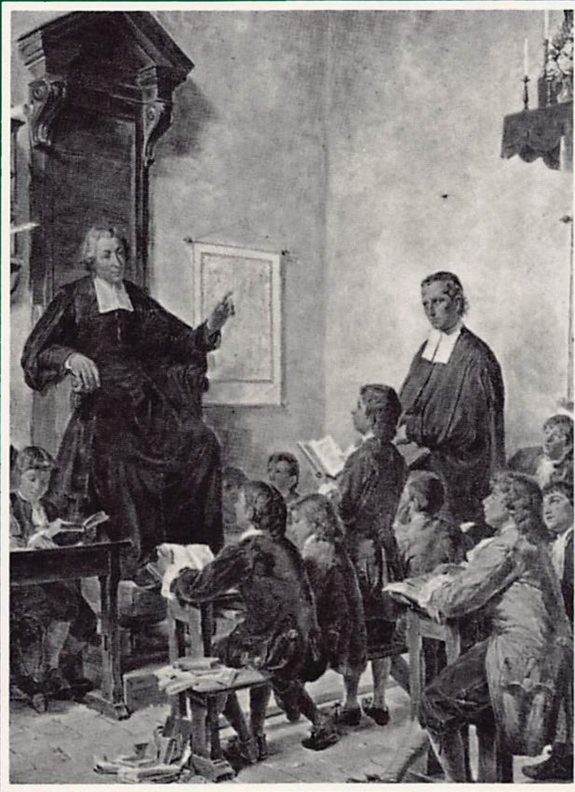
So Favored By Grace

Education in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle



Edited by Lawrence J. Colhocker, FSC

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Education
in the Time of
John Baptist de La Salle

In seventeenth-century Europe children of the rich were often taught at home; this was the case with John Baptist de La Salle. *The Lesson,* detail from *A Family Group,* by Michiel Nouts (c. 1655). The National Gallery, London.

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Cover: John Baptist de La Salle teaching school. De La Salle is known to have done some classroom teaching; on one such occasion he replaced a Brother who was ill. This picture illustrates features of the classroom described by De La Salle in his *Conduite des Ecoles chrētienne*. From a painting by Cesare Mariani, Vatican Museum.

This volume is dedicated to Brother Erminus Joseph Melofchik, FSC, former Secretary of Formation for the USA/Toronto Region, who, by his person and by his appreciation for John Baptist de La Salle and the Lasallian heritage, has inspired recent generations of De La Salle's Brothers, especially in North America.

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Sponsored by the Regional Conference of Christian Brothers of the United States and Toronto, Lasallian Publications will produce 30 volumes on the life, writings, and work of John Baptist de La Salle (1651–1719), founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and on the early history of the Brothers. These volumes will be presented in two series.

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The editors wish to thank Mrs. Carol Hamm, Secretary of the Christian Brothers Conference, who typed the manuscript, Brother Lawrence Oelschlegel, who served as copy editor, and Brother Lawrence Colhocker, who prepared the index. The text was proofread by Brothers Francis Huether, Richard Rush, Brendan Kneale, Robert Ferguson, and Robert Wilsbach. The acquisition of illustrations was coordinated by Brother Francis Huether.

Introduction

So Favored By Grace: Education in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle is the first of three volumes to be published as the New Lasallian Studies, a collection of essays investigating from a historical perspective a variety of educational issues related to John Baptist de La Salle and his era. The second volume will focus upon the ministry and spirituality of his time; the third volume will examine the Church and society in which he exercised his ministry. The series, New Lasallian Studies, has been designed to explore and illuminate the theoretical and practical issues that defined the historical context within which De La Salle envisioned and founded his Institute, the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The fundamental goal of this series is to promote through research a better understanding of and appreciation for De La Salle's unique charism and his contributions to the Church and society.

Because of the primacy De La Salle gave in his life and writings to the mission of education, it is most appropriate to dedicate this first volume to an analysis of that theme. Although an innovator, De La Salle did not undertake his mission without being directly or indirectly influenced by the vision of his predecessors and contemporaries, who were also committed to the work of education under the auspices of either religious or nonsectarian institutions. For this reason, the scope of this volume has been extended to include an examination of those specific educational philosophies and programs which evolved in France and more generally in Europe, particularly up to the end of the seventeenth century. This collection of essays will focus on those educational trends which most obviously affected the pedagogical thought and practice of De La Salle and the first Brothers of the religious Institute he founded. It will also examine the specific manner in which De La Salle responded to the educational problems of his day, as well as the rationale underlying the programs, policies, and practices he initiated.

Given the obvious limitations of a work of this nature, the essays included here are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive in their treatment of De La Salle and his relationship with the body of educational thought originating during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The essays vary in scope, depth, and purpose. A few of

the essays treat in detail selected educational developments prior to the time of De La Salle and his Christian schools; some call attention to his substantial contributions in adapting existing pedagogical theory and praxis; and others examine meticulously a specific curricular problem debated during the historical period in question.

Although De La Salle is credited with the establishment of the first normal school in France, other educators who predated him had seen the necessity of implementing formal programs for the pre-service and in-service training of teachers. In his essay, Brother Dominic Everett, FSC, investigates the efforts of those early reformers within the Church who were committed to the initial and continuing formation of teachers: Jacques de Bathencourt, Alix Le Clerc and Peter Fourier, Félix de Vialart, Nicolas Barré, Nicolas Roland, Charles Démia, and Adrian Nyel. Brother William Mann, FSC, in the second essay, describes in greater detail the life and mission of Peter Fourier, whose concern for the education of the poor included and went beyond the recruitment and training of qualified teachers. In his revision of an article by Brother Anselme D'Haese, FSC, Brother Gregory Wright, FSC, provides an overview of the basic philosophy and practical insights of *L'Escole paroissiale,* an influential pedagogical manual written by Jacques de Bathencourt and published in 1654.

Benefiting from the successful work of his predecessors and contemporaries, De La Salle dedicated himself totally to the education of the poor—a work he considered so favored by God's grace—by establishing a religious community of men whose sole purpose was to be teaching, by founding schools for the children of the working class, and by articulating in a series of treatises and pedagogical manuals his own convictions and insights. In his second contribution to this volume, Brother Gregory provides a portrait of De La Salle as an innovative educator, and he chronicles the significant impact De La Salle had upon the development of Western educational thought and the history of instructional methodology. Continuing with a similar theme, Brother Richard Arnandez, FSC, examines De La Salle and his commitment to primary education, discussed within an historical context that includes an analysis of the efforts of other pedagogues to provide a quality education, both religious and secular, especially for the children of the poor.

Finally, to illustrate more particularly De La Salle's active involvement in the development of instructional theory, both Brother Edward Davis, FSC, and Brother Yves Poutet, FSC, investigate the controversy that existed in France during the seventeenth century relative to the most effective method for teaching reading. Both studies attempt not only to clarify the nature of De La Salle's commitment to the adoption of the vernacular as the appropriate medium for reading instruction, but also to identify the cultural and educational factors which influenced the evolution of his theory.

This collection of essays on De La Salle and pedagogical theory and practice during the seventeenth century represents an initial effort toward the scholarly reappraisal of De La Salle's role in the history of Western education. More research is needed, not only to explore the essence of his relationship with the social realities of his own time and the manner in which such factors shaped his educational vision, but also to investigate the nature and extent of the influence he has had upon educational innovators in more recent times. Such studies will most certainly stimulate greater interest in De La Salle as an educator and provide a deeper and fuller understanding of the genesis and development of his pedagogical thought.

I would like to thank Brother Joseph Schmidt, FSC, Brother Francis Huether, FSC, and Brother Richard Rush, FSC, for their assistance in editing the manuscripts, and Brother Lawrence Oelschlegel, FSC, for his copyediting. I am also grateful to Brother Erminus Joseph Melofchik, FSC, not only for his encouragement and assistance during the early stages of this project, but also for the inspiration he continues to provide.

Brother Lawrence J. Colhocker, FSC
LaSalle University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
June 1, 1991

The Education of Teachers for Primary Schools in Seventeenth-Century France

Influences on John Baptist de La Salle

Dominic Everett, FSC

John Baptist de La Salle did not create primary teacher education *ex nihilo*. His success evolved out of the accumulated educational experience of his predecessors and contemporaries. Primary teacher education in France took root in a rich tradition of schooling and education. Its growth was fostered by the Council of Trent, and the story of the persons and events involved is a product of the Catholic Counter-Reformation.[1]

Seventeenth-century France believed in education. The treatises on pedagogy published in this period are counted by the hundreds. The grand career of a philosopher or an essayist was not complete if it did not include a treatise on education. Nearly all the registers of town councils' deliberations under the ancien régime have to do with education: a contract for the primary teacher, a levy of municipal taxes, an extraordinary intervention at the collège, a roof repair of the *grande école*, a date for the distribution of prizes. Studies of episcopal minutes, marriage signatures, and demographics affirm the existence in France of a functional primary level of instruction, especially in the northeast section of the country (Chartier, Compere, and Julia 1976, 52). The Catholic Counter-Reformation was not insensitive to the instruction of children. In fact, nothing seemed more urgent than the education of the young. "The Catholic reform

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[1]This essay supports Sauvage's view that the catechetical concern of the Catholic reform movement required a necessary place, the school, and an essential medium, the teacher. See Sauvage 1962, 359–469.

is a vast enterprise of teaching. It is a school which never closes its doors" (Viguerie 1978, 41). There was no lack of schools when De La Salle began preparing primary teachers.

French primary education was weakest, however, in the preparation of its teachers:

> Even in the atmosphere of the extraordinary educational interest during the first three-quarters of the seventeenth century, there was no solution to the problem of obtaining good teachers for the primary schools. (Fitzpatrick 1951, 208)[2]

Neither clerics nor lay people were professionally prepared for the classroom experience:

> Without any doubt, the weakest points in the organization of the Little Schools were the haphazard recruiting of the teachers and the lack of any real professional preparation. The clerics among them possessed at least some training in the use of language and in literature. Their intellectual education might be considered adequate, especially in view of the limited curriculum. But even they had had no instruction in the art of teaching, in methods, in classroom procedure, or in other areas of current pedagogical practice. The lay personnel usually had enjoyed even less formal training in content and instructional methods. (Arnandez 1960, 13)

Complainers were unanimous in deploring the lack of ability and manners in the teachers of the Little Schools. The bishops could legislate schools, but they could not legislate good teachers.

The Craftsman Teacher

Traditionally all primary school personnel were under the direction of the diocesan superintendent of schools (*écolâtre*), whose authority was founded on the decrees of the Council of Lateran in the thir-

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[2]Azarias (1896, 275) must be referring to the quality of teachers and teaching when he writes, "The primary schools were in a wretched condition when De La Salle came upon the scene and organized his Brotherhood."

teenth century. No one could open a primary school or hire a primary teacher without his approval. The superintendent was the protector of teachers' rights, especially their financial rights (Arnandez, 15). When the Council of Trent decentralized the organization of primary education and placed authority over it in the parishes, the newly empowered and zealous pastors refused to accept any interference from the diocesan superintendent. The conflict between the two when brought to the Paris courts became the cause célèbre in education for 40 years.

> We [83-year-old Claude Joly, the superintendent of schools of Paris] shall contest the power claimed by the pastors of Paris to control the schools under the name and pretext of charity, without the permission of the superintendent, to whom alone belongs this power. (Compayré 1889, 256)

A compromise court decision in 1684 secured the right of the pastors, but their schools had to be Charity Schools for children of the destitute (Hermans 1959, 40:135). The court's decision was reaffirmed in 1699. Unfortunately, De La Salle's efforts in primary teacher education were set back because of the lingering defensiveness of both dissatisfied parties.

The proceedings of teacher education assemblies conducted by Joly indicate that he had attempted to uphold professional standards for the union of teachers associated with the Little Schools (parish primary schools). Primary teaching was so unattractive, however, that positions were filled by those who could not do better elsewhere. A pamphlet of the time, in which Joly is lampooned for employing a motley collection of "low pot-house keepers, second-hand shop proprietors, silk-weaver flunkies, wig-makers, and marionette string-pullers," leaves little doubt about the quality of primary teachers (Battersby 1949, 7). Undoubtedly Joly was forced to hire undesirable characters because of the lack of good candidates. Hired without having to prove their aptitude and character, primary teachers tended to be of low moral character. Drunkenness was common among teachers. To the poor quality of applicants was added inadequate professional preparation. A seventeenth-century document, *Avis touchant les petites écoles,* is critical of this situation:

> A shoemaker or blacksmith must learn his trade, but young men without experience, who are themselves studying, are

> allowed to try their apprentice hand at the expense of those poor little ones. (Quoted in Azarias, 230)[3]

In addition, poorly paid primary teachers, especially in rural areas, had to supplement their income with a second job, as is often the case today. With little or no teacher training, these craftsmen teachers (cobblers, tailors, ropemakers) plied their trades while they listened to recitations. A poor parish priest in the countryside might be forced to support himself by part-time teaching, which suffered as much as did his ministry (Chartier, Compere, and Julia, 31; Compayré 1905, 47). Ravelet (1888, 71) describes a fiddler-teacher who leaves class to play for weddings. Frequently the parish schoolteacher served as the church sacristan and caretaker. In an effort to raise the quality of the sacristan teachers, the General Assembly of Clergy in 1685 took pains to honor them for their services. "The schoolmasters, clothed in their surplices, should be incensed in the church and should hold the place of honor above all the laity, even the aristocracy of the parish" (Ravelet, 70).

With the increase of better school funding near the end of the seventeenth century, part-time teachers were replaced by those working full-time, and the government began offering benefits to attract qualified persons:

> Teachers enjoyed exemption from military service even if they were single—a valued privilege indeed, especially under Louis XIV!—and also from certain taxes; nor could they be called upon to exercise the role of tax collector, a difficult and somewhat dangerous assignment. (Arnandez, 13)

The Priest Teacher

The programs of the two reform seminaries of Saint Sulpice and Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, named after the parishes in Paris in which they were located, provide good examples of the formation of priests in accord with the decrees of Trent (Poutet 1970, 2:333–39). Saint Sulpice was the model for the education of priests

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[3]The author of *Avis touchant les petites écoles* advocates public examinations as a means of encouraging competition. He considers such examinations a powerful corrective for both pupil and teacher.

from the upper classes who would serve in positions of leadership in the Church. Participation in the Saint Sulpice parish catechetical instruction made the seminarians aware of their responsibility for the Christian education of poor children:

> The Sulpician influence, in the seminary and in the parish, left no one ignorant about education in school. The interest of the seminarians was awakened. General information on the importance of Charity Schools and on the manner of instructing children in a Christian way was communicated to them. (Poutet 1970, 2:385)

The seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet was founded in 1642 for the education of candidates from the lower class who would serve in poor and rural parishes. A tragic reality of the time was that the majority of the poorer clergy had little education. The founder of the seminary, Adrien Bourdoise, describes the situation:

> Our everyday experience has made us aware that most of the poor clergy do not know their catechism nor do they read well. They are not knowledgeable of the truths of faith or of their moral obligations. They would have learned all of this information in their youth if they had attended well-run Christian schools. (Chartier, Compere, and Julia, 5)[4]

The program at Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet also combined ecclesiastical, educational, and pedagogical formation, and the priest as teacher was held up as the ideal to the lower clergy. "I [Bourdoise] believe that a priest who desires to become a saint should become a schoolteacher. He will be canonized for it" (Rigault 1950, 11).[5]

The seminarians at Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, of course, had in the parish an example of the ideal priest teacher, Father Jacques de Bathencourt, who directed the parish school for 18 years. De Bathencourt had published the pedagogical wisdom of his

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[4] Chartier, Compere, and Julia assert that this situation was common in the majority of dioceses in France in the seventeenth century.

[5] In contrast, De La Salle decided to separate the roles of priest and teacher and to assign the task of teaching to laymen sharing community life. See Chartier, Compere, and Julia, 67.

classroom experience under the title *L'Escole paroissiale,* "one of the most influential books on pedagogy that helped give direction to practical educational efforts in the second half of the seventeenth century" (Rigault 1937, 46).[6] A manual for teacher education, it was intended for the pedagogical reform of the more than 300 primary schoolteachers of Paris. The manual's stated purpose is "to break up the monotony of routine, to stimulate and support initiatives, and to bring about an exchange of ideas and solutions to problems" (Rigault 1937, 46).[7]

The quality of the primary teacher was to be upgraded through the process of selecting teachers who "will take an oath to keep the prescribed rules and regulations of *L'Escole paroissiale*" (Rigault 1937, 46). It remained the only guide for the primary schoolteacher available until the *Conduite des Ecoles chrêtiennes* was published by De La Salle in 1720 (Bernoville 1950, 103).[8]

L'Escole paroissiale deals with the qualities of a good teacher, classroom management, the theory and practice of teaching the catechism, and a methodology for teaching the basic academic subjects as well as Latin and Greek. The teacher is portrayed by an attractive metaphor: Just as in a person the heart is the first organ

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[6]Until 1970 the identity of the author was unknown. Poutet (1988) established his identity as Jacques de Bathencourt. Until this discovery, De Bathencourt's only identity was the initialed signature, I. de B., Prestre indigne.

[7]Compayré (1889, 277) is critical of De Bathencourt "for not having a high opinion of the office of the teacher, which he regards as an employment without lustre, without pleasure, and without interest."

[8]Hermans (1950, 38) states: "De La Salle had read very attentively the pages of *L'Escole paroissiale*. . . . We are able to affirm that they are the point of departure of his pedagogical labor. Having practiced them at the beginning of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, having compared them to the rules and usages of Peter Fourier, Charles Démia, Père Barré and Nicolas Roland, he had, so to speak, rethought and recomposed them. And then he wrote his own teacher manual, *Conduite des Ecoles chrêtiennes.*" Davis (1955, 74) conjectures that De La Salle used *L'Escole paroissiale* as a basis for his own methods because "La Salle had no specific training or knowledge of primary education, and apparently no very definite interest in it before 1679."

to live and the last organ to die, and is the principal center of the soul, so, too, the teacher in the school must be its heart.[9]

The theological and cardinal virtues are to animate the teacher in his relations with the children.

> The prudent teacher tries to understand the nature of his students. This shall serve much to the good conduct of the students. To this end he shall have conferences with their parents. He shall also observe new arrivals carefully to see if they are gentle and docile. If they grumble at the first correction and will not obey, he shall deal with them gently. If they have been hardened to correction by the blows of their parents or former teacher, he shall try to win them over by friendship. He shall always convince them of their fault before using punishment as a remedy. (Pungier 1980, 38)[10]

No less than 19 paragraphs are devoted to the virtue of justice, "of which a young teacher will have great need in obtaining obedience from the children" (Rigault 1937, 48). Some educators see value in this manual for teachers today:

> Certain methodological prescriptions of *L'Escole paroissiale* keep their value. At least these simple annotations show that the good teacher of the ancien régime was someone who tried to know his students, who reflected on his methods, and who sought to better his art. In this regard he remains for us an example. (D'Haese, 45)

In spite of these improvements, however, the only serious preparation of teachers for the primary schools of mid-seventeenth-century France occurred in those congregations of religious women whose ministry was the school.

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[9]A copy of *L'Escole paroissiale* (1685 edition) is available at the Christian Brothers National Office in Romeoville, IL. See D'Haese 1939, 30, and Rigault 1937, 45–59, for commentary.

[10]Foucault (1977) gives a vivid description and analysis of the fascination with cruelty characteristic of this historic period. Foucault analyzes De La Salle's role in the movement of society in its penal laws from physical punishment to psychological control.

The Nun Teacher

Canon law explicitly required professed religious women, called nuns, to live in cloistered communities.[11] If the nuns undertook teaching, they had to establish a boarding (intern) convent school within the cloister. The Ursulines and Visitandines are examples of congregations of teaching nuns. Both developed traditions of excellent teaching, giving to the young daughters of the wealthy an education conforming to their rank (Viguerie, 62).[12]

In an attempt to enroll more poor girls, the nuns of the Canonesses Regular of St. Augustine of the Congregation of Our Lady (Les Filles de Notre Dame) opened day (extern) classes in their convent schools. Later they also admitted older girls who expressed a desire to become teachers in poor parishes, and gave them suitable preparation for teaching. Only candidates well disposed to learning and teaching were accepted. The Congregation of Our Lady claims to be the first religious community dedicated to teaching as its main purpose (Renault, 40). The education of poor girls served as the nuns' reason for living in community and for vowing themselves to God. Alix Le Clerc, the co-founder with Peter Fourier (1565–1640) and first superior, maintained that, for a member of the congregation, "zeal for teaching was the real subject of her vocation." This priority given to education thus initiated a major change in the work of religious women. Thus Peter Fourier observed about the nuns:

> I have always thought that it was necessary to stress that first of all they were schoolteachers and that, in order to be better prepared for that occupation, they had asked to lead the religious life, for fear that they might think that they were first

[11] At the end of the sixteenth century, the Congregation for Religious in Rome "went so far as to declare teaching incompatible with the cloister and even with the celibate religious" (Poutet 1970, 1:94).

[12] "At this time (1597) special schools for girls were nearly completely lacking. . . . There were some communities of religious women who received boarding students into the cloister; but this necessity of boarding deprived the poor girls from getting a Christian education" (Renault 1919, 35). See also Blanc 1954, 86.

Alix Le Clerc (1576–1622) founded with Peter Fourier Les Filles de Notre Dame, probably the first community of Sisters dedicated to teaching as its main apostolate.

> of all religious who afterwards had asked to teach school. (Pungier, 31)

The Congregation of Our Lady had its own teacher education program:

> After the eighth month of the novitiate, they shall practice teaching in one of the extern classes under the direction of the experienced teachers, who shall be with them in the classroom and who shall make reports on their performance. . . . Each of them, before being employed, shall be diligently examined by the superior, carefully instructed by the supervisor [*intendante*] and prepared as a conscientious worker capable of teaching properly to the little girls everything that we make a profession of teaching in the class to which we assign her. (Renault, 52 and 54)

Their *Constitutions* encouraged the nuns to improve their teaching through research and experimentation:

> In order to improve teaching, they shall engage together in searches for new ways [*conférences d'inventions*] by which they might better have the students advance. . . . The nun teachers shall instruct their students by the methods explained hereafter or by better methods which their community shall discover. . . . They shall learn the methods described in this chapter and in the next twelve. They shall observe each until they have found another method more efficient and effective. (Renault, 55)[13]

A letter of Peter Fourier following his visit to a convent school in Nancy, France, suggests how thorough the teaching nuns were expected to be:

> During my visit to your school, I did not take the time to ask you for some important information on your teaching. I would like to know what method you employ in the instruction of your day students and your boarding students. Please draw up for me a little treatise on this teaching. Let me know in short paragraphs what you do in teaching piety, catechism, prayers, sacraments, reading, writing, spelling, manners, and modes-

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[13]See also Pungier, 36.

> ty. Let me know also the schedule and the hours that you keep. (Renault, 50)[14]

In effect, Fourier was asking the nuns to outline their curricular and instructional plans.

The Sister Teacher

Unfortunately, the extern classes in the convent schools did not draw poor girls. To solve the problem of educating poor girls, a new teaching force emerged within the Church, made up of young women similar to the older girls trained to be teachers by the Congregation of Our Lady. Called Sisters, these dedicated young women, not subject to the requirements that canon law imposed on nuns, formed secular congregations dedicated to teaching outside the cloister and the convent school.

> The Sisters lived in community under the dependence of a superior, with or without vows of religion. This extension of the meaning of the word religious is necessary if one wishes to understand the moving reality of a period in the course of which canon law was being tested. (Poutet 1970, 1:94)[15]

The Daughters of Charity, founded by Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul in 1633 to conduct social agencies as well as Charity Schools, formed the pioneer community of uncloistered Sisters

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[14] See Pungier, 34–36, for other educational similarities between Fourier and De La Salle. A touching account of Fourier in his last days portrays him practicing what he had preached: "In failing health he, nonetheless, went every day to the schools and taught the alphabet to the slowest and most unruly children. He immersed himself in the arduous work of the classroom [*parmi la poussière*]. He heard the spelling lessons of the slowest students with assiduity, patience, and gentleness. He was a model teacher up to the very end" (Renault, 32). Fourier died at the age of 84.

[15] Poutet continues, "The people of Reims could not understand these new religious seen on the streets. They were already concerned about a lax situation of parlor visiting and gossiping that was a growing practice in the cloistered convents. People also feared that they would end up supporting these new religious. These fears explain the constant opposition

(Arnandez, 19).[16] This radical change in the traditional lifestyle of religious women required an adjustment by their neighbors when, for the first time, they saw the Sisters walking to and from the parish schools. The number of Sisters grew rapidly and more than 80,000 were involved in teaching and other works of charity before the French Revolution. These secular congregations assured the recruitment of teachers, released to the primary schools the talents and energy of thousands of young women, and established a tradition of excellence in teaching:

> All the provinces of France had their own congregations, created first for the special needs of the town or diocese and gradually growing and stretching into branches. (Ravelet, 79)[17]
>
> There were a number of religious communities that met the educational needs of girls at the time. They provided a higher type of person as teacher because of the religious sensibility of the women and because they offered a real opportunity of service for a woman other than the eldest daughter. (Fitzpatrick, 208)[18]

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of the city councils to the opening of new convents of religious women and to sponsoring their apostolates."

"Pope Urban VIII was against these innovations in the convents of religious women. He suppressed the uncloistered congregation founded in 1609 in Belgium called the Jesuitesses. When he was requested for approval of the Congregation of Our Lady, his first words were: 'Are they Jesuitesses? We have no wish for them in Rome' " (Renault, 46–47). It was not until 1900 that canon law was changed to include the uncloistered secular congregations as canonical religious as long as these congregations accepted conditions which in effect made all congregations uniform.

[16] The Sisters of Charity undertook teaching in a parish Charity School only after concluding a written contract covering the conditions of their employment, and their community always remained under the control of their own superior. De La Salle was to model his teaching congregation on such a pattern of organization, and he put his teachers into a status not canonically defined.

[17] See also Rigault 1950, 13.

[18] Poutet (1970, 1:95) remarks: "These secular communities of women created a particular religious ambiance with which De La Salle became very familiar."

Louise de Marillac (1591–1660) founded with Vincent de Paul the Daughters of Charity, a noncloistered Congregation of women devoted entirely to the poor and the neglected through works of charity, including education.

The following brief discussion of the secular congregations of Sister teachers will focus upon their impact on primary teacher education.[19] The Daughters of Saint Genevieve were founded in 1636 "to instruct little girls, to train teachers for rural schools, and to shelter and feed these teachers for a time" (Ravelet, 78). The *Béates de Le Puy-en-Velay,* founded in the middle of the century, were concerned with the training of primary teachers. The community house of the Ladies of Instruction (1668), founded to form teachers to spread instruction in villages and hamlets, has been described as a nursery for growing teachers:

> It is a kind of nursery garden [*pépinière*] for the work of education. The novitiate is the meeting place of all these dedicated workers. They educate schoolteachers full of zeal for the Christian instruction of children. Teachers come there to make retreats of eight or ten days. Some remain for a complete year in order to form themselves in their method of teaching. (Guyatt, 25)

The Institute of the Daughters of the Cross (1671) established in Picardy a number of centers for the training of teachers for rural schools and became the prime model of French normal schools. In 1672 Félix de Vialart, Bishop of Chalons, founded the Teaching Daughters *(Filles Régentes)* for the education of schoolteachers capable of working in the rural areas.

> [The Bishop believes] that the best way to improve the supply of teachers and education in general is to establish houses of seculars in which they dedicate themselves to the Christian instruction of young girls. There they form schoolteachers to go out into the parishes. (Quoted in Guyatt, 27)

> In their seminary, to which a school is attached, they receive boarding student-teachers whom they form through courses and through experiences in the annex classes. Outside the seminary they spend time visiting the schools in the villages where they have placed their former student-teachers. According to the

[19]See Guyatt (1960) for a bibliography of the original sources on women's congregations.

> need and to the personnel available, they also open schools. (Quoted in Poutet 1970, 1:468)[20]

In dioceses from Ile de France to Languedoc, other Daughters of the Cross were occupied in pre-service and in-service teacher education. Their ordinary duties included:

> (1) forming schoolteachers for the instruction of young girls; (2) teaching reading, writing, catechism, Christian living, and manual skills; (3) going, two or three together, for several months of the year, to the countryside parishes to supervise schoolteachers; (4) receiving into their houses schoolteachers who wished to make retreats of several days' length; (5) caring for the sick. (Poutet 1970, 1:470)

Nicolas Barré (1621–1686), a spiritual advisor to De La Salle, founded the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence in Rouen, known in Paris as the Sisters of Saint Maur (named after the street on which their house was located).[21] These Sisters were the first organization of Sister teachers for rural schools:

> The community in Rouen was before all else a training ground of apostolic teachers, a center of formation at the same time religious and pedagogical. It responded willingly to appeals coming from outside the diocese. It rejected the cloister in order to maintain better contact with the common people [*milieux populaires*]. It put itself at the service of the parish clergy in order to help in some of its ministerial services dealing with women and girls. It was not against dispersing its members, in groups of two, into the small towns and villages in the countryside in order to propagate the faith. Without requiring

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[20] "De Noailles, who succeeded Vialart as Bishop of Chalons, established in his own village of Sarry a type of normal school. Later, however, as the Archbishop of Paris, De Noailles did not provide protection to De La Salle's seminary for the formation of the rural schoolteachers when it was under attack by the writing teachers" (Poutet 1970, 1:479).

[21] After the death of Father Barré, the Institute was divided in two—the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Paris and the Sisters of Providence of Rouen. The former now has pontifical status, the latter has always been and continues to be under diocesan jurisdiction.

> vows, it demanded the most complete evangelical detachment and renouncement. It even demanded missionary service in foreign countries. (Poutet 1970, 1:533)[22]

Uniquely vowed to and prepared for popular education without obstacle of cloister, these Sisters emphasized the professional training of their members.When Mme De Maintenon opened the school of Saint-Cyran for the daughters of financially embarrassed members of nobility, she invited these Sisters to form its future directresses. Barré always put in charge of the novitiate a Sister "who had a happy disposition for teaching" (Cordonnier 1938, 206).

Nicolas Roland (1642–1678), also an advisor to De La Salle, persuaded Barré to send two teaching Sisters from Rouen to help start Charity Schools for poor girls in Reims (Rayez 1952, 59).[23] This initiative constituted the foundation of the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Reims, composed of both nuns and Sisters. Their work grew to include caring for 30 orphan girls, teaching a total of 1000 girls in the four Charity Schools of Reims, giving retreats to women "who deplored their ignorance," and forming teachers for country schools. An early plan drawn up by Roland detailed his specific ideas:

> A teacher is able to teach well only 50 children. The community ought to limit itself [in 1677] to 20 teachers for 1000 students. It is necessary to have novice teachers who will become capable of succeeding the older teachers. It is necessary that some take sabbaticals, it being very difficult to teach all one's life without some break. The free schools of the whole town shall be in the hands of the Sisters. All the children who present themselves

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[22] Like Barré, De La Salle worked independently of the territorial limits of a particular diocese (Poutet 1970, 1:525).

[23] "Let us stop for a moment on the relationship of Roland and his friend, De La Salle. This is to touch upon one of the most delicate and captivating of the 'sources' of De La Salle. . . . De La Salle is so inspired by Roland in setting up his own foundation that it is practically impossible to separate what comes from one and from the other. The bonds of fraternity which unite them to each other and with Barré are so strong that a profound examination of their methods, of their writings, and of their spirit would only confirm more their indissoluble relation" (Rayes, 57). See also Poutet 1988, 4.

> shall be accepted if there are enough teachers. The council of the town ought not to have any say in the internal administration of the house. The community shall be funded, that is to say, a sufficient capital shall be guaranteed for it..(Poutet 1970, 1:542)

Upon the premature death of Roland, De La Salle inherited the temporary direction of this congregation.

The secular congregations of Sisters made a significant impact on primary education for girls throughout France; however, in contrast to the increase in Sister teachers, communities of men teachers were rare.

The Seminarian Teacher

Charles Démia (1637–1689), educational reformer in the diocese of Lyon, worked for 25 years as regional director of public instruction, opening new schools, regulating existing schools, and preparing schoolteachers (Compayré 1905, 15).[24] In 1666 at the age of 29, Démia addressed a manifesto, *Remonstrances,* to the principal citizens of Lyon, pleading the cause of education for the poor. It reads like a modern appeal for the passage of educational legislation:

> Experience makes only too clear that crimes are ordinarily committed by those who have been badly brought up. . . . The poor, not having the means of educating their children, leave them in ignorance. The concern that they have for earning a living makes them forget to teach their children how to live well. Having been poorly brought up and not having received an education in their own youth, the only thing they can communicate to their children is the disorder that the father has lived in during his youth. (Quoted in Compayré 1905, 112)

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[24] When De La Salle was traveling in the south of France, he "stopped a few days at Lyon to study the work of M. Démia" (Ravelet, 393). In 1687 Démia as director of schools recorded in his accounting journal, "La Sale [*sic*] of Reims in Champagne has sent me for purchase of books, four Spanish doubloons, that is to say, about 80 pounds tournois" (Poutet 1970, 1:711).

> Young boys badly brought up ordinarily fall into laziness and are not able to get a job. They loiter on the street corners, where they spend their time in dissolute talk. They become rebellious, licentious, blasphemous, quarrelsome. They give themselves to disorder, drunkenness, impurity, and thievery. (Quoted in Pungier, 47)

> What is the cause for all the disorders and jealousies in homes, for all the places of infamy in the city, for all the infants left at the Hospice, for all the disregard of public morals, if it is not that we have not had enough care for the education of young girls? We have left them in ignorance, after which they have fallen into idleness and then into lying, disobedience, inconstancy, and finally into misery, which is the most common reef on which the shame of this sex is shipwrecked. (Quoted in Bernoville 1950, 104)

> To give the poor food against hunger or clothing against cold is a passing good deed. To give the poor a good education is a permanent alms. An education received in one's youth is a beneficial possession for a lifetime. (Quoted in Compayré 1905, 71)

Démia founded 16 gratuitous schools with a total enrollment of 1600 girls and boys. In his will Démia stipulated that at his funeral each student should receive either a schoolboy jacket or a schoolgirl apron, and he bequeathed his wealth to the communities of men and women whom he had organized to teach and to prepare to teach (Compayré 1905, 15, 79).

