit on their heels, that they do not turn their head to look around them, and especially that they do not touch one another. They will do none of these things if the teacher makes sure they always have their arms folded" (CL 24,81; Cf. CE 7,4,3).

This topic takes up all article 4 of chapter 7: "Of the posture the teacher and the pupils must have during prayers, the manner in which to say them, and the order which should be maintained during them". It is enough to set an almost monastic ideal for a school! (CL 24,81f = CE 7,4).

6.3.5. MOTIVES BASED ON FAITH

It is interesting to note the motivation behind this behaviour. The text bases itself explicitly on the Christian faith which alone enables the child to accept the teaching he is given and interiorise the behaviour he has been taught: "They will be induced to enter their classroom with profound respect because of God's presence there" (CL 24,2 = CE 1,1,9). "During the day, on the hour, a few short prayers will be said, which will enable the teacher to take stock of himself and renew his attention to the presence of God, and accustom the pupils to think of God from time to time during the day" (CL 24,76 = CE 7,1,4).

In this connection, the teacher's brief comments on the "reflections" included in the morning prayer, and the examination of conscience during evening prayer, are especially effective moments for forming a personal moral conscience in an atmosphere of faith (CL 24,77f = CE 7,2).

6.3.6. SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

WITH A PREDOMINANTLY RELIGIOUS SLANT

It is sufficient to glance through chapters 3 to 6 of the first part of the CE, which deal with secular studies, to realise that reading, writing and arithmetic provide an opportunity to saturate even further the pupils with religious sentiments.

For example, regarding reading:

- the second book contains "Christian instructions"
- reading Latin is learned with the help of a book of psalms
- lesson 7 also is taken from the Latin book of psalms
- lesson 8 uses *Christian politeness*, a work which describes "all the duties towards God and parents, and the rules of civil and Christian propriety" (CL 24,33f = CE 3,9,2).

In teaching writing, the examples used will be "sentences from Holy scripture, or Christian maxims taken either from the Holy Fathers or books of piety".

The author justifies his choice as follows: "One should try to take them from Holy Scripture because, being the Word of God, they will necessarily make a greater impression and touch hearts more deeply" (CL 24,46f = CE 4,2,2f).

When teaching spelling, the teacher will make the pupils "write what they have remembered from their catechism" (CL 24,73 = CE 6,0,3). The 1720 edition adds: "The spelling lesson will be done also as follows: the teacher will say, for example, 'Almighty and Merciful God'. All will write...".

It is impossible to say today whether these methods of Christian formation produced the desired results. When the pupil left school, he was supposed to continue his life of faith by himself, inspired by the ideal of "the true Christian". As De La Salle never tired of saying to his Brothers: "If, like St Barnabas, you are full of faith and the spirit of God, as you should be in your employment, you will make true Christians of those whom you instruct. They will have not only the name but also the spirit. It will be seen in their conduct, and they will be admired for their piety" (MF 134,3).

The next passage, taken from the meditation for the feast of St Ignatius, martyr, is even stronger: "If you are a true lover of Christ you will take every possible means to instil his holy love in the hearts of your children whom you train to be his disciples, and your aim will be that they think often of Jesus, their good and only Master; that they speak frequently of Jesus, that they aspire only after Jesus, and that they live for him alone" (MF 102,2).

What is described here is the Christian who lives a life of faith and bases his behaviour on it. We can see the close link between this quotation and what the *Common Rules* of the Brothers say about the spirit of faith "which should induce [...] not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith, not to do anything but in view of God, and to attribute all to God" (RC 2,2).

7. THE TEACHERS, THE SECRET BEHIND THE SUCCESS

7.1. The teacher's profile

The CE is supposed to be an effective tool, but its author knows that a school can be successful only if the text is applied by competent teachers. The success of Lasallian schools from the very outset cannot be

understood except in the light of the quality of the teachers that ran them and of the quality of their formation. This is not the place to go deeply into De La Salle's concept of the teacher. We will simply mention a few of the major characteristics referred to in the work.

The 1720 edition of the CE ends with a list of the “twelve virtues of a good teacher”, without commenting on them: “seriousness, silence, humility, prudence, wisdom, patience, reserve, gentleness, zeal, vigilance, piety, generosity” (CL 24,118).

Some 60 or so years later, Brother Agathon, Superior General from 1777 to 1798, developed the topic of the 12 qualities in a small book (see below the article on the *Virtues of a teacher* by S. Scaglione & L. Lauraire). The interest of this for us is the way in which teachers are invited to reveal these qualities in their behaviour towards the pupils. This will help us build up the profile of the Lasallian teacher.

From the opening lines, three main characteristics are indicated:

- Interiority which gives rise to seriousness, silence, humility and piety.
- The self-control needed by a teacher in order to act with discernment, maintain personal equilibrium and be a model for his pupils by his prudence, wisdom, patience, reserve and gentleness.
- The commitment of the teacher to his work as an educator and to the exercise of his responsibilities, and his dynamism and professional conscience, shown by his zeal, vigilance and generosity.

