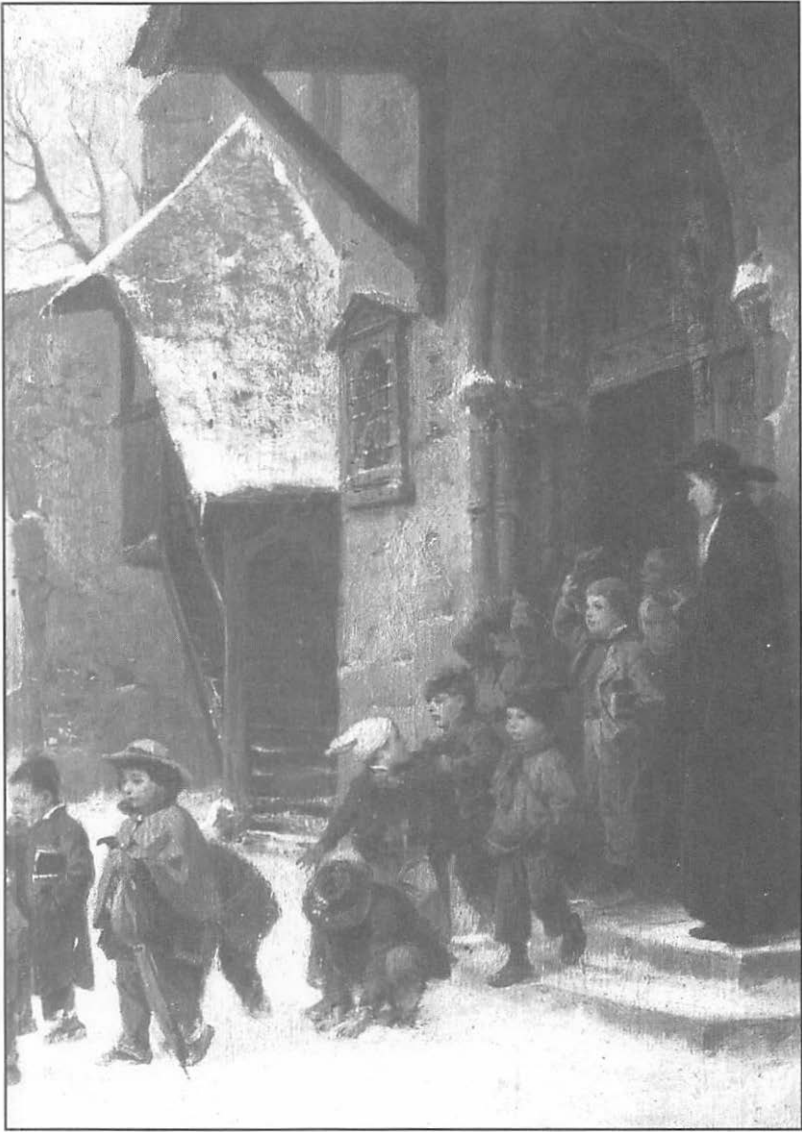


**Sacred Scripture
in the Spirituality
of Saint John Baptist
de La Salle**



Frontispiece: *Children Leaving School*, detail, by Benjamin Vautier (1829–98). This troupe of little ones has just heard truth and experienced goodness from the teacher this day—and will do so tomorrow and tomorrow. Now the students carry this within themselves, because of their implicit trust in the teacher who lives by the Lasallian spirit of faith and zeal, a spirit that will always be with them as they go their separate ways. (Reproduced by permission of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

**Sacred Scripture
in the Spirituality
of Saint John Baptist
de La Salle**

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**Lasallian Publications
Christian Brothers Conference
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Cover: The discovery of Lasallian education—Saint John Baptist de La Salle, Sacred Scripture, and the Crucifix lead to his *Meditations* for teachers, whose schools become solid and practical instruments for the education of the working classes and the poor of every culture worldwide. Photo E. Rousset (pen and ink drawing, representing the portrait by Pierre Léger, *Jean-Baptiste de La Salle; Iconographie*, Boulogne: Limet, 1979, plate 12).

