

92. REWARD OF THE TEACHER

Summary

1. The scope of the article

1.1. Meaning of "reward" 1.2. Historical background 1.3. Use of the term in De La Salle's writings.

2. Theological and moral context

2.1. In the hope of an eternal reward 2.2. "Gratuitously and solely for the glory of God".

3. The reward of the teacher in the present life

3.1. God takes care of those he sends 3.2. The rewarding nature of teaching 3.3. The consolation of seeing the Kingdom of God proclaimed.

4. The reward of the teacher in the future life

4.1. A hope and a requirement 4.2. God, the reward of the just 4.3. The glory of the Christian teacher
4.3.1. Ineffable union with God 4.3.2. In glory with one's pupils 4.3.3. The final apotheosis.

5. Trials, a sign of the Kingdom

5.1. The Gospel paradox 5.2. The trials of the Christian teacher 5.3. Even unto death.

6. Conclusion: The teacher compared with the saints and identified with Christ.

1. THE SCOPE OF THE ARTICLE

1.1. Meaning of "reward"

Dictionaries published in the period in which the Founder lived agree by and large on the meaning of *récompense* (reward). The term comes originally from Latin (*cum pensare*, meaning "return" or "repetition"). The Trévoux dictionary (1721) gives the following definition: "Prize, salary, gift given to a person; benefit obtained from someone for services rendered or for some good action".

Generally speaking, the word indicates a sign of approval for a good action, but can mean also punish-

ment for a bad one. It means to pay for, to remunerate a service; to recompense a benefit received, a service, a virtue, merit. It is used also with the meaning of gift, bequest, prize, gratuity, pay, awarded for reasons of justice, generosity or public recognition. Rewards should match the value of the services rendered.

In Claude Augé's *Nouveau Larousse Illustré* (around 1920), *récompense* is given three meanings: 1. What a person receives as a recompense for success, a service, an action. 2. A happy consequence, compensation. "A good conscience is the reward of virtue". 3. Punishment for a bad action, by antiphrasis.

1.2. Historical background

Reward in the sense of remuneration is integral to the work of teachers. The salary of teachers in the 17th century was modest by our standards, given the multiplicity of their functions, often under the authority of a parish priest. Their salary came from three sources: the parish council, the parish priest (in particular for their work as sacristans), and fees from the parents of pupils who could afford them. Their remuneration increased in the 18th century, but remained modest all the same.¹

Some teachers were priests. Normally, education was not free. In each diocese there were so-called "little schools" which were the responsibility of the precentor, appointed by the bishop, who had the ultimate authority. Town councils, parishes, various communities, sometimes the cathedral chapter or an abbey, gave support to the little schools. There were also charity schools, opened by parish priests for the poor children of their parishes, which were completely free,² as also those founded by hospitals.

Opening a poor school was something of a gamble for most parish priests because, even if they were supported by private donors, they still had to pay the teachers. All the same, teaching was seen by many as one of the most praiseworthy ways of helping the poor and their children. In 1662, the bishop of Châlons (south of Rheims) wrote to his parish priests: "Withdraw each year a certain sum from parish funds to help pay for a teacher in places where there is none because of the poverty of the people there. If you yourselves can contribute something towards the maintenance of such a teacher, give priority to him rather than to other needs which are less necessary and urgent. In a word, do not fail to do all that your zeal is capable of to provide a teacher for your parishes".³

We see the same attitudes at work when De La Salle opened schools. He did so normally at the request of a bishop, a parish priest, a hospital or a *bu-reau* (group of donors).

In De La Salle's schools, the remuneration pro-

vided for the maintenance of the Brothers was stipulated in a written contract. We know, at least in substance, the terms of the contracts drawn up when schools were founded in Chartres, Calais, Mende, Alès, Rouen, etc. In spite of these, there were still disputes and occasionally contracts were broken. In this connection, S. Gallego writes as follows: "It is better to have peace than money. [...] Money will come from the Brothers' work. And if they are paid badly, others will try to make up what is wanting".⁴

On one point, however, the Founder remained intransigent: the gratuity. Schools directed by the Brothers took in the poor and the better-off without distinction and, as a consequence, without charging fees.

