



02-B-06

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF CAHIERS LASALLIENS (1959-1984)

1) A CLEARLY FELT NEED

Even before 1940, especially in France and Italy, the study of Lasallian origins was seen as a matter of primary importance, in the Institute, first of all, and later in the wider field of the history of pedagogy and spirituality. The publication of the first nine volumes of the "*General History of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*" by Georges Rigault in 1937 made a contribution of the greatest importance to this study while, at the same time, demonstrating the urgent need for further research and publications on the person and on the written works of J.B. de La Salle.

It was, however, the late Fr. André Rayez, S.J. who published, in 1952, an inventory of the known sources and works published up to that time. This inventory not only pointed out the merits and limits of a certain number of essays and studies but called for more research with a view to publishing the ardently desired *Monumenta Lasalliana*. (cf. André Rayez, *Etudes Lasalliennes* in the *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, January-March, 1952).

During this period, Brothers who were studying theology or other ecclesiastical sciences foresaw the eventuality of presenting theses or memoirs consecrated to Lasallian origins and particularly to the spiritual teaching of the Founder. At the beginning, these Brothers, for their part, could only confirm the findings of Fr. Rayez. Of the first three biographies of J.B. de La Salle, only one, that by Blain, had been published. A work such as this was not easily accessible except in abridged editions or in editions containing important deviations from the original. Of the written work of the Founder only some manuscripts were preserved in the Institute Archives. The works published by de La Salle or by his second successor, Brother Timothée, could be consulted, for the most part, only in later editions unless one went to some of the great libraries, notably in Paris, to read one or other of the editions published during the life-time of the author or shortly after his death.

2) A DECISION OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1956

A memoir was submitted to the Brothers capitulants in 1956 which tried to focus attention on the lacunae mentioned above. It proposed a first program of work: research and publication of texts and documents capable of serving as a basis for scientific study of J.B. de La Salle and more generally of the period of the origins of the Institute. It requested that Brothers, who were particularly qualified for the work, should be allowed to devote themselves full-time to such research and publications. In the capitular commission and in the full assembly the Chapter recognised the validity of the points made in the memoir and accepted its conclusions.

3) AN UNDERTAKING WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF POSSIBILITY

With a view to preparing the desired *Monumenta* it was decided, first of all, to bring together the basic documents already known, to make known the documents uncovered by recent research and finally to prepare studies of the sources and content of Lasallian thought. Thus it was that in April, 1959, the *Cahiers Lasalliens* first saw the light of day.

The first twenty-five volumes (1959-1966) presented the earliest biographies — Bernard, the two Maillefer and Blain — and included two volumes of indices for the series (1974-1979). After these came the complete series of the works of the Founder based on the first edition or on the earliest known edition. The series was reproduced by the anastatic process.

Some volumes in this series belong more to the category of studies or essays: on Meditations for the Time of Retreat, on the Collection and even on the canonical status of the Institute.

A second series starts with Cahier 26 (1966). It is still continuing, thanks to the untiring research and publications of Brother Léon Aroz. Several hundred documents are thus presented, analysed and annotated. All of them throw light — often in a novel way — on the initiatives of de La Salle in his own family, within the body of the clergy and especially in his relationships and responsibilities as Founder.

On the last page of each volume of the collection the aims are summed up in a few lines:

"Cahiers Lasalliens": Texts, Studies, Documents,

- published in a collection which is not periodical,
- centred on the person of St. John Baptist de La Salle, his written work and the origins of the Congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools,
- in preparation for the publication of two definitive works: A critical biography of the saint and the corpus of his works.

2) TO WHOM IS THIS COLLECTION SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSED?

To the Brothers of the Christian Schools, very definitely, and also to those whose studies or activities lead them to a greater interest in the holy Founder, in his thinking and in his educational achievements. The critical notices which appeared in several scientific reviews on the publication of the different volumes drew attention to the remarkable contribution that such publications make to a better understanding of the history of ecclesiastical and civil society under the Ancien Régime.

For this reason the complete collection of the *Cahiers Lasalliens* is to be found in most of the great libraries of Europe and America, North and South.

5) WHO PUBLISHES THE CAHIERS LASALLIENS?

The publisher is the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It is to the General Council of the Institute (General Secretariate or General Accounts Department) that application must be made for authorization to reproduce or translate the Cahiers Lasalliens.

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Brother Maurice Hermans
Lasallian Studies
ROME