Dedicated to the fond memory of my mother,
to Brother Guillermo Felix, FSC, and
to all those who earnestly seek a firm foundation
for an effective *aggiornamento* in the roots
of Lasallian spirituality

Luis Varela Martínez, FSC, STD

Lasallian Publications

Sponsored by Christian Brothers Conference (the Regional Conference of Christian Brothers of the United States of America and Toronto), Lasallian Publications will include nineteen volumes on the life, writings, and work of John Baptist de La Salle (1651–1719), Founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and on the early history of the Brothers. The volumes are in two series.

- ◆ **Lasallian Sources**, ten volumes: new English translations and editions of the complete works of John Baptist de La Salle.
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The Life of John Baptist de La Salle, Founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools; A Biography in Three Books. Jean-Baptiste Blain. Translated by Richard Arnandez, FSC. Edited by Luke Salm, FSC. Volume 2 (2000) of Lasallian Resources: Biographies of John Baptist de La Salle by His Contemporaries. Book One, Book Two, and Book Three of the original work by Blain are published in separate bindings but with continuous pagination.

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John Baptist de La Salle: The Message of His Catechism. Jean Pungier, FSC. Translated by Oswald Murdoch, FSC. Edited by Gerard Rummery, FSC. Volume 4 (1999) of Lasallian Resources: Current Lasallian Studies.

Sacred Scripture in the Spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Luis Varela Martínez, FSC. Translated by Francis Vesel, FSC. Edited by Donald C. Mouton, FSC. Volume 5 (2000) of Lasallian Resources: Current Lasallian Studies.

If you wish to be filled with the mind of God and entirely fit for your work, make the Sacred Books of Scripture your special study, and particularly the New Testament, so that it serves as a rule of conduct both for yourselves and for those whom you instruct.

Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle, 170.1

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Editor's Preface

This work was conceived in Spain as part of a fourteen-volume series (*Sinite*) published by Instituto Pontificio San Pio X (Madrid) and dedicated to exploring various aspects of the Lasallian educational and spiritual tradition. The relationship between Sacred Scripture and Lasallian spirituality is a vital aspect of the Lasallian tradition and is the subject of the present study.

In 1985 the Lasallian Publications board proposed that this book be a part of its project of furnishing current English translations of the writings of John Baptist de La Salle and of some of the scholarly investigations into the Lasallian tradition written in other languages.

Francis Vesel, FSC (New Orleans-Santa Fe District), completed the first draft of the translation in 1987. Five readers participated in refining the text during the following years. After various editorial problems were solved, the manuscript was brought to its final version in July 1999, entitled *Sacred Scripture in the Spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle*. The principles guiding the translation were to preserve the spirit of the original without losing sight of the literal text and, while avoiding servile exactness, to strive to render the translation a faithful image of the original.

This book can be likened to an architect's conception of a school, understood not as a building but as the education realized within it. The educational vision of John Baptist de La Salle presented in this work is a blueprint that opens the minds and the hearts of both students and teachers, a blueprint that continues to challenge everyone involved in Lasallian educational ventures throughout the world.

We are grateful to Francis Vesel for his years of dedication to the project of translating this significant work by which an important step has been taken toward a better appreciation of our Lasallian tradition.

Donald C. Mouton, FSC
College of Santa Fe, New Mexico
July 1999

Translator's Preface

The author of this carefully investigated work introduces us to a man whose vision of education has been adopted and adapted throughout the world. This vision has proven itself to be exceptionally effective, regardless of the country, race, and economic and social condition of the children taught or of their teachers.

This man was an educational trailblazer because he popularized classroom education for the general public. To study the design of the plan he discovered, a plan marked by the simplicity and the adaptability of its basic structure, is to become aware of the potential that it opened up for the young of many generations and to reveal it to be one of the great ideas that significantly influenced human culture.