By means of an apprenticeship learned in community, Démia attempted to improve the art of teaching:

> Whatever care that one takes to establish the schools which are so useful and necessary for the public, one will never succeed unless one has good teachers to serve them. One shall never have good teachers unless they have been well-trained and prepared for this function. (Quoted in Compayré 1905, 46)
>
> There is no art the mastery of which does not require spending a length of time in apprenticeship. Shall it be said that instructing youth and directing their minds wisely, which the holy fathers call the "art of arts," does not also require with

> good reason an apprenticeship? One is able to do this apprenticeship well only in a community established for the formation of such teachers. (Quoted in Hermans 1959, 40:212)[25]

As part of his reform, Dēmia personally interviewed all applicants and examined them on their religious practice, teaching ability, and good morals before hiring them or renewing contracts. He required written evaluations of the teachers' conduct by the pastors, frequent inspections of the schools by members of the school board, and regular attendance at monthly pedagogical assemblies:

> There were pedagogical conferences dealing with educational and pastoral perspectives on a deeper level during which Dēmia commented on his *Règlements*. He underscored the excellence of the teaching profession. He invited the teachers to live the three virtues of faith, hope, and charity. He proposed means of beginning the year well and of finishing the year well. The assembly also dealt with a reading of some pedagogical work such as *L'Escole paroissiale*. (Pungier, 51)[26]

Dēmia conceived a new kind of teacher education institution, a seminary for priests in which primary school teaching would be an important program in the preparation for ordination:

> [Seminarians] should pass through the novitiate of the classroom before going on to the priesthood because it is by instructing children that they learn how to instruct adults. (Poutet 1970, 1:710)

In 1672, with the backing of the school board and the archbishop, Dēmia founded the seminary of Saint Charles for young

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[25]Compayré (1905, 46) quotes Dēmia as saying: "Even as they have regulated the clergy in establishing seminaries, so for the formation of the school teachers it is necessary to establish a sort of preparatory novitiate: so holy an employment needing necessarily as much an apprenticeship as the other arts."

[26]Pungier (52) also writes that De La Salle agrees with Dēmia's analysis of the situation: "In order to remedy the moral and spiritual abandonment of children, in order to respond to the social and economic necessities of the city, in order to sustain stable and truly Christian schools, it is necessary to assure the formation of teachers professionally and spiritually."

men aspiring to the priesthood and at the same time consecrating themselves to the primary instruction of children.[27] The program attempted to keep a balance between theological studies and teaching. According to one observer:

> Nothing is more edifying than to see this community leave the house every morning and afternoon at the same time. Twelve schoolteachers, each with an assistant, also a cleric, went into a different quarter of the city to instruct boys who assembled in apartments which their pious founder had rented as schools. (Allain 1881, 251)

The seminarian teachers could stay up to three years with a continuation of another three years with the approval of the school board, but "the principle of passage and not one of installation in teaching remained untouchable" (Chartier, Compere, and Julia, 68).

From its inception, the seminary of Saint Charles was an ambiguous institution: a place of retreat and study for ordination and a center for forming and developing teachers.[28] Despite this ambiguity, however, most historians of education regard Saint Charles as an authentic teacher training institution. Compayré, supported by the French historians A. Bonnel, L. Riboulet, and F. Brunot, asserts that the seminary was a real normal school at least in the

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[27]The seminary of Saint Charles is named after Saint Charles Borromeo, a sixteenth-century Tridentine reformer in Milan, who had great success in the reform of the clergy and the teaching of catechism (Pungier, 50).

[28]"With regard to the claims made in favor of Démia with respect to training colleges, there appears to be some confusion as to the meaning of the word *séminaire*. De La Salle called his establishments for student teachers, *séminaire de maîtres de campagne*. Démia's institution in Lyons was also called *séminaire de Saint Charles*. Although the same word is used in both cases, the sense is different. In the first instance, when it refers to the work of De La Salle, it is accurate to translate it as "training college." As applied to Démia's foundation, however, the English equivalent is "seminary," for it was a place intended for the training of priests" (Battersby, 114). "In a word he [Démia] has been a little Christopher Columbus of the Catholic primary school. J. B. De La Salle, more brilliant in

beginning (Guyatt, 3, 20–22). Cubberley, the American historian of education, however, distinguishes the pedagogical classes held in the seminary from the normal school founded by De La Salle 12 years afterwards:

> The first *class* definitely organized for imparting training to teachers concerning which we have any record was a small local training group of teachers of reading and the catechism conducted by Father Démia at Lyon, France. The first *normal school* to be established anywhere was that founded at Reims in northern France in 1685 by Abbé De La Salle. (1920, 745)

The more recent study by the French historian Chartier of the enrollment records at Démia's seminary gives an objective assessment of the pedagogical function of the seminary:

> Between the years 1679–1693, 427 individuals are recorded as entering the seminary, or an average of 28 each year. For the majority their passage through Saint Charles constitutes one step in the life of an ecclesiastic. Only one-fourth stay more than one year. Three-fourths stay ten months or less; half, not more than four months; one-fourth, a few days or a few weeks. Six of ten become ecclesiastics; three of ten become schoolteachers. (Chartier, Compere, and Julia, 71)

After Démia's death, the school board members judged that the theological studies of the seminarian and the professional preparation of the teacher were incompatible; consequently, they

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success, but coming after Démia, has only been Vasco de Gama. . . .What Ferdinand Buisson said recently of John Baptist De La Salle, the founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, when he represented him as having been a kind of Catholic Pestolozzi, a century before the other, we are able without hesitation to repeat of Charles Démia, the creator of the Little Schools of Lyon. There is between these two men of the seventeenth century more than one similarity. They were both involved in the same school work. But Démia has the advantage over De La Salle of having an advance of a dozen years in projects and ideas. Démia is also superior in that he undertook the care of the instruction of girls as much as that of boys. For the rest he remains at least his equal" (Compayré 1905, 113).

closed the pedagogical program. The most lasting undertaking of Démia was a community of Sister teachers which he started quite tentatively, to see if they could live together in harmony. That community, the Sisters of Saint Charles, still exists.

Démia actively promoted in other dioceses the foundation of seminaries similar to Saint Charles, for which he trained directors. In 1685, with over 20 years of experience in primary teacher education, Démia printed a proposal under the title, *Avis important*, recommending to the General Assembly of Clergy the ambitious project of setting up a seminary for the education of primary teachers in every diocese of France.[29] With this proposal Démia promoted a federalism of autonomous diocesan programs, whereas De La Salle sought one autonomous organization without diocesan territorial limitation.

Démia may have been encouraged to publish this proposal as a way of influencing future legislation regarding the use of wealth confiscated from fleeing Huguenots. As a matter of fact, the 1686 revocation of the Edict of Nantes and Louis XIV's Declaration of 1688 did decree that all the wealth confiscated from the Huguenots was to be used for the education of the "newly converted."

Démia's seven-page proposal is divided into three parts of unequal length. In the preface he makes reference to his own teacher education efforts in Lyon and to those of De La Salle, recently begun in Reims:

> It is certain that if His Majesty creates seminaries to form teachers, he shall procure for all his kingdom the advantages that the cities of Lyon and Reims begin to taste by such seminaries of teachers. (Poutet 1970, 1:714)[30]

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[29] The *Avis important* is in the Bibliothèque Mazarine in a printed collection. Apparently Rigault and Fitzpatrick did not know about this copy (Hermans 1959, 40:211, 214). The law governing the distribution of confiscated wealth explains why Démia stresses accountability for the use of funds.

[30] It is not very likely that Démia was aware of the three different kinds of teacher formation groups (student candidates, Brother teacher candidates, and candidates for rural schools) that De La Salle had functioning in Reims.

In the first part of the proposal, the *Avis important* establishes the necessity for such teacher training institutions:

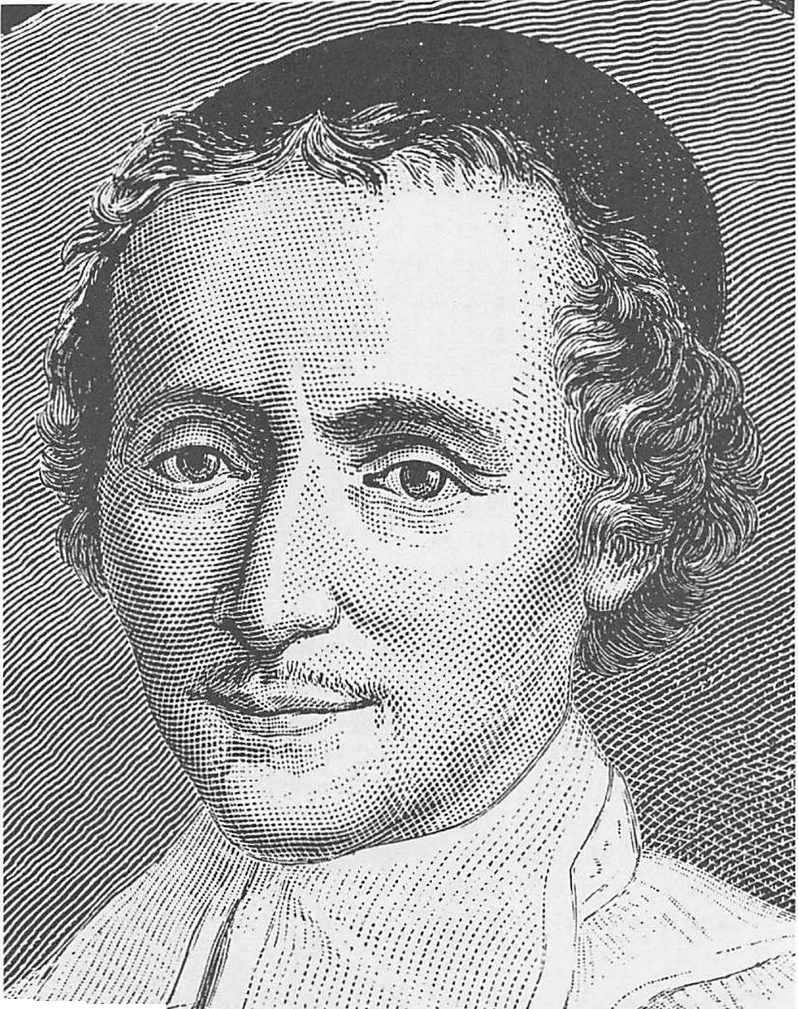
> When there are no such teacher training centers [*pépinières*], the wealthy and influential, but not necessarily the most virtuous, are able to appoint their servants to be the teachers in new schools as a recompense. This practice can have dangerous consequences for the public.
>
> When there are no such teacher training centers, one is obliged sometimes to hire the first teachers who apply.
>
> When there are no such teacher training centers, it is very difficult to make a substitution when a teacher becomes sick or fails in his duty, or when it is necessary to make a change for any reason. However, when one has such teacher training communities, one is able to draw substitute teachers. . . .

The very short second part of *Avis important* outlines the exercises of the program:

> The student teachers should be taught by means of exercises: how to present the catechism well; how to read Latin and French well by establishing, if it is possible, a uniformity of language forbidding certain corrupt patois; how to write well and to calculate well. They should be taught elements of Euclid, plain chant, refinement, politeness, and classroom management (which they could learn themselves in the place where they actually teach). They should be taught child psychology and methodology in order to be better able to teach children the duties of religion, the love of virtue, the horror of vice. They should also be taught the different character types and how to control them, the secrets of the art of making teaching easy and effective, and loyalty to the king. (Hermans 1959, 40:212–14)

The third part of Démia's proposal discusses the means of executing the plan. It describes 12 geographical locations to be used as diocesan pedagogical centers for applicants who are neither priests nor married men but celibates and clerics. The *Avis important* ends with the obligatory dithyramb praising the work of Louis XIV.

Démia never actually presented his proposal. Instead, a more utopian plan for universal primary teacher education was offered



Charles Démia (1637–1689) was one of the predecessors of De La Salle in the education of the poor, and worked for 25 years as regional director of public instruction in Lyon.

by M. Chennevières, "a priest of Paris serving the poor" (Azarias, 250).[31] In a fifty-page memoir written in a prolix style, the zealous priest advocates the establishment of seminaries for men and women schoolteachers in every diocese of France "for the good of religion and the benefit of the state." The following is a précis of what was unrealistically presented to the General Assembly of Clergy:

> In less than 15 days, or three weeks at the most, it shall be very easy to establish these two seminaries in every diocese in France. . . . During these 15 days a general mission should be held in each diocese. These missions will permit the discovery of the men and women recommendable for enrollment in the seminaries and will furnish the occasion to choose priests capable of conducting the seminaries.
>
> The lack of experienced teachers is foreseen as the great difficulty in the beginning; it will belong to the director to discern among the seminarians those most gifted in pedagogical intuition. These gifted will initiate the others in the science of explaining things well.
>
> Located in the episcopal cities, the seminaries will spread their good throughout the diocese. Communities of five or six teachers with their assistant teachers will be formed; smaller communities of two or three in the country. All shall be interdependent through a "grand prefect" in charge of all the communities. Prefects and sub-prefects will be in charge of the small groups. Each community will have a priest to care for its spiritual needs. All will be under the control of the bishop. The seminaries for men and women teachers will be completely separated. . . .
>
> The teachers will live on the retributions [confiscated wealth of the Huguenots] and the payments of the wealthier students attending the Little Schools. . . .
>
> The best disposed students in the schools shall be sent with their parents' consent to the seminary for three years of

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[31]At the time in Paris when De La Salle was opposed by the superintendent of schools, the Writing Masters, and the Masters of the Little Schools, Chennevières had won the backing of the superintendent of schools, the faculty of the Sorbonne, and 25 pastors for his request of letters patent.

formation. They will take a simple vow of perseverance to their bishop like the groups founded by Vincent de Paul. They shall wear a short smock (*soutanelle*), not a soutane. (Hermans 1959, 40:131–37)

Of course, the ambitious proposal with its dreams and contradictions went unheeded. Nevertheless, both Démia and Chennevières exemplify the growing awareness of the need for teacher education in the reform of the primary school. They reflect the aspirations, impatience, and even presumptions of an age.

The Brother Teacher

Except for the seminary of Saint Charles, only a few feeble attempts were made at the organized education of male primary schoolteachers (Ravelet, 89–90). The Bishop of Beauvais attempted to found a seminary for training schoolteachers, but he could not command the necessary funds. During the school vacation of 1597, Peter Fourier brought together four young men, whom he had been preparing for the priesthood, with the hope that they would band together and teach under his direction. Unfortunately, they left him, and Fourier gave up the idea (Renault, 35). The efforts of Nicolas Barré in Rouen, however, met with some success, although it was limited.

Barré, who established two secular congregations of Sister teachers, also founded in Rouen a congregation of Brother teachers, the Brothers of the Christian and Charity Schools. Barré's pedagogical writings, the *Statutes* and the *Maximes,* are addressed to both sexes.[32] "The Sisters (and Brothers) of the institute assure their salvation by their employment" (Maxim 9, quoted in Renault, 104).[33] Furthermore,

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[32]However, a letter of Démia (November 24, 1682) responding to a complaint of a Sister Anne Tientiuriers in Dijon about the lack of politeness (*doux*) of a Brother teacher toward her suggests that the working relation between the Brother and Sister teachers was not always ideal. Barré pacified the Sister by assuring her "that we will not tolerate in our institute any teacher, man or woman, who is not in effect very polite [*fort doux*]" (quoted in Poutet 1970, 1:517).

[33]*Maximes*, dedicated to Mme De Maintenon and published in Paris in 1694, contains 235 maxims for people in general; 54 for spiritual direc-

> [T]he service of the school claims total obedience. The Sisters (and Brothers) shall always be disposed to go to give instruction in whatever place and to whatever person that the superior shall judge appropriate. It shall be necessary to leave all other work in order to be on time for class and to fulfill entirely the program for the day. This is a public service which ought always to be preferred to one's own interest. Any teacher who shall be unfaithful to this article of rule shall be sent away without any hope of returning. (*Statutes;* quoted in Rigault 1937, 102)

Barré personally attended to the formation of the Brother and Sister teachers by weekly lectures on the catechism, monthly spiritual and pedagogical conferences, a series of short personal retreats, and an annual ten-day retreat. His teachers had the reputation for being excellent catechists, and most of what Barré wrote regarding teaching catechism would apply favorably to teaching any subject:

> Teachers ought not to make long discourses. . . . In this exercise it is necessary to avoid all affectation; to leave aside all elevated language; to speak in a simple manner, affable and familiar, in order to be understood as much as possible by the small and those not so bright. . . . Teachers shall be very attentive not to advance any proposition which they themselves do not understand or do not know how to explain. (Quoted in Rigault 1937, 104)[34]

For unknown reasons, the Brothers founded by Barré were not so fortunate as the Sisters and they did not survive very long.[35] However, they had taught in the parish school of Saint Sulpice, and when De La Salle's Brothers of the Christian Schools came to the

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tors; 40 for charity school teachers; 13 for anyone associated with charity institutions.

[34] Barré's text is from an unedited treatise entitled *Avis pour faire le catéchisme utilement.*

[35] "The Barré Brothers have vanished as phantoms" (Rigault 1937, 96). Poutet (1970, 1:518) has uncovered a letter of Louis Tronson, replying to an inquiry about obtaining teachers to go to Canada: "The Minim who organized the men teachers and women teachers was Père Barré . . . , but the men teachers are not succeeding very well."

Nicolas Barré (1621–1686), a spiritual advisor to John Baptist de La Salle, founded the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus in Rouen, and exerted a strong influence in directing De La Salle toward involving himself in the work of the poor schools.

parish in 1688, the parishioners, seeing the girls' school still taught by the Barré Sisters, mistook De La Salle's Brothers for Barré's Brothers. This confusion continued in the minds of some parishioners and partially explains why, in some historical accounts, Barré's Brothers are credited with a longer existence than they actually enjoyed. For example, the oldest gravure of the garb of De La Salle's Brothers of the Christian Schools is identified in Helyot's *The History of the Religious Orders* as that of the Brothers of the Christian and Charity Schools founded by Père Barré ("Le costume" 1911, 58). When the biographer of Barré speaks of the spread of Barré's Brothers throughout France, it is clearly another case of mistaken identity with regard to the Brothers of the Christian Schools (Rigault 1937, 83).

Even with this confusion of identity, the purposes of the two groups are distinct. Barré trained Brothers for rural parish schools, whereas De La Salle trained them for urban schools:

> Barré wished to give to country parishes and to hospices teachers who were needed by the clergy for the Christian formation of children. He aimed at establishing seminaries of teachers capable of preparing parish missionaries recruited among the laity. He was in the line of Bourdoise, of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, and of Démia. De La Salle undertook something else. His objective was essentially school, not parish; urban, not rural. (Poutet 1970, 1:525)

This discussion would not be complete without a few words about Adrien Nyel (1621–1687) and his partnership in education with De La Salle, a partnership which led De La Salle into work with primary teachers.

Superintendent in charge of the instruction of the poor boys at the General Hospice in Rouen for over 20 years, Nyel was tenured in that position by a contract which refers to him as Brother Nyel (Poutet and Vermeulen 1963, 148). In 1666, with the financial backing of the treasurer of France and the poor law administrator of Rouen, Nyel gathered around him six laymen to teach in the hospice school and in the four neighborhood schools. They called each other Brother, according to the practice among fellow craftsmen. The Brother teachers lived in the hospice according to the rules set by Nyel and made promises not to marry while they were employed

as teachers; however, they were not considered religious or clerics (Chartier, Compere, and Julia, 69).[36] One remarkable example of fidelity to his teaching obligations was François Levasseur,

> a schoolteacher at Rouen, who lived without salary from 1667–1707. He was teaching in the parish of Saint Vivien when his old *formateur*, Adrien Nyel, died there on May 31, 1687. He was teaching there still in 1707 when the Bureau of the Poor of Rouen asked the Brothers of the Christian Schools to come to teach there. Then the ancient disciple of Nyel and Barré transmitted to a teacher formed by De La Salle the secrets of the pedagogical methods which he had fruitfully applied and perfected during 40 years. Then he took a merited retirement at the General Hospice. (Poutet 1970, 1:524)

Our knowledge of Nyel's teacher training efforts is deduced from a study of the hospice's financial records and of personal associations tying him with Nicolas Barré. Entries in the financial records show a variance of six to nine Brother teachers each year, although the number of classes remains constant. This fact would indicate that two or three candidates were apprenticed with those who taught under Nyel's direction.

It is likely that Barré, who was a contemporary of Nyel in Rouen and whose Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence of Rouen taught the poor girls at the hospice, was instrumental in getting Nyel to form his group of Brother teachers (Cordonnier, 218–22). A member of Barré's auxiliary of wealthy women (and a relative of De La Salle), Madame Jeanne Dubois Maillefer, then living in Rouen, persuaded Nyel to take a leave of absence from his work in that city to establish similar schools for poor boys, which she wished to sponsor in her hometown of Reims. When he came to Reims in 1679, Nyel was accompanied by one of his apprentice teachers, a fourteen-year-old boy.

Nyel had had 22 years teaching experience when he met De La Salle and agreed to open schools associated with parishes rather than with the General Hospice as in Rouen. De La Salle attributed

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[36]In contrast to Démia, Nyel dealt only with laymen (Poutet 1970, 1:503); see also Viguerie, 60.

the start of his career in primary education to this meeting with Nyel. No doubt the personality of Nyel was an important factor in attracting and involving De La Salle in teacher education.[37] Unfortunately and unfairly, Blain, an early biographer of De La Salle, describes Nyel as "unstable, like a bird of passage flying from one school to another, with no talent to direct men or a community" (Blain [1733] 1961, 7:29). Nyel's success in Rouen for so many years as teacher and administrator proves this judgment to be without foundation. Another, probably more valid assessment, notes that

> Nyel had a gift for organization and was a born teacher who could handle a crowd of children with ease. He was gifted with all those beautiful characteristics that can be found in a sincere layman who is fully Christian. (Bernard [1721] 1965, 63)

From 1679 until 1685, the names of De La Salle and Nyel were inextricably bound together. In the six-year partnership their actions paralleled each other. That Nyel would promote new schools, hire the teachers and teach, and that De La Salle would be responsible for the teachers' formation was clearly understood. A man on a mission, Nyel had an energetic plan for establishing free primary schools and for successfully recruiting teachers. By 1680 he had staffed three schools with six teachers. When Nyel left Reims to found four more schools outside that city, he turned the responsibility for the schools as well as for the teachers' education over to De La Salle.

When Nyel left De La Salle in 1685 to rejoin his Brother teachers at the General Hospice in Rouen, there was no rupture in the personal good will between him and De La Salle. Far from it; Nyel had performed his mission well:

> De La Salle, who esteemed Nyel greatly, tried to have him stay, but Nyel, one last time, forced his hand. On October 26, 1685, according to Lucard and Rigault (April 26, 1685, according to a note in the archives), Nyel returned to the General Hospice

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[37]De La Salle claimed, "The origin of my interest in schools for poor boys was due to two circumstances: my meeting with M. Nyel and the proposal made to me by Mme Croyère. Before this I had never given the matter a thought" (Battersby, 37).

> in Rouen and resumed his position as superintendent of schools for the poor. . . .
>
> It is remarkable to see this intrepid founder of schools after each successful opening cede the place to the disciples of De La Salle. It is no less remarkable to see De La Salle send him some young teachers whom he was not able to prepare sufficiently. [A complete departure from the norm De La Salle followed.] Without abandoning their formation for long, he confided them to Nyel, certain that he would make good teachers of them. . . .
>
> When they separated, De La Salle was no longer the beneficed, well-to-do canon encountered six years before, to whom Nyel said farewell, but a simple priest, founder of a community of poor Brothers vowed to the education of the common people. (Poutet and Vermeulen, 154)[38]

Conclusion

By the third quarter of the seventeenth century in France, the educational reform initiated by the Council of Trent was reaching its effective fulfillment. The climate was right for the improvement of primary schools through the education of better teachers. Around De La Salle there were movements welcoming the idea of such an undertaking (Hermans 1960, 41:127). Primary teacher education in France was coming of age.

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[38]Bernoville (1951) and Merlaud (1955) provide different interpretations of the working relationship between Nyel and De La Salle. Bernoville states that the "departure of Nyel ends a situation which, to tell the truth, was no more than a fiction. All the time De La Salle was the single support and counsel, the director of the teachers, and the founder of the schools." However, Merlaud concludes: "As benefactor and counselor up to this time, De La Salle avoided interfiering in the overwhelming enterprises of his companion Nyel. But since the departure of Nyel, De La Salle saw himself constrained to assume the direction of the work, to be at the same time architect and pilot of the teachers" (quoted in Poutet and Vermeulen, 154 n.51).

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Peter Fourier

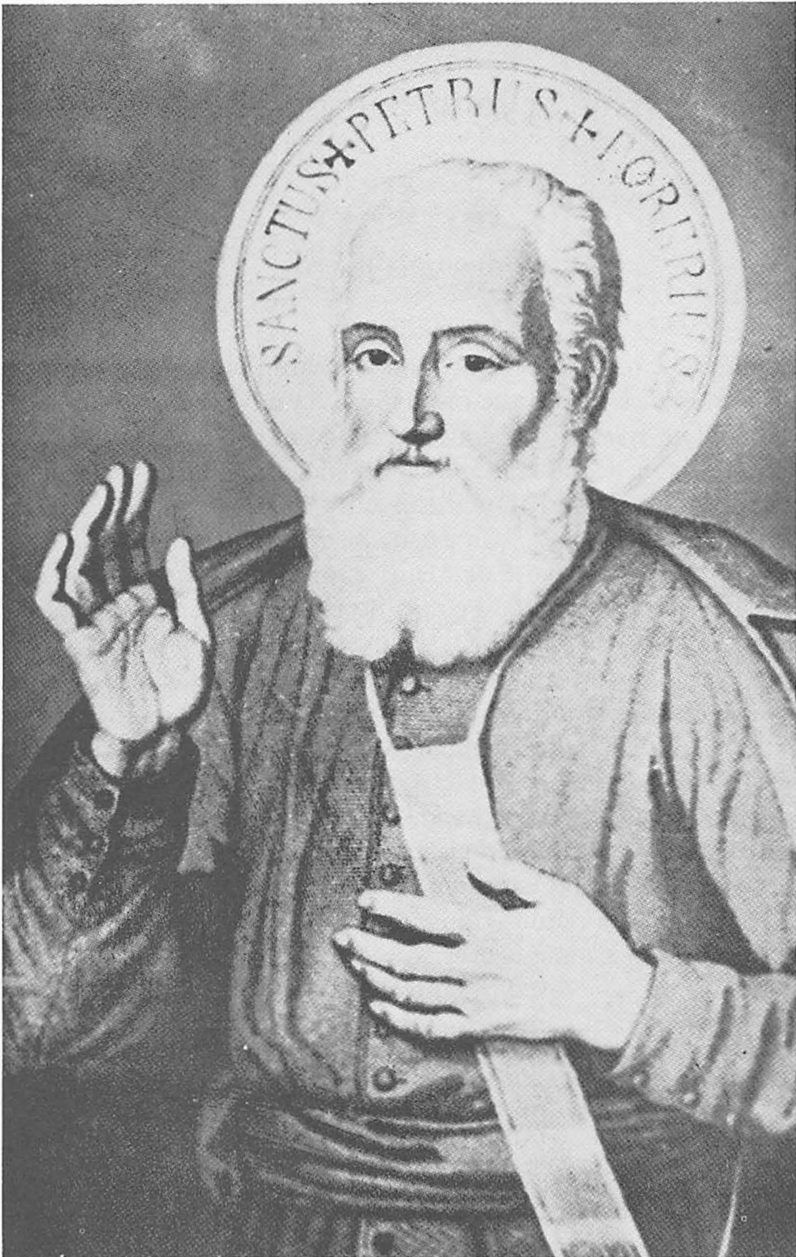
Precursor of John Baptist de La Salle

William Mann, FSC

Sixteenth-century Europe witnessed an eruption of the Christian spirit seldom rivaled in the history of the Catholic Church. In the work of faith-filled and zealous men and women, God's spirit broke forth across the continent, and God's grandeur flamed out in new ministries "like shining from shook foil." Innovators such as Charles Borromeo (the Schools of Christian Doctrine), Vincent de Paul (the Lazarists and with Louise de Marillac, the Daughters of Charity), Francis de Sales and Jane Frances de Chantal (the Visitandines), Angela Merici (the Ursulines), Philip Neri (the Oratorians), and Teresa of Avila (the Reformed Carmelites) come quickly to mind.

This enthusiasm for works of service was the response of the Catholic Church to the Protestant Reformation and the implementation of the challenge of the Council of Trent (1545–1563) to "cultivate the Christian soil and raise new harvests from it." That challenge was met by a serious recommitment to works of charity, by the expansion of the mission of the Church, and by a profound dedication to education (Daniel-Rops 1963, 94). The Protestant Reformation proclaimed Luther's teaching, namely, that the Christian is justified and saved by faith alone, but the Catholic Counter-Reformation reaffirmed the necessity of uniting faith with action. Daniel-Rops explains:

> What God asks [of us] is that [we] should co-operate fully in the work of [our] salvation, certain meanwhile that [our] effort is vain without grace, but equally assured that grace will not be refused [to us] so long as [we remain] faithful. Works therefore are necessary; faith alone is not enough. . . . Considerable stress is laid upon this double role of faith and works in the decrees of the sixth session of the Council of Trent (33 canons in 16 chapters). (1962, 97–98)



Peter Fourier (1565–1640) was a pioneer in the education of the poor in France, and with Alix Le Clerc established Les Filles de Notre Dame, a congregation which later became the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Two particular decrees of the Council of Trent deserve special attention. First, to insure the proper training of young clerics, the Council ordered that seminaries be established in every diocese. Second, the Council obliged all bishops and priests to make serious efforts to combat ignorance among the laity, especially through the education of children. A decree of the Council of Trent, enacted in the fifth session, made teaching obligatory upon the Church: every parish was to have at least one school for the free education of its children. And the great reforming movement led many of the new Orders to devote themselves to this most necessary task.

Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) is credited with having observed that "the training of students is one of the best means of forming true Christians" (Daniel-Rops 1963, 94).

Peter Fourier: A Biographical Sketch

A significant but lesser known educator of this period is Peter Fourier (1565–1640). Teacher, founder, and reformer of religious orders, Fourier was zealous in carrying out the decrees of Trent. He was born on November 30 in Mirecourt, Lorraine (now part of northeast France), of Demenge and Anne (Nacquart) Fourier. His father was a lace and embroidery manufacturer. Caught in a war between France and Lorraine and forced to flee his homeland, Peter died in exile in Gray, Franche-Comté.

Instructed from his youth in "virtue and the conscientious performance of Christian duties," Fourier was ten years old when he was withdrawn from the common school to be tutored at home by a Franciscan Friar. He entered the university at Pont-à-Mousson in Lorraine in 1578. This university had been opened in 1571 and had a seminary founded explicitly to combat any heresy infiltrating the Church as a result of laxity in the spiritual life of the clergy. Pope Gregory XIII put the Jesuits in charge. At the time Fourier attended, the university had approximately 300 students, many of them Catholic refugees from religious persecution. The course of studies included ancient languages, grammar, arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, dialectics, and rhetoric. Instruction was in Latin, with classes ranging in size from 15 to 20 students.

The school enjoyed an extraordinary reputation. Because of the persecution common in certain parts of Europe, the most

influential Catholic scholars found refuge in Catholic France and especially in Lorraine. The teachers at the university included Barclay of Scotland, Gregory of Toulouse, the celebrated French scholar Sirmond, Sutton of England, and Jean Fourier, SJ, Peter's cousin and an intimate friend of Francis de Sales. Mary, Queen of Scots, was a patron of the university (Mast 1966, 48, 65).

Having concluded his initial education, Fourier returned home, and through a curious but providential convergence of circumstances entered at Chamounsey, the lax monastery of the Congregation of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine. On February 25, 1589, he was ordained a priest and, in the autumn of that same year, returned to Pont-à-Mousson to continue his studies towards a Doctorate in Patristic Theology. In 1595, the Cardinal Archbishop of Lorraine, attempting to implement the decrees of Trent, initiated a "complete reform under the authority of the superior general or visitor" of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine (Mast, 67). So committed to this unwelcomed reform was Fourier that some of the less zealous monks attempted to quell his fervor by poisoning him. Consequently, he was advised by the abbot to leave the monastery for his own safety. Instead of taking one of the prestigious and wealthy pastorates offered to him, Fourier chose a poor, lax, and difficult parish in the village of Mattaincourt. His cousin Jean, in words reminiscent of those of Father Barré to John Baptist de La Salle, advised him:

> If you desire honors, riches, pleasure, and comfort, choose Saint Martin of Romenay; if, however, you seek little compensation here below, and are willing to suffer much for the salvation of souls, you must go to Mattaincourt. (Kreusch 1932, 103)

Throughout his pastorate, "he taught as he had resolved to do, more effectively by example than by word" (Kreusch, 113). He loved his parishioners and committed himself to teaching small children every day, beginning a lifelong concern for education. He demonstrated continually a profound regard for the poor.

> Once, at a celebration of the patronal feast [of the parish], . . . he told his people that some misfortune would befall them if they failed to invite our Lord to table with them; he was well informed that our Savior would be pleased to appear if they were prepared to receive Him. . . . They might wait after High

> Mass, and he would take them to a place where they would be certain to find the Divine Guest waiting. After the conclusion of the service, . . . he beckoned them to follow him to the churchyard. Here the curious crowd found the poor of the village assembled, and the pastor made his touching announcement: "Here is Jesus Christ who awaits you; take Him to your tables, and treat Him in a becoming manner. Has He not said, 'What you do to the least of these, you do to Me'?" (Kreusch, 138–39)

In 1621, at the insistence of Bishop Jean de Porcelets de Maillane, the ecclesiastical superior of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, Fourier reluctantly assumed the charge to direct a second attempt at reform of this congregation, of which he was still a member. Having already obtained a pontifical brief nominating Fourier as the Visitator General of the Lorraine Augustinians, the Bishop charged him with the task of attempting a unified reform of the eight Augustinian houses in Lorraine. These houses had been operating independently for some 500 years. The Bishop of Maillane offered a new proposal. Several willing senior members of the community and a few recruits agreed to a one-year novitiate under the direction of Fourier. This approach to reform led subsequently to the foundation at Lunéville of a new religious congregation within the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, the Canons Regular of Our Savior. Under the vow of obedience, Fourier assumed the offices of superior general and master of novices for this new group. Through his guidance, a plan gradually evolved for a varied ministry for the Congregation of Our Savior. The canons were to preach in villages and towns; they were also to be trained in educational practices and principles so that they could prepare schoolteachers and instruct young boys themselves. He wanted these monks to provide free elementary education for boys. To one monk he wrote:

> We must use every means in our power, both heavenly and earthly, in the cultivation of our patch of ground, which, though small in appearance, will bring in much. For the little plants will become large trees and bear fruit to the harvest of either good or evil. . . . Certain religious reap the ripe grain, and they do well. They leave some ears of corn behind, and we must imitate the poor who come to glean after the harvest

> is made and gather up those ears of corn while applying ourselves to the instruction of infants in their ABC's. (Mast, 176)

In approving the congregation in 1628, however, Pope Urban VIII never gave explicit approbation for the canons to teach boys. Consequently, the program of training the canons as teachers was never fully implemented, and after experiencing some initial success, this order did not survive the French Revolution.

A project in which Fourier experienced greater success and to which he wholeheartedly dedicated a greater part of his life was the foundation of Les Filles de Notre Dame, also known as the Congregation of Our Lady. Isabelle de Louvroir, Marguerite André, Claudia Cauvenel, and Alix Le Clerc began this work with him in October 1597. Together with Fourier, these women were interested in providing gratuitous instruction and opened their first free school to poor girls in 1598. Fourier believed that schools for the training of girls were necessary for the strengthening of good Christian families. His intention was to run schools where the daughters of the poor were taught side by side with the children of the wealthy (Daniel-Rops 1963, 290).