The teachers of today will probably not recognise themselves in this picture, because working conditions in school and educational ideals have greatly changed. It should be noted, however, that the *Twelve Virtues*, as presented by Brother Agathon, was a resounding success, and throughout the course of the 19th century it was recommended reading not only for teachers from religious congregations, but for all the teachers of the State schools in France.

7.2. Well-trained teachers

A text that we can usefully study in conjunction with the CE is one that appeared some time after the CE and which is entitled: “The training of new teachers or the third part of the Conduct of schools. Rule of the trainer of new teachers”. This text can be found as an appendix to Frère Anselme’s 1951 edition of the CE, p. 305f.

This document was produced in a Lasallian setting in the 18th century, and indicates the main areas stressed in training teachers, that is, the defects that have to be corrected — 15 in all! — and the qualities — 10 — that have to be acquired.

This text deals with the training of teachers only from a behavioural point of view. To discover De La Salle’s views on the means to be used to impart a spiritual formation which nourished the Christian faith of the teachers and motivated their commitment, we have to turn to his *Meditations*, the *Rules*, the *Collection*, etc. In these texts, the Founder reminds his disciples of their responsibilities towards their pupils, the social importance of their work, its spiritual aims and, as a consequence, of the obligation they are under to become trained in order to be able to exercise their ministry of Christian education with competence. What he says there is not addressed only to young teachers, but to everybody. This is quite understandable, because, according to his educational thinking, however important behaviour may be in order to acquire practical skills, it can never constitute the whole of an educational relationship whose purpose is spiritual.

7.3. Teachers committed to an educational approach

There is no point in looking in the CE for some sort of exhortation directed at teachers. Rather it is the sum total of what is demanded of teachers in the course of the work which reveals how complete their commitment must be. De La Salle uses the expression: “Community exercises and work in school require the whole person” (MH 10).

By his overall behaviour, a teacher must be seen as an example to follow and a model to imitate. It is quite clear that the three attitudes referred to earlier — interiority, self-control and commitment — should be also those of the pupils, as we saw earlier when speaking of the human and Christian education of children.

What initially was possibly only a profession for the teachers must become also a commitment to and for an educational approach. Otherwise, according to De La Salle, teachers are not worthy of the work they do. Certain passages in the CE are very hard in this respect: for example, the pages dealing with the reasons for the absences of pupils, or those regarding the right to correct. Teachers must always be prepared to accept the consequences of their actions.

This total commitment to an educational approach can be seen also in the reminder that the teacher must be with his pupils “from morning till night” (RC 1,3),

and the invitation to the Brother that, in addition to his 40 hours a week in school, he should set aside a large portion of his "private" time for exercises of a scholastic nature: writing, reading, preparation of catechism...

7.4. Teachers working together

The production of the CE was, as we have seen, a corporate effort. Its text is the result of shared research. This approach is a good illustration of Brothers doing work "by association". The teachers of the Little Schools or Charity Schools had to work in isolation. Often it was the case of 1 teacher = 1 school. De La Salle, on the contrary, always wanted his teachers to live and work as a team. The first thing he did in Rheims in 1680 was to gather the teachers together, to make them live together, propose a style of life to them, and make them all use the same method when teaching. When it came to making a commitment by vow in 1694, the Brothers vowed to run schools "together and by association" (CL 2,42 = EP 2,0,3). There are other episodes in the biography of the Founder which corroborate this fact: for example, his concern to send a companion to Gabriel Drolin, who was alone in Rome, and above all the refusal to send one Brother by himself to country schools.

Team work in the school is organised according to a plan that shares out tasks and responsibilities. The Brother Director or inspector coordinates the work and ensures that the school as a whole runs smoothly. In

this connection, it is worth reading the third part of the CE in the 1706 version: the various details it includes give quite a good portrait of the inspector.

His role involves him in the following tasks: the admission of pupils and their allocation to the appropriate level; during the course of the year, changes from one "order" or "lesson" to another, the appointment of "officers" (monitors), authorisation of rewards or punishments, the choice of topics for catechism, the checking of secondary questions planned by catechism teachers, permission to be absent, the re-admission of pupils after non-authorised absences, the checking and keeping of registers, especially those listing the "good and bad qualities of pupils".

By comparison, relations between teachers seem limited. There is some mention of this, but this is found in the chapter of the *Rules* on community life. The organisation of the school requires, all the same, certain forms of mutual help, in particular when children enter and leave school, when they walk to church and, when the need arises, to supervise two classes at the same time, thanks to a system of communicating doors and glass partitions.

All these aspects of organisation are meant to ensure that a school runs smoothly and offers an effective service to the children of working class parents. Such a school offers a human and Christian education to the poor, which not only does not isolate the underprivileged, but actually helps them to find a place in society.