The educational plan originated from a realization that an urgent need existed. This son of a magistrate of Reims, France, observed that the children of the poor and the working class, whose parents were so occupied all day long with making and earning their daily bread, seldom learned to read and write. In addition they were exposed to many of the dangers and disorders of generally living on the streets. What these children needed was an opportunity to discover their potential and to use it to grow in self-respect and competency so that they could give their future a solid and lasting meaning.

John Baptist de La Salle began by consulting and seeking collaborators. Three hundred years later, there are hundreds of Lasallian schools and thousands of students of all races in eighty countries of the world.

This is the saga that Brother Luis Varela, FSC, of Spain decided to research with scholarly precision for his doctoral dissertation in Sacred Theology. In this study the author begins with the man and the development of the personal ideas and values he would bring to his life's work. The fact that the author of this study of John Baptist de La Salle's educational vision is a theologian underscores the Founder's basic spiritual vision that integrates the teacher's educational work and spirituality. Regarding the teacher's state and employment, De La Salle

is clear: “Do not distinguish between the duties of your state and what pertains to your salvation and perfection.”¹

By examining the most original and authentic writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, Varela observes the expression of the deepest and most personal workings of his mind and heart, which are at one with the word of God in Sacred Scripture. It follows, therefore, that the form he gradually gives to this new Christian School and to its teachers is marked by an attitude of solid faith based on a body of “maxims of the Gospel.” Coupled with the learning of practical skills and the respect for others, this approach develops into a vision of a life worth living successfully and enthusiastically.

A glance at the table of contents reveals how the author slowly makes his case for the use of Scripture in the spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Spirituality, in this sense, embraces the total inner vision of God, people, things, and their relationships, which constitute the culture of a people and therefore of each member of that culture.

The final chapter of this study shows the Lasallian student and teacher at work in the Lasallian School, where truth, beauty, and goodness are absorbed along with fundamental skills. Parents, teachers, and students are aware of a proven basic principle that guides all activities: living by the spirit of faith as completely as possible in a real world produces a significant and successful life.

Technical features of the book

The chapter divisions are not only the various aspects of the title but also the process by which the spirituality of John Baptist de La Salle grows from a daily schedule of reading the Divine Office to an awareness that the truths being read in Sacred Scripture are the truths revealed by God, who became man and spoke to us personally in Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Gospels. This Jesus Christ invites us to follow him by believing in him and by incorporating his wisdom into our daily lives through love, in view of our growth in excellence and virtue and, ultimately, of our salvation. Such is the spirituality of John Baptist de La Salle.

This process requires that we observe the many stylistic facets of his writings, particularly in the meditations he wrote for his teachers. The style is the person, and a detailed observation of his choice and use of words, as well as the common denominator of his references, indicates his personal preferences and, therefore, his basic ideas and values. Much patience and reflection are needed to read the obvious

1. *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, p. 78.

similarities in the scriptural references and quotations, which Varela lists copiously. The purpose of these many references is to demonstrate the habitual process going on in the mind of the author of the meditations, which eventually evolves into the spirit of faith.

The spirit of faith, then, begins powerfully to determine the choices this man must make as he undertakes the complex process of establishing the Gratuitous Christian Schools for the children of the working class and the poor. He must invent systematic teacher training, find patrons for reliable financial support, and deal with the hierarchy of the Church, local parish priests, and officials of municipal and national bureaucracies, while caring for the now orphaned brothers and sisters of his own family. This very creative endeavor not only increases his spirit of faith and zeal but also profits from the strength and characteristics of his own spirituality.

Attention to the minutiae of this doctoral dissertation shows a spiritual experience that is ultimately quite realistic, highly practical, and that constitutes a successful educational system for every culture. Solid spirituality can be in harmony with any valid truth, goodness, and beauty for any time and any place.

The book's organic structure introduces the elements and organizes them consecutively, thus actually demonstrating concretely the way in which Lasallian spirituality came to be, igniting and then meshing with the creation of the Christian Schools and the Lasallian teachers formed by De La Salle himself in order to make Jesus Christ an integral part of the education of youth.