The absence of dedicated and steadfast teachers was a problem which plagued the primary school in the sixteenth century and limited the success of initiatives on behalf of the Christian instruction of children. The education of girls in primary schools had actually occurred before the successful education of poor boys. Some scholars have attributed this development to three characteristics of women involved in such an educational endeavor: (1) these women accepted the conventual life more easily than men did, and many of these schools were to be staffed by groups of religious women; (2) these women were generally more attentive to and patient with children than were men; and (3) because these women were not as well educated as men, they were more comfortable with the primitive character of these rudimentary primary schools (Rigault 1937, 28).

When founding Les Filles de Notre Dame, Fourier placed each convent and school under the authority of the bishop of the diocese where it was located. This practice resulted in frequent confusion among the nuns because different convents were under the jurisdiction of different priests, some of whom even advised the nuns to disregard Fourier's advice, and some of whom were interested in

gaining control of the congregation. Division existed among the nuns themselves because communication was not always consistent. Over the course of the years, bishops friendly to Fourier died and were replaced by men less supportive; consequently, some of the convents found themselves directly under the jurisdiction of bishops at odds with Fourier. Other convents of nuns simply chose to follow the advice of the Jesuits who were closer to their local situation than was their founder. In 1636, only 12 convents actually accepted Fourier's *Grandes Constitutions*.

Many ecclesiastics were opposed to the idea of a non-cloistered teaching order of nuns. Consequently, the first cloistered monastery of these nuns was opened in Nancy in 1603 only after receiving approbation from the Cardinal of Lorraine. On October 6, 1616, a pontifical brief authorized these cloistered nuns to instruct both boarders and day students. Fourier always wanted gratuitous instruction to be an essential element of this religious group. On the first profession day, December 2, 1618, he had inserted into the vow formula the following: "I promise never to consent that the instruction of young girls . . . be abandoned" (Mast, 153). While requiring them to remain cloistered, Pope Urban VIII finally gave the nuns official sanction in 1628 to bind themselves by vow to the education of young girls. From this time on, the nuns (Les Filles de Notre Dame) were known as the Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine of the Congregation of Our Lady. Papal approval, in some ways, constituted a major innovation in the existing recognized forms of religious living. Prior to the permission for the Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine to instruct day students, nuns had received only boarders who lived with them in the convent (Battersby 1949, 51).

Fourier had a great affection for these nuns all of his life. He considered them a great consolation given to him by God. At the time of his death, 50 convents of these nuns existed, 24 in Lorraine, 22 in France, and 4 elsewhere (Myers and Brumleve 1984, 69). The School Sisters of Notre Dame, founded by Mother Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger in 1833, venerate Peter Fourier and "have an established devotion to him, whose ideal of education they follow" (Mast, 222).

Fourier wanted to unite the Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine and the Canons Regular of Our Savior into one congregation under the direction of a visitor general chosen from among the

canons regular. There was concern that such a move would arouse old fears in some bishops about losing control of the houses and schools in their dioceses. The matter was settled, however, when Urban VIII was silent concerning the issue of a visitor from among the canons for the nuns. Without Rome's approval, the matter died.

Educational reformer and genius, Peter Fourier preceded John Baptist de La Salle by approximately 80 years. Certainly De La Salle knew of him because Fourier's nuns ran schools in Reims during De La Salle's lifetime. In Reims on the Rue du Barbâtre, next door to the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus, there was a school for girls run by the Canonesses (Battersby 1949, 80). Furthermore, a dozen of De La Salle's relatives were among the nuns of Reims, in particular, two of his own nieces. In addition, De La Salle's good friend, Canon Nicolas Roland, had been one of their confessors (Pungier 1980, 32–33). Fourier was declared *venerable* in 1679, the same year that Adrien Nyel and John Baptist de La Salle met in Reims at the portal of the convent of Nicolas Roland's Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus.

Peter Fourier: His Influence on French Education

Enough has been said of the man; what can be said about the educational contribution of this predecessor of De La Salle? What was his impact upon the course of primary education?

First, like Ignatius of Loyola before him and John Baptist de La Salle after him, Fourier was completely dedicated to an education grounded in the belief that the habits of virtue or of vice learned as a child form and influence the very fabric of a person's entire life. This situation had been both his own personal experience in the home of his parents and in his own ministry in the education of the children entrusted to him. Fourier struggled most of his life to obtain Rome's permission to dedicate his nuns and canons to the gratuitous education of the child. The following excerpt is from a letter written in 1627 by Fourier to Guinet, his representative in Rome, concerning the objections of two prelates in the Roman Curia, Volpio and Fagnano:

> It seems to me that, with regard to the [primary] schools, it would be good to let Saint John Chrysostom talk a little to these

> two gentlemen, Volpio and Fagnano. . . . To follow the advice of Saint Chrysostom it is necessary to begin instructing children as soon as they grasp their beginning alphabet, and not wait till they go to the universities to learn Latin. At that age they are already full of bad words and evil impressions from the bad example and disorderly conversations which they have heard, some from their fathers and mothers, others in the streets, and still others in the very schools which are run in towns and villages by laymen and women, who, to make more money, admit boys and girls pell-mell, and usually do not dare to reprove or chastise them, for fear of turning them away and thus not having so many clients. The result is that, as the boys who do not wish to learn Latin (and the others as well before they go to the collèges) have no body of religious (at least in these parts) who undertake the duty of teaching them, there exists, it seems to me, a kind of vacant benefice in the Church of God, and we humbly ask to have it. (Lawson 1969, 69–70)

Fourier had a very exalted view of these children. As a part of the treasure of God's Church, they were entitled to be instructed in the Christian manner of living.

Fourier was well aware of the significant influence of the mother on the formation of her children, and so he emphasized the importance of the role these young women would play in the education of future Christians. What was involved was not just the matter of the virtue of these individual students. What was at stake was the Christian formation of their children and their children's children. These schools were places where the very character of the child was being formed and reformed; the child was being introduced to "the love of God and of people, and then to the performance of duties to God and [to others] in the exercise of all the virtues" (Lawson, 72). For Fourier, the school was to be a "Christian workshop" (Myers and Brumleve, 72).

A second characteristic of Fourier's approach to education was the decision that all teaching was to be gratuitous and that in his schools the rich were to sit side by side with the poor. These schools were to exclude no one; girls from the country and those from the best society were to be instructed in a common school. The teaching of the rich and the poor in the same classroom was a radical departure from custom in a society preoccupied with the stratification of

its people into different classes. That Fourier followed the approach he did, however, should not be so surprising, especially in light of the sermon in which he had encouraged his parishioners to invite the poor to come to their dinner tables.

The decision that all teaching was to be gratuitous and that even the wealthier students would not pay for their education left the nuns in a financially precarious and often impoverished condition. Because their dowries and the gifts they received never seemed to cover their expenses adequately, the nuns had to take on additional employment such as "laundry work or market gardening or lace making" (Lawson, 70); ultimately, they lived poorly. For Fourier, living a poor life was virtuous: he had voluntarily lived a life of stark poverty himself. In guiding his nuns, he advised them that they must live the life of the poor if they were ever to succeed in teaching the poor (Mast, 137).

Because of this gratuitous instruction of poor and rich, Fourier had difficulty with teachers. Some of the teachers in the tuition schools, for example in Chalons, opposed the existence in their city of a free school which reduced the teachers' means of support (Mast, 150). This same problem plagued De La Salle throughout the entire course of his ministry (Battersby 1957, 180–83).

A third aspect of Fourier's schools concerns the content and method of instruction. The educational program included Christian doctrine, moral formation, reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing (including free needlework), and other "respectable manual work appropriate for girls" (Rigault, 28; see also Myers and Brumleve, 71). The students were taught their morning and evening prayers in both French and Latin. Hygiene and cleanliness were also taught in these schools.

Teaching by the simultaneous method, another aspect of Fourier's pedagogy, is often considered his greatest contribution. Prior to Fourier, the tutorial method of instruction predominated in schools:

> The individual method [of instruction] was feasible in the Little Schools and was almost universally followed because the classes were very small and the teacher could deal with each student separately. (Battersby 1949, 79)

Fourier's approach was significantly different:

> Every school will be divided into three classes. The first of them will be the schoolgirls who read records and other papers and letters written in hand; the second, those who have learned to read in printed books and are already somewhat advanced; and the third class, the little ones just learning their ABC's, who are beginning to recognize their letters and to join syllables together and to pronounce words. (Rigault, 28)

Even within the context of this group-oriented methodology, content was adapted to the abilities of the individual students. Fourier attempted to explain and to clarify his concept of the simultaneous method:

> The students in each class were put into several groups of between 16 and 20, and each group had its own bench and its own teacher. The students within a group would be roughly equal in ability, but they had to keep their places in competition with lower groups, so that the prospect of being moved up or down was always an incentive to study. The students were also paired off within a group, and had regular scholastic duels on the outcome of which their place in the group depended. (Lawson, 78)

For Fourier, this method of teaching was a profitable and effective instrument of instruction. It helped maintain the attention of the learners, economized on time, stimulated self-esteem, and inspired emulation among the students.

Another contribution of Fourier was in the use of visual instruction. In the simultaneous teaching of arithmetic, for example, Fourier directed that numbers be written "on a slate or a board or blackboard fastened to a place so visible in the classroom that all those who are learning may easily see and be instructed together" (Rigault, 29).

Furthermore, the children were to be taught skits or dialogues (a form of morality play) which helped them to visualize moral lessons. Because these dialogues were often performed in church where the adults were present, it could be said that Fourier used such opportunities to speak to the hearts of the parents through the mouths of their children (Mast, 91).

Still another characteristic of Fourier's schools was to provide an education that was both profitable and practical. In addition to

the courses which would be considered appropriate for schooling at the primary level, the girls received training in needlework, in the keeping of accounts, and in "such household skills as they were likely to require" (Lawson, 75). As with De La Salle in the *Conduite des Ecoles chrêtiennes,* Fourier wanted education to be rewarding, useful, and utilitarian (Pungier, 35). This practical dimension of the schooling was integrated with the other more obviously academic purposes of instruction. For example, letters of congratulations or of consolation were written as part of the composition class, and spelling lessons involved the learning of words that would be encountered in the everyday world of adults.

The girls were to be trained in good manners, which were thought to be a necessary part of a good Christian upbringing. De La Salle was also concerned with the teaching of manners, as his *Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* clearly demonstrates. For Fourier, the teaching of good manners was an extension of the teaching of religion. Because of his insistence upon instruction in practical matters, Fourier feared that teachers might lose sight of the underlying principles upon which such instruction was based. Being ill-mannered, one could offend God. These were Christian schools whose purpose was to raise the child in virtue and grace conformable "to the standards of good, courteous Christians living in the world" (Lawson, 75).

Fourier did not limit the education of children to the practices of the efficient schoolroom. Students in his schools were to receive an education which, in a very real way, would prepare them for living their lives fully as Christian adults:

> They should often be reminded that they are not given lessons to learn them and use them only when they are young or still at school, but that they should continue to use them afterwards for the whole of their lives. (Lawson, 71)

One specific application of this principle concerned teaching prayers to children. Fourier intended that the students acquire the virtue of being truly prayerful all their lives and that they learn not merely how to say prayers (Pungier, 38).

Fourier was not always sure of the kind and quality of the women who would join him. In the beginning, many were inexperienced and lacking in knowledge and methodology. Therefore,

early in the life of the Order, Fourier realized the necessity of including pedagogical training in the initial formation of his nuns. At first Fourier himself "visited them several times a week, assisted, instructed, and encouraged them" (Kreusch, 193). He helped them to formulate an evolving methodology, continually to be adapted according to circumstances and new insights, and he encouraged individuals to share their experiences with one another (Pungier, 35). Communities were also to share with one another what was successful in their teaching. In order to improve their own instruction, Fourier encouraged the nuns to visit other schools to observe effective pedagogical methods (Lawson, 77). The formation of teachers and a successful methodology of instruction are striking characteristics of Fourier's pedagogy.

Later, to insure that the nuns would be prepared adequately for their teaching responsibilities, Fourier created the office of mother supervisor. Like the supervisor of schools as conceived by De La Salle, this nun was to visit classes, note the teacher's attitudes, and be concerned with the progress of the students. Fourier made sure that during her entire teaching career each nun received constant evaluation and assistance. The objective of this practice was to keep improving the quality of instruction. Fourier's was "a teaching method always adapted, always more efficient . . . always on the look out for ways and means to improve" (Pungier, 34–35). In the *Vrayes Constitutions* of 1640, Fourier provided his nuns not so much with a manual of prescribed teaching methods as with a means to develop an adaptive pedagogy.

Fourier was constant in urging his nuns to be kind in their dealings with the girls. "Gently, gently, gently," was his advice for teaching children. His own experience demonstrated that the "gentle method" successfully "overcame all fear" in his parishioners (Mast, 10, 98). To the teachers Fourier wrote:

> You shall try to treat them in all things with great gentleness and with the perfect love of a mother, never insulting them, ridiculing them, or saying any word or giving any sign which would show scorn, haughtiness, anger, or impatience. They should not see in your face anything like irritation, severity, austerity, unpleasantness, peevishness, sadness, or annoyance. Nor must you strike them, push them, or snap at them. . . . Thus they will have every reason to approach you with

> complete confidence and without fear, as their teacher, whenever it may be necessary. (Pungier, 38)

However, in spite of Fourier's plea for compassion, there "was to be no softness in the government" of these schools; right authority had to be obeyed. A strictness centered on the good of the children and directed to the glory of God "is consistent with, and in fact makes possible, a universal gentleness, which is Pierre Fourier's spirit" (Lawson, 72–73).

Fourier's pedagogy was deeply rooted in apostolic spirituality, also a characteristic of John Baptist de La Salle's philosophy of education. Fourier was aware that teachers instruct by the example of their own lives and that the "attractiveness of a Christian personality" on the part of the teacher invites the child "to be rich in charity" herself (Lawson, 72). He admonished those charged with the care of children to be "responsible for their salvation as well as your own" (Mast, 99). Finally, he grasped the reality of the close bond which exists between the spirituality of the congregation and its apostolate (Myers and Brumleve, 75).

Conclusion

This analysis of the life, work, and educational contributions of Pierre Fourier has been necessarily cursory. In spite of this fact, it is hoped that the greatness of the man has shown through his words and work. An attempt was made to situate his life within the reforms of Trent, to provide the reader with some insight into Fourier's own education, to highlight the interaction of Fourier with bishops and the difficulties he experienced in establishing a congregation across diocesan boundaries, and to clarify his wholehearted and complete commitment to the gratuitous education of the poor. Perhaps the significance of his contribution to the reform of primary education and the similarity between his work and the work of John Baptist de La Salle have become apparent. Fourier and De La Salle shared a love for the poor, a commitment to gratuitous instruction, a deeply spiritual perspective on the education of children, an insight into the advantages of an evolving methodology of instruction, an awareness of the necessity of the training and ongoing supervision of teachers, a commitment to the simultaneous method of instruction, and an approach to education that necessarily stressed both

The preparation and supervision of teachers and the organization of the classroom were the weakest elements in the common schools for the poor. *The Schoolteacher*. The Newberry Library, Chicago.

the profitable and the practical. Fourier provides an historical perspective from which to view John Baptist de La Salle as a participant in the Counter-Reformation, that is, as a member of an extensive movement of resurgence and reform within the Catholic Church and society of his day.

That Peter Fourier influenced John Baptist de La Salle cannot be doubted. However, De La Salle did not imitate his predecessor. There are in fact clear differences between them (Poutet 1970, 392–405). De La Salle established a non-monastic community; Fourier founded a monastic religious community. De La Salle's gratuitous schools were supported by benefactors and pastors; Fourier's schools were supported primarily by the dowries and supplemental work of the nuns. Fourier established three classes of nuns within his community, the lay nuns, the school nuns, and the choir nuns. In De La Salle's congregation all members were originally

teachers, the concept of lay Brothers emerging later. The vow formula of the canonesses emphasized dedication to the Most Blessed Mother; the focus of De La Salle's vow formula was the Most Blessed Trinity. The nuns began their school day with the teaching of faith, devotions, and the works of mercy; then they moved on to the teaching of the secular subjects. De La Salle's school day began with the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic, ended with the teaching of catechism and the Gospel, and emphasized the intrinsic value of education for earning a living. Daily Mass was to be part of the school day in the Lasallian school; such was not the case for the day students in Fourier's schools.

Peter Fourier, preceding John Baptist de La Salle by 80 years in the work of education, was an extraordinary gift to the Church. God's Spirit enkindled a fire in his heart and, through him, brought light and hope into the lives of many young people. Canonized in 1898, he continues to inspire those entrusted with the education of youth.

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The Parish School

L'Escole paroissiale and *Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes*

Gregory Wright, FSC

Lasallian scholarship has established that in writing *Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes* John Baptist de La Salle was very much influenced by an earlier work, *L'Escole paroissiale.* A comparison of salient parts of the two books can help us better understand the educational traditions into which the De La Salle Brothers entered, and the origins and evolution of De La Salle's own ideas.

L'Escole paroissiale, ou la mannière de bien instruire les enfants dans les petites escoles (*The Parish School, or the Manner of Teaching Children Well in the Little Schools*) (EP) was printed in Paris in 1654 by Pierre Targa, printer for the archdiocese and bonded bookseller for the University, in Rue Saint Victor, at the sign of the Golden Sun, and with the royal authorization. The author was identified only as "a priest from a parish in Paris."

L'Escole paroissiale is a volume of 335 pages and is divided into three parts:

> The first describes the qualities of a good schoolteacher, the suitable setting and furniture for a school, and the characteristics desired in the students who are accepted into the school. The second describes the teaching of piety: in theory, by means of the various catechism lessons, and in practice, through assistance at the divine offices, processions, and the prayers in school. The third describes the methods required to teach reading,

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This essay is based on the article, "*L'Ecole paroissiale,* Une aïeule de la *Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes,*" by Anselme D'Haese, FSC, published in *Bulletin des Ecoles Chrétiennes,* 27 (January 1939): 29–45.

> writing, arithmetic, and the principles of Latin and Greek, concluding with two chapters of how to keep the school register. (EP, Preface)

De La Salle's *Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes* is also divided into three parts. The first is entitled "School Exercises and the Manner of Conducting Them," the second, "Means of Establishing and Maintaining Order in the Schools," and the third, "Duties of the School Inspector." This organization of materials by De La Salle indicates a major difference between his work and the earlier volume. However, numerous and striking similarities exist between these two manuals as well.

Research conducted since 1939 has determined that the author of *L'Escole paroissiale,* who identified himself only as "a priest of a parish in Paris"—an "unworthy priest"—and who gave his initials as "I. de B." was a Father Jacques de Bathencourt, long associated with the parish and the school of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet in Paris. His educational ideas were very much in keeping with those of his time:

> He had printed a collection of instructions for teaching religion based on the feasts of the year, some thirty in number, with each instruction divided into three or four parts. (EP, 129)

> Also, if God gave him His Holy Spirit, good health, and the time, he wished to write a book containing the materials for instruction and the means of imparting them so as to prepare children for their first Communion, along with a description of the ceremonies to be observed on this occasion. (EP, 161)

This emphasis on the author's experience as the basis for writing his pedagogical work is reminiscent of what is said in the Preface of both the 1706 and 1720 editions of the *Conduite* as well as in the Letter of Brother Timothée found at the beginning of the latter edition. De La Salle also emphasizes the role of practical experience in selecting the material to be included in his book and declares that this experience of the author increases the value of the book for those who want to learn how to teach.

The Qualities of the Teacher

In Chapter I of *L'Escole paroissiale,* Bathencourt writes:

> Just as the heart is the first organ to come to life and the last to die, and just as it is the principal center of the soul, so the teacher in the school must be the heart, animated by the Spirit of God, which gives life to all the members of his little family. Therefore, we will begin by considering the qualities the teacher should possess. (EP, 2)

Bathencourt describes these qualities in terms of the theological and cardinal virtues as well as humility, which he regards as the foundation of all the other virtues. Below are a few quotations to provide a clearer idea of his work on this subject.

The teacher must have a vocation and the required qualifications:

> The first act of prudence on the part of the teacher is to see if he has the necessary virtues and qualifications before he undertakes this work. (I know that no one can be perfect from the start, but he must see if he has the disposition to become so.) If he is called by God, his vocation should be made apparent by his aptitude, affection, and zeal for a task which is not highly esteemed by the world. In this matter he should seek the advice of prudent, pious, and learned individuals, after often having recourse to God in prayer. (EP, 15)

The teacher must have sufficient knowledge and know how to teach:

> The teacher must not only have the theological and moral virtues, but he must also know the subjects he is to teach in his school, not only for his own use, but to be able easily to instruct the students in these areas. (EP, 16)

The teacher must demonstrate authority in dealing with the students and their parents:

> He must acquire and maintain a great credibility not only among the children but also with the parents so that what he says or does will have such an authority that no one will doubt that he is right when he does or says something. This requires that he show great prudence and discretion in all his words and

> actions, particularly when he speaks with or confers with parents and when he instructs the children. (EP, 17)

The teacher must be content with what it is possible for the children to do:

> Thus the teacher of writing must give an example of words well-formed and perfectly executed while he accepts the fact that his students will not write perfectly to begin with. Likewise the teacher must do perfectly all that he teaches his students while accepting the fact that each of them is doing the best he can—which might not be much—particularly if the student does not show a complete lack of ability to do the work required. (EP, 15–16)

The teacher must try to understand each child's individuality; in other words, he needs to understand and to apply the principles of developmental psychology:

> What will be of great help in directing the children is that the teacher be prudent and make the effort to know the character of each of them, and this is the reason for having conferences with the parents. . . . With this in view he will carefully observe the new students admitted to the school so as to become familiar with the character of each: if he has a gentle and peaceful disposition, . . . if he lacks self-esteem and dreads the rod or the ferule, if he gives up easily, if he grumbles, . . . if he is arrogant. (EP, 19–20)

Education in patriotism, so much emphasized today, was not unknown to Bathencourt, who gave it religious overtones:

> Never will he allow the students to speak against or to repeat what they have heard said against the king, the queen, the princes, and others having authority in the state. Rather he will reprimand them severely and even punish them if they have spoken maliciously or with disrespect, while reminding them of the honor due to those whom God has chosen to rule us. (EP, 39)

Specific and detailed emphasis on the virtues required of a teacher is one of the features which distinguishes Bathencourt's pedagogical work from that of De La Salle. However, other writings

of De La Salle, particularly his two sets of *Meditations,* indicate that he was aware of the virtues required by a teacher and that he placed great emphasis on acquiring and developing them. However, the only specific mention in the *Conduite* of the virtues of a good teacher is found at the end of the 1720 edition (De La Salle died in 1719), where twelve of them are listed. A further discussion of these virtues had to await the work of Brother Agathon, which appeared only much later in the century. Nevertheless, it is clear that De La Salle would have agreed with much of what Bathencourt had to say on this subject.

However, De La Salle would not at all have agreed with much of what Bathencourt had to say about corrections:

> The ordinary punishments are: (1) to strike the fingers with the rod to make a student get to work; (2) to strike the hand with the rod; (3) to spank a child with a greater or lesser number of blows, according to the gravity of the fault; (4) to place a student in the "prison" for two, three, four, five, or six hours—but this punishment is for habitual offenders or for more serious faults, such as stealing, impurity, or serious disobedience to one's parents; (5) to put a student in the place of the donkey and to dress him in the donkey's attire, which includes an old rag or a cloak, a broom he is to hold, a cardboard head of a donkey which he is to wear on his head, and a poster which says "donkey" that he is to wear, while the other students laugh at him and call him a donkey and even lead him to the entrance of the school. (EP, 45)

John Baptist de La Salle was more discreet and showed himself a better pedagogue in this area. His different approach to discipline is quite evident in several places of the *Conduite,* which give specific details on the types of corrections allowed in his schools (*Conduite* II:V). His position on punishment, as outlined in the *Conduite,* indicates that he was more interested in eliminating the need for corrections or in suggesting how they might be administered so as to be most helpful to the student. Furthermore, De La Salle provides good reasons for *not* correcting certain students even though they might seem to be deserving of punishment.

On the question of rewards, Bathencourt's basic ideas on this subject as well as some of the practices he suggests and the con-

siderations which inspired them are consistent with our contemporary educational thought:

> 1. The students should be assigned places each according to his achievements and his knowledge, and this should be done when a student first enters school and every two weeks thereafter, on the basis of good conduct or hard work, and even more frequently if a student's daily performance is good, so that he will perceive that it is possible to gain or to lose standing in class.
> 2. Diligent students should be publicly praised if this will not make them vain . . . depending on the preference of the teacher in this matter.
> 3. The students should be given some rewards of small value such as holy cards, larger or smaller in size, colored or otherwise, embellished with decorated paper, and so on, as each deserves. When such cards are signed by the teacher, they can also excuse a child from punishment with the rod, one or more times. . . . And because these objects have little value in themselves and are prized only because of how they are given, the teacher should award them with a certain amount of ceremony, showing the students these prizes, be they medals, rosaries, or books, just like a merchant who is trying to make much of his wares, regardless of their intrinsic worth. (EP, 47)

What Bathencourt focuses on here is treated by De La Salle in three different places in the *Conduite*. In Part I, Chapter III, Section 3, and Part III, Chapter IV, De La Salle discusses promoting the students, giving the teacher a minor role in this process, while assigning a much more important role to the Inspector of Schools, who has the final say. A comparison of the two manuals of pedagogy suggests that De La Salle would have promoted students in a more orderly and systematic fashion. In Part II, Chapter IV, of the *Conduite,* he considers rewards, covering this subject succinctly while expressing ideas similar to those in *L'Escole paroissiale* about the types of reinforcements to be given and the students who should be recognized and encouraged by this means.

The School and School Furnishings

Concern for hygiene and the condition of the classroom for teaching was not so rare in the seventeenth century as some current scholars may think. The next portion of *L'Escole paroissiale* develops some of the ideas educators then had on these matters:

> The school should be as isolated as possible, on a side street and not on a main one, but still as close to the parish church as possible, so that it will be easier to bring the children to the divine services.
>
> The room in which school is taught should be large and spacious, keeping in mind the number of children it is to contain. . . . It should have a large number of glass windows or at least openings covered with translucent paper. And if possible it should have openings on three or, better still, on four sides, because in summer, when it is warm, one cannot have too much fresh air. . . . During winter, when it is cold, these windows should be closed to keep out the cold . . . ; however, the teacher should then assign a student to open them as soon as the students leave the room, . . . and during pleasant weather they can be opened even during the lessons. (EP, 53–54)

The simple but adequate school furnishings should include objects of piety such as a large crucifix, pictures of the Virgin, Saint Joseph, the patron saint of the diocese, Saint Nicolas, patron of students, and the patron saint of the parish, and, if possible, a large representation of the last judgment and of heaven and hell. "In various places in the school, posters which could suggest good intentions to the students could be placed, attached to large pieces of cardboard" (EP, 57).

The school should also contain coatracks, shelves, nails and pegs, and a large cupboard for the students' books, the teacher's effects, the school registers, and the large pictures used for teaching religion. The classroom should also include a closet with a lock for storing writing paper, the students' books and writing materials, and other items which the children have to buy and bring to school.

L'Escole paroissiale further directed that the school should be furnished with writing tables and chairs sufficient to seat at least sixty percent of the students, small benches for those who are learning only to read, special seats for new students so that the teacher

can study them for the first few days. The "donkey seat" should be located behind the door in the most undesirable place in the room. Finally, the room should include a small bell, a container of holy water, a tablet to record those who are absent, ink bottles, two guides for writing, baskets, brooms, and a dust pan, and, next to a large stove, benches where the students can sit to keep warm, as well as materials to maintain a fire.

The 1706 edition of the *Conduite* has nothing to say about the school or its furniture, but Part II, Chapter IV of the 1720 edition covers this topic in detail. The similarities and differences in what *L'Escole paroissiale* and the 1720 edition of the *Conduite* say on this subject are interesting. Both works insist that the classroom be as suitable and as hygienic as possible. Each text reflects a practical orientation in its attention to the details of the classroom and its fixtures. In discussing such matters, both authors obviously speak from their own experience or that of others.

Admission of Children to the School

L'Escole paroissiale directs that children should not be indiscriminately admitted to school and carefully distinguishes among the children of heretics, those from another school, students previously admitted and punished, those of the parish, those from another parish, the deserving poor, and girls, who were never to be admitted into a school for boys. In each of these groups, the author devises some judicious rules.

The teacher should strive to know as much as possible about the children and their parents:

> It is necessary to insist that in Paris and in other large cities, children should not be admitted to a school immediately, at a time when nothing is known about their parents. They should be put off for a time, during which inquiries can be made among people in their neighborhood so as to learn more about [the parents]: where they come from, their situation, their morals, the work they do, why they want to send their children to school, as well as many other things. (EP, 75)

The questions to be asked of the parents seeking admission of their child to the school are quite detailed:

> The following things are to be asked of the parents before accepting their son into the school: (1) the name and surname of the child, that of his father or of whoever is responsible for him, where the latter lives and what his employment is, and in which parish he lives; (2) the age of the child; (3) if he has previously attended school; (4) for what career he is being prepared, for example, the Church, the army, law, medicine, business; (5) the ability he has to read or to write Latin or French; (6) what the good or bad traits or morals of the child are; (7) if he has some physical disability or sickness that will keep him from attending school or the divine services on Sundays and the feasts of the Church; (8) if he knows his religion, especially the catechism of the diocese; (9) if he has been confirmed or tonsured . . . and how long it is since he last went to confession; (10) if he is a godfather of some child. . . .
>
> Based on what the parents have told him, the teacher will discuss with them what he can do that will be most helpful to the student . . . in view of the vocation for which he is destined. (EP, 76–78)

The teacher should give the parents prudent suggestions for improving the education of their son. He should tell them the time when classes begin, the titles of the books needed in church and in the classroom. Furthermore, he should inform them that their son will take breakfast and lunch in school and that he should be properly dressed. He should urge the parents not to give their son any money, not to be surprised when he is corrected, and not to listen to any complaints he might make against the teacher. Finally, he should ask them not to withdraw their son from school or to allow him to be absent. The teacher should ask the parents to come back, in two or three months time,

> so as to discuss together the progress their son is making either in school or at home, and to look for the best means of turning him from evil while directing him to what will be most useful for helping him to make progress either in Christian virtue or in his studies. (EP, 88)

These early schools did not force the students to conform to a fixed pattern of behavior but sought rather to attend to the needs

of each learner, a notion consistent with contemporary theories of child-centered education.

It is evident from *L'Escole paroissiale* that concern for the student as an individual was an important aspect of the educative process. Such concern is demonstrated by the procedures by which a student was accepted into school and by the manner in which he was treated. The detail with which Bathencourt describes the process of interviewing a perspective student is also characteristic of the *Conduite*. Part III, Chapter II of the 1720 edition lists the inquiries the School Inspector is to make before accepting a student. In addition to this initial concern for the individual student, the *Conduite* expresses equal consideration for the students with whom the Inspector will deal once they are accepted into the school. Both Bathencourt and De La Salle demonstrate this two-fold concern by devising appropriate means for showing such solicitude when considering which students to accept into their schools.

The System of Student Officers in the School

Some of the most interesting articles in *L'Escole paroissiale* describe the different student officers of the school. The author wants the students to be involved in the efficient operation of the classroom: "It is an excellent means to get them to listen, to learn, and to study, because the students will learn much by teaching others" (EP, 90). Because the students earn such honors through industry and good conduct, these positions are an important means of motivating them. Positions in the classroom are rotated on a regular basis in order to encourage all the students:

> The highest officer among the students of Latin will be the emperor. His tasks will be to take the recitations of all the other students on his bench, require them to do their assignments, and record absences. The second officer will be the censor. If there is a second bench of less advanced students, the top two students of this group will be called the consul and the decurion. (EP, 91–92)

Those studying Latin are to write a composition each month to show general mastery of the language as well as of the declensions and the conjugations. The teacher should grade these assignments

on the basis of writing, spelling, and general excellence. In the middle of the month, a writing exam should be scheduled, after which students should move up or down in their rank in the class as the teacher rewards diligent students and indicates the deficiencies of others.

Among the students learning writing, the first officer will be the praetor, the second, the prince of decurions, and the third, the teacher of proceedings. Each shall have as an assistant one of the first three senators. Finally, based on the number of benches, the teacher will select six additional senators, six or eight decurions, and a greater or lesser number of prodecurions who will take recitations and record absences.

In addition to these positions, the teacher will appoint other class officers on a monthly basis, taking into account the ability and the attitudes of the students.

> The first of these officers will be the intendants, two of the oldest students who have shown a great fondness for school. Their task will be to help the teacher supervise the other officers, instruct new officers in their duties, and from time to time call attention to the failings of these office holders. The teacher will pay particular attention to them, often confer with them in private, encourage them to do their work well . . . and order all the other officers to obey them. (EP, 94)

Two supervisors or observers will diligently note those who talk in school, those who do not stay in their places, or those who recite too loudly. Every day they will lead the other students to church, keeping them in rank two by two; furthermore, they will observe how the boys enter and leave the church and how they pray while there. From time to time the teacher will confer with the observers in private.

> The teacher will retain them in this position as long as he thinks proper, replacing those who are lax in their work and rewarding those who do well with some prize that recognizes their assiduity and their concern for the good order of the school. (EP, 96)

In each corner of the classroom, the teacher will assign an admonitor, one of the best and most modest of the students, who

will call out the names of those boys who speak, hum, waste time, or do not write. The teacher then will make the delinquents kneel in the middle of the room.

In addition to the decurions, the teacher will choose 12 of the best students as tutors to whom the decurions in turn will recite every half hour in a very soft voice. "This method could lead to having as many teachers as students; for this reason, the teacher will take care to show all of them the correct way of hearing recitations" (EP, 98).

Two prayer leaders having strong voices, chosen from among the best behaved and most pious students, will lead the prayers. The teacher will change these students periodically in order to give many students a chance to pray with special devotion.

> Every two weeks he will select three students who know how to read well to make the spiritual readings on Sundays, feasts, and the vigils of the more solemn holy days. One of these students will stand near the reader to prompt him in a low voice when he mispronounces a word and to take his place if a reading is excessively long. (EP, 99)

Every two weeks, two sturdy students will be chosen to clean the classroom floor; they will be called the sweepers. Every day in summer and every other day in winter, the sweepers will go to the fountain to get water and to bring it back in a large bucket carried on a pole.

Two writing officers will be chosen each month to prepare all the materials needed for the writing lessons. Two collectors will go to the parents of the students to obtain the money required to provide all the writing students with ink and the powder needed for blotting.

Every two weeks the teacher will choose two porters who will alternate the task of opening and closing the school door. They will admit only the students. "The porter will bolt the door shut before prayers begin and when the teacher is preparing to punish some student with the rod. And he will not open the door for anyone until the punishment is finished" (EP, 103).

> The teacher will also select an almoner who will after breakfast or lunch receive what the students want to give voluntarily to the poor. If ordinarily he wears a hat, he will remove it and

> go from place to place, very courteously holding out the collection basket and then placing it at the feet of the crucifix or in front of it. The teacher will distribute what has been collected to the poor students. (EP, 103)

The list of student officers found in Part II, Chapter VIII of the 1720 *Conduite* is quite long, although it is briefer than the one found in the 1706 edition. Both lists, however, are considerably shorter than that found in *L'Escole paroissiale.* While most if not all of the student officers called for by the *Conduite* assist the teacher with non-instructional matters, the positions described in *L'Escole paroissiale* are more often than not directly involved in the teaching process. One effect of the student officer system was to reduce to a minimum the active and explicit work done by the teacher.