1.3. Use of the term in De La Salle's writings

In the *Lasallian Vocabulary*, the noun *récompense* (reward) occurs 83 times, and the verb *récompenser* (to reward) or *être récompensé* (to be rewarded), 27 times. It should be noted that, the 21 times that this word is used in the *Conduct of Schools*, it refers to the rewards given to pupils in school.

De La Salle speaks of reward as a motive for teachers in the exercise of their ministry. This motive will vary in character and depth from teacher to teacher. All rewards can be considered under the following headings:

- (a) who rewards? (God, Mary); (b) who is rewarded? (the Christian, the teacher, the saints); (c) what is rewarded? (zeal, persecution, the free gift); (d) what kind of reward is it? (earthly, heavenly, professional, spiritual, affective); (e) When will it be received? (in this life or in the next).

De La Salle's view is founded on his personal disinterestedness regarding the remuneration of his teachers for the work they do. The Christian Schools had to have guaranteed financial support from a parish or some other institution, so as to ensure the gratuity of the schools. It is in this context that the Founder invites his teachers to sublimate their commitment to the children they instruct and catechise.

2. THEOLOGICAL AND MORAL CONTEXT

De La Salle bases the reward of the teacher on the infinite goodness of God and on absolute trust in the one who, by his providence, showers his gifts on the messengers to whom he entrusts the mission of re-

vealing him to his dearest sons, the poor.

At the same time, we need to bear in mind the great realism of the Founder of the Brothers in this connection. He knew from personal experience the

difficulties and persecutions that the ecclesial mission entrusted to the teachers could entail, and yet he was still able to provide his teachers with motives to inspire them on a practical level, views to give meaning to the work they did in school, and the hope of being rewarded for it.

De La Salle borrowed the theme of “the glory of the teacher arriving in heaven” from the 10th meditation of Fr Giry. He enlarges on this theme in two triumphant *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* (MR 207 & 208): “Those who instruct many persons in Christian justice will shine as stars for all eternity” (MR 208,2 quoting Dn 12,3).

2.1. In the hope of an eternal reward

The eschatological dimension of salvation history gives the MR their unity. It places them in the context of the New Testament and especially in that of St Paul’s writings. The Kingdom of God envisaged by the Founder of the Brothers is built here and now through the transcendent mission of the Christian school.

Reward is the fruit of the faith and hope of the Christian. Salvation is the object of not only hope, but also of the experience of the love of Jesus made present by the Brothers. Faith includes hope (Rm 4,18). Like faith, hope is born from God’s call (MR 208,2 quoting Ep 1,18) which does not deceive, because the Spirit makes possible the interior experience of the love of God. Hope is the pride of the Christian (Rm 5,2) and the source of his courage: “Your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you” (Mt 6,18). Those who are separated from God have no hope of a reward (MR 199,3 quoting Ep 2,12).

MR 205-208 are entirely devoted to the eschatological view of the Brother’s mission. The hope of an eternal reward sustains him and becomes a reality. His reward, in fact, will be to see the children in his charge with him in the eternal glory of God (MR 208,2). These children are his hope. The thought of heaven encourages him to take his ministry more seriously. His striving to attain the fulness of what is promised leads him to bear in mind the Last Judgment during the course of his daily activities (cf. AEP 79).

Christ’s words provide us with a criterion for discerning what the true reward of the Christian really is: “When a man’s doctrine is his own, he is hop-

ing to get honour for himself; but when he is working for the honour of the one who sent him, then he is sincere and by no means an imposter” (Jn 7,18). The double criterion Jesus gives in order to assess the value of his teaching can be transposed to the educator. The doctrine of Jesus is in the man himself (Jn 7,17). Whoever seeks human fulfilment — the accomplishment of God’s plan — sees that the teaching of Jesus, which is freedom and life, proceeds from God. And the negative criterion — the pursuit of personal glory — proves that the teaching proposed does not come from God, but that it reflects an attempt to use God in view of one’s own personal interest.