It therefore becomes self-evident that this work is best read sequentially. Each chapter presupposes its predecessor and prepares the foundation for the one that follows. At the end, the process stands on its own merits and is justified by its results.

Francis Vesel, FSC
July 1999

Acknowledgments

The author gratefully acknowledges the important contributions of Brother Guillermo Félix, FSC, who has been the main inspiration for this investigation by facilitating the research in every possible way and by giving it his total support, generous encouragement, and valuable suggestions; of Father Miguel Nicolau, SJ, who has selflessly and enthusiastically placed his profound knowledge and experience, as well as his time, at my disposal; of all my colleagues on the faculty of "Pius X," who have given their fraternal support; of Brother José María F. Yañez, FSC, who has been a faithful reader of the work, and of all those who in any way contributed to making my work easier or who collaborated in the obscure task of correcting proofs. To all, my heartfelt thanks.

Introduction

“By their fruits you will know them.”¹ Everyone is familiar with these words of Christ. In philosophical terms, we would say that action flows from and is a reflection of being. With the completion of the three-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, we have become much more aware that his legacy is very much alive even today and continues to be most relevant. His work perdures. Its result continues to flourish on all continents. His beneficent influence expands from one frontier to another by means of the Institute he founded. Thousands of students acclaim him as their father and as the master of their spiritual life, while hundreds of thousands thank him for making it possible for them to enjoy a truly Christian education.

This phenomenon demands an adequate explanation. Behind the continuing expansion of Lasallian education there must be a hidden factor that is worth discovering. Lasallian effectiveness tantalizes us to seek the source from which it springs. The considerable bibliography that is developing around Saint John Baptist de La Salle provides ample evidence that the field of education is becoming more and more interested in him.

However, we must be aware of the fact that it is only within the last thirty years that a truly scientific investigation of the life and works of De La Salle has been in progress. This explains why his contribution to the development of the spiritual movements that have been taking place has scarcely been included for consideration by the experts.² Besides, we must recognize that there are many areas of the

1. Matt. 7:20

2. As a relevant example, see Pourrat, *La Spiritualité Chrétienne*, vol. 4, pp. 387–396, which touches on Lasallian interior prayer but with scarcely any reference to the role that Scripture plays in it. Also, see the rather poor image

writings of the Founder that remain more or less unexplored, even within the Institute he founded.³

Difficulty of access to the authentic texts of De La Salle and the lack of critical editions for many of them make the work of investigation especially difficult and frustrating. At the present time, the *Cabiers lasalliens* are providing a most important service by publishing photocopies of the original texts. However, we are still lacking some sorely needed critical editions, especially of his more outstanding works. As long as this gap is not filled, the solution to critical problems and the identification of sources, which in some way or another affect practically all of his writings, will not be possible. As Rayez has observed,⁴ this poses the risk that all subsequent studies will suffer from a sense of being provisional.

In spite of all these difficulties, we believe that our present study makes a contribution to the clarification of an extremely important point, which until now has not been sufficiently grasped: the role of Sacred Scripture in the life and writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle or, expressed more concisely, the role of Sacred Scripture in his spirituality.

In 1957 Brother Émile Lett recognized the necessity of undertaking this work when he wrote in his study of *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*:

It would also be necessary to make a study of the theme, Saint John Baptist de La Salle and Sacred Scripture, since Scripture holds such a privileged place in his thinking. For one thing, such a study would show us to what degree the *Explanation* reflects his experience of God through his meditation on the word of God. It would also reveal his approach to the reading of Sacred Scripture

of De La Salle in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, "Écriture Sainte et vie spirituelle chez les spirituels du XVII^e siècle,"* Berthelot du Chesnay, vol. 4, col. 234. The author has limited himself, for lack of something better on this topic and certainly because of the impossibility of direct access to the original texts of De La Salle, to consulting an anthology of his writings arranged by thèmes, such as is found in *Spiritualité lasallienne*, Paris, 1952.