While De La Salle maintained the tradition of student involvement in the regular functioning of the classroom, he assigned the student officers necessary but non-teaching functions, and he left the instructional task to the Brother. De La Salle may have been aware of and able to profit from Bathencourt's experience of the ordinary student's ability to assist the teacher. In any case, based upon what the *Conduite* says about student officers, it seems evident that De La Salle was influenced by the Brothers' experience as well as by the prescriptions found in *L'Escole paroissiale.*

A very important student office in *L'Escole paroissiale* was that of the student visitor. The teacher chooses some of the most reliable and best mannered boys to visit on his behalf the homes of the students, about once a month, to inquire about their lives and conduct. For three or four years this system was tried in several schools with such success that Bathencourt recommends it to all. According to this plan, whenever parents enroll their children, they should be told that these visits will take place. For a school of 100 students, the teacher should select eight visitors. The area of the city served by the school is divided into four quarters; two visitors go together to make the visits in each quarter. At the beginning of each month, these student officers set aside several holidays or feast days in order to visit the students' homes. The teacher should tell the visitors to be very polite while making these visits:

> If they have mantels, they should wear them on these occasions. After knocking at the door of the house and greeting

> whoever answers, they should ask politely to speak to the father or mother of the student. If someone is willing to talk with them, the visitors will enter the house. After offering greetings, the elder of the two will explain that they have been sent by the teacher to ask the parents if they are willing to respond to four or five questions about the behavior of their child. If the boy's father is not at home, they will leave without saying anything about the purpose of their visit. The visitors will never inquire about the behavior of a child from a servant or a step-parent because of the petty jealousies or the lack of affection such people might have for a child who is not their own. They should not question siblings nor aunts nor uncles unless such relatives are guardians of the child. (EP, 105)

Bathencourt makes further recommendations. The visitors will inquire about five matters: (1) if devoutly and on his knees the student prays to God in the morning and evening in an oratory which they will ask to see, and if he says grace before and after meals; (2) if he is greedy or deceptive in the house; (3) if he obeys promptly and without complaining, doing all that he is told to do; (4) if he quarrels with or strikes his brothers and sisters or the servants; (5) if he leaves the house without permission, and if he returns promptly after school (EP, 105–07).

Having heard the responses, one of the two visitors writes down what was said without any addition or deletion. If the parents are satisfied with their son, he writes down an "S." Then, after saying goodbye, the visitors exit in a polite manner and proceed to the next house. When they have completed their visits for the month, they present a report to the teacher.

This system makes it possible for the teacher to monitor the students both at home and in school. Because the task is very important, the teacher will exercise great care in selecting and supervising student visitors, who will continue in their position as long as they are performing their duties well.

When the parents come to see the teacher, he will inquire discreetly about what they might have said during the visits so as to be certain that the visitors have reported honestly what was told them. If they have not been faithful to their responsibilities, the visitors will be removed from their office and punished in keeping

with the gravity of their deceit. From time to time the teacher should reward those who have done this job well, encouraging them both in private and in public, stressing the importance of their doing well, and assuring them that God will reward them for all of the good they have accomplished.

When discussing the office of the visitors, Bathencourt mentions its importance and how successful it has been in practice. Did these comments of another successful priest educator influence De La Salle to include the visitors for absentees among the student officers listed in part II, Chapter VIII, Article 9 of the 1706 edition of the *Conduite?* If so, why are these officers not mentioned in the 1720 edition of his work? Possibly, De La Salle discovered in the intervening years that the idea was impractical and that the responsibility was too great to assign to students. The Prefaces of both the 1706 and 1720 editions of the *Conduite* stress the benefit of "several years of experience" in determining what was to be included in the *Conduite.* Because the Brothers' experience with the visitor for absentees may not have been successful, it is possible that De La Salle decided to eliminate such an office from his schools. If that was the case, this episode shows that De La Salle tested educational practices such as those described in *L'Escole paroissiale,* distinguished what was successful from what was not, and retained only what had produced the better results.

L'Escole paroissiale recommends that if there were 100 students in the school, the teacher was to be assisted by an aide who would prepare examples for the writing class, listen to the students read, show them how to do computations with counters, supervise the children, and perform other tasks which the teacher would assign.

The Teaching of Religion

The second part of *L'Escole paroissiale* is devoted to education in piety. Religious instruction was given every day in a catechism lesson during the last 15 minutes of the school schedule. Instruction dealt with confirmation, confession, and prayers at Mass. During this time, under the direction of the teacher, the students memorized two or three questions from the catechism; the lesson concluded with a short story appropriate to the subject of these questions.

The ordinary catechism, according to Bathencourt, was taught on Wednesday afternoon and Sunday before vespers (EP, 122). The students prepared for this lesson by listening for 15 minutes to the reading of a spiritual book. Prior to the lesson the teacher carefully reviewed the material and prepared for the class by a quarter hour of prayer in his room or in church. When the teacher entered the classroom, the students recited the *Veni Creator* and several other prayers. Then the teacher had them recite their lesson for a half-hour, beginning with the youngest children. Next, during three quarters of an hour, in very simple words, and using a mixture of questions and answers, he explained a portion of the summary of the principal mysteries. After a short recess, he presented the material of the new lesson and briefly explained its meaning. After this period of instruction, the teacher allowed the students to ask each other questions and to argue with each other, thus gaining points which could lead to their moving up or down in their rank in the class. During the last quarter hour, the teacher briefly summed up the entire lesson, finishing with a story suitable to the topic and then exhorting the students to show their love of God by doing better in the future.

Each year, prior to every major feast, the teacher instructed the students about the feast in what was called the "Catechism of Mysteries." Bathencourt identifies over 30 feasts that required such special presentations, and in this way the liturgical year provided the framework for religious instruction. On the day of the feast or its vigil, a student read to his companions for a quarter hour from a pious text related to the feast. Following the saying of the regular prayers, the teacher presided over the usual recitation of catechism. The questions chosen for the lesson dealt with the mystery to be explained. After that part of the lesson,

> the teacher will briefly and clearly explain the content he is to teach, while trying to relate his explanation to a picture that also dealt with this mystery. . . . He will make use of a long pointer when explaining a specific point so that he can indicate the part of the picture about which he is speaking. . . . During this time the children are to sit facing the picture; they may even go closer to it in an orderly way to examine it better and then quietly return to their regular places. (EP, 132)

After completing this explanation, the teacher questioned the students, summarized the lesson, and closed with an exhortation suitable to the feast.

Religious instruction was given an important place in the curriculum because it contributed to the purpose of the school. *L'Escole paroissiale* and the two earliest editions of the *Conduite* reveal interesting similarities and differences in the teaching of religion. However, the differences are not significant. Both authors insist that teachers should develop an effective method of instructing the students in the Christian faith and implement it consistently, and each describes such a method of religious instruction. In the teaching of religion, neither Bathencourt nor De La Salle allowed the teacher much initiative.

According to *L'Escole paroissiale,* every year five lessons are to be devoted to preparing some of the students to receive the sacrament of confirmation or to remind others of its excellence. Bathencourt recommends that in Paris the students be confirmed on the Saturdays of the Ember Weeks because of an edifying custom related to the sacrament. When students from Paris were confirmed, a priest put a cloth around their foreheads after they had been anointed with the holy chrism. Their teacher, in a moving exhortation, then encouraged them to wear this headband for two or three days. After this period of time, the teacher, if he himself were a cleric, removed the cloths and, after wiping the students' foreheads, placed the headbands in the sacristy of the church.

> He should frequently remind them of the promises they made to God and of the graces they received through this sacrament, recommending them to thank God every year on the day on which they were confirmed by means of some prayer, alms, or other work of piety, so as to stir up in themselves the Holy Spirit they had received. (EP, 141)

Regarding the sacrament of penance, Bathencourt writes that it is appropriate for children who are seven years of age or older to go to confession before each of the six principal feasts of the year.

> In addition to these six ordinary confessions, those who are ten or twelve or older should be encouraged to confess more often, for instance, in preparation for the feasts of Our Lady . . . and

> more so when they are experiencing some problem in regard to a sin they commit frequently. For this reason the teacher should take enough time, particularly prior to these six general confessions, to instruct them thoroughly to receive this sacrament in a worthy manner. (EP, 141–42)

Bathencourt explains at great length the material to be taught and the methods of instruction. First Communion was received after confirmation, generally when the child was at least 12 years old, sometimes even 13 or 14, depending on his knowledge and piety. Preparations began at the beginning of Advent and continued on all succeeding Sundays as well as on two or three days a week during Lent until Holy Thursday. The teacher was to encourage those who were to receive their first Communion to fast on several days during Lent and to direct each of them to make a general confession of his life. In this way, those attending school were prepared very carefully, interiorly as well as exteriorly, for this very holy and important action.

One thing which here distinguishes Bathencourt's work from that of De La Salle is the former's very detailed discussion of the preparation for and the worthy reception of the sacraments of penance and Holy Eucharist, topics not mentioned in either of the first editions of the *Conduite.* However, in several places in his other writings, particularly in his *Instructions et Prières pour la Sainte Messe, la Confession et la Communion, avec une Instruction méthodique par demandes et résponses pour apprendre à se bien confessor,* De La Salle deals with these matters at great length. A perusal of this volume will show why De La Salle would be considered more moderate in matters of religious instruction than Bathencourt.

After dealing with religious instruction, the author of *L'Escole paroissiale* turns to the practices of piety such as vespers on Saturday, the offices on Sundays and feasts, processions, and prayers:

> Because, according to the practice of the Church, Sundays and feasts commence with first vespers on Saturdays or the vigils, the teacher shall take all the children to vespers on these days. . . . Afterwards, he gives them his weekly exhortation, encouraging them to make three acts of virtue by thanking God for the graces received during the week, asking his pardon for the sins they have committed, and asking God for the grace

> to begin the new week well through a proper observance of Sunday. (EP, 166, 172–73)

On Sundays and feasts the children were to be in school by 8:00 A.M. The teacher had them recite their prayers and then instructed them in religion until the time for High Mass. The students participated in the procession before Mass and prayed together in the choir of the church under the supervision of their teacher, who wore a surplice and at times sang at the lectern. After the Gospel, before the sermon or the offertory, the teacher led the children outside for a short time to take their breakfast. He then returned with the older students and some of the others to listen to the sermon. When it was finished, all returned to their places to assist at the rest of the High Mass. In the afternoon, all the students returned to school for the catechism lesson, after which the teacher took them to vespers.

In Part I, Chapter IX, Article 5 of both the 1706 and the 1720 editions of the *Conduite,* De La Salle describes the catechism lesson given on Sundays and holy days; in Part I, Chapter VIII, he indicates what the Brother and his students were to do during Mass. De La Salle focuses on what was to be done during the Mass which the students attended daily; he does not concentrate only on the Sunday Mass as does Bathencourt. In spite of some differences of opinion on these subjects, the two authors concur on two important issues. First, the catechism lesson is an essential part of the students' observance of Sundays and holy days. Second, a determined effort is made to teach these children to participate in the liturgy and to behave appropriately in church. Evidently, teaching children to observe Sundays and holy days had priority in the curricula of the time.

In the next sections of *L'Escole paroissiale,* Bathencourt explains at great length how to teach the students to serve Mass and what to do on certain days such as those during carnival time and Holy Week. In addition, he describes the manner in which the students should take part in the procession.

Bathencourt lists the prayers to be said in school before and after a lesson, both morning and afternoon. He also prescribes prayers on the hour:

> When the hour strikes, all the students will rise, remove their hats, join their hands, and turn toward the crucifix. This pro-

> cedure will be followed for all prayers said standing. One of the prayer leaders will make the sign of the cross, saying "In the name. . . , " while all the other students do the same. Then he will say, "My God, give me the grace. . . , " which all the other students will repeat. Then he will say the Hail Mary. . . . This prayer is to be recited whenever the hour strikes but not the half or quarter hour. At this time, the prayer leader will ring a bell, at the sound of which all will rise and take the position described above. During catechism lesson, however, this prayer will not be recited. (EP, 228)

These prescriptions in *L'Escole paroissiale* for hourly prayers suggest that the practices described by De La Salle in the *Conduite* Part I, Chapter IV, and long a distinctive feature of the Lasallian school, were not innovations on his part. Other special prayers were said for confession, Communion, and Holy Orders. A penitential psalm was recited each day during Lent, and grace was said before and after breakfast and lunch. A special prayer of adoration was said when the Blessed Sacrament was encountered in the street. Other prayers were offered for the sick, the deceased, a newly baptized person, and during a thunderstorm.

Bathencourt accords prayer an important place in the educational program of his school just as De La Salle does at a later date. In this way each educator seeks to teach children to pray by making prayer a regular and frequent activity during the school day. The schedules of prayers suggested by the two authors are quite similar, in spite of some relatively minor differences.

Some Methodological Concepts Found in *L'Escole paroissiale*

Bathencourt urges teachers to know well the students they are teaching. If students are very young and of limited cognitive ability, they learn more slowly and require more time; consequently, the teachers should give them less to learn at any one time, encourage them to repeat more often what they have learned, and show much patience with them. But if a student has a good mind and sound judgment, he is to be encouraged to do more, particularly if he has good will (EP, 235).

Bathencourt's sensitivity to developmental issues is reflected in his ability to integrate concern for the individual student with an

understanding of classroom realities, an insight gained from his 17 years of experience as a teacher. De La Salle expresses similar ideas in *Règles Communes,* Chapter VII, Articles 11 and 12. Continued practical experience in the classroom forces the teacher to plan realistically to instruct the neediest and the least gifted of the children.

In the Little Schools (the parish primary schools) of 1654, reading began with Latin and was learned by going from letters to syllables, then to words and phrases. Thirty years later, John Baptist de La Salle decided to begin with reading in French, but not without encountering opposition even from his friends.

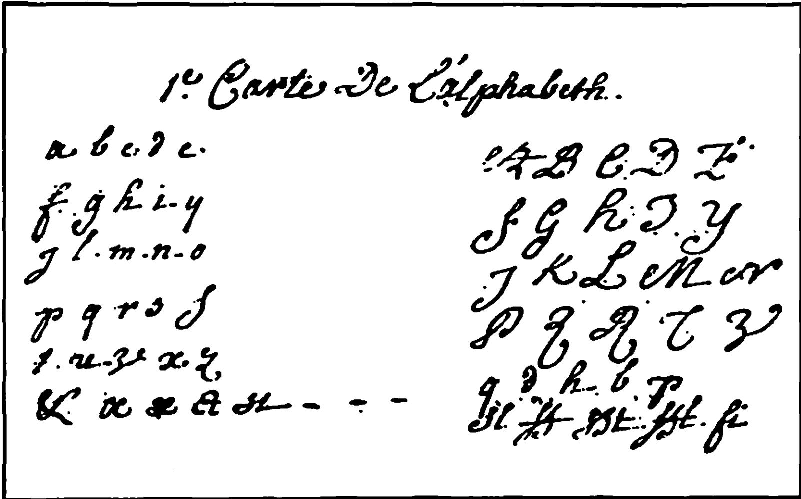
Because writing was an important subject in the schools, *L'Escole paroissiale* includes many prescriptions regarding the quill pen and how to sharpen it, the ingredients to be included in the ink and the blotter paper, and the quality of each, and the manner in which the students should sit and hold the pen. When correcting the students' writing, the teacher is not to try to improve everything at once; he is to focus upon only a few errors so as not to confuse the students nor to impede their learning.

Bathencourt recommends that the students copy practical materials such as

> different forms of bills and receipts, of bonds and debentures, of leases on land, and so forth, that is, business papers used in the type of work for which each student is destined. Training him in the current business practices while teaching him to write will be very pleasing to his parents. (EP, 270)

Spelling was learned by carefully copying models and books. From time to time, at leisure, the teacher would correct the assignments of one student or another. This method was effective, especially at this time when spelling was not standardized and books of grammar were rare.

In the *Conduite,* Part I, Chapters III, IV, V, and VI, De La Salle describes at length how to teach basic subjects such as reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling. The emphasis upon the teaching of writing and the importance of learning this skill is also characteristic of *L'Escole paroissiale.* In this regard, the two manuals of pedagogy have much in common, even though in the area of reading, Bathencourt deals with the teaching of Latin and De La



An alphabet wall chart similar to those used by the Daughters of Charity and later in the schools established by John Baptist de La Salle.

Salle with the teaching of French. It is not clear whether Bathencourt's experiences as well as those of De La Salle and the early Brothers led to the development of similar teaching methods or whether both educators borrowed such ideas from still earlier works.

Arithmetic was taught either by using counters or by writing with a pen. By using 36 counters (pieces of copper or old coins) whose position on the table determined their monetary value, the student learned to add and to subtract as well as to make correct change. The student also learned both Roman and Arabic numerals, the four operations, and the method for checking each one, as well as the "rule of three." The arithmetic program was limited but adequate for the times. In arithmetic, the teacher wrote with white chalk on a piece of black wood, a modest beginning to the development of instructional technology.

Bathencourt advises the teacher to guard against the misconceptions of some parents:

> The teacher risks doing considerable injustice to certain students to whom he proposes to teach Latin if he has listened too readily to their parents who, as a general rule, know nothing about

> education. Initially, he should be sure that parents understand fully what is involved, not only in the importance of the subject, but also more especially in the intellectual abilities and study habits demanded by a subject such as Latin. (EP, 283)

Before admitting any of the students to advanced studies, the teacher should carefully select the best students. The following conditions should be observed:

> Such students should have good judgment, a well-developed memory, some desire to learn, and the money necessary to continue their studies. They should know how to write well enough so that every day they will be able to do their lessons neatly and correctly. . . . Some very capable students who are quite young but lack the financial resources can be admitted to higher studies if their parents so request. Because students cannot begin to practice a trade until they are 16 or 17 years old, the younger, gifted children can use this time to study the classics. Then, if it pleases God to call them to a higher station in life, they will be ready to make the required studies. (EP, 284)

The children arrived at school before the teacher and took their places in the classroom:

> The door of the school will be opened a half hour before 7:00 A.M. so that the more interested students will not have to wait. Each will enter the school in a quiet manner, remove his hat, take holy water, bow to the holy pictures and then to his fellow students, bring his book bag to where he can hang it on the wall, take his regular place without making any noise, and then get to work. At this time, those learning to write will put their papers in order and trim their pens while the others will study their lessons without talking or playing. During this time, the observers and intendants will take note of those who are out of order. The writing officers should be among the first to arrive so that they can prepare the paper, ink horns, and blotting powder, each in its place. . . . The observers and intendants will also see that all these things are in order so that, after the teacher has arrived, none of the students will have to ask for ink, blotting powder, or paper, something which would cause disorder. (EP, 315)

During the meals, the teacher instructed the students on how to eat politely and neatly:

> During breakfast he will allow the students to speak in a low voice, but during the rest of the day he will, with the help of his admonitors, have them keep silence. . . . He will give the names of those who are absent to their respective decurions; if a boy does not live too far away, he will send a student to his house to find out why he is not present. If the absent student lives at a distance, the teacher will make a note of his absence and direct some student to go to his home after the lesson to find out what happened to him. (EP, 322)

The students were to come to school at 7:00 A.M. if they were learning to write, if not, no later than 7:45 A.M.; and they were to leave at 11:00 A.M. In the afternoon, they were to arrive at 1:30 P.M. or 1:45 P.M. and leave at 4:30 P.M. or 5:00 P.M., according to the season of the year.

Both *L'Escole paroissiale* and the *Conduite* require the students to arrive earlier than the teacher. Although this practice was taken for granted, it was the subject of concern, as both books show in their lists of student officers and their duties. But if this practice was as time-honored as it seems to have been, it apparently did not create any behavior problems, a fact which in itself provides some interesting insights into the students, the class officers, and seventeenth-century France.

The final article of *L'Escole paroissiale* deals with the school schedule, to be recorded in a planbook which allotted time to the various aspects of the program:

> . . . on it will be indicated what is to be done every year, every six months, every month, and every day. The teacher can make those changes required by his locality, assigning to each the time he thinks is needed. This schedule will be written on a large piece of paper or cardboard and attached to the wall so that it can be consulted easily.
>
> Every year the teacher will revise his schedule prior to the beginning of the school year on the feast of Saint Remigius (October 1), making sure he understands it well. He should examine all the pictures, charts, and desks so as to repair or to replace anything which is deficient. In order that God will

> bless this work which is so holy and which is about to begin, he will review the faults he might have committed during the past year, humbly asking God's pardon for them while determining the means to correct them. (EP, 333–34)

In contrast with the stipulations of Part II, Chapter VII of the *Conduite, L'Escole paroissiale* gives the teacher the freedom to establish and to change the daily schedule of the school. However, the different approaches Bathencourt and De La Salle take on this issue are easy to understand given the context in which each one writes. Both educators do share one conviction, the need to have an established daily schedule which is known to the students. Such a practice suggests that, having learned from past experiences, each author attempted to improve the quality and the functioning of the schools with which he was involved.

L'Escole paroissiale continues:

> Every month, as he sees fit, the teacher will change the class officers or continue them in their positions, carefully considering the progress each has made in catechism, reading, writing, Latin, and so forth. He will look for the means to help each one do better and to correct the faults he has committed. . . .
>
> Every week he will make a list of the more common faults of the students individually and as a group, so as to call attention to these problems during the catechism lesson and to find means to correct them. . . . (EP, 334–35)

Contemporary teachers who frequently complain about excessive paper work may wonder about not only the amount of time all this record keeping required of the teachers of the seventeenth century, but also whether these teachers were faithful to these responsibilities. An examination of the two articles dealing with the registers in Part II, Chapter III of the 1720 edition of the *Conduite* and the six articles dealing with the same topic in the 1706 edition will show that a devoted teacher did perform this task. In requiring the teachers to complete this work, both De La Salle and Bathencourt are consistent. Each stresses the need for the teacher to know the students as individuals, despite the large size of the class. If this conviction was to be more than an ideal, something practical had to be mandated. By requiring the teacher to keep such registers as specified

in *L'Escole paroissiale* and in the *Conduite,* even to the extent of invading the privacy of the student, the teacher was provided with an effective means of getting to know his students as individuals. As insignificant as it may seem, such a practice represented significant progress in pedagogical methods.

Final Observations

Both Bathencourt and De La Salle were personally familiar with the school, and so were able to organize a classroom designed for students of differing levels of development in such a way as to control them and to teach them effectively. In such a school the teachers had to possess certain qualities to be successful. They had to have a Christian concern for all the students and had to provide special attention and assistance to the most needy and to those having the most difficulty in learning. Teachers had to devise efficient methods to know large numbers of students as individuals. They needed to establish and maintain good relations with the parents so that the parents themselves could cooperate and become co-workers in the education of the children.

The students also contributed to their own education in ways which helped the classroom operate efficiently.They shared responsibility for good order and discipline.They assisted with the required record keeping and some of the procedures used in the learning activities of the school. The students also participated in the cleaning and upkeep of the room. The students were expected, above all, to learn about their Christian religion and how to participate properly in religious activities whether in school or in church; they were given ample opportunities to learn by doing.

Emphasis was given to religious instruction and to practices directed toward the moral development of the student. Furthermore, the schools provided a limited but basic program of studies in other subjects that were taught in a manner suited to students who might be in school for only a very short time, usually three years at most. In an effort to give children the minimum skills they would need throughout life, programs were adapted as much as possible. Besides giving students instruction in the basic academic areas, the school program was designed to teach students the social refinement and politeness they needed as well as concern for others less fortunate

than themselves. In this manner, the social aspects of living were also emphasized.

Both *L'Escole paroissiale* and the *Conduite* accept as a principle that if children are to live, work, and learn together, order and discipline are required. Some disciplinary methods as well as the severe punishments allowed on some occasions may seem extreme by contemporary standards, yet the experiences of both Louis XIII and Louis XIV when they were boys suggest that such discipline was thought appropriate even for future kings.

Such, in broad terms, was the educational tradition into which John Baptist de La Salle moved and of which he become a part when in 1680 he assumed responsibility for the first teachers of Adrian Nyel in Reims and for the schools they were directing. *L'Escole paroissiale* seems to have played a significant role in De La Salle's awareness of important educational issues.

For the Christian Education of the Working Class and the Poor

The Heritage of John Baptist de La Salle

Gregory Wright, FSC

John Baptist de La Salle, the first child of Louis de La Salle and Nicolle Moët de Brouillet, was born in Reims, France, on April 30, 1651. His career corresponds almost exactly with the Age of Louis XIV, and De La Salle's achievements, significant enough in themselves, can be ranked as one of the many outstanding events of this epoch. In time he made his mark as a pioneer in the field of popular primary schools, as an innovator in educational matters, and as founder of a Catholic teaching congregation, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

The family into which John Baptist was born was well established in Reims, and Louis de La Salle was a respected member of the community. As the eldest son, John Baptist might have been expected to follow in his father's footsteps. But from the age of five or six, the young De La Salle manifested an interest in the clerical state, and at the age of eleven made known his desire to become a priest. His parents, regarding these qualities as a sign of the call of God, decided not to oppose his wishes in this matter.

Although he began his studies for the priesthood in 1667 by entering the seminary of Saint Sulpice in Paris soon after his sixteenth birthday, it was not until 1678, when he was 27 years old, that De La Salle was ordained a priest. The death of his mother and soon after that the death of his father had forced him to leave Saint Sulpice after a stay of only about 18 months. Consequently, beginning in 1669, he continued his studies for the priesthood and his work toward a doctorate in theology at the University of Reims. Shortly after he was ordained, he completed his studies and was awarded his doctorate. By this time De La Salle had already impressed his fellow citizens of Reims by his fervor and holiness of

life, and he appeared both ready and willing to exercise the ministry for which he had prepared himself.

The Catholic Church occupied an important position in France under the ancien régime. It owned one-fourth to one-third of the national wealth, possessed a strong administrative structure, and enjoyed great prestige as the first of the three estates into which the kingdom was divided (Orcibal 1947, 2). The Church during *le grand siècle* also performed important functions for French society in general. All of what were then described as works of charity, and which today are called social services, were under the control of the Church. The clergy and religious constructed the needed buildings, provided the personnel to perform charitable works, and more often than not generously contributed of their wealth to finance such undertakings (Sicard 1893, 457–58).

Another function which was then under Church control was education. Church property, personnel, and wealth were devoted to this task and in each diocese the bishop was the local superintendent of public instruction. The Church considered this work one of her time-honored functions, and numerous documents testify to the interest of the clergy in education, to their application to the task, and to their success in establishing several hundred primary and secondary schools, some for rich and others for poor children (Sicard, 438–39). Against this background it is now possible to look more closely at the educational activities taking place in France during the age of Louis XIV. De La Salle would become deeply involved in and have a very significant influence upon some of these activities after 1680.

Schools for the Poor in the Kingdom of France

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, as a result of the Wars of Religion, the French schools for the poorer classes were lacking in money, teachers, and buildings (Rigault 1937, 15). After the restoration of peace under Henry IV, there was great interest in reestablishing and improving these institutions. Peter Fourier, co-founder of the Canonesses Regular of St. Augustine of the Congregation of Our Lady; Francis de Sales and Jane Frances de Chantal, co-founders of the Visitandines; Vincent de Paul, founder of the Congregation of the Missions (the Lazarists) and with Louise

de Marillac, the Daughters of Charity; Cardinal Richelieu, the great minister of Louis XIII; Grignon de Montfort, apostle to the peasants in the Vendée; and Nicolas Barré, founder of the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence—all these innovators led the way.

During the reign of Louis XIV, this educational work was continued, and clerics such as M. Jean-Jacques Olier, founder of the seminary of Saint Sulpice, Charles Démia, a pioneer of primary schools for poor boys in Lyon, and Nicolas Roland, founder of the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Reims, tried zealously to expand the movement toward popular instruction, and great strides were made in the education of the poorer classes (Rigault, 24; Barnard 1918, 1; Daniel-Rops 1958, 337–40).

As a rule the greater number of the popular schools were intended for boys, although religious orders of women worked diligently for the education of poor girls. Anne and Francoise de Xainctonge, who, among others, were quite successful in opening elementary schools for poor girls, founded a congregation of sisters to staff their schools (Barnard 1918, 31–32). The fact remains, however, that, if a parish or town could afford only one poor school, generally it established one for boys.

Poor schools were usually conducted in buildings never designed for education. If the teacher were a lay person, classes might be held in a private home. The main subject in the curriculum was religion, and daily attendance at Mass was the custom. Other subjects included reading, writing, and simple arithmetic, all of which were taught on a one-to-one basis. In keeping with medieval tradition, the students were first taught to read Latin, and only if there were time, French. Thus, few students could read their mother tongue (Rigault, 35, 57, 59–60; Barnard 1918, 2).

The teachers in these schools and the schools themselves were under the supervision of the superintendent of schools (*le grand chantre* or *écolâtre*), an official of the cathedral, who acted for the bishop of the diocese. Custom allowed parish priests to open any number of charity schools for the poor of their parishes without having to consult this official, but everyone else needed his authorization to open a primary school or to teach in one. The superintendent of schools and the Guild of Writing Masters were jealous of their monopoly of primary education. They possessed much power

and were ready and willing to use it by taking legal action against any real or imagined infringements of their rights.

Not all schools gave the same education; some taught only writing, others only one or two of the subjects mentioned above. Furthermore, qualifications for the teachers varied. Parents of the students complained frequently about individual teachers, many of whom were totally incompetent to conduct a school or to educate children. However, school administrators found it impossible to find better qualified personnel for this work (Léaud and Glay 1934, 99–100; Rigault, 35).

French Religious Orders and Their Schools

In the early seventeenth century the founding of several congregations of teaching sisters led to some improvements in the girls' schools, but the qualifications of the lay teachers remained unchanged (Barnard 1918, 31; Rigault, 31; Daniel-Rops, 338). Charles Démia attempted to effect similar improvements in the more numerous schools for poor boys, especially in Lyon. Under his direction a few priests began teaching in these schools, but these clerics were not numerous and they did not remain at this task very long. Most of the teachers in the poor schools for boys were still laymen who lacked even basic qualifications. Because of this situation, the influential Vincent de Paul, with the support of Canon Roland and M. Adrien Bourdoise, began a campaign to improve the recruiting and training of teachers as the first step toward making the schools for poor boys more effective. M. Bourdoise, a priest long associated with the seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet in Paris, founded a League of Prayer to ask God to provide a corps of qualified teachers for this task (Rigault, 73–74, 76–77).

Boys of the aristocracy and the richer bourgeoisie had more adequate educational facilities at their disposal. They might be exposed to a curriculum similar to that of the poor schools, but either in a Little School (a parish primary school) or with a tutor at home. This phase of a boy's education lasted at most three years (Barnard 1918, 3–5). Then he was ready to enter a secondary school conducted by the Jesuits, by the Oratorians, or, for a while at least, by the Cistercian nuns at Port Royal, an educational center achieving significance about 1635.

At that time under the influence of Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, Abbé of Saint-Cyran, a number of *messieurs* or *solitaires*, followers of Jansenism, gathered near Saint-Cyran and dedicated themselves to the instruction of boys on the secondary level. Within a very short time the secondary school associated with Port Royal was well-known and highly regarded in French educational circles.

The Jesuits, however, were the most successful in the work of secondary schools and had the greatest number of such schools in France. The Oratorians also enjoyed a high reputation. Port Royal's one school existed for less than 15 years and trained not more than 250 students (Compayré 1879, 167, 172–73, 210–11; Barnard 1913, 28-29, 165–66). All three communities gave an education stressing religious instruction and the classics, with greater emphasis on Latin than Greek. While the Jesuits showed themselves most opposed to the use of French, the Oratory and Port Royal encouraged the use and the teaching of the vernacular (Léaud and Glay, 109–10; Rigault, 30–31; Compayré, 218–19, 251–53). In this respect as well as in its teaching techniques, Port Royal was an educational pioneer. The small number of its students enabled it to experiment freely both with subject matter and with methods of instruction (Compayré, 36).

Girls of these same social classes were not so fortunate. Prejudice against the education of women limited the schools available to them as well as the programs of these institutions (Léaud and Glay, 140). Following an established custom of Catholic convents, Port Royal had a school for girls, and Mme De Maintenon established at Saint-Cyran a school for girls of the nobility. Both were exceptional schools for their times (Léaud and Glay, 147; Barnard 1913, 167). But they were primary rather than secondary schools, and their programs of studies were more suited to preparing a girl to be a good nun than a good wife or mother. While representing a new trend and, in some ways, furthering the education of girls, they emphasized moral and spiritual rather than intellectual training (Barnard 1913, 170–72; Léaud and Glay, 148).

Just as the schools for the people of means were superior to those for the poorer classes, so also the teachers in the former were of a higher quality. In the Jesuit and Oratorian schools, the professors were all members of the respective orders, trained in Greek and Latin, which, after religion, were the principal subjects taught (Compayré, 183–84). Port Royal could depend upon the services

of the *solitaires* who lived near the convent, some of whom were both well-educated and deeply interested in their work. In addition, great care was taken in selecting those *solitaires* who were to instruct the young (Léaud and Glay, 107–8; Saint-Beauve 1954, 431–32). In the school at Port Royal as well as at Saint-Cyran and the other convent schools open to girls of better families, the teachers were nuns or women of culture, quite capable of teaching the relatively limited program offered (Barnard 1918, 191; Compayré, 362). Consequently, the need to improve the teaching staffs of these schools was much less pressing than the necessity to improve those found in the popular schools.

One thing which all these schools had in common was their ultimate purpose. All sought to make the students good Christians, as each understood this term, with a view of furthering their salvation. Richelieu interested himself in the education of the masses, not only to provide the state with trained and obedient subjects, but also to supply these individuals with some necessary religious instruction (Barnard 1913, 208; Rigault, 19–20). In the work of Charles Démia and other clerical or religious pioneers of popular education, the religious objective was uppermost. However, as far as the common people were concerned, another important although secondary reason accounted for interest in their instruction. A literate individual, trained to do useful work so that he could support himself and his family, was an asset to the state. Popular education could produce such subjects and increase their number (Rigault, 64, 67).

The Jesuits and Oratorians, hoping to regenerate society from above, attempted as their first goal to make their students from upper social levels good practicing Christians. Because they also knew that their students would later occupy high and responsible positions in the government, in business, and in society, these clerics sought to train their students' minds and to give them the social graces their future positions in life required. The more immediate educational goals were not forgotten (Léaud and Glay, 103; Compayré, 237).

Sharing these same ideas, the Abbé of Saint-Cyran considered a Christian education as a special grace from God and the teacher as a co-worker in the Divine scheme. This co-founder of Jansenism, however, was aware of the high positions to which the students of Port Royal could aspire and of the influence they could exercise.

Serious efforts were made to give the youths in his charge the training they needed (Mayer 1919, 508–9; Saint-Beauve, 427). Efforts were also made to prepare the students to be good nuns or capable wives and mothers. The teachers also emphasized the practical aspect of their students' education (Barnard 1913, 172; Léaud and Glay, 148).