8. CONCLUSION: A MODEL THAT BORE FRUIT

Are there any conclusions we can draw? The work is so rich that it is not easy to do so. Each new reading reveals new ideas. Rather than attempt an overall assessment, we shall try to give some idea of the impact the work had from the early years of the 18th century onward.

8.1. Initial success

The first biographers of De La Salle and the historians of the origins of the Institute all mention the success of the Brothers' schools from their foundation. Pupils came flocking in, requests to found new schools came from all corners of France as far apart as Calais and Marseille. The good behaviour of the

pupils even outside school was noticed, for example, by the bishop of Chartres (CL 7,374). To what can this success be attributed? Among the possible reasons we offer four which are difficult to deny:

1. The good initial formation and professional quality of the Brothers, the fact they constituted a stable group, devoted to their work and, what is more, inspired by an understanding of gratuity rare in their century.
2. The coherence already stressed between the various parts of the work. This coherence was not a theoretical one, devised in some isolated private study, but arrived at after a period of gradual experimentation involving all the concrete components of an educational establishment. Conversely, the patent success

achieved bears witness to the coherence of the text and to the correct approach used in drawing it up.

3. The pertinence of the model proposed given specific educational needs. The Lasallian school was seen as a good response to the needs of the day for instruction and education in France.

4. An approach which catered for the integral and integrated education of young pupils. Using modern terminology, we would say that the CE offered pupils a number of skills/types of knowledge: life skills, social skills, personal equilibrium, religious faith. The most interesting thing about this is, perhaps, the fact that the various components making up this formation of the person are not separated, as school subjects very often are nowadays, but that they intermingle in all school activities. In this sense we can speak of integral and intergrated formation: the intellectual, professional and spiritual dimensions of the person are addressed simultaneously.

The educationist and educational historian Jean Vial writes as follows: "In 1720, one year after the death of the founder, *The Conduct of Schools* was published. It was still being reprinted in 1940. It is a very complete manual of pedagogy, defining with meticulous relevance the programmes and methods of the Little Schools, but also the attitudes of humble and gentle teachers who were also stubborn and conquering. Like John Baptist de La Salle himself" (*Les Instituteurs*, Paris, Delarge, 1980, p. 28).

8.2. The model is taken up by others

While not wishing to give a history of the text, we can recall that the CE, reference work that it was, continued to inspire the Brothers throughout the 18th century without, however, hindering necessary changes. Educational needs changed with society. In the course of the century, schools introduced new subjects into their curriculum: geometry, hydrography, navigation, commerce, accounting, etc., and pupils tended to stay longer in school.

There was a new edition of the CE in 1742. When the Revolution broke out, an extensively revised version was being worked on and was nearly ready for the printers, but the suppression of teaching congregations in 1792 halted the process. The following century saw the spread of elementary education through-

out the country, and De La Salle was often and variously referred to.

In a recent article, S. Scaglione tried to draw up a list of all the various editions of the CE between 1720 and 1965. His list included 26 editions (*Revista lasalliana*, 1991, N° 3). Most were published in the 19th century and were "enriched" or "revised" to fit in with the century. This success in the bookshops can be explained in part at least, by the powerful impression left on the collective memory by the schools of the Brothers in the 18th century.

8.3. An inspiration for today?

It is noticeable that the appearance of revised versions ends with the beginning of the 20th century, a time that coincides with the internationalisation of the Lasallian congregation. When laws were passed in 1904 onwards forbidding French Brothers to teach in their own country, many went abroad.

It is easy to explain how the process of adaptation came to an end. If for two centuries the CE had been able to adapt to the various changes of the French school system, it was no longer possible to offer a normative text which was suitable for the numerous different countries in which the Institute was now establishing itself.

If we thought of producing a new *Conduct of Schools* for the world as a whole at the present time, we could never go back to the literality of the original text. There has been much progress in psycho-pedagogy, didactics and other educational sciences which enable us to see school life in a different light and, if possible, in a better one. Another factor is the mass of national and regional pedagogical cultures and traditions, some of which are not connected in any way with the French origins of Lasallian thinking.

All the same, the CE can help those who wish to analyse in a given situation the aims and objectives on the basis of which an educational institution is founded, the motives that inspire teachers, the school learning process, the research and application process which makes progress and adaptation possible.

This text could also suggest an anthropology stemming from a unified vision of the individual and involving team work by teachers with a view to creating an overall educational model which values the spiritual and Christian formation of young people.

Complementary themes

Artisans	Employment	Parents of the pupils
Association	Example	Poor
Brothers	Exercises	Prayer
Catechism	Formation	Pupil-teacher relation
Christian	Gentleness	Reflection
Christian teacher	God's work	Reward of the teacher
Correction	Gratuity	School
Decorum	Guardian angels	Silence
Director	Heart	Spirit of Christianity
Disciples	Hymns	Vigilance
Duties of a Christian	Instruction	Virtues of a teacher
Education	Ministry	Zeal

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