3. Note also the brevity of treatment conceded to the theme of Scripture in Lasallian spirituality in writings that deal directly with this topic, such as Isidoro di Maria, FSC, *La Spiritualità lasalliana*, Biella, 1957; Herment, *La doctrine spirituelle de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, Bruxelles, 1948; Emiliano, FSC, "Presupposti ad un concetto individualizzatore della spiritualità lasalliana," in *Rivista Lasalliana*, 28 (1954), pp. 179–224.

4. See "Lasallian Studies in the Mid-twentieth Century," in *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, Berger, Robert C., ed., pp. 81–131.

and would clarify the recommendations he gave to his disciples concerning their reading of Scripture. It would give us insights into why he based the method of interior prayer and the spirit of prayer on Sacred Scripture and why he saturated his meditations with passages of Scripture that are taken from the Gospels, the Psalms, the Epistles, and so on.⁵

Brother Michel Sauvage, through his investigation of the scriptural sources in the sixteen *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, holds the undisputed primacy in the application of scientific methods to the study of the importance of the word of God in the writings of De La Salle.⁶ This methodology should be expanded and applied to all Lasalian writings.

The present publication hopes to make some contribution to this project. We make no pretense of exhausting a topic that has so many possible ramifications. Besides, given the absence of a complete set of critical editions, such an effort would be quite tenuous. We have therefore chosen to keep to our one theme and to leave the rest open to future investigators.

To provide this study with a sufficiently reliable foundation capable of scientifically supporting its conclusions, we have not shied away from dedicating many hours to the formidable task of identifying, listing, and analyzing the biblical quotations contained in the 207 meditations composed by De La Salle. Sixteen of these meditations have already been studied by Sauvage; however, it has been necessary to examine them again in order to assure an identical standard of criteria for the entire set of meditations and to examine some of the characteristics of scriptural usage that do not fall within the scope of the author of *Les citations néotestamentaires*. The results of our effort appear very succinctly in the tables that are included in the Appendix of this work and in the statistics inserted in certain chapters. This information provides a basic and continuous point of reference for the entire investigation.

In chapter two we present ample justification for focusing on *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle* in this study. Although our analysis of scriptural quotations has been limited to this particular book, when the moment arrives for making our final conclusions, our intention is to apply them to De La Salle's entire literary production.

5. Lett, *Explication de la Méthode d'Oraison*, p. 61.

6. Sauvage, *Les citations néotestamentaires dans les Méditations pour le Temps de la Retraite*.

Our investigation can be separated into two parts. In the first part (chapters one through four) we examine Saint John Baptist de La Salle from the point of view of his knowledge and use of Scripture.

We begin with a general overview of the socio-cultural atmosphere in which he was formed, his concept of Scripture, and its integration into his personal life. Then we present his written works. Using as a point of departure the analysis of his scriptural quotations, we offer successive concrete considerations about their quantitative aspects, their sources, and the characteristics of their use and interpretation.

The second part (chapters five through nine) is completely dedicated to an evaluation of the importance of Sacred Scripture in Lasallian spirituality.

We begin with a preliminary investigation of “maxim” and “spirit,” because a correct understanding of these key concepts is presupposed in the following chapters. Then the analysis focuses on the scriptural foundation for the “spirit of faith,” which is the keystone of Lasallian spirituality. The pillars that support it are spiritual reading and interior prayer.

In conclusion we look at the mutual relationship that exists between this spirituality and the apostolic ministry of the Brother.

It can readily be seen that we are touching on historical, exegetical, and dogmatic areas, all of which are directed toward the same end: the clarification of Lasallian spirituality in the light of Sacred Scripture. By Lasallian spirituality we mean the spirituality that animates the life, writings, and apostolic work of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. It manifests its most pervasive power and influence in the spirituality he leaves as a heritage to his followers, the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Chapter One

Saint John Baptist de La Salle and Sacred Scripture

His Scriptural Formation

We do not live by bread alone; Jesus Christ has indicated another food that is far more necessary than bread if we intend to realize our true potential. For this reason Sacred Scripture has become the bread for all ages and the leaven of every authentic Christian spirituality.

