

REFERENCE LIST OF QUOTATIONS

contained in the writings attributed to
St. John Baptist de La Salle

The Lasallian Studies Centre received, last March, a work entitled "Reference List of Quotations in the Writings attributed to St. John Baptist de La Salle". The author of this work writes the following brief introduction:

Research on the passages containing a quotation has been carried out for all the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle with a view to publication in the Cahiers Lasalliens. The exception is the "Exercises of Piety performed during the day in the Christian Schools". Those researched are: The Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer, the Meditations, the Collection of Short Treatises, Instructions and Prayers, the Rules of Good Manners and Christian Politeness, the different manuals on the Duties of a Christian, the Management of Christian Schools and the Rules of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

For each of the writings studied the work gives, in the left hand column, the quotation and in the right hand column, the reference with indications as to where to find it. For quotations from Holy Scripture the reference gives only the name of the sacred book with chapter and verse. (Jerusalem Bible). For non-biblical quotations (the Fathers of the Church and different authors) the text is given with the reference at least when this is possible. It is given in the original (Greek or Latin) because this is what the editions used have done and also to avoid being drawn into problems of translation.

At the end of the work a thirty page table has been drawn up of the works and authors cited with corresponding indications for the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle, of the page and line where the quotation appears. A four page table for recapitulation gives the numbers of the references according to the works and authors cited and according to the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

Research has been facilitated by the works (or editions of the Meditations) of Brothers Luis Varela, Brother Anselmo A Balocco, Brother Michel Sauvage and Brother Miguel Campos. However, these works deal only with some of the writings of de La Salle and are interested only in quotations from Sacred Scripture, especially those from the New Testament. The present work deals with all the writings of de La Salle and includes all the authors cited by him.

The method employed to find the references of quotations not given in the writings studied (these are the more numerous) was to have recourse, for Holy Scripture, to the tables which indicate where a given passage can be found from the principal words it contains. For the Fathers of the Church I used the indices at the end of Migne's volumes on Latin and Greek patrology. For the other authors I used manuals of bibliography and library files.

A certain number of quotations from the Fathers of the Church and other authors are almost identical with the texts from which they were taken. But many others are only approximate. It often happens that the quotation is not clearly evident in the sentence and that the author's text is often modified... This was common practice in 17th and 18th centuries. The notion of literary ownership and copyright was practically unknown. Writers had little scruple about using other writers' ideas or incorporating them in their own thought while modifying their expression. We have now become more respectful of literary creation and more demanding as to the manner of borrowing from the texts of others.

I had to search a long time to find the quotation of St. Jerome in the Meditation for the First Sunday of Advent (MD 6,21), permeated as it is by fear of God's judgement. "He (St. Jerome) says also that being, as he was, completely covered in sin he hid day and night for fear that he might be told, 'Jerome, come forth', and that he might be made to pay the last farthing". Eventually the following text was found

in the letter to Florentius (P.L. 22, 336) "Ego cunctis peccatorum sordibus inquinatus, diebus ac noctibus opperior cum tremore reddere novissimum quadrantem. Sed tamen qui Dominus solvit compeditos et super humilem et timentem verba sua requiescit, forsitan mihi in sepulchro jacenti dicat: Hieronyme, veni foras". (As for me, stained by all the filth of sin, I await trembling night and day to pay the last farthing. However, since the Lord looses those who are bound and lets his Word rest on the one who is humble and who trembles, it may be that He will say to me who lie in the grave of my crimes, "Jerome, come forth" — a reference to the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11, 42 - 44 - You can see that the meaning is different in the text of the patrology from that in the Meditation. The person who has recourse to quotations sometimes does so from necessity but often also to embellish his discourse, to illustrate it by pious examples which give it force or make it more agreeable. This, however, is a danger — orators and writers often fall into the the trap of forcing an example or misusing a text to give weight to their own arguments.

It is not possible to deal in a few lines with a work of six hundred pages involving more than five thousand references.

Among the writings of St. John Baptist de La Salle, the one least burdened with quotations is the Management of Schools, but the historians tell us that this work is above all the fruit of the reflections of the Founder and of the most experienced and responsible Brothers in the Institute.

Quotations from Holy Scripture are by far the most numerous. The catechesis expounded in the Duties of a Christian is founded on the Gospel. The spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle in the Meditations is inspired mainly by the Gospels and the teaching of St. Paul in his epistles. The Rules of Good Manners and Christian Politeness make more than fifty references to Ecclesiasticus or the Book of Ben Sira the Wise: "The wisdom taught by Ben Sira comes from the Lord. Its principle is the fear of the Lord, it forms youth and brings happiness". (Introduction to the Book of Ecclesiasticus in the Jerusalem Bible).

More than seven hundred references are made to the Fathers of the Church and other writers (56 names counted). The Fathers most quoted are: St. Augustine (129 times), St Chrysostom (59), St. Ambrose (31), Tertullian (28), St. Jerome (27), St. Bernard (27), St. Cyprian (14), St. Thomas Aquinas (14), St. Cyril of Jerusalem (11), St. Gregory, Pope (11). We must also take into account the place given to Conciliar declarations, particularly those of the Council of Trent (168 quotations), often textual, especially in the Duties of a Christian.

In view of the numerous quotations from Holy Scripture and from ecclesiastical writers a question springs naturally to mind: What kind of formation was given to the Brothers to enable them to use them? The historians of St. John Baptist de La Salle tell us that many of the young men who sought admission to the Institute were uneducated and that the first preoccupation of the Founder was to give the Brothers the kind of formation that their state and their work required.

Some will ask themselves what is original in writings where borrowed elements, so to speak, fill almost every page. Such a question would have astonished de La Salle himself. "Nowhere does he try for complete originality" writes G. Rigault (History of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. T. 1. p. 446). His main preoccupation is the Christian education of children and the formation of those in charge of them. He wishes to provide the teachers with the work tools they need for their own spiritual culture and for carrying on their work. If he finds works treating of subjects which interest him he borrows without scruple, as was the custom of his day. Besides, it is only when you are content to juxtapose borrowed material that you show lack of originality— St. John Baptist de La Salle quotes or borrows following a train of thought which guides him throughout a page or a Chapter. His ardent soul is often revealed in the kind of questions he so frequently asks the Brothers in the Meditations, or in the stringent conclusions he is forced to by a reflection inspired by a text taken from the Gospel or from an epistle of St. Paul, a page from St. Augustine or St. Chrysostom.

The work presented above is far from being complete or perfect. All the references have not been found. Others are merely approximate. The work undertaken was wideranging and to complete it a considerable number of books had to be consulted. Others, perhaps, will take it as a starting point for further research, more precise and more effective.

Brother A. ROCHE

N.D.L.R. The original work of Brothers Adrien Roche is in the Bureau des Cahiers Lasalliens in the Generalate. A copy of the same work is in the Institute Archives, also in the Generalate.