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), Louis XIV favored the founding of Catholic primary schools in the Huguenot areas, mainly as a means of converting Protestant children to the Catholic faith. He considered these schools essentially centers of religious education. For this king, as for most of his subjects, the lesson in religion was the most important part of the school's curriculum, particularly on the elementary level. He also took note of the good which could result from any secular instruction they might provide (Rigault, 41), but if other instruction had some value, it was only of secondary importance when compared to religion. This feature of the elementary schools in seventeenth-century France must be kept in mind when examining the educational achievements of the Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, John Baptist de La Salle.

De La Salle: Educational Innovations and Teacher Training

By the time of his death in 1719, John Baptist de La Salle had left his mark on the field of education, particularly but not exclusively on elementary education. In at least two major aspects of the elementary school, its curriculum and its method of instruction, he had initiated significant change. At the same time, in at least two other critical areas of educational activity, the language of instruction and the training of the teacher, he had proven himself to be a pioneer.

In spite of his notable accomplishments De La Salle considered his involvement in the area of popular education to have been the result only of a series of chance incidents, or, as he was to tell M. Gense of Calais and the Abbot De La Cocherie of Boulogne at a later date, of the intervention of God under the appearance of such incidents. As a pious canon, De La Salle had established a close friendship with Nicolas Roland, like himself a former student of Saint Sulpice and a canon of Reims. Following Roland's death, De La Salle assumed responsibility for the orphanage and the schools

for poor girls founded by Roland and for the order of nuns Roland had established to conduct these institutions. This involvement brought De La Salle into contact with a wandering schoolteacher, Adrien Nyel.

Nyel had come to Reims to open a school for poor boys, a venture in which he sought the assistance of De La Salle. The young priest helped Nyel open several such schools, and when, as was his custom, Nyel went elsewhere to found yet other schools, De La Salle became more deeply involved in what he considered a work of God in order to ensure the schools' survival. Through this series of unanticipated and unplanned events, De La Salle found himself engaged in a work not of his choice, but one in which he would achieve great things even from a merely human point of view.

At first it might seem that the Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools took the primary school of his day simply as it was and made no effort to effect any significant changes in it. The program of studies was quite similar to the curriculum found in the Little Schools and the Charity Schools for the poor which already existed; in this matter De La Salle was not an innovator. Yet in Chapter VII of the *Règles communes* which prescribes how and what the Brothers should teach as well as how they should act with regard to their students, there are several indications of important changes.

> They [the Brothers] shall pay continual attention to three things in school: first during the lessons to correct all the words which the student who is reading pronounces incorrectly, second to make all those who read at one time follow in the same lesson, third to have the students keep silence meticulously during all the time of school.
>
> They shall teach all their students according to the method which is prescribed and which is universally practiced in the Institute, and they shall not change anything in it or introduce anything new into it. (De La Salle 1947, 31–32)

Here De La Salle informed his Brothers that they were to abandon the individual method of instruction and replace it with the simultaneous method. The former required a teacher to instruct each student individually in each subject, repeating the same lesson for each student. This method greatly limited the number of children

John Baptist de La Salle meets Adrien Nyel. This meeting at the <loor of the convent of Roland's Sisters radically changed the life of De La Salle and led to events which have had a lasting influence on Christian Educa tion. From an 1886 engraving by Gerlier.

one teacher could instruct and also created discipline problems. While waiting their turn to be instructed and having nothing to do, the students misbehaved. The simultaneous method allowed the teacher to give his lesson once to all the students in a class or section who were ready to receive such instruction. A single teacher could thus instruct large numbers of students. All the students would find it necessary to pay attention to what the teacher was saying or doing, thus eliminating or solving many discipline problems.

De La Salle did not invent the simultaneous method; it had already been in use at the secondary school and university levels long before he opened his first school for the poor. His achievement was to introduce this technique into the primary schools where it had not been routinely employed previously. Moreover, his insistence on the use of the simultaneous method in his schools and the success the Brothers had in using it contributed to its widespread adoption in primary schools throughout France (Rigault, 289–90).

De La Salle introduced this technique early in his career; when the Brothers opened their first school in Paris in 1689, they were already using it. As in the case of many innovations in education, a number of teachers doubted its usefulness and value. For example, among others, the pastor of Saint Sulpice was opposed to its use in the poor schools. But the method soon proved its worth, for by this means alone were the Brothers able to manage and instruct the large numbers of students who frequented the poor schools of Saint Sulpice.

In addition to modifying the method of instruction, De La Salle instituted another curricular change in the poor schools when he insisted that the students were to learn to read French first and then Latin (De La Salle 1935, 80–81). Once begun, this innovation became an essential feature of his schools, one that he was determined to maintain at all costs.

De La Salle was not the first to implement such a change. The Oratory and Port Royal had already initiated the practice in their schools but on a limited basis. Yet while rejecting Latin as the vehicle of all the instruction, both the Oratorians and the Port Royalists retained it as a language to be studied for its literary and humanistic value, with the classics continuing to hold a prominent position in the curriculum (Barnard 1913, 46, 216; and 1918, 28). In De La Salle's schools, where the classics did not hold a place, this innova-

tion affected the entire curriculum and all of the students, and it became the preferred method for all instruction, especially reading (Rigault, 306, 587).

Such a modification of the traditional curriculum was a change which De La Salle had considered carefully and introduced only because he regarded it as a necessary improvement. The treatise in defense of this procedure, which in 1697 he addressed to his old friend, Bishop Paul Godet des Marais, gives evidence of this fact. De La Salle's arguments were solid enough to convince the Bishop of Chartres that the new method was pedagogically sound (Blain [1733] 1961, 1:374–76). Initiating and maintaining this practice of having students learn French before Latin was one of De La Salle's most important innovations and one of his greatest contributions to the work of primary education.

Pierre Coustel and Thomas Guyot, both authors of pedagogical literature of Port Royal, defended the teaching of French first by arguing that it was easier to teach the children to read a language they already spoke, that teaching the children first French and then Latin was going from the known to the unknown, and that teaching the children French first prevented many discipline problems from arising in a school (Barnard 1913, 46, 216; and 1918, 150–51, 154–55).

In his communication to Bishop Godet des Marais, De La Salle offered slightly different reasons for teaching French in the poor schools. He emphasized that the students, spending only a limited time in school and not needing to learn Latin first, could become proficient in the vernacular, and with the entire curriculum taught in French, could more easily learn religion and the other subjects. Furthermore, he insisted that the students of his schools needed to know French but not Latin to succeed in later life (Blain, 1:375–76). De La Salle's practical ideas and his zealous implementation of them in the poor schools represented not only a break with the classical tradition of his times, but more precisely the complete abandonment of it.

In another matter, De La Salle's emphasis was also innovative. The Protestant Revolution and the Catholic Counter-Reformation had created great interest in biblical studies, stressing alike the Old and New Testaments. De La Salle showed his respect for the Scriptures by allowing his Brothers to possess a New Testament in private

and by prescribing that they always carry it on their persons and read a portion of it every day. He frequently stressed the importance of the Word of God for both his Brothers and their students. However, De La Salle differed from many of his contemporaries by emphasizing the reading and study of the New Testament, particularly the Gospels, rather than the complete Bible.

Chapter I of the *Règles communes* implies that De La Salle founded his religious community primarily, if not exclusively, to conduct elementary schools for poor boys. The curriculum that he specified as normal for his schools confirms this conclusion (De La Salle 1947, 9). Though De La Salle may have intended to concentrate on elementary schools during his lifetime, the Brothers, in fact, branched out into other areas of educational work. Shortly before 1700, at the suggestion of Cardinal de Noailles, the Brothers were entrusted with the education of some 50 Irish boys whose families had followed James II into exile in France. Evidence indicates that, although it did not include the classics, the education provided in this school went beyond the elementary level. If so, this project was probably De La Salle's first effort in secondary education (Blain, 1:367–69; Rigault, 217).

Another innovation, a weekend or Sunday school, was established in the parish of Saint Sulpice about 1700, and it enrolled youths who had to earn their own living but who did not know how to read and write. It provided them with basic instruction along with lessons in religion. Those who had an elementary education were given vocational and technical training to help them better their position in the world. This institution, which functioned for a number of years, was certainly founded as a secondary school to offer a more advanced but non-classical education to youths in need of such training (Blain, 1:289–90; Rigault, 218).

Undoubtedly De La Salle's most important secondary school was that founded at Saint Yon near Rouen in 1705. The success of the Brothers in the free primary schools of the city had attracted the attention of merchants and business men in Rouen who wanted a secondary but not a classical education for their sons. The Brothers who were teaching in the schools for the poor were underpaid, and De La Salle was in need of money to support his novitiate as well as the community of aged and sick Brothers who could no longer work. To obtain the needed funds, De La Salle opened a tuition

school, which took in both boarders and day students seeking an education mainly in commercial subjects.

A reform school was also opened in this same house for delinquent young men from better families. Many of the inmates also followed the secondary program. In time, some of the delinquents improved sufficiently so that they could return to their families. The success the Brothers achieved in these secondary schools added to their reputation as educators of youth, and in these institutions De La Salle pioneered a new type of education, one both secondary and non-classical.

De La Salle: Founder of a Religious Society of Teachers

The most serious problem facing the poor schools for both boys and girls during *le grand siècle* was the lack of qualified teachers. By founding his society of lay religious to staff schools for boys and by using the novitiate to train the Brothers for this task, De La Salle took major steps to improve the quality of the charity schools. However, to safeguard the religious life of the Brothers, which required they live together in a community, De La Salle would not have the Brothers staff a school unless it was large enough to need the services of at least two Brothers. In the rural areas, however, many of the poor schools were small and could employ only one teacher. To train laymen for these schools to which he would not send his Brothers, De La Salle opened teacher training schools for teachers in rural schools, first in Reims about 1686 and later in Paris about 1700.

In these normal schools for elementary teachers, laymen were taught both subject matter and methodology in a program similar to one that De La Salle followed in forming the Brothers as teachers (Blain, 1:278–79, 365–66). Because of circumstances beyond his control, neither normal school was a lasting success; however, in undertaking this work De La Salle was a pioneer in establishing teacher training schools. His recognition of the need for trained teachers as the first step to improve the quality of the poor schools and his efforts to provide such training in these rudimentary normal schools remain among De La Salle's greatest contributions to education.

As an innovator and pioneer, De La Salle was determined not only to introduce some basic and necessary changes into the

elementary schools, but also to take steps to ensure the continuation of the work he had begun. One means he used to do this was to found a new community of lay religious in the Catholic Church, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In addition, he formulated his ideas on education and on the spirit which should animate those engaged in that ministry. He attempted to share his vision with his Brothers through his writings.

To express his concern and to communicate it to the Brothers, De La Salle wrote works of two types, those dealing with spiritual subjects and those focusing on educational issues. The spiritual works intended for the use of the Brothers were *Règles communes de l'Institut des Frères, Recueil de différents petits traités à l'usage des Frères, Explication de la méthode d'oraison, Méditations pour le temps de la retraite,* and *Méditations pour les Dimanches et les principales fêtes de l'année.* To these can be added the letters which De La Salle wrote to various Brothers, some of which have been preserved. The educational work De La Salle wrote for his Brothers was the *Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes.* He also wrote four other educational works to be used as texts by the students in the Brothers' schools.

Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes and the writings on spiritual matters express De La Salle's view of the unique position and function of the Brothers in the Church. Depending upon the occasion, his teachings are addressed to the Brothers as Catholic laymen, as religious, or as educators with a Christian mission. On this last point, his aim was to inspire the Brothers with what can be best identified as a supernatural professionalism. According to De La Salle, such an understanding of the nature of the Brothers' educational mission was based upon realization that the Christian schools were the creation of God, not man, and that the Brothers as teachers were doing a supernatural, not merely a natural, work.

> God is so good that, having created men, He wishes that they come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4). . . . That is why God desires that all men be instructed, in order that their minds might be illumined by the light of faith. For one cannot be instructed in the mysteries of our holy religion unless he has the happiness of hearing about them, and one can have this advantage only through the preaching of the word of God (Rom 10:17). (De La Salle 1953, 3–5)

Normally, according to De La Salle, the task of instructing children in their faith should be assumed by Christian parents. For various reasons, however, parents neglect this duty, thus creating conditions which lead to many evils in society on both the natural and supernatural planes. To prevent or to minimize these misfortunes, the Brothers intervene, replacing the parents and acting as the instruments of God (De La Salle 1953, 3–4).

De La Salle realized that teaching a multitude of poor children in a charity school was at times a difficult, tiresome, and unrewarding task. Only when it is viewed in the light of faith would the significance of such a mission be clear: "Consider your work as one of the most important and most excellent in the Church since it is one most capable of sustaining it by giving it a solid foundation" (De La Salle 1953, 17–20). This supernatural esteem for their vocation as teachers would lead the Brothers to cherish it and be attached to it:

> You have the happiness of working for the instruction of the poor and of being engaged in an employment which is not esteemed and honored except by such as have the Christian spirit; thank God for having placed you in such a holy state, one in which you can procure the salvation of others. . . . (De La Salle 1953, 247–49)

Another reason he gave the Brothers for loving and valuing their vocation is that it is a means of personal sanctification:

> Do not make any distinction between the affairs proper to your state and the affairs of your salvation and your perfection. Rest assured that you will never effect your salvation more certainly, or acquire greater perfection, than by acquitting yourself well of the duties of your state, provided you do so with the view of doing the will of God. (De La Salle 1932, 148)

The Brothers, according to De La Salle, had to make themselves both worthy of their mission and qualified to fulfill it. The first requirement, he maintained, is holiness of life. He exhorted his Brothers to have a great love for God and His holy law, observing the latter as perfectly as possible, to be men of prayer so as to fill themselves with God and His grace, to have a great horror of sin or anything else which might displease God, and to be completely

detached from all earthly pleasures and things. Thus, he concluded, they would make themselves such as they desired their students to be and become good and effective Christian teachers. De La Salle wrote numerous meditations for the Brothers to help them pray over their duties and to undertake their responsibilities in a spirit of faith.

The Brothers as Catechists

Besides this preparation for the religious life, De La Salle was also convinced that his Brothers required appropriate catechetical training. Knowledge of the truths of the Catholic religion, of the Scriptures (particularly the New Testament), and of the catechism the Brothers were to teach was absolutely necessary for any Brother, he wrote. De La Salle added that ignorance on the part of the Brother would be criminal because it would harm the students entrusted to his care.

He also taught that a Brother must be unbiased toward his poor students and must show a supernatural affection for them, preferring, if any, the very poorest among them:

> Recognize Jesus under the poor rags of the children you have to instruct, and adore Him in them. Love poverty and honor the poor after the example of the Magi, for poverty should be amiable in your eyes, you who are charged with the instruction of the poor. Let faith lead you to instruct them with affection and zeal since they are the members of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 12:27). (De La Salle 1953, 214)

De La Salle thought that anyone engaged in such an essential mission as the Christian education of poor children had to express great zeal both by instructing the children and by watching over them so as to prevent them from falling into sin.[1]

A Brother thus prepared would be ready to perform his mission, not only to teach the students profane knowledge or even to

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[1]De La Salle focused on the theme of zeal in general in his *Meditations* 1953, 23–25; on zeal in instruction, 12–14; on the role of the Brothers as the visible guardian angels of their students, 12–20; and on the need for vigilance, 14–17.

give them religious instruction, but also to provide them with a thorough and complete Christian formation. The religious teacher would accomplish such a task only if and when his students reflected their Christian beliefs in their actions, that is, when they lived continuously in the spirit of Christianity (De La Salle 1953, 20–22, 178–180, 322–325, 373–375).

De La Salle identified the means by which a Brother was to form his students: instruction, vigilance, correction, and good example. Instruction in religion he regarded as the first of these means; he told his Brothers that teaching catechism was their principal function and the one to which he desired them to give the greatest care.

Nothing concerning the teaching of catechism was left to chance. On regular school days the lesson was to last a half hour, on the eves of holidays an hour, and on Sundays and feasts of obligation, when the students were gathered together specifically for this purpose, an hour and a half. Adapted to the ages and educational backgrounds of the students, the lessons were to cover limited topics and were to be thoroughly developed. The choice of material was not left to the individual Brother but to the Brother Director, who indicated the topics for the coming week. On Sunday the Brother was to review the subject matter covered during the previous week, and on feasts the liturgy of the day was to provide the subject for the lesson (De La Salle 1935, 127–29).

In order to impress the students with the importance of religious knowledge, the Brothers were to receive and keep no child in school unless he assisted at all religious instruction. If a student was to be in school only for a short time and did not yet know how to write, he was to be allowed to devote all the school day to practicing writing, except the time set apart for prayers and the religion lesson. If on occasion any students had to help their parents, they were to be allowed to absent themselves from the morning classes but not from the afternoon classes, when religion was taught (De La Salle 1935, 193–94).

Practical religious instruction had a place in the schools. The students were taught their prayers and how to assist at Holy Mass and other liturgical functions. They were then required to apply this knowledge under the watchful care of their teachers. Piety as manifested during the prayers in school and in group attendance

at liturgical services was to be rewarded from time to time. De La Salle insisted his Brothers give the best rewards to those students who had distinguished themselves by their piety.

De La Salle also used two indirect means to teach the students religion and help them remember church doctrines. One was the collection of hymns he included in the *Exercices de piëtë* (De La Salle 1945, 65). Certain simple airs previously used for religious hymns or even profane songs provided the melodies for the hymns in De La Salle's collection (Gerin 1869, 319–20). Students in the poor schools were generally familiar with these tunes, and if the hymns were set to these melodies and taught to the students, they were able easily to learn and retain them and their ideas.

In addition to the singing of hymns, De La Salle used the penmanship lesson to impart religious instruction. Texts that the students copied were taken from the Old and the New Testaments or from the maxims of piety of the saints and spiritual writers. No other texts were to be used in the Christian schools (De La Salle 1935, 86–87).

Classroom Management

Vigilance, having as its purpose to safeguard the students from evil, was, according to De La Salle, the second important duty of the Christian teacher. Watchfulness over the students, he said, had several good effects. It established and maintained good order in a school. A vigilant teacher prevented the students from associating with individuals who could teach them evil, pervert their young minds, and lead them astray. Children, said De La Salle, fell into bad habits not by themselves or because of their evil inclinations, but because of the bad example they witnessed. A vigilant teacher could safeguard them from such influences.

Vigilance over their students would provide the Brothers with opportunities to perform another important duty, that of correction. Failure to correct their students, De La Salle said, would draw down on a Christian teacher the punishment of God. However, the Brothers were to avoid occasions of having to admonish their students, to correct them rarely, and to perform this duty only in the manner indicated. When administering punishment, the Christian teacher was to have in view only the good of the student, show

no sign of anger or any other passion, and let charity, justice, moderation, disinterestedness, and patience characterize everything he did at this time (De La Salle 1953, 157–58; 1988, 155).

Following the custom in the primary schools of his day, De La Salle allowed the use of corporal punishment for more serious offenses. But to prevent the abuse of this practice, he directed that it be used only as a last resort. He prescribed in great detail the restraint and dignity which were to characterize the administration of corporal punishment. He insisted that its only purpose was to encourage the student to correct himself. De La Salle also acknowledged that certain students, either because of their past experiences or their situation at home, could be corrected only with difficulty if at all. To avoid a greater evil, he allowed the Brother Director or headmaster to expel such a student from school. This punishment also was to be used only as a last resort (De La Salle 1935, 168–170).

De La Salle called on his Brothers to exercise an apostolate of good example and suggested means of carrying out this prescription. The Brothers were to be models of the modesty and piety they wished their students to possess at prayer or in church. They were to give evidence of the wisdom they wished to impart to the students, and always manifest control of themselves and their passions in order to develop these traits in their students. Good example, De La Salle said, would provide the Brothers with a means of extending their apostolate. They had few if any regular contacts with outsiders other than their students, but by their good example they could influence all who might see them or have any dealings with them, inspiring these people to a greater and more intense Christian life (De La Salle 1953, 115–16, 390–92).

In order to motivate his Brothers to perform well the many duties of their difficult task as Christian educators, De La Salle reminded them of the final judgment:

> When you appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, each of you will have to render an account to God of how you have acted "as a minister of God, and as being, with regard to your students, the dispenser of His mysteries" (1 Cor. 3:9). . . . It is then that He will look into the depths of your heart, and that He will examine if you have been a faithful steward of the goods He has confided to you, and of the talent He has

> given you to be employed in His service. (De La Salle 1953, 34–36)

The specific items on which a Brother would be judged were, according to De La Salle, his care to instruct the students well in reading, writing, and above all, religion; his zeal for their salvation and his efforts to effect it by inspiring them to practice their faith with a piety suitable to their age; his vigilance to keep them from sin or anything displeasing to God; and his striving to give his students good example and to be a model of all virtues when in their presence. The account a Brother will have to give to God is not to be taken lightly, said De La Salle, and any Brother who fails in these or any of his duties is to regard himself as a thief in the House of God and one deserving the strictest judgment at His hands (De La Salle 1953, 3–7, 167–68, 448–50).

De La Salle also sought to motivate the Brothers by reminding them of the reward they could expect from God: "God is so good that He will not fail to reward the good that we do for Him and the service we render Him, especially when it concerns the salvation of souls." Part of the reward received in this life, De La Salle promised his Brothers, was the consolation of seeing the results of their work, when their students profited by religious instruction and lived in a manner worthy of Christians, doing much good in their lives. As another part of their reward, De La Salle assured the Brothers that they would enjoy a high place in heaven and would also have the joy of seeing many of their former students there, knowing that they had done much to make that possible (De La Salle 1953, 39–45).

The Legacy of De La Salle

To conclude, it would be helpful to summarize and to evaluate the impact of John Baptist de La Salle and his work. The mission and the writings of De La Salle show him to have been a man very much aware of the society in which he was working, of the problems that the common people faced, and of what might be the suitable means of influencing that society and of dealing with those problems. At the same time, he took a positive point of view when dealing with people and situations. He was realistic in what he proposed as well as ingenious in dealing with concrete situations.

Immediately after the wars of religion in the sixteenth century and during the long reign of Louis XIV, clerics and royal officials alike manifested intense interest in educating the children of the poor. Royal legislation prescribed that every parish have its school and efforts were made to enforce attendance. But in spite of what was done by interested parties, results were meager. Many parents remained neglectful of the training and education of their children, who as a result grew up without any instruction in either religious or profane subjects and without training in even the most elementary manners. De La Salle addressed this situation when he stated the purpose for which he was founding his religious community.

At the same time, the children who did receive some education attended school for only a short time, two or three years at most, and often their attendance was irregular or infrequent. Toward school in general and any efforts to educate and train them in particular, they often manifested indifference and even open hostility. Their teachers, who at times knew little more academically than did their students, lacked any professional training and enjoyed no prestige or standing in the society. Because so many unqualified teachers were employed, discipline was a major problem. Cruel and even brutal methods were used to control the students, and whatever else such techniques achieved, undoubtedly they did nothing to make school more attractive. Deeply aware of these religious and social problems, De La Salle set about finding suitable remedies.

Like most of his contemporaries, the Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools believed that the primary purpose of schools was to help the students become good Christians, with a view toward their salvation. Fully aware of the ignorance of so many of the poor and their children, of things divine as well as human, and of the conduct to which such ignorance led, De La Salle took a positive step to remedy the situation. He sought to help these boys become fervent Christians, encouraging them to develop the mind of Christ.

De La Salle was quite realistic in what he had to tell the Brothers. Instructing large numbers of poor, often unappreciative children could be an apostolate or simply a task, depending on the attitude the teacher took toward the work. So while making no secret of the difficulty their work involved, De La Salle spared no effort to develop the correct mentality among his Brothers.

The necessity of giving a Christian training to youth, its importance for the future of the Church, the example of those saints who had gloried in teaching catechism to little children, the dignity of their mission as bearers of the Word of God, the virtues proper to them as ministers of Jesus Christ, and the reward reserved for them in this life and hereafter—all these are matters to which De La Salle returned frequently in his writings for his Brothers. De La Salle's efforts to form his Brothers as apostles of youth and to inspire them to approach their mission with the proper outlook showed that he recognized both the difficulty of the work and the need for proper motivation.

De La Salle's realism is also evident in the ingenuity he showed in dealing with certain pedagogical matters. While he stressed the lofty mission of the Christian teacher, he addressed many of the problems even the best and most devoted Brother would experience while trying to educate 60 or more poor children every day in a crowded classroom. Means of eliminating or reducing such difficulties received his most careful attention.

Very early in his involvement in the work of popular education he had recognized that if the Brothers used the individual method of instruction then in vogue each Brother would have been able to teach and help only a few boys. To increase the effectiveness of each Brother, De La Salle introduced the simultaneous method into his primary schools and made it one of their essential features. This approach had the added advantage of eliminating the disciplinary problems created by the presence of large numbers of students who would have been doing nothing constructive while they waited to be taught by teachers using the individual method.

De La Salle also addressed another problem. Besides giving the students religious instruction, the Charity Schools were supposed to prepare them to be useful citizens. Because a reading knowledge of French would have been of greater value to them than one of Latin, De La Salle abandoned a tradition and had the Brothers teach their students to read the vernacular first. Further, in the ordinary curriculum, De La Salle found a means of reinforcing what he considered the main area of instruction: by using both penmanship and reading lessons, the Brother was able to give the students additional religious instruction. Similarly, by having the students take breakfast together in class, the Brother could give instructions in politeness

and charity. In these and other matters, De La Salle showed himself very resourceful in designing practical means to achieve his educational goals.

John Baptist de La Salle, as he himself said, was imperceptibly and reluctantly led by Providence to devote his life to the Christian education of poor boys. He accomplished this goal while proving himself to be an innovator and a genius on several levels in the field of education, as well as a founder of a religious community of Brothers dedicated to Christian education. The awareness, the positive point of view, the faith, the realism, and the ingenuity with which he pursued this work of God make De La Salle one of the outstanding educators of *le grand siècle* and of the Western world.

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Primary Education in France in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle

Richard Arnandez, FSC

Education in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

By the end of the Middle Ages and before the outbreak of the wars of the sixteenth century associated with the Protestant Reformation, popular education in Western Europe had spread to a degree which was not to be attained again before the nineteenth century. In France, particularly during this period, a multitude of popular schools existed even in rural places, nearly always church-associated, staffed by the parish priest, by the vicar, or by lay teachers. As late as 1535 the Venetian ambassador in France, Marino Giustiniani, could write, "Here, every man, no matter how poor he may be, learns to read and write" (Flinton 1957, 174; Fagniez n.d., 12).

The Church, from the first Council of the Lateran in the twelfth century to the Council of Trent in the sixteenth, had consistently exhorted the clergy and laity to work together to promote the multiplication of schools. Echoes of this preoccupation are evident in the decrees of bishops and diocesan synods, as well as in provincial councils (Blain [1733] 1961, 60–61]. In 1576 the Synod of Evreux declared: "All those responsible . . . must set up teachers in cities, towns and villages. Formerly, it would have been difficult to find a fair-sized town without a foundation for free schools, whereas today even cities lack them" (Beaurepaire 1872, 2:5–6). The complaint was only too justified, for, unfortunately, during the religious upheavals that made Europe desolate in the last half of the sixteenth

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century, most of the pious foundations that supported the schools were appropriated by the unscrupulous, or disappeared in the aftermath of war.

Similar decrees can be noted in the statutes issued in Rouen in 1581 and in the decrees of the French Kings Charles IX in 1560 and Henry III in 1579. That the problem of education gave concern not only to the Church but also to the civil authorities is evident from the frequency with which this problem was raised in the petitions presented by the deputies of the various provinces at the sessions of the Estates General. The deputies of Normandy, for instance, repeatedly addressed this matter, and they specifically asked for help in the field of popular education in the meetings of 1595, 1614, and 1616 (Beaurepaire, 2:5–6).

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the slow process of rebuilding Catholicism had begun in France. The first step, the organization of seminaries to prepare Church leaders, was the major task of men like Cardinal de Bérulle, Charles de Condren, Jean Olier, John Eudes, Adrien Bourdoise, and Vincent de Paul. The definitive establishment of the Jesuits in France early in the seventeenth century and the educational activity of the Oratorians created a growing class of well-instructed Catholics.[1]

At the time of the birth of John Baptist de La Salle, a large number and a considerable variety of educational establishments existed in France (Rigault 1937, 1:30). The most prestigious of these institutions, of course, were the great universities, especially the Université de Paris and the Collège de France. The collèges existed on what educators today would call the secondary level, and were conducted by the Jesuits, Oratorians and other religious, as well as by members of the secular clergy.[2]

On the primary or elementary level several types of schooling were available, depending on the social and economic status of the students. The children of the rich or those belonging to families

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[1] By 1608 the Jesuits already had some 30,000 students in their collèges all over France. Between 1615 and 1645 the Oratorians opened some 23 collèges in the country.

[2] The Collège des Bons Enfants at Reims, which De La Salle attended, was staffed and directed by the secular clergy.

in comfortable circumstances were often taught by private tutors at home, as was De La Salle himself during his early years. Primary-level classes conducted in classical boarding schools and collèges catered to the children of wealthy or noble parents who preferred not to have their children tutored at home. The courses in these schools prepared students for classical studies offered in the collèges. For the less wealthy, and offering strictly terminal programs, two types of schools existed, at least in the cities and towns: the primary schools conducted by the Writing Masters, and the so-called Little Schools. For the poor a special type of educational establishment, the Charity School, existed. To this type of school, De La Salle devoted the greater part of his activity.

The Writing Masters

The Guild of the Writing Masters (*Maîtres Ecrivains jurés*) was an organization of teachers who, while specializing in the art of handwriting, also taught other branches of the elementary or primary curriculum, either in rooms or buildings of their own or in private homes. The Guild had developed from a society of handwriting experts begun in the late Middle Ages. At first its members were simply scribes who wrote for illiterate people, drawing up letters, deeds, and documents of various kinds. Later, many Writing Masters were connected with the universities, copying and embellishing manuscripts. Their teaching had originally been limited to the training of their own apprentices, but by degrees this activity gave rise to schools of writing open to the general public, especially after the invention of printing cut deeply into the revenue the Writing Masters had derived from copying manuscripts. The Writing Masters specialized in calligraphy, considered, with some justification, as one of the fine arts; however, little by little, they continued to add to their curriculum until, in the time of De La Salle, they taught arithmetic, spelling, and reading, along with penmanship (Beaurepaire, 2:274–76).

Until 1570 the Writing Masters apparently did not enjoy legal status. In that year it was discovered that the signature of King Charles IX had been forged on a document; in the wake of the uproar that followed, seven Writing Masters petitioned the King to set them up as a closed corporation with the exclusive right to verify signatures

and public documents, as well as to teach writing (Ravelet 1874, 38). By letters patent issued in November, 1570, the King legalized this corporation and thenceforth the Writing Masters constituted a closely knit group. To become a member, a person had to demonstrate competence as a penman, furnish proof of good morals, establish residence in the locality for at least three years, and undergo an examination (Beaurepaire, 2:274–84). When all these formalities had been fulfilled, the candidate was admitted to full membership by the *prêvôt,* or municipal officer. Candidates had to pay to the Guild, besides other lesser fees, a fairly high initiation fee of 400 livres (Beaurepaire, 2:274–84).

In view of the limited amount of work available, the Writing Masters were not overeager to expand their membership; consequently, they never became very numerous, and their numbers gradually declined throughout the eighteenth century. In Rouen, for instance, 32 Writing Masters were teaching in 1618, 70 in 1662, 36 in 1725, 35 in 1776 (Beaurepaire, 2:283).

The Writing Masters lived solely on the fees paid by their students. Therefore, in an age when individual instruction kept classes very small, it is not surprising that they fiercely resisted competition. They tried to have all paid elementary instruction put under their control, while defending their claim to the exclusive privilege of teaching writing. As a result they engaged in a series of lawsuits with the Masters of the Little Schools, lawsuits that dragged on for a century and a half even until the time of De La Salle. The Writing Masters, who, as a rule, were looked upon with favor by the municipal authorities, generally won the first round of litigation, but on appeal the decrees of the lower courts were regularly annulled or modified.

Parliament, in fact, was reluctant to extend the Writing Masters' monopoly to the other subjects beyond their specialty of penmanship, fearing that this privilege would seriously hamper the progress of public education. Nonetheless, a decree issued in 1651 and confirmed in 1699 guaranteed the right of the Writing Masters to teach other subjects besides writing, and even established their independence of the superintendent of schools (*écolâtre*), a member of the cathedral chapter of canons, or sometimes the chancellor, who exercised authority over the schools as the delegate of the chapter and of the bishop (Ravelet, 39).

But litigation continued, usually over trivial matters, until in 1714 a settlement was reached which limited the power of the Writing Masters and upheld the right of their rivals, the Masters of the Little Schools, to give lessons in writing, reading, grammar, and arithmetic. The Masters of the Little Schools could not, however, furnish their students any penmanship models more than three lines long, nor advertise the teaching of writing in their schools, nor display specimens of handwriting on the shingle over the door of the school (Ravelet, 40; Battersby 1957, 180).

The court records of this period mention hundreds of lawsuits brought by the Writing Masters against individuals, clerical and lay, who presumed to teach writing. The legal status given to the Writing Masters by Charles IX, usually assured that these lawsuits were decided in their favor (Beaurepaire, 2:275, 280). The courts in the eighteenth century regularly found that neither the bishops nor the superintendent of schools nor the parish priests could authorize a person to teach writing if that person were remunerated for doing so (Beaurepaire, 2:18–20). In Paris, priests who taught the rudiments of Latin to the boys in the elementary classes of the collèges and those who served as tutors in private families were allowed to teach their students writing and arithmetic. In the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Normandy, however, priests could not do so, except in villages where no Writing Master taught (Beaurepaire, 2:277).

When the Ursulines and Peter Fourier's Les Filles de Notre Dame began their schools for poor girls early in the seventeenth century, they were at first cautious about teaching writing for fear of arousing the ire of the Writing Masters. However, because they found a certain immunity in their status as cloistered religious, they eventually did teach writing without too much disturbance (Beaurepaire, 2:276).

The Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence, founded in Rouen by Father Barré with the financial help of Mme Maillefer, were not cloistered, and at first had much trouble with the Writing Masters in Rouen. By the early years of the eighteenth century, the matter had been settled amicably; the Sisters' right to teach writing in their Charity Schools was confirmed by royal and ecclesiastical decree. In this instance, one reason why the Guild of the Writing Masters did not object more vigorously, apart from the fact that the

Sisters taught very poor children who were in no position to pay the usual fees, was the fact that the civil and religious legislation of the time strictly forbade the teaching of boys and girls in the same classroom, and forbade the teaching of girls by men.[3] The Guild was probably almost exclusively male and the Sisters taught only girls.

With the rise of the Charity Schools for boys, the Writing Masters felt that they had to be on the alert to any possible competition. Six months after De La Salle's Brothers arrived in Rouen, the Bureau (the governing body of the General Hospice on which the schools depended) had to deal with a complaint lodged by the Writing Masters, who saw in the Brothers new competitors. The Writing Masters complained that "they [the Brothers] teach persons of all conditions indiscriminately, despite the fact that the [Charity] schools are supposed to be open only to the truly poor [*les véritables pauvres*]." After considering the matter, the Bureau decided that "in the future the children who wish to attend [the Charity Schools] must bring an attestation concerning their poverty, issued by their respective parish priests" (Beaurepaire, 2:341).