The Seventeenth Century in France

Scripture stood as one of the most solid pillars of the renewal movement that shook France in the *Grand Siècle*. Richard Simon (1683–1712) established the basic scientific principles of modern exegesis. Bossuet (1627–1704) wrote extensive commentaries filled with deep feeling. Bérulle (1575–1629) created the French School of spirituality, in which devotion to Scripture, especially the New Testament, had great significance.¹

1. Cf. Renié, *Manuel d'Écriture Sainte*, vol. 1, pp. 279ff; Pourrat, *La Spiritualité chrétienne*, vol. 3, pp. 486–567; Dagens, *Bérulle et les origines de la restauration catholique*; Brémond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux*, vol. 3, *L'École Française*. The fact that Richard Simon cannot be accepted without reservation, because of certain doctrinal points—for example, his theory of

Total equilibrium had not yet been achieved after the reformers created problems concerning the reading of the Bible, but already at this time some popular editions of the Sacred Books, especially the New Testament, were beginning to appear.

As far as the complete Bible is concerned, during the period between 1600 and the death of De La Salle, we know of the French versions by Jacques Corbin (Paris, 1643 and 1661), the so-called Bible of Louvain, which appeared in many editions and revisions in France (1608, 1613, 1647, and so on), the Bible of Sacy (Port-Royal version by Isaac Le Maistre, Paris, 1695), and from the Protestant side, the so-called Version of Geneva, which also went through many editions.

The editions of the New Testament alone are even more numerous. Besides those previously mentioned, we are aware of the versions of Michel de Marolles (Paris, 1649) and the New Testament of Mons, in the version of Port-Royal (Paris, 1667), which sold 5,000 copies within a few months and went through five editions in its first year, with four more the following year. Because of its Jansenistic inclinations, it was condemned by Clement IX and Innocent XI. The New Testament of Denis Amelote (Paris, 1666–1670) had twenty-eight known editions by 1719, the year of De La Salle's death.² Louis XIV, in order to staunch the Jansenistic influence of the Mons version, ordered free distribution of 100,000 copies of Amelote to persons recently converted. Other versions were produced by Antoine Godeau, bishop of Vence (Paris, 1668), Dominique Bouhours, SJ (Paris, 1697–1703), Richard Simon (Paris, 1702, anonymously, the New Testament of Trévoux), Charles Huré (Paris, 1702), Jean Martianay (Paris, 1712), and Jean Daillé and Valentin Conrart (Paris, 1669, the Protestant version).

To this listing we should add several partial versions of the Old Testament, principally the Book of Psalms and the Wisdom Books, by

“inspiration”—does not warrant overlooking his positive contributions to the advance of scriptural science.

2. To the list of the editions of Amelote drawn up by Sauvage in *Les citations néotestamentaires*, p. xi, we must add another—Amelote, Paris: Hérisant, 1707—which we discovered in the National Library in Paris. (The Amelote 1707 edition mentioned by Sauvage, which is in the Generalate archives in Rome, was edited by David.) Among the known editions, we call attention to a copy of the edition of Paris: Hérisant, 1730, which is also in the National Library in Paris. Another copy of Amelote (Paris: Muguet, 1677, in 2 volumes) we discovered in the rare book shop of Denyse Chertin (Paris). It was acquired by the library of the Instituto Pontificio San Pio X of Salamanca. The only other copy of this edition, as far as we know, is in the National Library in Paris, where the card catalogue lists it as incomplete.