2.2. “Gratuitously and solely for the glory of God”

De La Salle requires the Christian teacher to be completely disinterested. This attitude is “the one which is most characteristic of Lasallian pedagogy”. For De La Salle, teaching is an apostolate: the teacher is an apostle who “must give freely what he has received as a free gift” (ALCALDE, 134-140). Disinterestedness in the exercise of one’s function is the sign of the true teacher. Gratuity is the trademark of the Christian school.

The apostle, however, “cannot disregard the reward he will receive for having devoted himself with ardent zeal to the conquest of souls. Reward is a necessary stimulus for man. Jesus Christ himself spoke of reward to encourage us to bear with the contradictions and sufferings of this life: ‘Rejoice, therefore, [...] because your reward will be great in heaven’ ” (VIOLA, 175f, quoting Lk 21,28).

The approach one adopts to the question of the disinterestedness of the teacher or the gratuitous nature of his teaching will vary according to one’s point of view. Nowadays this is a sensitive question. In 1649, Adrien Bourdoise expressed the wish to see “teachers who worked in this profession as perfect Christians, as apostles, without self-interest, and not as mercenaries who considered this profession as a wretched occupation invented for the purpose of having bread to eat”.

The author of the *L’Ecole paroissiale*, says much the same thing when he states that, as a rule, a teacher should be completely disinterested regarding remuneration for his teaching. Disinterestedness on the part

of the teacher, demonstrated by his refusal to accept any kind of remuneration from the pupil for the teaching and education he is given, is a principle that is rigorously applied in De La Salle's approach to edu-

cation. The "Christian and gratuitous schools" founded by De La Salle are intended primarily for poor children, and that is why teaching there is given "gratuitously and solely for the glory of God" (MR 194,1).

3. THE REWARD OF THE TEACHER IN THE PRESENT LIFE

3.1. God takes care of those he sends

The teacher, conscious that he is called to fulfil a specific mission, knows that God, as a good father, will provide for his material needs, since this is one of the necessary means if he is to accomplish his plan of salvation: "Set your hearts on his Kingdom first, and his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well" (Mt 6,33; cf. MD 67,3). De La Salle recalls that God, in his goodness, does not fail to reward those who give up everything to follow Christ, and who work with ardent zeal for the extension of his Kingdom (MR 207,1). De La Salle often expresses this conviction in his meditations: "You may rest assured that he will take care of you, provided that you serve him faithfully and omit nothing that he expects of you" (MD 59,3). Elsewhere, he asks the Brothers: "Have you then so little faith that you fear that, by fulfilling your duty, and giving all your attention to establishing God's reign in your hearts and in those of others, you will lack food and clothing?" (MD 67,2).

God does not allow himself to be outdone in generosity. In his providence, he takes care of those whom he chooses and sends to his vineyard. De La Salle concludes MD 67 by saying: "The more you abandon yourself to God with regard to temporal matters, the more he will take care to provide you with them" (MD 67,3 referring to Mt 6,25-33).

3.2. The rewarding nature of teaching

The work a teacher does can be a source of joy for him as well as being rewarding, and this can motivate him in his teaching. Kerschensteiner states that "the sole motive a teacher should have in his work is the education of the pupil and, through him, that of the group. [...] It is from the accomplishment of this task that the teacher derives his greatest pleasure" (quoted by ALCALDE, 140f). Seeing pupils develop their abilities and adopt worthwhile values is enough to make a teacher rejoice and feel fulfilled.

God is at the teacher's side in his educational work,

rewarding him with the "miracle" of being able to touch his pupils' hearts by his faith. As De La Salle says: "This is the purpose of your work" (MF 139,3).

Zeal is rewarded by certain success in educational work. "God will bless all you do zealously for his sake, and victory will be granted you over all those who oppose what you do for him" (MF 182,3).

3.3. The consolation of seeing the Kingdom of God proclaimed

One of the rewards a teacher obtains in this world is the knowledge that God is glorified by his apostolic work. For the true apostle, his greatest consolation is not the realisation that his intellectual and human work has not been sterile, and has led to the academic success of his pupils, in itself a very gratifying reward for any teacher, but rather seeing his efforts rewarded by some moral or spiritual fruit: "Another reward, even in this life, which those who work for the salvation of souls receive, is the consolation they have of seeing God served well by those they have taught, and of knowing that their work has not been useless, but has helped to save those they were called upon to instruct" (MR 207,2).

