

3. THE THEOLOGIAN

For the composition of the nearly two thousand pages which make up his catechisms de La Salle needed tranquillity and time. His life as Founder and superior of the Brothers afforded him no such tranquillity and time. He was compelled to draw on treatises in use at the time and to adapt them to his purpose. In the choice he made and in his adaptations we can see both his sensibility as a catechist and his competence as a theologian. Let us examine briefly how he, a doctor in theology, drew his inspiration from these sources and at times surpassed them in his catechetical treatises. Let it suffice here to refer to four of his sources: Holy Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, Claude Joly and Jacques Le Coreur. We shall deal with the first two later on.

CLAUDE JOLY

"The Duties of A Christian" of de La Salle follows so closely the catechism of the Bishop of Agen that we find the following evidence given at the time of the beatification of the educator from Rheims "Another edition, in continuous style, which we found in the same library and which bears the name de La Salle was printed in Rheims in 1779, that is, sixty years after his death. This book, in its contents, is similar to that of Monseigneur Joly. How did the Venerable Servant of God come to resemble so closely the Bishop of Agen? On the other hand, the author of the first life of the Venerable does not mention this book."

A close comparison between the bishop's catechism and that of the priest leads us to the following observation: John Baptist de La Salle used the work of Joly particularly in the composition of the part of his book dealing with moral principles.

In the treatise "De Praeceptis", the commandments of God and of the Church, only eleven pages out of fifty-nine in "The Duties of A Christian" do not show a visible influence. There are, also, long paragraphs where the correspondence is almost verbatim. The chapters on Sin and the Virtues corroborate the resemblance between the two works. Only FIVE pages out of FIFTY-ONE do not bear the mark of Joly.

The influence of the Bishop of Agen in the treatise "De Sacramentis" is minimal, but once the subject of moral is touched upon, as for instance, in the conditions for making a good confession, the authority of Claude Joly is clearly evident.

The reason why the author of "The Duties of A Christian" followed so faithfully, and on the subject of moral, exclusively, the work of the bishop, is revealed by his own conduct. On numerous occasions he advised his followers not to get involved in deciding whether a sin was mortal or venial. The most they could tell their pupils was that it was serious.

Apart from the chapters which we have qualified as moral there is little to indicate the influence of Claude Joly. Of the THIRTY-FIVE pages taken up with other treatises, ELEVEN, most in the section "De Sacramentis", borrow only definitions, while the other TWENTY-FOUR draw from the source with great moderation.

JACQUES LE COREUR

Is the name Jacques Le Coreur, priest, doctor of theology and confessor in the parish of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, that of the author of "*The Principal Duties of A Christian*"? Some evidence suggests that it is: In any case the catechism was written for use in the missions that the author gave to people who had made their First Communion. This explains why it contains four hundred and sixty pages and deals here and there with matters of casuistry.

The roles of Joly and Le Coreur in the work of de La Salle are complementary. The influence of Joly is most evident in the *section dealing with moral*, that of Le Coreur in "De Sacramentis", particularly. The contributions of the latter are more evenly spread throughout "The Duties of A Christian".

The first section of Chapter IV of "The Duties of A Christian" shows evidence of "*Principal Duties of A Christian*" in the more difficult areas of theology. The inspiration of Le Coreur is felt in two places only in the chapter "De Ecclesia" and then only in matters of theology.

The missionary priest rarely makes his influence felt in the treatise "De Praeceptis" and when he does it is only to provide a definition or a doctrinal passage of little importance.

It is in the seven sections on the Capital or Deadly Sins that the complementary roles of Joly and Le Coreur become more evident. De La Salle borrows verbatim from both for almost the whole of his catechism. Naturally the passages taken from one source and reproduced in "The Duties of A Christian" do not appear in the other. The only coincidence of both is found in the section dealing with *other sins*, a sequel to the Capital Sins.

In the treatise "De Sacramentis", the influence of the catechist from Amiens on the Saint of Rheims is most evident. As we cannot follow them step by step we must be content with the following observations:

a) Le Coreur's authority is always evident in arguable cases or in matters of casuistry as for example, "If the damned retain or do not retain the sacramental character and why; who can communicate under both species? and why the ordinary faithful may not do so; when the priest may and should refuse absolution..."

b) For the ceremonies in connection with reception of the sacraments in general and in particular for Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage and especially for Penance and Holy Orders.

c) For definitions of the sacraments in general. The definitions of Confirmation, the Eucharist, under various appellations, and Holy Orders are taken verbatim from Le Coreur.

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