Michel de Marillac, Jean de Saint-Massens, Gilbert, Nau, and so on. A remarkable indicator of enthusiasm for Scripture during this epoch, in our opinion, is the importance given to Sacred Scripture by the heterodox movement. We have in mind the Jansenistic work of Paschase Quesnel (which brought down on itself condemnation by the Bull *Unigenitus*): *Moral Reflection on the Four Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles of the Apostles* (Paris, 1699). In this work each verse of the Sacred Books (as in the version of Port-Royal) is followed by a corresponding moral reflection. Charles Huré wrote in the preface to his version:

We have the good fortune to live in times that have seen the disappearance of those scruples that governed our use of the Sacred Books and our reading of the word of God and the coming of those times in which the reading of Sacred Scripture is both popular and frequent. These evaluations are of themselves quite significant, but as we will see, they cannot all be taken too literally and without qualification.³

Early Years

We make no attempt here to present a developed biography of John Baptist de La Salle. Others have already furnished us this information in sufficient detail; however, we must recall a few facts that have a special bearing on the way he was introduced to the Scriptures.

John Baptist de La Salle was born in Reims, France, on 30 April 1651 of a well-to-do family deeply rooted in Christianity. Blain, his biographer, tells us that both his father and his grandfather before him voluntarily took upon themselves the daily obligation of reciting the complete Divine Office at home. From his earliest years, John Baptist lived the piety that reigned within the family circle, and he felt a real interest in liturgical functions. Early on, he joined his father in singing the Divine Office. On 9 July 1666, while still in his teens, he began to perform this function officially when he received a position as Canon of the Cathedral of Reims.⁴

Aside from the stories of the Bible that he probably heard with some embellishment from the lips of his devout mother, together with

3. Concerning all such versions of Scripture, consult Simon, *Histoire critique*; Darlow and Moule, *Historical Catalogue*; Mangenot, *Versions françaises de la Bible*, col 2366–2369; Sauvage, *Les citations néotestamentaires*, pp. xiv and xlvi; Dupriez, *Fénelon et la Bible*, pp. 55ff.

4. Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle*, Book One, p. 10.

his early years in class at the Bons Enfants school of his native city, it was certainly in the Divine Office where he first made meaningful contact with the revealed word. This early experience gave to Lasallian spirituality from its very inception that characteristically scriptural stamp that is so much in evidence.

Higher Studies

John Baptist de La Salle took courses in theology both in Reims and in Paris. From 18 October 1670 to 19 April 1672, we know that he followed courses at the Sorbonne and that he finished his formation as a priest at the Seminary of Saint Sulpice. We also know that about this time he had received his *Maître-ès-arts* in Reims and that he had followed at least one course in theology. The death of his mother on 19 July 1671, followed by that of his father nine months later, obliged him to return to his native city, because he was the oldest child of the family. He had to take charge of the care of his brothers and sisters and at the same time pursue his theological studies under the direction of Nicolas Roland, a lectoral canon of the Cathedral of Reims. In this way he completed his licentiate in theology in January 1678, was ordained to the priesthood in April of the same year, and obtained his doctorate in Theology two years later, just when Providence began to involve him in matters relating to schools.⁵

We have no information about the precise scriptural studies that De La Salle pursued at the Sorbonne.⁶ At the moment, the only authentic documents we have say only that he followed the lectures *De Trinitate* and *De Incarnatione*.⁷ What is beyond doubt is the influence of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice and of Nicolas Roland on his attitude toward Scripture, which we will now examine.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 23, and Lett, *Explication de la Méthode d'Oraison*, p. 57.

6. It is most probable that he followed some courses, since we already know that from 1598 an order of the *Parlement* was being implemented that created four chairs of Sacred Scripture that held classes daily "from the feast of Saint Martin until the end of August" according to the following schedule: morning, in the Collège Navarro: first hour, the Epistles and Revelation; second hour, the Prophets; afternoon, in the Sorbonne: first hour, the Gospels; second hour, the Pentateuch and historical books. Cf. Feret, *La Faculté de théologie*, vol. 1, p. 411; 3, p. 8; La Broise, *Bossuet et la Bible*, p. 16; Dupriez, *Fénelon et la Bible*, p. 23.