Taking his inspiration from St Paul, De La Salle states that the primary source of consolation, the highest reward, the greatest source of joy on achieving success in one's ministry, comes from the fact of "proclaiming the Gospel free of charge, without it costing anything for those who hear it" (MR 207,2 quoting 1 Co 9,18). Another source of consolation is the spiritual growth of the pupils: "You must consider also as a great reward the consolation you feel in the depths of your hearts when you see that the children you instruct behave properly, know their religion well, and are pious. Thank God with all your heart for all these rewards which he gives you in advance in this life" (MR 207,2). There is also joy which anticipates that of the life to come, when education is rewarded with spiritual success: "There is the very special satisfaction you will experience when they grow up and you

see them living a just and pious life" (MR 207,3).

The joy of the teacher will be complete when he sees that, "by the establishment of the schools, reli-

gion and the practice of the faith have increased among the faithful, and especially among the artisans and the poor" (MR 207,3).

4. THE REWARD OF THE TEACHER IN THE FUTURE LIFE

4.1. A hope and a requirement

The hope of the teacher is sustained by his belief in God's promise regarding the Day of Judgment and eternal life. This belief inspires the faith of the teacher who lives in the expectation of an affectionate and definitive welcome from the Father. The whole of MR 208 is a hymn of praise for the educational mission seen from this eschatological point of view. De La Salle speaks lyrically — something unusual for him — of eternal happiness: "What a consolation it will be for those who have procured the salvation of others to see a great number of them in heaven!". He goes on to quote the words of "the angel to the prophet Daniel: 'Those who instruct many persons in Christian justice (sic), will shine like stars for all eternity'" (MR 208,2).

The ideal De La Salle proposes to his disciples is that "they should offer their lives willingly to God so as to win souls for God, who will enable them [the teachers] to reach a high place in heaven" (cf. MD 70,2) "Devote yourself, then, with zeal and affection to your work, since it will be one of the most helpful means to ensure your salvation" (MR 207,1).

4.2. God, the reward of the just

De La Salle speaks also of the teacher's encounter with God in heaven. He describes it as a series of surprises, not a dream, but many different kinds (not degrees) of glory.

The Brother has practised gratuity all his life. His purified vision makes him seek God as the greatest of his rewards. De La Salle's mysticism recalls that of St John of the Cross: "Your ministry requires you to teach children the science of salvation. [...] Do you acquit yourself of this duty solely with a view to procuring God's glory and the salvation of souls?" (MF 108,2). "What constitutes the life of the saints is their continual attention to God. This also should form the life of those who are consecrated to him, and who seek only to accomplish his holy will, to love him, and to make others love him. Hence, this is what your

sole occupation on earth should be, and towards this end all your efforts should tend" (MD 67,1).

The supreme reward is communion with God. De La Salle takes advantage of the feast of St Thomas Aquinas to encourage his Brothers to follow his example. Thomas "desired no other reward but God alone. [...] Declare solemnly to God that you wish to have no other view but this" (MF 108,2). Convinced that "the more completely you give yourself to God, the more God will do for you; and the less you are in the sight of men, the greater you will be before God" (MF 104,3).

4.3. The glory of the Christian teacher

De La Salle never tires of saying that God reserves a special reward for teachers of poor children.

4.3.1. INEFFABLE UNION WITH GOD

The gift that God reserves for the elect after their death consists essentially in union with himself. This is called also eternal life or the beatific vision, as De La Salle explains in his *Duties of a Christian* (CL 20,87 = DA 106,0,15). He speaks of it also in his meditations, as we shall see.