In Rouen, as late as 1772, the Brothers found it difficult to subsist on the meager wages the Bureau paid them even when supplemented by the scanty alms that occasionally came their way, and they began admitting to their classes a few children belonging to relatively wealthy families who sometimes made gifts or donations to the community. The Writing Masters immediately complained to the authorities. The magistrates decided that twice a year the Bureau must check the list of families of the students of the Brothers and enforce the regulation that the Brothers admit to their classes only those boys whose families appeared on the official list of paupers. A sign reading "Charity School for the Paupers of the City and the Faubourgs" was to be placed over the door of the school (Beaurepaire, 2:352–53).

In spite of the jealous care with which the Writing Masters guarded their prerogatives, their legal situation slowly deteriorated during the eighteenth century, while their professional ability also declined. Their guild, temporarily abolished in 1778, was reestab-

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[3] But these regulations were probably not observed very strictly. See Ravelet, 31; Beaurepaire, 2:276–77.

lished the following year, but with much less power and prestige. It disappeared permanently in 1791, swept away by the whirlwind of the Revolution, along with so much else reminiscent of the ancien régime. It must have found few mourners (Beaurepaire, 2:285–89).

The Little Schools

The designation "Little Schools" (*petites-écoles*), in contrast to the "higher" schools, that is, secondary collèges and other institutions preparing students directly for university work, had a precise significance. It meant the elementary schools where children of modest circumstances could acquire the rudiments of learning. The Little Schools were pay schools and were subject to the jurisdiction of the cathedral superintendent of schools (*le grand chantre* or *écolâtre*). Their history is a fascinating one.

Schools attached to cathedrals and collegiate churches had existed ever since the early Middle Ages. The students of these schools were mainly, but not exclusively, choirboys and other young men destined for the clerical state. These schools were a kind of combination junior seminary and boarding school. The superintendent of schools was originally the canon specially charged with directing the chant of the divine office and the other liturgical functions in the cathedral. It naturally fell to him as the delegate of the chapter and of the bishop to exercise proper supervision over the choirboys' school. As time went on other schools sprang up in cities and towns; the vast majority of these were the result of pious foundations and legacies of which the bishops were the executors. Control over these schools and the direction of their teachers gradually passed into the hands of the superintendent of schools, who thus became something like a diocesan director of primary education. By the later Middle Ages, this organizational pattern had become all but universal in France and elsewhere in Western Europe (Blain, 60).

From the thirteenth century onward, the Little Schools multiplied. In Paris, as early as 1357, statutes and regulations existed to govern them and to give the teachers as a group a certain juridical status with well-defined rights and obligations (Rigault, 1:33; Ravelet, 29). Especially in the cities and larger towns, where they were fairly numerous, the Masters of the Little Schools soon established tightly closed corporations claiming the exclusive right to teach

elementary subjects, that is, reading, writing, arithmetic, and even the elements of Latin grammar. The teaching of Latin grammar, however, brought them into conflict with the regents of the lower classes connected with the collèges and with the Faculty of Arts of the universities, who also claimed the exclusive privilege to teach Latin (Fosseyeux 1912, 1:33). Furthermore, their teaching of the other subjects caused them to clash with the Writing Masters. When the Charity Schools began to multiply, the Masters of the Little Schools jealously watched their growth for fear that the new arrivals on the educational scene would rob them of their paying students, and this bread-and-butter reason led them eventually to join forces with their rivals, the Writing Masters, against De La Salle and his Charity Schools.

In the sixteenth century, the wars of religion, as well as the confiscation of Church goods, wrought havoc on the Little Schools, but as peace and order were restored, they began to thrive again. About 1610, Paris had in its 43 parishes 147 recognized *quartiers,* that is, divisions of the town established by the superintendent of schools; in each of these divisions existed a school for boys and another for girls (Ravelet, 28–29).[4]

In 1659, the superintendent of schools of Paris, Michel Le Masle, issued a set of regulations which were amended by his successor, Claude Joly in 1672, and later confirmed by a decree of Parliament in 1725. These acts sought to give the Masters of the Little Schools a practical monopoly on elementary teaching in pay schools, except, of course, for writing (Ravelet, 34). According to these prescriptions, the Little Schools were not to be too close together, at most one every 10 houses in the crowded quarters of the cities and every 20 houses in less congested areas. A sign over the door proclaimed: "Herein a Little School, [name], which is authorized to teach children [divine] service, reading, writing, grammar, and arithmetic. . . . " The program also included religion along with the usual prayers and responses at Mass, the rules of civility, and sometimes singing (Léaud and Glay 1934, 1:94).

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[4] Rigault, 1:35 and Guibert 1901, xxiii, speaking of Paris circa 1672, give the number of quartiers as 167.

Some Little Schools had been set up by town officials acting in the name of the population, but most of them owed their establishment to legacies and pious foundations. Bishops and councils frequently recommended to the laity the support of the Little Schools as a very practical and efficacious type of almsgiving (Allain 1881, 196). Parish priests frequently exhorted their wealthy parishioners not to forget in their testaments "the Master of the Schools, who is in some way a true father of the Republic," as the Synod of Evreux quaintly declared in 1567 (Ravelet, 22). Nevertheless, because such foundations, although very numerous, usually did not provide enough money to finance the Little Schools entirely, the problem of finances continued to be a serious one. It received varying solutions in different localities.[5]

Funding the Little Schools

The Masters of the Little Schools usually had three sources of income. The primary one was a fixed salary paid by the founder or foundation and set by the royal decrees of 1698 and 1724 at a minimum of 150 livres a year for men teachers and 100 livres for women (Allain, 130; Urseau 1890, 116). Because this meager amount did not suffice, especially if the teachers had families of their own, all the students of the Little Schools, with the exception of the destitute poor, had to pay a small monthly fee called *écolage*. This fee varied from place to place and depended on the ages of the scholars and especially on what was taught in the school. Because an elective system prevailed and no student had to follow the full curriculum, the amount a student paid was in proportion to what he chose to study (Guibert, xxix; Battersby, 71; Urseau, 148ff). The diocesan regulations at Autun, in 1685, set the *écolage* at 5 sols per month for the child who learned reading only; 10 sols for reading and writing; 15 for reading, writing, arithmetic, and the elements of Latin grammar, and so on, up to a maximum of 30 sols for the student who enrolled for the complete course (Ravelet, 24). On the

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[5]About 1710 the Archdiocese of Rouen had 1161 Little Schools in its 1159 parishes. See Beaurepaire, 2:382–83, 407.

average, these fees would have brought the teacher 150 to 200 livres a year in addition to the minimum salary.[6]

Finally, especially in rural areas, the teachers received part of their pay in kind. This practice too was, as a rule, minutely regulated either in the contracts drawn up between the teachers and the officials of the towns where they were employed or in the terms of the legacies from which the teachers benefited (Allain, 131).

What was believed in and practiced was relative gratuity, that is, free schooling for the poor who could not afford to pay anything, while others were expected to contribute according to their means (Allain, 184–85). The common opinion also was that any so-called gratuitous instruction should be really such, that is, that it should cost the beneficiaries nothing. In this sense, modern free compulsory education for all would not have been considered as truly gratuitous because schools supported by public tax funds are really paid for by rich and poor alike.

That the parents whose children attended the school should support it, at least in part, seems to have been a generally accepted principle. The idea of universal and absolutely gratuitous instruc-

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[6]The monetary units in common use in France at this time were the *denier,* the *sol,* and the *livre,* which corresponded, in relative value, with the penny, shilling, and pound of the English system in use until decimalization in 1971, i.e., 12 deniers (pence) equaled 1 sol (shilling), and 20 sols (shillings) equaled 1 livre (pound). Also, 1 écu equaled 3 livres. See Barrême 1723. It would, of course, be very interesting to have some idea of the acutal value of money at that time in terms of real purchasing power and in reference to present day prices, but such a determination would be very difficult, especially in view of the fact that the currency was not absolutely standardized and prices during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries fluctuated considerably. Here, however, are a few items which give some indication of the value of money at that time: an ordinary unskilled laborer in Paris could expect to earn about 12 sols a day (Battersby, 71); the price of meat in Paris a little before 1690 was 5 sols a pound, bread 2 sols a pound, and wine about 4 sols per pint; in the cheap restaurants in Paris about 1690 one could buy a meal consisting of soup, meat, bread, and beer for 5 sols (Mongrédien 1948, 89); and about 1780 at the Brothers' boarding school of La Rossingnolerie the board was 400 livres per year (Urseau, 333).

tion, that is, education for all children indiscriminately, was never considered by the people in those times.

As a matter of historic fact, the monastic and other church schools of the Middle Ages were open and free to all, and until the Reformation the Little Schools had often been entirely gratuitous or very nearly so, partly because the foundations that supported them provided sufficient funds, and partly because most of these schools were actually taught by members of the clergy who either had other sources of income or were willing to be content with the modest salaries offered. But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the revenues of the foundations were not, as a rule, sufficient to support the schools entirely. Furthermore, the decrease in the number of clergy teaching in the schools made it necessary to employ more and more lay people, whose upkeep required more money; consequently almost everywhere the schools had recourse to *écolage*.[7]

Apart from teacher's salaries, the financing of a Little School did not call for a great outlay of money. A special school building was not required; a room in the teacher's own house, or a room rented for this purpose, or one supplied by the authorities sufficed. Because the number of students rarely went beyond 20 or so, only a single room was needed (Rigault, 1:35). The rudimentary furnishings of the school consisted mainly of benches and tables. Furthermore, the school did not provide a playground or recreational equipment. The students brought their own books and writing materials, and the system of individual instruction usually made charts and blackboards unnecessary.

The children were all brought together in the same room, regardless of age, ability, or advancement, but bishops and councils had repeatedly enjoined the strict separation of boys and girls even under pain of excommunication. In the cities this practice was usually observed, but in rural areas it was not always possible (Urseau, 111–12; Guibert, xxx).

On the average, children spent about two years in the Little Schools. The school day was brief; classes lasted about two hours

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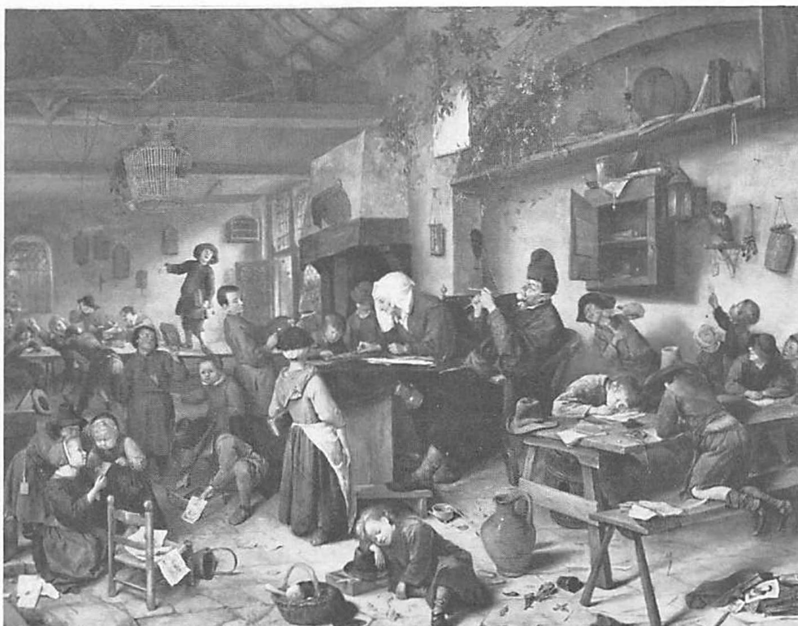
[7]As far back as February 7, 1534, the Parliament of Paris had forbidden the superintendent of schools to name parish priests as schoolmasters except in cases of extreme need. See Cilleuls 1898, 280.



In rural areas where boys and girls were not separated in different class rooms, teachers attempted to manage large numbers of children of varied ages, abilities, and dispositions in mixed classes. *The Mixed School,* by Jan Steen. The National Galleries of Scotland.

in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. Some schools were open only in the winter; some only for three or four days a week (Urseau, 114).

The Profession of Teaching

Generally, the profession of teaching enjoyed more respect than some authors have suggested. To begin with, a goodly proportion of the teachers were members of the clergy, even though at the time of De La Salle the number of clerics teaching had begun to diminish. In 1710 in the archdiocese of Rouen, some 94 Little Schools were conducted by parish priests, 274 by assistant priests or deacons, and 450 by tonsured clerics or laymen (Beaurepaire, 2:407).

These lay teachers have often been described in very unflattering terms, but it is certainly an exaggeration to say that "the only

persons who could be found for the post of schoolmaster were sextons, disabled soldiers, cobblers, and such-like" (Battersby, 71). The accusation that Claude Joly employed "low pothouse-keepers, barbers, flunkeys, fiddlers, and marionette string-pullers" in the Little Schools under his jurisdiction should be viewed with skepticism (Rigault, 1:35; Guibert, xxx). Some such individuals may, at times, have been teachers, but that they ever constituted even a notable minority has never been proved and seems highly unlikely.

Positions available in the Little Schools were eagerly sought after, a fact that shows not only that these positions offered some appreciable advantages, but also that those who had the right and duty of selecting the teachers did not have to take everybody who applied. When a vacancy occurred, there was, as a rule, no dearth of applicants. In 1674, 14 persons applied for the post of teacher in the village of Bourbourg (Nord); as frequently occurred elsewhere, the responsible authorities organized a competitive examination to determine their final choice (Allain, 133ff). Once a person obtained a position as teacher, he usually held it and fought off all types of competition even from the clergy, a course which could hardly have succeeded if the teacher had been as incompetent as some have implied.

Masters of the Little Schools not only kept their positions for long periods of time, in many cases ten to forty years, but often succeeded in passing their jobs on to their own sons. The teachers enjoyed exemption from military service even if they were single, a valued privilege indeed, especially under Louis XIV. They also were exempted from certain taxes and could not be called upon to exercise the role of tax collectors, a difficult and sometimes dangerous duty. In addition, they were accorded a certain amount of public consideration by both clergy and laity. They occupied the second place in church after the parish priest. They often wore the surplice and took part in the liturgical ceremonies, and at solemn Mass they were the first to be incensed, even before the local gentry. These last privileges applied, however, more commonly in the rural areas than in the cities, where the schoolteachers probably enjoyed less prestige (Allain, 139–44).

The Training and Supervision of Teachers

The difficulty of recruiting competent teachers and the lack of any professional preparation or continuous supervision for teachers were the weakest points in the organization of the Little Schools. The clerics among the teachers possessed at least some training in letters and their intellectual formation might be considered adequate, especially in view of the limited curriculum. But they had no instruction in the art of teaching, in pedagogical methods, or in classroom management. The lay personnel usually had little formal training in either the content to be taught or in teaching methods (Urseau, 143–44).

The need, however, for some sort of teacher training institution had not escaped thoughtful people. Various efforts had been made toward the end of the seventeenth century to do something constructive about this situation. De Portmorant at Paris, François Jogues at Orleans, the Bishop of Beauvais, Peter Fourier, and Charles Démia had tried to establish teacher training schools, but to no avail (Rigault, 1:31).[8] The schools conducted by the Brothers of De La Salle and the various congregations of religious women founded at this period were clearly superior. In the novitiate candidates received at least rudimentary teacher training and instruction in classroom procedure; furthermore, once in the classroom, they enjoyed regular supervision of superiors and more experienced teachers. De La Salle's activity in this field of teacher preparation constitutes one of his most significant contributions to education.

The wise and practical suggestions for organizing the school which De La Salle makes in the *Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes,* the supervision provided the Brothers by their superiors and the Inspectors of Schools, De La Salle's insistence that the Brothers study constantly to learn thoroughly what they were called upon to teach, all helped significantly to make his schools superior to those run by the Masters of the Little Schools. The Little Schools were often unorganized, isolated, and abandoned to their own limited academic resources.

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[8]See also Alphonse Hermans, FSC, 1959–1960, on the seminarian as teacher during this period.

The Little Schools were, of course, entirely Catholic. The students were taught prayers, catechism, and Bible history, and were brought to Mass regularly. The whole organization of these schools was oriented toward religion, and the superintendent of schools exercised strict supervision over the teachers' morals and teaching (Ravelet, 33; Léaud and Glay, 1:94–95). The overriding consideration was for orthodoxy among the teachers, especially in those times when heresy was so often spread surreptitiously by means of schooling (Ravelet, 35–36; Léaud and Glay, 1:96). Illegal schools were called *écoles buissonnières* (hedgerow schools) because the itinerant teachers of heresy often gathered children in out-of-the-way places to inculcate their doctrines.

The Superintendent of Schools

On February 7, 1544, the Parliament of Paris had commissioned the superintendent of schools to "see to it that outside of the Little Schools established and controlled by him there should be no other schools or unauthorized teachers." The purpose of the ordinance, often reiterated in Paris and elsewhere, was "to obviate the inconveniences that would arise through the evil and perverse doctrines that might be taught to the young." Similar measures were adopted for similar reasons in other localities such as Narbonne in 1511 and Cologne in 1536. In Rouen the Parliament of Normandy issued such a decree in 1576 and renewed it in 1618. This decree provided that "all and sundry, whatever their quality, are forbidden to undertake the task of teaching and instructing the youth without the permission of the Archbishop of Rouen and the approbation of the chancellor" (where the chancellor filled the role of the superintendent of schools). This ordinance, reissued as late as March 24, 1752, carried for violation severe penalties, such as fines up to 100 livres and the confiscation of the school furnishings (Beaurepaire, 2:12–13, 16–17).

The superintendent of schools, then, had extensive control over the teachers. He inspected their classes in the name of the bishop and authorized them to teach, usually for a year at a time. If any difficulty arose or any complaint was lodged against one of the teachers, especially in reference to faith or morals, the superintendent investigated the matter and dismissed the teacher if necessary.

He also had the power to issue regulations to which the Masters of the Little Schools had to conform (Ravelet, 20–21, 31–32).

By the mid-seventeenth century, it was taken for granted and confirmed by law that the superintendent of schools was the undisputed head of the Little Schools (Ravelet, 32–33; Rigault, 1:34). No Little School could be opened in a diocese without his approval, and he was also regarded as the main protector of the Masters of the Little Schools, the champion of their rights and privileges, especially in their continuous struggle with the Writing Masters.

So extensive was the superintendent's power that he exercised control even over the Charity Schools when these first came into existence. When Louise de Marillac opened her first gratuitous classes in 1641, she was careful to obtain prior authorization from the superintendent (Flinton, 184–85; Fosseyeux, 28). The superintendent's concern was to make sure that the growth and multiplication of the Charity Schools caused no financial harm to the Masters of the Little Schools and, indirectly, to himself. While welcoming the founding of schools that cared for the destitute, because the destitute did not attend the Little Schools in any case, the superintendent and the teachers wanted to make sure that none of their own paying students should be admitted to the Charity Schools. The Masters of the Little Schools, the Writing Masters, and the superintendent held firmly to the principle that the Charity Schools were for the "truly poor," not for such as could afford to pay. On this principle they were regularly upheld by the courts.[9]

Within a few years, however, the parish clergy of Paris, like their counterparts all over France, realizing that the poor did not attend the Little Schools even though they had a right to do so

[9] The schools of the "four quarters" in Rouen (Charity Schools) more than once aroused the suspicions of the Writing Masters, always easily alarmed by anything resembling an infringement on their privileges. The Charity Schools existed for the exclusive benefit of the truly poor. In the sixteenth century paupers wore an outward sign of their condition. Attached to their hat or hung about their neck by a string was a piece of parchment, 4 or 5 inches square, with the words, "Pauper of the City of Rouen," the individual's name, and the archbishop's seal. By the seventeenth century this public display of poverty appeared too degrading, so,

(Allain, 190), and eager to multiply their Charity Schools in view of the great good which they accomplished, resolved to ignore the superintendent's jurisdiction and to break the monopoly.

In 1656, the Writing Masters and Claude Joly, the superintendent of schools in Paris, seeking to limit the alarming development of the Charity Schools, exerted their authority. However, the parish priests resisted, aided by the powerful influence of members of the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement. Forced to concede, the superintendent offered to authorize all the Charity Schools that the parish priests wished to create. But the priests, unwilling to grant him any legitimate control over their schools, refused the offer and took their case to Parliament (Fosseyeux 1912, 3).

Disputes Over the Education of the Poor

A real cause célèbre then occurred in the courts and continued until 1699. The Masters of the Little Schools protested that the Charity Schools actually admitted children whose parents could afford to pay for their education, thus ruining the pay schools and making beggars of the teachers themselves. Claude Joly, for his part, naturally disliked seeing a new opportunity for elementary instruction escape his previously exclusive and uncontested jurisdiction. Moreover, he realized that if the Charity Schools actually did cut into the revenues of the teachers his own income would eventually suffer because the teachers apparently paid him an annual fee, probably when they applied for a renewal of their licenses (Fosseyeux, 33).

In 1678 Claude Joly had published a monumental work entitled *Traité Historique des Ecoles* in which he attempted to prove

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instead, a written certificate of poverty was made out for such children. This document, according to a regulation dated March 6, 1654, had to be produced by the child before he could be admitted to school. In 1674, it was decreed that these certificates could be issued only when validated by the pastor of the parish to which the pauper belonged. The Writing Masters were authorized to present to the authorities the names of parents who were not poor but who nevertheless sent their children to the Charity Schools. Such parents might then be forced to enroll their sons in the regular schools. See Beaurepaire, 2:313–14.

his claim to power over the Charity Schools by arguments at once legal, canonical, and historical. According to Joly, both teaching and social work (i.e., organized charity, hospitals, and welfare work) had originally been inaugurated and developed by the cathedral chapters; consequently, the superintendent, as the qualified representative of the chapter and of the archbishop, should keep control of all teaching and charitable enterprises. The parish priests, however, argued that their Charity Schools for the poor were a necessary adjunct to and extension of their parish catechism classes and that as pastors of souls they had an inherent right and duty to provide for the religious upbringing of these children.

Joly argued that the education of the poor was not necessarily a parish function and pointed to Lyon where the archbishop had called on Father Charles Démia to found and organize Charity Schools for all the destitute children of that city, without reference to the parish organizations or the parish priests. He likewise complained because the parish charity bureau, which took care of the schools as well as of the sick and indigent, frequently failed to respect the authority of the archbishop or of the superintendent (Fosseyeux, 33–35). He even questioned the very necessity of parish Charity Schools because, according to standing regulations and precedent, the poor had the right to attend the Little Schools gratis. The parish priests replied that even if poor children were supposed to be admitted free to the Little Schools, in practice they were not welcomed there and were often embarrassed; consequently, the children chose not to attend (Rigault, 1:37; Ravelet, 45). Therefore, the poor were not receiving any instruction and were, in fact, living in ignorance and immorality, running wild to the detriment of society and jeopardizing their eternal salvation (Démia 1668, cited in Battersby, 71–72).

Joly also objected to the Charity School on historical grounds as a departure from Christian principle and precedent. The schools fostered the separation of the poor from the wealthy, a practice not consistent with educational tradition which had mixed social classes since the Middle Ages. But the parish priests must have considered this segregation the lesser of two evils. In practice, the only alternative was to see the poor grow up without any education at all. The solution offered by the Charity School for the poor, while far from the ideal, was probably the best that could be had at the time

and under the circumstances. "It was the old Christian idea of gratuitous instruction but interpreted by men living in an epoch of marked social inequality. In the Middle Ages one and the same school served all children, rich and poor alike, without requiring or accepting anything from anybody. In the seventeenth century the poor were segregated; to them instruction was imparted as an alms" (Rigault, 1:38).

The quarrel between the parish priests and the superintendent continued. In 1684 the Archbishop of Paris, François de Harlay de Champvallon, issued a decree in the hope of ending the matter. He recognized the right of the parish priests to establish and maintain their parish Charity Schools independently of the superintendent on condition that they accept only truly poor children (Ravelet, 46). This proviso simply reiterated what had already been current practice for some 40 years. The agreement entered into in 1646 between the superintendent and the parish priest of Saint-Eustache had stipulated that the priest would admit to his Charity School "only truly poor children . . . sent to school with an attestation of poverty." Every three months a list of the children taught in the Charity School had to be sent to the superintendent so that a check might be made on the financial condition of their families (Rigault, 1:38–39).

Archbishop Harlay's decree did not put an end to the dispute, and it was not until 1699, 15 years later, that the litigants finally agreed on a compromise which specified that Charity Schools run by the parish priests could accept only those children who were certified by their pastors as being truly poor. Lists of poor children had to be kept and reverified every six months (Fosseyeux, 35–36). The decree also recognized that the superintendent had the right to visit and inspect the Charity Schools once a year. The parish priest had full authority to hire and fire the teachers. A sign reading, "Charity Schools for the Poor of the Parish of. . . , " was to be placed over the door of the school. The parish priest of Saint Sulpice in Paris was one of the signers of this document (Fosseyeux, 35–36; Ravelet, 46–47).

Such, then, was the situation in Paris in 1688 when John Baptist de La Salle arrived at Saint Sulpice to take over from M. Compagnon the direction of the Charity School in the Rue Princesse. The Brothers' school, with good discipline, many students, and

remarkable scholastic results, immediately aroused the jealous suspicion of both the Masters of the Little Schools and their traditional adversaries, the Writing Masters. These rivals, sensing their positions threatened by the Brothers, agreed to collaborate, and early in 1690 they brought the first lawsuits against De La Salle and the Brothers. Suits continued with a few interruptions for more than 15 years until, in 1706, they succeeded in having the courts condemn De La Salle and his schools.

Given the prevailing legislation and the existing precedents, it is not surprising that De La Salle and the Brothers had to endure these attacks nor that the lawsuits turned out as they eventually did. Furthermore, no evidence indicates that the Writing Masters or the Masters of the Little Schools were animated by a spirit of hatred for the Charity Schools or motivated by personal animosity toward the Brothers or De La Salle; these Masters had already come into conflict with the personnel of other Charity Schools. Their motives were quite frankly economic. In principle they had no objection to seeing the poor taught reading, writing, and the other subjects. Bluntly stated, they were not interested in the poor, but they were determined not to allow any of their paying students to be enrolled in the Charity Schools.

Charity Schools for the Poor

The French revolutionaries of 1789 did not originate the idea of gratuitous instruction for all; it already had a long history in that country and in most of the rest of Europe as well.[10] As early as 1179

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[10] In England about 1699 the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge began to open subscriptions for Charity Schools for the poor. Within six years, there were 40 such schools in London and its environs, and by 1711 over 1000 were functioning all over England. Apparently the inspiration was the Anglican Church. Teachers were paid by results. The teacher got 2 shillings 6 pence when each child could name and distinguish each of the letters in the alphabet; a like sum when all could spell; 5 shillings more when they could read well and say the Church catechism; and 15 shillings more when they could write and add accounts. See the "Account of Charity Schools in Great Britain and Ireland," 1711, quoted in Lamb 1950, 59.

the Third Lateran Council had ordered that free schools be founded, and the Council of Trent had done the same. The implementation of these decrees by many reforming bishops, such as Charles Borromeo at Milan, is a matter of record. But the gratuitous education practiced and recommended in De La Salle's time was restricted to the children of indigent families or to those in very impoverished circumstances. The notion that anybody should furnish an education free to those able to pay would have struck most people as strange. The reason given by the municipal authorities at Saumur who, in 1783, voted against allowing Charity Schools to be established there, was that there "are in this town very few workmen who are not in a position to send their children to the schoolmasters [i.e., to the Little Schools], and of these latter there is no dearth" (Urseau, 97).

Still, places like Saumur were rare exceptions. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France many partially or wholly destitute people were to be found, especially in the larger towns and cities. This population constituted a proletariat without regular employment or trade, individuals and families who lived from day to day, often in conditions of great squalor, on what they could obtain by doing odd jobs, picking pockets, or begging (Battersby, 23). Vast numbers did survive thanks to public charity, often administered by a municipal Charity Bureau composed of ecclesiastics and laity whose piety and devotedness were exceptional. A curious but pertinent remark of De La Salle himself deserves notice here. In the *Conduite des Ecoles chrêtiennes,* referring to the parents of the children who miss school frequently, he writes, "These poor people are ordinarily those to whom alms are given." The normal and proper clientele of Charity Schools, the poor, were people who today would be considered paupers or welfare cases.

All along, the problem of providing instruction, particularly religious instruction, to the children of these families had proved extremely difficult. In theory these underprivileged youngsters should have been accepted and taught free of charge by the Masters of the Little Schools. Diocesan regulations repeated that "the poor are not to be turned away" (Fosseyeux, 27). *L'Escole paroissiale,* published in 1654, records that the "children of the parish, both poor and rich, shall be accepted, as long as there is room. The poor shall be taught gratuitously; those who can pay shall do so according to their

means" (Bathencourt 1654, 71). But *L'Escole paroissiale* suggests that the teacher gather the poor children in a special place in the classroom, apart from the rest, lest their dirt and vermin prove obnoxious to their more fortunate companions (Rigault, 1:51).

The proceedings of the assembly of Parisian schoolmasters held in 1672 under Claude Joly declare: "Remember that you are supposed to teach the poor children gratuitously. God will bless your school if in it the poor are evangelized. So, love the poor tenderly." Similar injunctions appear in the Synods and Statutes of the dioceses of Toulouse, Chalons, Aix, Grenoble, and Arras (Allain, 191).

Frequently, a clause in the agreement between a teacher of a Little School and the local authorities or the representatives of the founders of the school specified that the teacher must accept free of charge either a definite number of poor children or even all those who might present themselves, providing they brought a "certificate of poverty." One such contract drawn up at Mâcon in 1620 reads: "The teacher will accept no payment from students who are notoriously poor" (*notoirement pauvres*). At Avesnes the two pious ladies who taught the girls agreed to accept up to 20 needy students gratuitously; however, these children had to bring with them a written statement from the mayor certifying that they were poor. Most of the time, the parish priests drew up such attestations in favor of the destitute children who wished to enroll in the Little Schools.

Whatever the theory, however, this right of the poor to attend the Little Schools gratis seems to have been widely disregarded in practice. The teachers, especially those who had families of their own to support, were understandably reluctant to accept these charity students. With the number of their students severely limited by the individual method of instruction then in vogue, every poor child taught without charge meant one fewer paying student. Furthermore, the presence of ragged, dirty, poor children might prove distasteful to the more fortunate students and therefore cause some of them to withdraw. At the same time the poor, seeing no great advantage in learning and realizing that they were not particularly welcomed in the Little Schools because of their social inferiority, simply did not attend (Rigault, 1:37). But whatever the cause, only a very small number of poor children actually attended the Little Schools. The great majority spent their time running the streets and

growing up without any instruction, particularly religious instruction.[11] This problem preoccupied thoughtful people whose attempts to solve it led to the establishment of special Charity Schools for the destitute poor.

As early as 1527, such special institutions existed at Lille (Fosseyeux, 27). In 1555 the *Bureau des Pauvres* in Rouen bought four houses in separate parts of the town to serve as free schools for poor children. The clerics who at first directed these four establishments (called the "schools for the four quarters," *écoles des quatre quartiers*) received 40 livres a year and free lodging. They were to teach the students to "fear and praise God, [to know] the Creed and Commandments, the little Catechism, reading, writing, and above all, [to possess] good morals" (Beaurepaire, 2:289). The Bureau also organized a similar school in the precincts of the General Hospice for orphaned or abandoned children.

In 1556 two more schools, these for poor girls, were started and entrusted to two pious laywomen who, in addition to the elements of religion, reading, and writing, instructed their students in the art of sewing (Beaurepaire, 2:290). At Toulouse the institute founded by Saint Jeanne de Lestonnac[12] about 1607 did similar work. Other foundations were established in various parts of France throughout the first half of the seventeenth century (Fosseyeux, 27).

Charity Schools in Paris and Rouen

Paris seems to have lagged behind the provinces in this respect. The organization of Charity Schools for the poor began in Paris only about 1640 as part of the vast charitable movement under the influence of men like M. Olier and Vincent de Paul. Charitable associations appeared everywhere and their members engaged in various types of welfare work, all strongly organized along parish lines. Members of these associations visited the hospitals, took care of the sick, established orphanages, procured medicines, ran soup kitchens, and provided clothes and lodgings for destitute families. Naturally, the

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[11] Parish catechism lessons were rare and poorly organized. The first official diocesan catechism at Nantes is dated 1690.

[12] Her uncle was Michel de Montaigne, the famous essayist.

people active in these Charity Schools also saw the problem posed by the lack of educational opportunities for the children of the poor, and before long founding, organizing, and financing Charity Schools became an important part of their work. "These schools for the poor were both a welfare activity and an educational enterprise; they catered to the dregs of society, where stark poverty and lack of interest in the value of an education usually go hand in hand" (Fosseyeux, 25–26, 27–28, 32).

Most of the charitable groups active in the parishes of Paris and elsewhere were offshoots of the powerful, semi-secret society known as the Compagnie de Saint-Sacrement. These wealthy and influential people contributed funds and solicited gifts and legacies for the Charity Schools. Donations, made either to the parish or directly to the parish charity, were often designated for opening Charity Schools where the indigent could be taught gratis (Fosseyeux, 28–31).

Within a few years, practically all the parishes of Paris possessed one school of this type, with the larger parishes and those with the neediest populations having more than one.[13] On both these criteria the parish of Saint Sulpice was ranked highly. During his time as pastor, Jean-Jacques Olier (d.1657) founded seven Charity Schools for boys and a number for girls in various parts of the parish (Rigault, 1:191). At Lyon, Father Charles Démia spent his own fortune and devoted the last years of his life to organizing Charity Schools. When he died in 1689, the city had 16 free schools for the poor, with over 1600 students (Rigault, 1:66).

At Rouen the four Charity Schools established in the sixteenth century had disappeared by the mid-seventeenth century. But the spirit of Jean-Jacques Olier, Adrien Bourdoise, and Vincent de Paul found imitators. In 1654 the Charity Bureau decided to gather all the poor children *de l'aumone* (i.e., those who depended for their subsistence on the alms of the *Bureau des Pauvres*) into a single institution where "they could be instructed in piety and the Catholic religion, taught to read and write, and be employed in the diverse tasks for which they should be prepared." These children lived in and went to the school associated with the General Hospice.

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[13]About 1685, within the limits of the parish of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, five Charity Schools and seven Little Schools existed. See Fosseyeaux, 40, n. 4; Allain, 188.

Jane Frances de Chantal (1572-1641) founded with Francis de Sales the Visitandines, which had teaching in the Charity Schools as one apostolate.

At first, priests seem to have done the teaching of religion and the Writing Masters taught the other subjects. Later, Laurent de Bimorel (d. 1669), who headed the Bureau, reopened the schools of the four quarters of the town and associated them with the one already functioning in the General Hospice. In this project he was greatly helped by Adrien Nyel who, as early as 1657, was teaching catechism, reading, and writing to the boys at the General Hospice. From 1661 to 1669 Nyel and Bimorel worked at reorganizing the four schools of the parishes of Saint Maclou, Saint Vivien, Saint Godard, and Saint Eloi, the very schools which the Brothers of the Christian Schools took over after 1705, when De La Salle moved the center of the Institute to Rouen (Beaurepaire, 2:299–305).