"The degree of this union will depend on the innocence, preserved or regained, presented to God" (GALLEGO, *Teología*, 277). Teachers will enjoy glory because, by their zeal and by acting as guardian angels, they collaborated in the building up of the Church, and because they helped a great number of their pupils to preserve or regain their "robes of innocence" (MR 208,3). These children will be our crown and our glory, the "halo of educators" (GALLEGO, *Id.*, 275). This will be a special kind of glory, whose intensity will depend on the extent to which one has provided pupils with a true and solid piety: "This should make you realise that your happiness in heaven will be greater than what will be enjoyed by those who have worked only for their own salvation. It will be much greater in proportion to the number of children you have taught and won over to God" (MR 208,1).

4.3.2. IN GLORY WITH ONE'S PUPILS

It is a rare thing to find De La Salle expressing himself as lyrically in his writings as he does when speaking of the joy of the teacher, on receiving the thanks of "his pupils, who are enjoying eternal happiness in heaven, as a result of his efforts. [...] How united in God they will all be! How happy they will be to speak together of the blessings they were promised when God called them, abundant glory and God's heritage in the dwelling of the saints" (MR 208,2 quoting Ep 1,18).

They will enjoy perfect happiness seeing and living with a great number of their pupils who also have attained eternal happiness. De La Salle speaks of "a great number" three times. He does so twice, to indicate those who have been saved, and once, referring to those who have regained their innocence (cf. GALLEGO, *Id.*, 278).

4.3.3. THE FINAL APOTHEOSIS

The eschatological consequences of "zeal for the instruction of children [...] in the fear of God" (RC

2,9) are proclaimed for all to hear. The work of the Christian teacher for the building up of the Church is fully revealed.

De La Salle describes in grandiose terms the scene at the Last Judgment, the eternal day which will never end. The spectacularly dramatic scene he describes for us enables us to imagine the successive stages of the marvellous encounter which will seal an eternal communion between teachers and pupils.⁶ "Then they [the children] will represent the good you have done among them [...] the trouble you took to put them back on the road to salvation; and they will all join in asking Jesus Christ to grant you a favourable judgment, praying him not to delay putting you in possession of the happiness you procured for them by your work and your concern" (MR 208,3).

At this point occurs what we can call the apotheosis of the teacher, in the presence of the entire court of heaven: "Oh, what glory there will be for those who have taught young people, when their zeal and their devotion to procure the salvation of children will be made public" (MR 208,3).

5. TRIALS, A SIGN OF THE KINGDOM

5.1. The Gospel paradox

The Founder knows from personal experience and from Jesus' warning in the Gospel, that the servant is not greater than his master, and that he too will have to undergo trials. The paradox we find in the Gospel is that, when persecution comes and there is danger of death, we should rejoice "because our reward will be great in heaven" (Lk 21,28).

When De La Salle invites us to share in the sentiments and sufferings of Christ, he means we should undertake a process of ongoing conversion and identification with Christ. "This christocentric view of mortification at last gives De La Salle's teaching a positive value: suffering is a means to attain life, it is not the pursuit of death" (AEP, 196).

Certain that the sufferings of this life bear no comparison with the future glory which will be revealed in us, De La Salle insists that good can come out of suffering and persecution, and reminds the Christian teacher that his work will lead inevitably to conflict with the worldly society it seeks to condemn and transform. "Do not be surprised, therefore, if you meet with

trials and opposition in the exercise of your ministry. The more you suffer, the more resolute you should be to acquit yourself conscientiously of your work. Rest assured that God will then shower his blessings upon you in abundance" (MF 126,2).

Elsewhere, De La Salle goes a step further in speaking of the joys of suffering persecution: "What a happiness it is to be able to suffer and die like this saint [James], for having laboured to win souls for God. This is the reward you have to expect for the care and work of your ministry" (MF 119,2).

5.2. The trials of the Christian teacher

While the trials of the teacher may not include the ultimate sacrifice of martyrdom, they can take more insidious forms: "Prepare to suffer insults, outrages and calumnies for the good you try to do to your neighbour. This is the chief reward that God allows in this world, and frequently it is the only one we receive from the poor for what we do for them. Dispose yourself to accept such things lovingly" (MF 120,3; cf. MF 162,3; 168,3; 182,2).