The rest of the country witnessed similar initiatives undertaken by charitable ecclesiastics and public-spirited laypeople. Father Barré established schools for poor girls at Rouen and Darnétal with the help of Mme Maillefer, and later established schools in Paris. Canon Roland undertook the education of poor girls in Reims. M. Aubery established schools at Moulins; and schools were established by the Ursulines and Peter Fourier. Many similar enterprises were also undertaken (Allain, 189).

De La Salle and the Charity Schools

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, at the time when De La Salle was becoming involved in the education of the poor, a considerable number of Charity Schools for the gratuitous instruction of the indigent existed all over France, especially in the large centers. Practically all these schools, with the notable exception of those in Lyons, were strongly centered on the parish. The vast majority of the congregations of the Sisters who taught in the Charity Schools for girls were, for all practical purposes, entirely parochial in constitution. They had no chapel other than the parish church, and many of them had the parish priest as superior (Fosseyeux, 44).

With the victorious conclusion of their long struggle against the superintendent of schools, the parish priests of Paris had established themselves as the real authority in their schools, which depended on them entirely for financing, recruiting and selection of teachers, and for organizing and administering scholastic details (Fosseyeux, 36).

In general, the parish priests did not relish sharing authority over their Charity Schools with anyone else, which helps to explain the attitude assumed by the pastors of Saint Sulpice, De La Barmondière, Baudrand, and De La Chétardie, regarding De La Salle and his Brothers. The idea of a religious congregation of men devoted to teaching, having its own central system of government and a superior responsible for schools spread throughout many dioceses and even beyond the borders of France, was sufficiently novel at that time to find very slow acceptance.[14]

When De La Salle and the Brothers came to Saint Sulpice in 1688 to take over the direction of the Charity School in the Rue Princesse (the only school remaining out of the seven founded by Olier some 40 years earlier), they found that the school was totally a parish project, completely subject to the authority of the parish priest. The school cared for the children of the numerous indigent families of the neighborhood. None but officially poor children (*enfants reconnus pauvres*), that is, those whose poverty was duly certified by the parish priest, were to be admitted. To make sure that no other children were accepted, the superintendent, the Masters of the Little Schools, and the Writing Masters all monitored what occurred in the Rue Princesse, ready to invoke the law on parish priest and teachers alike if that Charity School were to admit children who could pay the modest fees charged by the regular schoolmasters.

Gratuity of instruction was the Charity School's one sure and powerful defense against the vested interests arrayed against it. Only the Writing Masters and the Masters of the Little Schools had the right to engage in public primary education. This right they were willing to waive in the case of Charity Schools which accepted only the verifiably indigent who would otherwise not have come to their classes.

If children who could pay were admitted to the Charity School, both priest and teachers would be fined and their schools closed. Such a policy was the root of the difficulties De La Salle and the Brothers encountered and led to the temporary closing of the Saint Sulpice schools in 1706 and the schools in Chartres in 1719 (Rigault, 1:265–68).

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[14] In De La Salle's lifetime, the community of Brothers had no juridical or canonical status.

Most of the numerous teaching congregations of women that evolved during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries found in the Charity Schools the main, if not the exclusive outlet for their zeal; in their Rules are found prescriptions concerning gratuitous teaching, much like those established by De La Salle.[15] Books, food, clothing and school supplies were also often given to the students (Beaurepaire, 2:224, Allain, 195). The Rule of the Brothers specified that the children should be furnished with free ink.[16]

Funding the Charity Schools and the Schools of the Brothers

In many cases the Charity Schools were supported by the charity budget of the parish derived from collections, alms, donations, and legacies. However, the heavy drain of the schools on parish finances led pastors and bishops to seek more positive means of support for them.[17] "The greatest act of charity toward the poor," wrote the Bishop of Arras in 1678, "is to provide them with the opportunity of instructing themselves" (Allain, 196–97). That such pastoral exhortations did not go unheeded is evident in the multiplication of these pious foundations. The origin of most of the early schools of the Brothers followed this pattern.[18]

Donations for founding schools took various forms: real estate, buildings, rents, vineyards, farms, cash for investment, revenue bear-

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[15]See the *Common Rule,* Brothers of the Christian Schools, Manuscript of 1705, chapter 6.

[16]See *Règles et Constitutions de l'Institut des Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes,* 1718, Chapter 13.

[17]In 1697 the parish of Saint Sulpice alone had seven Charity Schools for girls and three for boys, taking care of some 2000 children, all of whom were taught without charge and given books and other school supplies gratis (Fosseyeux, 52).

[18]The act of foundation of a school at Soulaire in 1700 reads in part: "Considering that if God visits with malediction those who furnish the little ones with an occasion of losing their souls, God likewise reserves rich rewards for those who give them the means of sanctifying themselves and saving their souls; and since the most useful and necessary of such means is a good education and proper instruction in the faith . . . , Dame Jeanne Gille . . . hereby establishes in perpetuity . . . a Christian school in which the girls of the parish can be instructed and educated" (Urseau, 100).

ing securities. At times ecclesiastical benefices were created with the express purpose of providing funds that would allow the titular to instruct the children of the parish free of charge. Sometimes existing ecclesiastical benefices were converted into revenue producing investments so that schools could be endowed (Allain, 101–05). At other times, a wealthy person guaranteed a fixed sum sufficient to cover the expenses, or a group of people collaborated to raise the required capital (Rigault, 1:273–75). Although some municipalities helped in a few cases, this practice was the exception; education was not yet considered one of the normal responsibilities of the public authorities. The schools of the Brothers at Calais and Versailles received occasional grants from the King, but such subsidies did not become a regular source of income (Rigault, 1:271).

What did it actually cost to maintain a teacher in a Charity School in those days? No uniform contract for the teachers of the Charity Schools existed. Salaries depended on local circumstances, on the duties demanded of the teacher, and on the extra emoluments he might enjoy along with his salary (Guibert, xixx). The royal decrees of 1698 and 1724 set the minimum cash salary for a Master of a Little School at 150 livres a year; however, salaries for teachers in the Charity Schools varied considerably from this amount because they, unlike the Masters, could not supplement their wages by fees.

When the Brothers came to Paris in 1688, Claude de La Barmondière, pastor of Saint Sulpice, agreed to pay each of them 250 livres a year (Battersby, 93; Ravelet, 182). A contract for one teacher in Paris in 1711 indicates that he received 420 livres a year of which 70 livres represented the cost of his lodging, and from his salary he was expected to give pens and books free to the children (Fosseyeux, 65). The 14 Brothers employed at Saint Sulpice in 1740 were paid 4592 livres a year from the parish, or 328 for each Brother. At this time the three Brothers teaching at the Gros Caillou school received 1158, or 386 livres each. In both cases, lodging was provided free by the parish. In 1744 the three Brothers at Saint Etienne du Mont received 900 livres plus lodging, and the six at the Madeleine in 1757 were paid 2250 livres, or 375 livres each (Fosseyeux, 66).

When Mme Maillefer sent Adrien Nyel to Reims in 1679, she promised him 100 écus, the equivalent of 300 livres, a year. With this sum Nyel paid M. Dorigny, the parish priest of Saint Maurice,

for board and lodging for both himself and his young companion (Rigault, 1:138, 143).

Mme De Croyère, in order to establish the school in the parish of Saint Jacques, bequeathed for the support of two teachers a sum of money the interest on which came to 500 livres a year (Rigault, 1:145). At Chartres the Brothers had no fixed revenue. As long as Bishop Godet des Marais lived, he provided generously for them out of his own resources. But not having made any provision in his will for these benefactions to continue, he left the Brothers and their work in a very precarious position when he died, a situation in which the Brothers suffered great hardships for years (Blain, 376–77).

Considerable negotiation was needed to accumulate the capital to insure the annual salary of about 265 livres for the two Brothers in the school at Troyes. The lower cost of living at Troyes and the free use of the presbytery as a community residence may have accounted for such a modest salary. At Darnétal the two Brothers who took over the parish school after the death of the lay teacher had to be satisfied with the 150 livres that their predecessor had received.

When the Brothers began teaching in the schools of the four quarters at Rouen, they received board and lodging free at the General Hospice and 36 livres a year each for their other expenses. The contract signed in 1707 between the Bureau and De La Salle called for ten Brothers plus a Director and a cook to work in the four schools. The only remuneration the Bureau agreed to pay the Brothers was 600 livres a year, out of which they had to pay the rent for their house (Rigault, 1:273–89).

A comparison of the salaries paid to the Brothers with the wages of other workers can be drawn from the records of a wealthy nobleman in Paris about 1690. The chaplain was paid 200 livres; the private secretary, 300; the maître d'hôtel, the most important man in the household, 500; the chief cook, 300; assistant cooks, 75; coachmen, 100. All these persons received board and lodging free (Franklin 1957, 19).

School Policies

Although the *Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes* describes how the Christian school in general should operate, it also demonstrates why those gratuitous schools conducted by the Brothers were superior

in organization, in pedagogy, and in efficiency. By inference at least, this superiority explains the popularity of the Brothers' schools with pastors and parents and the animosity they aroused among the Writing Masters and the Masters of the Little Schools.

Although the parish priests made their own decisions on the general policies of their schools, they left the real operations and practical details to the Brothers and Sisters in charge. As a rule, a Charity School included two divisions or classes, one for children up to about seven years of age, and the other for those older. Lessons lasted approximately five hours a day, generally from 8:00 or 8:30 to 11:00 in the morning, and from 2:30 to 4:00 or 5:00 in the evening. In many places the schools were not open on Wednesday or Saturday.

The Rule of the Brothers prescribed only one holiday during the week, Thursday, but the eves of major feasts were often holidays as well as the feasts themselves. The school year lasted 11 months, with September usually the long vacation (Fosseyeux, 68). On the average, a child spent two years in a Charity School, but some children might stay for three or four.

In many schools, once the simultaneous method became accepted, a classroom might have 60 or 70 students, presumably following the same lesson, with little attention to differences between the slower and the brighter, the more and the less advanced. However, following the directives of the *Conduite,* the Brothers' schools were organized with three or more divisions to each class based upon the ability and progress of the students, with careful grading, regular evaluation, and promotions. This organization contributed to the superiority which the Lasallian schools enjoyed over schools where classroom procedure was much more haphazard (Rigault, 1:195).

In the Charity Schools considerable emphasis was placed on proper behavior and politeness; this practice was also a unique characteristic of the schools the Brothers conducted. De La Salle's *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* exercised considerable influence on French society until well into the eighteenth century and was frequently reedited. Many other books on good manners were published about this time, a genuine sign that the topic was very much emphasized.

The Charity Schools received regular visits not only from the pastor but also, at least in certain parishes, from the cleric who looked

after them in the pastor's name. In addition to the clergy, the officers delegated by the parish Charity Bureau made monthly inspections and presented regular reports on the situation in the schools to the other members of the Bureau at their general meetings (Fosseyeux, 70–71).

Teaching Orders

The girls' schools were staffed almost exclusively by Sisters belonging to one of the many congregations established all over France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For the most part these were non-cloistered. Ravelet sets the number of such congregations at over 50 without claiming to have included them all (Ravelet, 58). Among these Orders was that of the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence founded by Father Barré with the help of Mme Maillefer. They had opened a convent in Paris as early as 1677, where they were known as the Sisters of Saint Maur, and had begun working in the parish of Saint Sulpice two years before the Brothers arrived. By the end of the century, these Sisters were conducting eight schools in the parish of Saint Sulpice alone (Fosseyeux, 44).

The Daughters of Charity, founded by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, also conducted many schools in Paris, along with hospitals, orphanages and other social works. Unlike the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence, they undertook teaching in parish Charity Schools only after drawing up a written contract with the parish priests to cover the conditions of their employment.

The Daughters of Charity always remained under the control of their own superior general and enjoyed the spiritual guidance of the Lazarists. In the early eighteenth century, 217 Daughters of Charity were employed in 31 parishes of Paris, either as teachers in the poor schools or as social workers (Beaurepaire, 2:407).

Other religious groups included the Sisters of Saint Joseph, founded at Le Puy in 1650 by Bishop Henri de Maupas du Tour; the Daughters of Charity and Christian Instruction of Nevers (1650), to which Saint Bernadette was to belong; the Sisters of Saint Charles, founded by Father Démia at Lyons; and the Sisters of Ernemont, founded at Rouen in 1690, whose ecclesiastical superior for many years was Canon Blain. Many of these seventeenth-century congregations have continued in existence to the present day. Among those

that did not survive were the Sisters of Saint Martha, founded in 1713 by the widow of the French sculptor, Théodon, who had helped Gabriel Drolin in Rome and to whom De La Salle alludes in several letters (De La Salle 1988, Letters 13, 14, 19, 20, 22). These Sisters, attached to Jansenistic traditions bequeathed to them by their foundress, finally ceased to exist toward the middle of the nineteenth century (Fosseyeux, 46–47; Allain, Chapter 11).[19]

One effect of the development of the non-cloistered religious congregations of women was to improve the education of girls. The foundresses, founders, and early members of these congregations came for the most part from among women better educated than the average laywoman in a society which, as a general rule, permitted only women to teach girls and limited the education of girls to preparation as housekeepers and mothers.[20] These congregations were a limited source of teachers for the girls, at least initially. However, recruits to teach boys existed in abundance among both clerics and laymen.

The great weakness of the schools for boys was the lack of any organized system for selecting, training, and supervising the teachers after they were in the classroom. The schools were usually conducted in a very inefficient manner and the children grew restive and left. Also, hiring laymen to teach the poor put a strain on parish finances. In addition, to retain good teachers in the Charity Schools was difficult. A man sufficiently educated, trained, and anxious to succeed as a teacher in the Charity School could make much more money in some other occupation or even as a Master of the Little Schools.[21] For these reasons and to provide support and motivation, good men had tried to establish religious congregations or confraternities dedicated to teaching poor boys. None of these efforts, previous to the work of De La Salle, had met with any success.

At Lyon, Father Charles Démia had set up a seminary or normal school for the training of the young men he hoped to employ

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[19]See also S. M. D'Erceville 1956.

[20]Even among the upper classes, intellectual training for women was not generally encouraged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

[21]This seems to have been the temptation to which some early members of De La Salle's Brothers succumbed.

in his Charity Schools. That his teachers came exclusively from among clerics no doubt contributed to the ultimate failure of his enterprise; his seminary lasted for only a few years after his own death. Earlier, Peter Fourier had planned a community of schoolteachers, but his proposal did not meet with the approval of the authorities and had to be abandoned. Father Nicolas Barré, after succeeding so well with the Sisters, did his best to establish a similar group of Brothers, but the community was short-lived (Allain, 288–89).

In addition to the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the only other religious congregation of laymen who were teachers and who continued for any length of time in France was a Jansenist Community called the Frères Tabourin. Named for the priest who founded them in Paris about 1711, they also were called Brothers of the Christian Schools of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, because for a while they practically monopolized teaching in the Charity Schools of that area. They still conducted 17 schools in Paris as late as 1738 but eventually died out (Fosseyeux, 48).

Coming Out of School, from a print by August Saint-Aubin.

The Legal Battle Between De La Salle and the Schoolmasters

When the Writing Masters, the Masters of the Little Schools, and the superintendent of schools brought various lawsuits against De La Salle and the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Paris and elsewhere, they did not oppose Charity Schools as such because these institutions had been founded for the destitute (Battersby, 108). The Masters feared, however, that students who were not destitute would go to the schools of the Brothers where they would receive a better education free. Consequently, the Masters were constantly concerned about the student population in the Brothers' schools.

As early as 1690 the classes of the Brothers in the parish of Saint Sulpice came under the scrutiny of the Masters. Not long after the Brothers started work in the Rue du Bac, the Masters of the Little Schools filed suit, alleging that De La Salle admitted to his classes children whose parents could afford fees. This fact, they contended, meant that the Brothers' schools were not really Charity Schools and therefore had no legal right to exist because, "Charity Schools were tolerated only on condition that the gratuitous instruction they provided should benefit none but the truly poor" (Rigault, 1:194; Battersby, 108–09, 155).

Nothing is known of how De La Salle defended himself in court on this occasion, but, in all likelihood, he simply argued that, because the superintendent had no jurisdiction over Charity Schools and could not prove that the school in the Rue du Bac was not a Charity School, he had no legal grounds for interfering (Rigault, 194–96). De La Salle won the case and during the next ten years or so the Brothers won various similar lawsuits (Battersby, 110).

Eventually, the Masters of the Little Schools joined with the Writing Masters, to force the issue, and began to take aggressive action. Early in 1704 the Writing Masters of Paris attacked the Sunday school in the Faubourg Saint Antoine and the seminary for rural schoolteachers in the Faubourg Saint Marcel.[22] They had all the school material seized and the classrooms closed on the plea that the parents

[22]"Had the Brothers taught writing in the Charity Schools only, the Writing Masters might have overlooked this infringement of their alleged rights; but when they now saw them teaching this and other subjects at a more advanced level in the Sunday Academy and training college, they

of the students included "a surgeon, a locksmith, a jeweler, a grocer, a wine-merchant, and so forth."[23]

On February 22 the Lieutenant General of the police condemned De La Salle, who had refused to appear in court. The sentence read in part: ". . . and the court orders that in the Charity Schools only those children shall be admitted whose parents are truly poor [*veritablement pauvres*] and that they shall be taught only such matters as are in harmony with the condition of their parents" (Ravelet, 203).

At the same time, the Masters of the Little School had lodged another complaint, this one against the Brothers' school in the Rue de Charonne. On February 14, 1704, De La Salle was condemned by the superintendent, told to close the school, ordered to pay a fine of 50 livres, and forced to forfeit the school furnishings. His appeal was denied, and on May 30, after a second condemnation, the authorities themselves closed the school. A month or so later, elated by these successes, the Masters moved against the Brothers' schools in the parishes of Saint Sulpice, Saint Marcel, and Saint Hyppolyte.

Urged by the parish priests of Saint Marcel and Saint Hyppolyte, the Brothers on July 11 appealed. The appeal was denied and on August 29 a fourth and final decree enjoined the Brothers to "cease and desist from acting like a recognized religious community" until such time as they obtained from the King the letters patent conferring on them juridical existence. The decree informed the two parish priests that, although they could establish Charity Schools in their parishes, these institutions must be real Charity Schools, that is, strictly for the poor; furthermore, to prove that the schools were indeed for the poor, a list of the students was to be drawn up monthly and presented to the court and to the Writing Masters (Ravelet, 308). Under pain of fines, the judge even forbade the parents whose children were not "truly in need of the Charity Schools" to send them there to learn writing (Ravelet, 307). This sentence was carried out to the letter.

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decided to intervene" (Battersby, 180). These rights, however, were fully recognized and protected by law.

[23]See the list of "bourgeois" whose sons frequented the Brothers' schools in Rigault, 1:241 and Battersby, 181.

De La Salle appealed the verdict of the superintendent to the Parliament. In the final judgment issued on February 5, 1706, the Parliament upheld the condemnations and forbade the Brothers to "teach in Little Schools within the City of Paris and its Faubourgs" unless they were so authorized by the superintendent (Ravelet, 310–11; Battersby, 197). This prohibition, of course, left the Brothers free to continue teaching in the Charity Schools for the poor, such as those of Saint Sulpice. But to make sure that the students of the Brothers were actually poor, the Masters paid frequent visits, ferreting out alleged abuses and causing all sorts of disorder in the classes, until finally the Brothers, in exasperation, asked De La Salle himself to close the schools. He did, at first temporarily; but seeing that De La Chétardie, pastor of Saint Sulpice, took no effective steps to put an end to this petty persecution, he withdrew the Brothers a second time.

The parents besieged their parish priest with their complaints and urged him to reopen the schools. At first De La Chétardie tried to find other teachers, but failing in this effort he called on De La Salle to send the Brothers back (Battersby, 198). De La Salle demanded as a condition for the Brothers' return that De La Chétardie conclude some definite arrangement with the Masters which would permit the Brothers to do their work in peace.

By the time classes resumed in October, 1706, an agreement had been signed between the parish priest and M. Larcher, representative of the Writing Masters, which declared:

> The aforesaid M. Larcher does not object to the aforesaid parish priest of Saint Sulpice's hiring teachers to instruct the poor children of his parish; but he [i.e., the parish priest] must draw up a list of the names of such poor children who are so taught, which list shall be turned over to the Lieutenant of Police, and by him transmitted to the Writing Masters; and the teachers [in the Charity Schools] must not admit any but poor children to these schools. . . . (Fosseyeux, 37; Battersby, 200)

In conformity with this directive,

> M. De La Chétardie sent M. De Gergy, his vicar, to list the names of all the students, together with their ages, addresses, and the financial status of their parents, and it was agreed that thenceforth the Brothers should not admit any child to the

school unless he came provided with an admission slip issued by parish authorities. (Ravelet, 317)

From this time on, apparently, De La Salle and the Brothers suffered no further trouble in Paris from the schoolmasters (Rigault, 1:241–47).[24]

Conclusion

In France under Louis XIV, education was not financed by the state, and was essentially religious in content, inspiration, and direction. The modern concept of public education, supported by taxes and ostensibly divorced from all religious influence, simply did not exist. Most of the schools had been founded and were directed by the clergy, and clerics and religious formed a majority of the teaching personnel. Even in the few schools controlled and partly supported by the municipalities, religious instruction and training in the practice of faith were provided as a matter of course; furthermore, these institutions followed the curriculum common in schools entirely under ecclesiastical control (Rigault, 1:359, 367).[25]

Until the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, even the Protestants had been allowed schools of their own, but after 1685 their schools were closed. The Royal Declarations of 1698 and 1724 show that the French monarchy depended greatly upon Catholic education in the Protestant areas to bring about conversions both religious and political. The schools at Ales and Les Vans founded by De La Salle and the Brothers of the Christian Schools were established mainly with this intention.

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[24] But in Chartres difficulties developed about 1719. The account Rigault gives is not entirely clear (1:265–68).

[25] What is said here about the Christian character of the schools in the seventeenth century should not, of course, make us overlook the fact that many of the Little Schools in particular were but nominally religious. In fact, it was dissatisfaction with the religious results achieved in these schools that contributed so much to the clergy's enthusiastic adoption of the Charity School formula. Blain, who was the friend and confidant of two religious founders, De La Salle and Grignion de Montfort, and who was the ecclesiastical superior of the Brothers in Rouen from 1712 to 1725,

De La Salle accepted, as did everyone at the time, the practice, in vogue for at least 40 years, of providing gratuitous instruction for the indigent in free parish schools. In other schools of the Brothers that did not cater specifically to the poor, such as Saint Yon, no one expected that the instruction would also be gratuitous.

De La Salle established his society of Brothers primarily for indigent children because theirs was the sorriest plight of all. Since their families could pay nothing, he resolved that the education must be absolutely gratuitous, that no payments or gifts should ever be accepted, even from those children whose parents might not be paupers. De La Salle realized, and the history of the Little Schools proved, that a school in which some children paid fees while others did not would not long remain a place to which the poor would come willingly or where they would be welcome.

De La Salle broke with tradition, legislation, and current practice by freely admitting to his schools all the children who wanted to enroll, whether they belonged to the pauper class or not. He felt that he had a mission to all children and that no economic barriers should prevent him from giving a Christian education to any child who came to him asking for one. He never limited the Brothers' activity to the poor except when forced to do so by the Parisian courts after 1706.

He accepted into the schools of the Brothers children who were not paupers, though he knew he was inviting trouble by doing so. He was willing to teach the young Irish nobles, the well-to-do children of Rouen, the young workmen of Paris, the youths desirous of becoming rural schoolteachers, even wild, young incorrigibles from wealthy families. He did not turn away children who could afford to pay fees, but he did direct the Brothers to refuse "money or presents, however small, on any occasion whatsoever." A primary

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and the second founder of the Sisters of Ernemont and their superior for 24 years, speaks in vigorous terms of the Little Schools as "places where the young come to learn, for a price, the arts of reading, writing and calculating . . . , where is imparted a secular and profane type of knowledge, mostly indifferent, or unimportant, and hardly necessary for salvation" (Blain, 1:34). Even allowing for Blain's uncritical use of language, one suspects that there must have been some truth in his strictures, and that the Masters were not models of zeal when it came to teaching religion.

reason for De La Salle's establishing a rule of gratuity for the Institute may have been to insure that as many students as possible would come to the schools.

The presence in the Brothers' schools of wealthier children who had no legal right to be there led to the lawsuits of the schoolmasters and furnished the evidence which led to De La Salle's condemnation in 1706. Given the existing legislation, the sentence could not be faulted; the condemnation was actually a foregone conclusion. However, the Rule of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, requiring personal gratuity on the part of the Brothers, may have helped mitigate the legal seriousness of these cases. For if the schoolmasters could win their lawsuits simply by showing that some students in the Brothers' schools could have paid fees, they certainly could have been successful had they been able to prove that the Brothers themselves could receive personal compensation. Such a possibility was precluded by the Institute's Rule establishing gratuitous teaching as essential.

The troubles which De La Salle and the Brothers faced in their legal battles arose, not because of their work with the poor, but because their schools were open to all classes and income levels. Because De La Salle knew that the presence in his schools of children who were not paupers would anger the schoolmasters, the question arises of why he received them, when there were more than enough of the poor to educate.

Perhaps the parish priests, who were responsible for these schools, insisted that all children attend because of the close connection between school and parish. In fact, the agreement which ended the 1706 dispute in Paris was settled between the schoolmasters and the pastor, not De La Salle, and stipulated that it was the pastor who was to certify that the students were all from indigent families. Or perhaps the Brothers, who for the most part came from the poorer classes, helped De La Salle reject a concept of education by social class. He may have more or less subconsciously anticipated the role of the school as an instrument for social equality.

An evaluation of the work of De La Salle indicates that his genius lay in the areas of organizing the schools, in training and supervising teachers, in designing innovative methodologies, in providing for individual differences among students, in creating a valid and effective place for the laypeople and religious in the educational

ministry of the Church, and in filling the gap in French education between elementary instruction and the classical college.

De La Salle's outstanding success in the area of popular education consisted above all in doing well what was being done poorly by others and particularly in grasping the importance of the teacher in the educational enterprise. He provided the schools of France and of the world with the kind of teachers who, looking upon their work as a real mission, would exercise it as a true apostolate, a genuine and most important contribution to the well-being of the Church. The Church has fittingly proclaimed John Baptist de La Salle not the patron of elementary or charitable schools, but the Patron of all Teachers.

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"A Grace and Sweetness of French"

The Vernacular in the Secondary Schools of France in the Seventeenth Century

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Introduction

One of the major contributions of John Baptist de La Salle, an innovation in the late seventeenth-century France which influenced the subsequent history of education in the West, was his insistence on the use of the vernacular rather than Latin in all the schools conducted by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In order to avoid confusion, however, De La Salle's contribution to the rise of the vernacular in education must be clarified.

Various schools existed, maintained for the most part by the Roman Catholic Church, in which boys under nine years of age were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, catechism, singing, and the rudiments of Latin grammar. These institutions may be considered primary schools. According to their nature, who taught in them, and the students they accepted, they were called Charity Schools, Little Schools, schools of the Writing Masters, or Christian schools, and were conducted by ecclesiastics and teaching orders of the Catholic Church.[1]

At the age of ten or eleven, the boys who were to receive further education entered secondary schools, the collèges of the universities, and the schools conducted by various teaching organizations.

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[1] The Little Schools (*petites écoles*) should not be confused with the Little Schools of Port Royal. The Little Schools of Port Royal were Jansenist institutions. The Little Schools, or ordinary primary schools, served parishes throughout France.

In the secondary schools instruction began with the sixth form and continued upward until the first form (15 to 16 years of age). Following this level of instruction, these schools provided for a continuation of philosophy ending with the reception of the *Maître des arts* at about the age of 19.[2]

A great difference existed between the use of the vernacular as a medium of instruction in the secondary schools and its use in the primary schools. At the beginning of the seventeenth century in the primary schools, the children were taught to read first in Latin, from a book written completely in that language. However, the instruction by the teacher and the answers of the students—that is, all discourse in class aside from the actual reading—was in the vernacular. In the secondary schools, the teaching of reading and other subjects was accomplished through the medium of Latin; furthermore, all discourse in class, all conversation during recreations, and all verbal communication in the school were in Latin.

De La Salle's innovation pertained to education in the primary schools. Here he departed completely from the traditional system of his day in the teaching of reading. For the first time the students were forbidden to read Latin until they could read French perfectly:

> The first book which the students of the Christian Schools will learn to read will be composed of all sorts of French syllables of two, three, four, five, six, and seven letters and of some words to facilitate the pronunciation of the syllables. (La Fontainerie 1934, 74)

At the same time, a parallel and equally important movement was taking place in the secondary schools: French replacing Latin as the language of instruction and discourse, as both a result of and an influence upon the changing attitudes in Europe toward both languages.

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[2] There were, however, some inconsistencies in this arrangement. For example, the University of Paris was in charge of secondary education only. Nevertheless, some teachers of the university taught small boys reading, writing, and arithmetic. Therefore, the official in charge of the primary schools of Paris encouraged the teachers of the primary schools to retain boys beyond age nine and to teach grammar and rhetoric. See Adamson 1921, 200–201.

It is this revolutionary change in the secondary schools of seventeenth-century France that this essay will examine. Was De La Salle influenced by the work going on in the secondary schools? Were there interrelations? An understanding of the vernacular movement in the secondary schools will provide context and contrast for the contribution of De La Salle.[3]

Nationalism and the Ascendancy of French

The seventeenth century was dominated by the Latin language. French was the *langue vulgaire*. Latin, on the contrary, formed the language of letters, the means for intellectual cultivation in France, and the common instrument which gave to Europe, notwithstanding geographic, historical, religious, and political diversities, a moral unity (Falcucci 1939, 11).

One must not forget that the mastery of Latin was the principal, one might almost say the unique, objective of the earliest schooling. *Latine loqui, pie vivere,* "Speak Latin, live devoutly," was the complete program of life. Piety opened heaven; Latin assured entrance into the divine science and human knowledge; it provided commerce with all that there was of goodness, of wisdom, and of nobility on earth (Brunot 1905, 7).

But well before the seventeenth century, nationalism was on the rise. France, Spain, and England were the first to evolve as nation-states out of the fabric of medieval Europe. When Louis XIII became king in 1610, France was already strong in agriculture and commerce. As his minister, Louis had chosen Cardinal Richelieu, who centralized the king's government. He subdued the great nobles and the Huguenots, two decentralizing factions; he improved and strengthened foreign relations.

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[3]There was no coeducation in France during this period. This essay concerns itself with the education of boys; therefore nothing that relates to the education of girls is discussed. In primary education (only) there were many congregations of women devoted to the schools: the Ursulines, founded in 1535; the Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine of The Congregation of Our Lady, founded by Saint Peter Fourier and Alix Le Clerc in 1597; and the Daughters of Charity, founded by Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac in 1633—to mention only the most important.

In 1643, Louis XIV ascended to the throne and Cardinal Mazarin followed in Richelieu's footsteps. Powerful France became magnificent France. This age of the Grand Monarch was also the golden age of French art, the age of Mansard, Girardon, LeBrun, Lully, Corneille, Molière, Racine, Mme De Sévigné, La Fontaine, Bossuet. The domestic policy of Colbert and the military policy of Louvois combined to make France the foremost nation in Europe (Hayes 1932, 278–319).

Since the thirteenth century, much had happened to stimulate the growth of the European vernacular languages. The French language began its struggle for recognition early, despite the opposition of tradition. The New Testament was published in French as early as 1523 by Lefèvre d'Etaples, a Huguenot. Montaigne (1533–1592) believed that too much time was spent on learning the classical languages; to him even the other vernaculars were more useful to learn (Durkheim 1938, 2:62). Bodin, Mestre, Rabelais, Cordier, and Calvin praised the French tongue and urged its use. In the early years of the sixteenth century, the first grammars appeared, reflecting the rising interest in the study of the French language,[4] and a significant event early in the seventeenth century was the publication of Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode,* in the author's native tongue.

Several factors in the development of the use of the French language in education merit consideration here.

Peter Ramus

Peter Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée) was born in 1515 at a time of great religious and educational turmoil. He became an ardent Huguenot and was a lecturer at the collège of Navarre. After a rather violent life, he died August 26, 1572, a victim of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre (Graves 1912, 19–107).

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[4] The first French grammars were published in England, Alexander Barclay's *Introductory to wryte and to pronounce frenche* (1521) and John Palsgrave's *L'esclaircissement de la langue francoyse* (1530). Probably the first grammar published in France was the *Briefoe doctrine pour decrement escrire selon la propriete du langage francais* (1533). See Monroe 1911–1913, 5:719.

Ramus closely examined the entire curriculum of French secondary education. Grammar was the object of his particular attention. In his plan for the reform of instruction, Ramus allowed three years to be given to grammar, during which the emphasis was to be on learning Latin through the examples of great authors. The grammar of Ramus exhibits marked contrasts with that of Jean Despautère, in common use in the schools of the day. The latter is a mass of complexity; exceptions and irregularities occur as often as the normal principles. True, the rules in Ramus' grammar were still in Latin, but the grammar had been simplified to an astonishing extent. It is the first book that, if translated into English, would resemble a Latin primer of today (H.C. Barnard 1911, 32).

More important, Ramus also produced a French grammar, the first edition of which was published in 1562. It was very popular, and a second edition followed in 1567, a third in 1572, and a fourth in 1587 (Waddington 1855, 461). The preface to his grammar, addressed to the then Queen of France, Catherine de Medici, presents Ramus' thoughts on his mother tongue:

> It is by your persuasion that the king has commanded me to proceed with the treatise of the liberal arts, not only in Latin for the learned of all nations, but in French for France, where there is an infinity of good minds capable of all science and education, who are, however, deprived of this learning because of the difficulty of language. (Waddington, 417)

Ramus told the queen that his objective in writing the grammar was

> to gather together all the noble minds given over to letters, and urge them to think of their country and to hold it worthy of their vigils and studies, and to communicate to it liberally the fruit of their labors, proposing before their eyes a grace and sweetness of French which may invite foreigners to study it as avidly as we in our schools study Greek and Latin. (Waddington, 420)

Ramus is indeed a figure of no small importance. His was the first successful attempt to break away from the medieval tradition in French secondary education. His published works enjoyed wide popularity; the influence of his French grammar in displacing Latin

as the medium of teaching and learning has been considerable. In several particulars Ramus anticipated the reforms of the Port Royalists, and his work was at the same time well-known, at least to some of them. Apparently, he contributed in some measure to the formation of the educational doctrine which was put into practice in the Little Schools associated with Port Royal.

The French Academy

Over half a century after Ramus' death, the French language became the object of serious study. In 1634 Cardinal Richelieu offered his protection to a group of literary men who were accustomed to meet and discuss literature and form. In 1635 he secured for them letters patent from Louis XIII, under the name *L'Académie française* (Falkiner 1891, 251).[5] The principal function, aim, and object of the Academy according to its charter was "to work with all possible care and diligence for the advancement of the French language, to purify it from all the dross which might alloy it, to establish a certain use of words—in short, to render it eloquent, and capable of treating of the arts and sciences" (Falkiner, 254).