Such is the consequence of leading a life of conformity with Christ. Persecution is the normal “reward” for working in the apostolic ministry. This is what De La Salle and his first Brothers experienced.⁵ We have here a good illustration of the “spirit of martyrdom”, typical of the 17th century.

Sufferings can purify us, make us grow in love, bring us closer to Christ. “A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too; if they kept my word, they will keep yours as well” (Jn 15,20). This is the reward for the work of redemption accomplished for and in Christ; such is “the reward of saints and apostolic men, as also of Jesus Christ” (MF 155,3; cf. MF 162,1; AEP, 197). De La Salle challenges his Brothers with the example of the saints: “Such was the result of the zeal and preaching of this great saint [John the Baptist]. Is this the reward which you count upon for your labours?” (MF 162,3).

M. Sauvage and M. Campos consider that De La Salle’s conformity with the suffering Christ must be seen in the broader context of his personal identification with the suffering Christ. They write: “De La Salle’s view of suffering here, couched in mystical terms, seems to us more than ever positive. There is

no question of masochism here [...], for suffering is not sought for its own sake, but accepted as being an integral part of apostolic work” (AEP 198).

Persecution gives the Brother’s work, as it were, a guarantee of authenticity. “Happy are you when people hate you [...] on account of the Son of Man [...] for then your reward will be great in heaven” (Lk 6,22). That is why De La Salle insists: “The more faithfully you adhere to God when you have occasion to suffer, the more will God pour his graces and blessings upon you in the exercise of your ministry” (MF 155,3).

5.3. Even unto death

Complete and authentic victory consists in the gift of life. We find an echo of the Gospel maxim “Anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 10,39), in De La Salle’s meditation on St Denis: “The recompense usually bestowed upon apostolic men here below is persecution and death for the faith which they preach. [...] After having exhausted yourself in this noble work of your apostolate, expect no other recompense here below than to suffer and die, as Jesus Christ himself died, in the midst of pains and afflictions” (MF 175,3).

6. CONCLUSION : THE TEACHER COMPARED WITH THE SAINTS AND IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST

When De La Salle writes of the reward of the teacher he is not concerned with his legal and social status, nor with the finances involved in the running of a school. It would be pointless to look for such considerations either in his life or writings. However, as we have seen in this article, there existed already, in the period that concerns us, indications of the thinking that, in the course of two centuries, would change the social image and consequently the nature of the teaching profession.

De La Salle shows his disciples that the teacher working in a charity school — the lowest rank in the profession — was promised a very high reward by God. Here below, if he shares the lively faith of the holy

evangelisers and reforming bishops, who are given to him as models, his esteem for the work he does can satisfy his affective needs.

From the point of view of faith, the Lasallian teacher can be defined as one who brings the salvation announced by Jesus Christ to young people. To enable him to fulfil such a noble mission, De La Salle invites him to identify himself with Jesus, and to adopt as his own the sentiments and aims that were those of the prophet from Nazareth, when he was here on earth. In the meantime, he can expect to receive the same rewards as he did: in this world, alternating recognition and persecution from people around him; in the next, the happiness promised by God.

- ¹ Cf. *Lexique historique de la France d'Ancien Régime*, Paris, A. Colin, 1978.
- ² GALLEGO, S., *Vida...*, vol. II, 33-42 & 430f.
- ³ Quoted by BLAIN, CL 7,59.
- ⁴ GALLEGO, S., *Vida...*, vol. II, 277 & 431.
- ⁵ Cf. GALLEGO, S., *Teología...*, 287. The author analyses various aspects of the life of the Christian teacher. I am indebted to him, in particular, regarding what he says about the reward of the Christian teacher in his last chapter.
- ⁶ GALLEGO, S., *Teología...* The author borrows this evocative description from É. LETT, *Jubilum saeculare*, Compton, *pro manuscripto*, 1951, p. 278f.

Complementary themes

Abandonment	Gratuity	Renunciation
Christian teacher	Hearts (to touch)	Saints
Conversion	Joy	Salvation
Education	Justice	School
Faith	Love - Charity	Suffering
God	Mission	Teacher - Pupil
		Zeal

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