A letter (not notable for its humility) dated March 22, 1634, from the first academicians to their protector, Richelieu, stated that their objective was the reform of the French language:

> The country which we inhabit . . . has always produced valiant men; but their valor has gone unrecognized in comparison with that of the Greeks and Romans because they have not known the art of making it illustrious by their writings. Today the Greeks and Romans are the slaves of other nations, and the tongues which they spoke are accounted among the things which are dead. . . . Our language is already the most perfect of living languages and would succeed to the place of the Latin, as that succeeded to the Greek, if we took more care than hitherto with the art of expression. (Vincent, 40–42)[6]

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[5] Richelieu did not found the Academy; it was in existence already. See Vincent 1901, 55–56.

[6] This letter is reproduced in the original French by Pellisson and D'Olivet 1858, 1:21–22.

Did the French Academy exert an appreciable influence on the French language? Probably the reverse is true: the growth and development of the language was reflected in the Academy. No evidence exists to suggest that the Academy had a direct influence on education. At no time did the Academy advocate replacing Latin in the schools. The academicians confined themselves to refining the French as it was already used.

The Universities

The schools were the last to capitulate to the increasing demands for the native language. In the universities, education was founded on the tongues and literature of antiquity. French was considered not only an uncultivated language but also one impossible of being cultivated.[7] Indeed, the most formidable obstacle to the use of the vernacular was the tradition of the universities (Brunot, 14).[8] Humanism in the universities came to mean a Greco-Latin culture. By a statute of François I (1660), renewed by Henry IV, the students of the universities and collèges were required to speak in Latin, even during recreation (H.C. Barnard 1913, 108). The Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris forbade the students to speak at all in French (Hodgson 1908, 54).[9]

All evidence indicates that the Latin language completely dominated the collèges at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Collège des Bons Enfants in Reims, which De La Salle attended, was a model of the schools of the period:

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[7]At least one person, Bude, considered French fit only to describe the art of hunting (H. Barnard 1880b, 459).

[8]The universities were composed of collèges, or houses of studies. There were separate secondary schools in various cities also called collèges, and sometimes academies. In this essay, collèges and academies have been used interchangeably.

[9]However, this university allowed the use of French instead of Latin for catechetical purposes in those lower classes where the students were insufficiently advanced to understand questions put into Latin. It also permitted substituting Greek for Latin.

> Latin was the only language spoken during school hours. The professor delivered his lectures in Latin, and even during recreation and meals the students were obliged to converse in Latin. Of a total of six hours' schooling a day, one hour was occupied in learning grammatical rules and syntax, and the other five in studying authors and in writing translations. . . . There were, moreover, frequent recitations of Latin verse, as well as declamations and disputations by the more advanced students. (Battersby 1949, 15–16)

The Protestant Schools

In the Huguenot schools a similar situation existed. Although Mathurin Cordier had advocated the vernacular as an instrument of study as early as 1532, he liked to teach the children pure and correct Latin (H.C. Barnard 1911, 208; Chevriers 1884, 232).

In Geneva, however, Calvin and his followers preached, taught, and argued in the vernacular, French, and from there went to other countries, especially France, to preach in French. Calvin helped to make the vernacular tongues of western Europe literary, and there was no tongue and no people that he influenced more than the French (Hodgson, 57).

But education generally remained impervious to this influence. In the Huguenot schools, divided into seven classes, the instruction included Latin reading, writing, and grammar (Chevriers, 232). In the seventh form the boys learned reading in Latin and in French. The sixth form advanced them to Latin writing; here they also learned the Greek characters. The rudiments of Latin grammar from the book of Despautère, the ability to converse in Latin by studying the *Colloquies* of Cordier and Vives, and the *Dialogorum Sacrorum libri quattuor* of Sébastien Chateillon were taught in the fifth form. Latin conversation was compulsory for all the students in the upper classes. Ovid, Terence, Cicero, Hesiod, Xenophon, and the Greek drama were read in the upper four forms, along with constant verse composition (H.C. Barnard 1911, 93).

The Jesuits

Originally the schools of the Society of Jesus were just as committed to the scholastic tradition as were those we have examined. However, by the end of the sixteenth century, the Jesuits could claim the distinction of allowing the use of French, although only in a very limited way. In the *Ratio Studiorum*, published in 1599, among the *Regulae rectoris*, this eighth rule was promulgated: "In the house, care should be taken to conserve most diligently the use of the Latin language among the scholastics: they shall not be exempted from this law of speaking Latin except on days of vacation and in hours of recreation." Instruction in all school subjects and all conversations during school hours were conducted in Latin. Thus the collèges, including those of the Jesuits, did not employ the vernacular as an instrument of teaching until well into the eighteenth century.

French secondary education, even in this golden age of French literature and letters, would have been totally without the vernacular had it not been for two notable exceptions: the Society of the Fathers of the Oratory of Jesus and the Little Schools of Port Royal.

The Oratory

Pierre de Bérulle (1575–1629) founded the Institute of the Oratory in 1611. The society received letters patent in 1612 and was approved by Papal Bull in 1613.

Bérulle originally forbade the Oratorians to conduct educational work for lay students. However, the pope ordered them to accept collèges, and the first collège under the direction of the Oratorians was that of Dieppe, which was opened in 1614. By 1629 the Oratorians were in charge of 50 collèges (H. C. Barnard 1911, 145–58).[10]

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[10]See also Cormack 1933, 115–16. For an account of the administration of the collèges of the Oratory, see H.C. Barnard 1911, 172. The sources for information on the education given by the Oratorians consist of the writings by members of the Congregation: Perraud, Lamy, Thomassin, Du Guet, Houbigant; various *méthodes,* or *Rationes Studiorum,* written under the auspices of De Condren, the superior; household accounts; *Arrêts de Parlement*; and various memoirs. Although they were secondary schools,

At the collèges of the Oratory the aim of teaching was religious, the formation of the Christian gentleman. The discipline was not severe; individual differences were respected. From this benign philosophy and from the labors and genius of the priests of the Oratory there arose a method of studies, the *Ratio Studiorum magistris et professoribus Congregationis Oratorii Domini Jesu observanda,* published in 1645. Father Bourgoing sent this document to all the collèges of the Oratorians with the instructions that they conform to it completely (Lallemand 1888, 231).

In the *Ratio Studiorum* a major departure from tradition was in the teaching of languages. The use of the Latin language was forbidden up to the fourth form; from this class on it became obligatory. However, the instruction in history was given in French from the sixth to the first form. Religion also was taught in the vernacular, except in the two highest forms (Lallemand, 226).

Awareness of the inconvenience and misuse of Latin led the Oratorians to bring about a revolution in the teaching of the classics. The Oratorians were really the first to teach Latin and Greek grammar in French. As early as 1640, the *Méthode Latine* of Father De Condren was printed and sent to all the Oratorian collèges. The Latin composition and the theme, that is, the translation of French into Latin or Greek, lost their importance and assumed a secondary rank. The principal exercise was the version or translation of Latin or Greek into French. To understand the text was the main objective of the teaching of Latin (Lallemand, 238).

The logic of the teaching of languages through the medium of the vernacular is explained with clarity by Lamy:

> The grammar books which are placed in the hands of children ought to be in the language that is known to them, that is to say, in French for the collèges of France, for to use grammars written in Latin to teach Latin is to undertake to sweep away shadows by shadows. A German who does not know French at all, and with whom I am able to discourse only by signs—ought he to instruct me in his language? Perhaps in convers-

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in some Oratorian collèges there was a preparatory form below the regular six year course, the *chambre des abécédaires,* corresponding to the seventh and eighth form of the *petites écoles.* See H.C. Barnard 1911, 167.

> ing a long time with him I would be able to guess what he wished to say to me; but finally, if I did not take pleasure in wasting my time, I should prefer to him those who would be able to instruct me more easily, using the French language which I know in order to teach me the German which I do not know. (Lamy 1706, 134)

In addition to the use of the mother tongue to teach the languages, the Oratorian *Ratio Studiorum* prescribed its use in certain other instances, for example: "If tragedies are presented at the end of the year, they shall be in Latin; nevertheless the prologue, the choruses, or the interludes may be in French" (quoted in Lallemand, 233–34).

The Oratorians were probably the first to teach history, particularly the history of France; they were the first to use the vernacular as an instrument of instruction in the secondary school; and they reformed the teaching of the classical languages. Barnard describes their contribution:

> In three respects, therefore, the teaching of Latin in the collèges of the Oratory far surpassed the methods in use in contemporary schools, with the possible exception of those of Port Royal. The emphasis is on the reading and explanation of authors, not on the writing of prose; Latin is used not so much as an end in itself but as an aid to the fullest use and appreciation of the vernacular and as the basis of a literary education; the employment of Latin as a teaching medium, if not entirely abolished, is at any rate restricted. (H. C. Barnard 1911, 162)

The Courtly Academy of Richelieu

The methods of the Oratorians were adopted in great part by Cardinal Richelieu. Profoundly nationalistic, passionately attached to a unified and powerful France, Richelieu naturally saw the advantages of the mother tongue. The foundation of the French Academy had been a concrete step toward the fulfillment of his ideals. Later, in 1640, he established a collège in the Ville de Richelieu in the Diocese of Tours.

In the preamble to his plan for the collège, Richelieu expressed his doubts about the efficacy of a classical formation for the great

majority of students. He foresaw instruction in French and in the living languages in place of Latin (Glatigny 1949, 63–64).

The program of the collège included (1) a profound study of the French language; (2) the instruction given in this language by all the teachers; (3) a study of Greek as complete as that of Latin; (4) the combined teaching of science and letters; (5) the comparison of the Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish languages; and (6) the study of chronology, history, and geography (H. Barnard 1880a, 711).

Thus, advancing further than the Oratory, the collège of Richelieu employed the vernacular throughout the curriculum.

Port Royal

Almost contemporaneous with the collèges of the Oratorians there flourished a few schools educating merely a handful of students in various locations in and around Paris, yet doing so with an influence out of proportion to their numbers and duration; these were the Little Schools of Port Royal.

An abbey of Cistercian nuns had been founded at Port Royal, about 18 miles southwest of Paris, in 1204. In the following centuries, the abbey underwent a period of extreme laxity followed by strict reform. By 1626, there were 80 nuns in the community. Because of the unhealthy climate of Port Royal, they moved to Paris to the Rue de la Bourbe. Into their original site entered a group of laymen who wished to dedicate their lives to prayer and study. These were the *solitaires* of Port Royal: Antoine Le Maître, Simon Le Maître de Séricourt, Claude Lancelot, and others.

In 1635, Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, Abbé de Saint-Cyran, became the spiritual director of the two communities, *Port-Royal de Paris* and *Port-Royal des Champs*. Under the influence of his powerful personality, the Little Schools of Port Royal and the theology of Jansenism made the lasting influence of Port Royal a certainty.

The Little Schools of Port Royal (not to be confused with the Little Schools—*petites écoles*—or primary schools already established throughout France, which had their origin in Church-related schools for young choirboys) had a formal existence of just 14 years. During their most flourishing period there were but four teachers, and

each had only five or six students. On March 10, 1660, the last school at Le Chesnai closed. A careful examination of the evidence indicates that about 250 students, possibly fewer, passed through the schools (H. C. Barnard 1913, 6–49, 66, 165–66).[11]

To the traditional curriculum the Port Royalists made few but important changes. The *solitaires* made the greatest advance, perhaps, in the teaching of reading.[12] The unvarying custom had been, as we have already noted, to teach children to read in Latin. The *solitaires* saw this practice as a great mistake which had many deleterious consequences:

> This process is so long and so painful that it not only sets the students against all other instruction by inspiring their minds from their tenderest years with an almost invincible disgust and hatred for books and study; but it also makes the masters impatient and ill-tempered.
>
> . . . In Latin they have nothing whatever to help them; everything is new and strange to them; they cannot interest themselves in the letters or groups of letters which are shown to them. As a result, they can remember these only with extreme difficulty and after a long time, during which they have to repeat them hundreds of times before they can call them to mind once. (Guyot, *Billets de Ciceron,* 1667; quoted in H. C.Barnard 1918, 150)

These statements almost surely reflect the actual experience of the classroom: the "impatient and ill-tempered" masters, the students' repetition "hundreds of times," the "disgust for books and study": all are poignantly recalled.

A very definite break with tradition was established: the boys of the Little Schools of Port Royal were taught to read first in French.

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[11]There seems to be no doubt that this number is correct. Other authors (Cormack, Compayré, and Battersby) cite the total number as 1000, an exaggeration. See, for example, Cormack, 110–11.

[12]The invaluable book for discovering the methods and curriculum of the Little Schools of Port Royal is Coustel 1687. This book undoubtedly describes the actual teaching in the schools, as is proved by H.C. Barnard 1913, 35.

The teachers of Port Royal did not forget the classics, but the problem was the same: Latin grammars were written in Latin. The most popular grammar was that by Despautère, the rules of which were written in barbarous Latin jingles. The absurdity of this method of teaching was perceived by the *solitaires*. In his *Règles,* Pierre Coustel presents the reply of Port Royal to the objections of the champions of the traditional methodology:

> Some people maintain that we ought to employ the Latin rules of Despautère for teaching our pupils the genders, the declensions, etc. They give as their reason that because their ancestors learned them, this ancient custom has the force of a law binding on their consciences, as if in the education of children we should have any aims other than how we can best help them to progress in their studies! . . . If one were learning Spanish, Italian, or German, for example, it would be unheard of to use rules written in Spanish, Italian, or German; for this would argue that one both knew and did not know these languages at one and the same time—an obvious contradiction. For if, by means of these rules a man sets out to learn a language, he apparently does not know it already; and yet he must know it in order to understand the rules which are couched in this language. If then this method would never be used in the case of an adult whose mind and judgment are mature, what course should we adopt with the children whose minds are as yet quite undeveloped and who are often as little able to understand the rules of Despautére in their present form as Hebrew or Syriac? (Coustel 1687, 2:28–31; quoted in H. C. Barnard 1918, 157–58)

The similarity between this argument and that of Père Lamy of the Oratory is remarkable;[13] however, Despautére was not rejected by the Oratorians (H. C. Barnard 1911, 159). The grammar used in the Little Schools was the *Nouvelle Mèthod pour apprendre facilement et en peu de tems la Langue Latine* by Claude Lancelot. Consistent with their methods in the teaching of Latin, the Port Royalists approached Greek also through French.

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[13]Nonetheless, Lamy, 157, does recommend the use of Lancelot's *Mèthode,* stating that the order of presentation is better, the manner easier, and the remarks more solid.

Although instruction in the modern languages is nowhere mentioned in the writings of the *solitaires,* Lancelot composed a *Mèthode Espagnole* and a *Mèthode Italienne;* Racine, upon leaving the Little Schools of Port Royal, knew both Spanish and Italian (Compayré 1885, 1:260).

An innovation of the highest importance was the inclusion in the curriculum of composition in the vernacular, a practice unknown at the university level or among the Jesuits. A good French style was regarded as of equal value with a polished Latin style (H. C. Barnard 1913, 121). The students were drilled in writing in French; they were set to compose little narratives and letters, the subjects of which were borrowed from their recollections of what they had read. The reason for teaching composition in French was the real world into which these students would go:

> Out of a 1000 people there will not be four who, on leaving school, find it necessary to speak or write in Latin. But everyone should know how to express himself in French; and it is humiliating to be unable to do so in good society. Children then must be particularly practiced in translation because the application which must be employed in pondering the various expressions and for finding the sense of a Latin author exercises their intelligence and their judgment alike and makes them realize the beauty of French as fully as that of Latin. (H. C. Barnard 1918, 165; see Coustel, 2:184–89; 194–98)

The Little Schools of Port Royal closed after an existence of only 14 years, but their influence persisted. The textbooks of the *solitaires*—the Port Royal Logic, the Latin grammar, the *Grammaire générale*—retained their importance into the nineteenth century. Among other ideas of Port Royal which have influenced later pedagogy are the tutorial system, the appreciation of the dignity and importance of teaching, and teaching based upon affection between teachers and students (H. C. Barnard 1913, 231). In addition, their methods made a lasting impression on the French secondary schools. The emphasis on the mother tongue, the teaching of reading in the vernacular, the study of Latin and French simultaneously, the recognition of the unique value of Latin translation for giving command over the vernacular, the employment of the classics as literature to be read and enjoyed rather than as

linguistic material to be anatomized and labelled: all of these instructional methods to a large extent were initiated and promoted by the teaching *solitaires* (H. C. Barnard 1913, 230–33).

Interrelations: Some Concluding Ideas

By the end of the seventeenth century, French as the language of teaching had won its place in both the primary and secondary schools of France. After the pioneering efforts of Ramus came the substantial contributions of the Oratorians, Richelieu, and the *solitaires* of Port Royal in the secondary schools. At the same time, the work of such men as Claude Fleury and John Baptist de La Salle reformed and vitalized the primary schools. The universities held on to Latin, but in the eighteenth century, led by the heirs of the seventeenth-century innovators (Houbigant and Charles Rollin, for example), they too finally capitulated.

A question remains. Did these seventeenth-century educational movements depend on one another or were they isolated and independent? All of them saw the necessity of French in the schools; all of them saw Latin and Greek in a new light, that is, as literature and not as a practical skill for use in the world nor as mere linguistic drill. And the ideas of the reformers are often remarkably similar. For example, the ideas of Lamy (the Oratorians) and Coustel (Port Royal):

> I should prefer . . . those who would be able to instruct me more easily, using the French language which I know in order to teach me the German which I do not know. (Lamy, 134)

> If one were learning Spanish, Italian, or German, for example, it would be an unheard of thing to use rules written in Spanish, Italian or German; for this would argue that one both knew and did not know these languages at one and the same time. . . . (Coustel, 2:28–31; quoted in H. C. Barnard 1918, 157–58)

Or, compare Vincent de Paul and De La Salle:

> . . . as a rule, it is of very little use for boys to begin the study of Latin when there is no opportunity of going on with it. (De Paul, Letter to Father Coglée; quoted in Leonard 1933, 278)

> And of what use can the reading of Latin be to those who will have no purpose for it in their lives? What use, for instance, will those boys and girls who frequent the poor schools make of Latin? (Blain [1733] 1961, 375, so-called Memoir on the Vernacular; quoted in Battersby, 86)

Or, Guyot (of Port Royal) and De La Salle:

> In Latin they have nothing whatever to help them; everything is new and strange to them; they cannot interest themselves in the letters or groups of letters that are shown to them. (Guyot, *Billets de Ciceron;* quoted in H. C. Barnard 1918, 150)

> The reason why such a long time has to be spent learning to read Latin is that the words are strange to beginners and it is difficult to remember the syllables and spelling of words the meanings of which are unknown. (Blain, 375, so-called Memoir on the Vernacular; quoted in Battersby, 86)

School matters may sometimes have formed a topic of conversation between the *solitaires* and certain of the Oratorians, since the two societies were contemporaries. There is, however, a noticeable absence of references to the Oratorian schools in any of the Port Royal educational writings. This situation is the more remarkable because the *solitaires* habitually refer to those to whom they are indebted for ideas and suggestions. The similarities that do exist cannot be mere coincidence, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine how extensively each borrowed from the other or to what extent they were indebted to a common inspiration (H. C. Barnard 1913, 205–06).

The Port Royal *solitaires* called their institutions "Little Schools," implying that they were not secondary (although they were) and that they would not compete with the university. They cannot, however, be classified as purely secondary. Some students entered at an early age; others—Racine, for example, who was 16—had already attended a collège (H. C. Barnard 1913, 28–29).

Did John Baptist de La Salle in his work with the primary schools follow the principles and example of Port Royal? Almost certainly not. A close study of De La Salle and his writings fails to establish any connection whatever between him and the Port Royalists. In fact, whether he had even heard of the Little Schools of Port Royal

is doubtful. In addition, De La Salle would have had little interest in what was done in these schools even if he had known about them because they were so different from his own. Coupled with this fact was De La Salle's distaste for Jansenism; he would have been loathe consciously to adopt the methods used at the very center of Jansenism.

Although he would have been sympathetic with both the methods and the educational philosophy of the Oratorians, no evidence has been found which links De La Salle with their prior work in school.

In his determination to break with the established usage of teaching little children to read in Latin, De La Salle followed his own good judgment. Not once in his treatise on the vernacular nor in *Conduite des Ecoles chrêtiennes* does he mention that other schools had successfully experimented with using French, surely a point he would have emphasized if he intended to support his practice with the experience of others (Battersby, 87). In primary education, we may conclude that De La Salle was the first actually to break with the established usage, the first to create a completely vernacular school.

Because they lived in the same world, all of these educational reformers fell under the same influences: the flourishing of French nationalism, the pride in all things French. This fact is quite clear from their writings. Along with sound judgment, common sense, and a deep concern for the education of the young, the spirit of the age impelled them. The movement from Latin to the vernacular was inevitable.

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A Victory for Using French in the Teaching of Reading

John Baptist de La Salle's French Spelling Book

Yves Poutet, FSC

In his essay, "A Grace and Sweetness of French," Brother Edward Davis raises this question: When and by whom was the practice begun in France of teaching beginners to read using French syllables only? (School children had traditionally been taught to read Latin before they were introduced to texts in French.) Brother Edward very aptly remarks that too often historians of pedagogy or of language, when considering the seventeenth century, fail to make indispensable distinctions when they discuss teaching methods in the schools. They sometimes fail to distinguish among the collèges, the Little Schools (ordinary parish primary schools), schools run by religious orders, the Little Schools of Port Royal, educational establishments depending on the university, pay schools like those of the Writing Masters, parish schools, and Charity Schools. They also occasionally fail to differentiate between the programs adopted for boys and those intended for girls only.

Historians have often arbitrarily cited out of context the prescriptions of educational theoreticians such as Locke and Montaigne, the methods of private tutors such as Fénelon, the popular pedagogical strategies based on empirical principles, or the school regulations

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This essay is adapted from a translation by Richard Arnandez, FSC, of the article, "Une victoire de l'enseignement du français par le Français; le 'Syllabaire François' de J.-B. de La Salle (1698)," by Yves Poutet, FSC, published in *Le Français Moderne* (October 1962), 277–87, and reedited (1988) for *Cahiers lasalliens* 48:126–33.

drawn up by the diocesan administrators. These imprecise historical analyses result in considerable confusion. In addition, because clearly defined social classes were a basic reality of life in the seventeenth century, what determined the practice common in one milieu did not always apply to the others. Certainly, one of the principal merits of Brother Edward's essay is that it clarifies an involved issue. However, because other studies have shed new light on the question, it is perhaps worthwhile to reexamine the matter of teaching reading.

Ferdinand Brunot's famous *Histoire de la langue française* (1917) devotes chapter 5 of volume 5 to the teaching of French in the elementary schools of the seventeenth century. After mentioning the state of popular education under the ancien régime, the author makes passing reference to the Protestants, the Oratorians, Port Royal, Behourt, and John Baptist de La Salle as innovators who had few followers, and implies that, apart from their schools, children continued to be taught reading by first learning Latin syllables.

Unfortunately, this assessment appears to confuse even further the question of the methods used in teaching reading. Behourt, an early seventeenth-century regent of the Collège des Bons-Enfants in Reims, certainly was not dealing with children of lower class families. The very title of his work, *Alphabets françoys, latin et grec* (1620), indicates clearly that this book is oriented toward classical culture, something which in the seventeenth century was available almost exclusively to the children of the upper classes. Port Royal schools dealt with only a small number of very select pupils. The Oratorians conducted highly reputable collèges but were not concerned with primary schools. Thus, in his history Brunot suggests that the only institutions which educated the children of the common people were those of the Protestants on the one hand and those of John Baptist de La Salle on the other. Brother Anselme, FSC, in his commentary on De La Salle's *Conduite,* asserts that the appearance of the Lasallian spelling book brought about "a Copernican revolution" in the teaching of reading in France (De La Salle [1706] 1951, 324). What are the facts?

No doubt, in the seventeenth century Latin was indispensable in good society if one wished to hold an honorable rank or claim to be a person of some culture, but knowledge of Latin was of no real use to ordinary people. Catholics needed Latin merely to read

and to sing the liturgical texts, while Protestants celebrated their religious services in French. Consequently, among those responsible for the instruction of children—parents, pastors, and parish priests—some favored the Church's official tongue and others the child's mother tongue. Partisans on both sides came to push their positions to extremes, all the more so as opposition furnished them with favorable opportunities for displaying their hostility.

Beginning with Calvin's *Institution chrêtienne,* originally published in French, and until 1680, French Protestants taught their children to read without using Latin as an intermediate stage. After Louis XIV's accession to the throne, however, the French government's strategies to convert Protestants to Catholicism seriously hampered the Protestants' efforts to teach their children. In 1680, five years prior to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, a royal decree closed all the schools of the Protestants; and after 1685 the decree left them only two alternatives, to leave the country or to go underground. Thus, for the children of the people, there remained no other authorized manner of learning to read except that used by the Catholics. The diocesan superintendent of schools (*écolâtre*), and the priest in the parish were officially responsible for everything that went on in the elementary schools.

From 1654 on the handbook on which the teachers in popular schools relied most was *L'Escole paroissiale* of Jacques de Bathencourt. This work summarized the most general method for teaching reading: "Hence, to proceed in an orderly fashion . . . one must read the words so as to make of them Latin sentences, and then learn to read in French" (Bathencourt 1654, 254). This work, widely read, went through several editions.

Meanwhile, various new congregations had been founded or developed for the instruction of girls; among them were the Ursulines, the Daughters of the Cross, the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence, the Sisters of Saint Charles, and the Canonesses Regular of St. Augustine of the Congregation of Our Lady, founded by Saint Peter Fourier and Alix Le Clerc. But most dioceses at this time preferred to entrust the education of girls to religious belonging to diocesan institutes.

A careful examination of the methods used by these congregations of women and a study of the earliest of their regulations which have survived in manuscript form show that all of them started their

young pupils reading Latin before putting into their hands any French books. Although his biographer Gabriel Compayré shows him to have been an innovator in many areas, Charles Démia himself did not change the traditional order established in *L'Escole paroissiale:* Latin first, then French.

Claude Joly, the superintendent of schools in Paris, prescribed the traditional method of teaching reading and insisted on the importance of making children learn to read Latin syllables first. The Bishop of Chartres, although a friend, questioned De La Salle's innovation of teaching children to read French first (Rigault 1937, 1:262). Scipion Roux, a Doctor of Laws and schoolteacher in Paris, systematically criticized the new method in a work which, so as not to appear too much out of date, he entitled *Méthode nouvelle pour apprendre aux enfants à lire parfaitement bien le Latin et le Français* (1694). "Certain teachers," he states, "make the children read French before Latin." He then launches into a long defense of his thesis, at the end of which he declares:

> I say, therefore, that it is incomparably easier for a child to learn to spell Latin rather than French, because to spell a Latin syllable all he has to do is to name the letters forming the syllable and put them together . . . whereas to spell a French syllable he must not only name the letters in the syllable, as he would do in Latin, but in addition join these letters in a manner which as a rule is entirely contrary to what he sees written. (Roux 1694, 21ff)

About this time De La Salle composed for Bishop Godet des Marais a treatise defending his innovative method. The great stimulus for acquiring new knowledge, namely interest fed by curiosity, had escaped Scipion Roux and all the other adherents of the traditional method. That this principle played any role in the choice made by the Protestants is not at all certain, for their pedagogy, like that of the Catholics, rested on ecclesial rather than on practical considerations. From the start, however, De La Salle approached the problem from the practical point of view of the student. "The French language," he wrote, "being the child's natural tongue, is incomparably easier for him to learn than Latin, for he understands the former and does not understand the latter" (Blain [1733] 1961, 1:375). Concern for preparing the students for the life that lay ahead

as well as regard for the law of social utility also influenced De La Salle.

> Experience teaches us that those who attend the Christian Schools do not continue to frequent them for very long and do not spend enough time there to learn how to read both Latin and French well. As soon as they are old enough to work they are withdrawn from school. . . . If they are made to begin with reading Latin . . . they leave before they learn to read French, or at least to read it well. . . . When we begin by teaching children to read French, they can at least read it satisfactorily by the time they leave school. (Blain 1:375)

All these reasonable principles, however, would have remained simply theoretical if De La Salle had not given his teachers, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, a new spelling book for use in the schools. This text, *Syllabaire françois,* was published at Paris in 1698 by Antoine Chrêtien with no official authorization. The reason for the absence of this approbation is easy to determine. Not only had Claude Joly approved the book by Scipion Roux, arguing against the new method, but he had also warmly recommended the book to all the teachers subject to his authority. "I exhort," he wrote, "men and women teachers in my jurisdiction, and all others likewise, to make use of it [Roux's book] in their schools. Done at Paris, July 31, 1694, Claude Joly" (Roux, 11).

After Joly's death, the Lasallian speller was reprinted, this time with due authorization, in 1700, and again in 1703 and 1705. On August 6, 1706, copies were deposited in the Royal Library according to law. Other editions appeared subsequently, sometimes under different titles. The catalogue by Douillier, bookseller at Dijon, mentions one of these editions as late as 1855. These later editions contained modifications of the primitive text, no doubt demanded by the phonetic evolution of the language.

The original *Syllabaire françois* of De La Salle contained 72 pages. The first pages included "all sorts of French syllables with from two to seven letters." Next came "some words to facilitate the pronunciation of the syllables" (De La Salle, 34). In a departure from custom, prayers such as the *Pater Noster, Ave Maria,* and *Credo,* which made up the bulk of the older spellers, did not appear in De La Salle's little book. To do so would have been redundant,

because the prayers already were contained in a booklet which he had published two years earlier with the title *Exercices de piété* (Rigault, 1:543).

What role did this new spelling book play in the schools? How much time did it take the students who followed this new system to learn to read perfectly? These are questions which De La Salle's *Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes* answered with precision. The better pupils "should not be changed from using the alphabet chart until they have been reading from it for two months"; they were "not to be changed from the chart of syllables before having read from it for a month." Next, for five months they applied themselves to deciphering "all sorts of syllables" (De La Salle, 266).

Once these fundamental mechanisms had been mastered, thanks to the *Syllabaire françois,* the students were given their first reader, with which they spent three more months spelling out the text. When they were capable of spelling "perfectly, without ever being obliged to guess or to hunt for the syllables," they were "to begin to read with pauses" (according to the sense of the paragraphs) and had to apply themselves so as "not to make any more mistakes because of punctuation" and to "read distinctly and intelligibly," taking care to "pronounce the words very correctly" (De La Salle, 269).

Because the school year began on October 1 and ended on August 31, we know that the better students learned their letters, both upper and lower case, as well as the most important syllables, during the first three months they spent in school. By the beginning of the new year, they began to read syllables, an activity that continued until the end of May. In early June they gave up the spelling book and began using their first reader, which they finished by the time vacation started. At the outset of the next school year they received their second reader. This book initiated what teachers today would call fluent reading but which the seventeenth century, with greater prudence and less impulsiveness, named "reading with proper pauses." Only after this activity were the students introduced to reading Latin.

Such was the method followed at least in the gratuitous schools for boys in the parish of Saint Sulpice in Paris about 1698. Does this fact mean that a "Copernican revolution" had taken place in the teaching of reading? In any case, it is certain that the new method

did not spread rapidly to all the popular schools in France. Even after 1750, as they had done before 1698, most of the women religious teachers continued to follow the traditional method. The pedagogical directories which some of these congregations have preserved from the middle of the eighteenth century provide evidence for this conclusion.

In rural areas where education was closely controlled by the parish officials, the clerical assistant in charge of instruction, the sacristans, and superintendent of schools, all of whom doubled as teachers, felt too much attachment to the old method and too much personal involvement to give it up willingly. Latin was still necessary for future priests and very useful during Mass for the servers and chanters in the parish choir. However, one should not overemphasize this explanation, for, while after the Revolution of 1789 many elementary schools no longer depended on the parish priests, many teachers, especially in smaller towns, continued the older practice and first taught reading Latin syllables before teaching French.

In the cities, however, it was a different story. Reims, Paris, Chartres, Calais, Rouen, Marseilles, Grenoble, and Dijon had used the new method prior to 1720. After 1713 (some claim after 1709: see Gazier 1906), the disciples of the Jansenist Tabourin adapted for the poor children of the Faubourg Saint Antoine in Paris the pedagogical techniques formerly recommended by the teachers of Port Royal. They not only taught reading in French before Latin but also adopted a new way of spelling, giving the letters of the alphabet a truly phonetic sound.

About 1709 or 1710, an anonymous work, *Règlement et méthode pour les écoles,* adopted most of the features of the Lasallian system. Py-Poulain Delaunay in 1719, Vallange also in 1719, and Dumas in 1733, along with other reformers of education, considered the new order for reading, French first, then Latin, as something required by common sense. However, such was not the opinion of the publishers, who continued to edit spelling books in Latin. The *Nouveau Syllabaire latin et françois* by Nyon (Paris, 1789) had 106 pages, 51 of which were entirely in Latin. Under the reference number X 19-675, the National Library of Paris has over 300 spelling books published between 1806 and 1875, among which are many Latin spellers. In nearly all of these works, after one or two pages of syllables, the student is presented with religious texts such as the

Pater Noster, Ave Maria, Credo, and *Psalms,* either in French or in Latin, depending on the manuals. At Troyes in the middle of the nineteenth century, Mme Garnier did not hesitate to publish a Latin spelling book entitled *Alphabet et instruction Chrétienne pour les petits enfants selon l'ancien usage de l'Eglise catholique.*

In view of these facts, it would seem correct to say that the replacing of Latin by French took place only gradually in the popular schools. If the differing objectives they pursued make it impossible for us to view the Oratorians and the professors at Port Royal as reformers who influenced teachers in the Charity Schools, nonetheless it is certain that their ideas agreed perfectly with that intellectual movement which championed the excellence and the utility of the French language. This movement, which had begun as early as the time of Du Bellay in the sixteenth century, kept gaining strength through the seventeenth century and, in the end, made its influence felt throughout the various levels of society.

The creation of the French Academy, the publication of the *Advantages de la langue française sur la langue latine* in 1669 by Le Laboureur, and the publication of *L'Excellence de la langue française* in 1683 by Charpentier, illustrate some of the gains made by the movement. Little by little even the most adamant opponents had to yield to the conviction that French might some day possess a fixed and definitive pronunciation and a regular spelling, the conditions *sine qua non* for a methodical teaching of reading beginning with the mother tongue. When the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* finally appeared in 1694, it was possible to define officially the pronunciation and the spelling of French words.

The genial, good, and practical sense of De La Salle helped the common people to profit by this general circulation of ideas which favored the abandonment of Latin. While the traditional spelling book, *La Croix de Jésus,* aimed at teaching the language of the Church and the prayers proper to Christians, the *Syllabaire françois* of De La Salle aimed rather at immediate utility on the social level. The child learned the mother tongue, and, without being involved in the special requirements for participating in religious offices, learned how to pronounce and read ordinary words. That an educator who was to be declared a saint of the Catholic Church should have been the one to introduce this sort of secularization in elementary reading methods and that his group of religious Brothers should

have spearheaded the implementation of this abandonment of Latin are two facts which together are perhaps even more surprising than the pure and simple substitution of French for Latin.

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