7. Sauvage, *Catéchèse et laïcité*, p. 545.

The Seminary of Saint Sulpice

Although the Seminary of Saint Sulpice is not the first among the seminaries of France on the merits of the date of its foundation, it most certainly has this distinction due to its importance in the formation of the French clergy.⁸

It was not simply another diocesan seminary but rather had a national clientele. It was a kind of novitiate frequented for the purpose of receiving priestly formation in piety, virtues, and ecclesiastical matters, not only by aspirants to Holy Orders but also by those already so consecrated, in view of revitalizing their ecclesiastical spirit.

By the time De La Salle entered its doors, it already bore the imprint of such eminent men as Cardinal de Bérulle, the founder of the Oratory; Condren, the Superior General of the Oratory; Olier, the founder of the Seminary, and Tronson, the second successor of Olier in its administration and the current superior. All of these were outstanding for their intimate love of Sacred Scripture, which would certainly influence the soul of John Baptist de La Salle.

Pierre de Bérulle (†1629) made his studies at the Sorbonne. He based his spirituality on the whole of Scripture, but he had a preference for quoting Saint Paul and Saint John. A verse of one of the Psalms inspired him to found the Oratory, and in his Rule he prescribes that his followers will leave no day pass without studying something from Sacred Scripture.⁹

Charles Condren (†1641) insists, in his *Règlements*, on the Oratorian custom of reading or reflecting on some passage of the New Testament while walking toward the dining room. There he prescribes that the novices hear a reading of the New Testament without commentary, and after leaving the dining room, they are to discuss the truths of life and the words of Jesus Christ that are contained in the holy Gospel, by way of topics for conversation.

Jean-Jacques Olier (†1657), Oratorian that he is, also came under the influence of Bérulle and Condren. Because he is also the founder of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice, it is he who most directly set his imprint on its traditions. He looked on Scripture as another chalice bearing God; therefore, he required the same reverence and love for both. He never read the Sacred Scriptures without kneeling and uncovering

8. Degert, *Histoire des séminaires français*, vol. 2; also, Trudo, *Seminario carolino y Seminario sulpiciano*, p. 311.

9. Dagens, *Correspondence du Cardinal Bérulle*, 6, p. xviii; *Règlements donnés par notre T. H. Père*, MSS. 47, Archives des Eudistes, p. 2.

his head. In his private room he arranged a place of honor in which he enthroned an ornate copy of the Bible, in view of surrounding the word of God with all the veneration it deserves. His advice was to carry the Gospel always, so as to be able to meditate on it constantly.

The Rule of Saint Sulpice tells us that at 11:00 A.M. the bells ring for particular examen. Each session begins with everyone kneeling, head uncovered, and with the reading of a chapter of the New Testament. The particular examen follows.

Olier introduced a series of conferences on Sacred Scripture that he himself presented every day.¹⁰ We get some idea of the special importance given to Scripture in the program of Sulpician formation from the *Règlement de la Solitude d'Avron*. *Solitude* was the name given to the training center for future seminary directors. It remained only for a short period at Avron, but during this time it was under the direction of Louis Tronson (†1700), the future superior of Saint Sulpice and of De La Salle.

In this particular Rule, besides the reading that preceded the particular examen, we find one hour of reading in the Old Testament, a half hour of study on what was most striking in a previous reading of the New Testament, another hour of reading in some commentary on Scripture, a half hour of either studying a selected commentary or reviewing a segment of Scripture previously studied, and, finally, a one-hour conference on Scripture. This makes a total of four hours daily.

Of course, the Rule in force at the Seminary of Saint Sulpice during the time when De La Salle was there cannot be compared with the Rule of *Solitude*. However, it seems that at the seminary, one hour daily and a weekly conference were dedicated to Scripture. In the personal schedule of classes and activities that each student was asked to make under the guidance of his director, we often find some of the free time that remains between one activity and another being dedicated to the reading of Sacred Scripture.¹¹

As we will observe later, in spite of his scant eighteen months at Saint Sulpice, De La Salle not only assimilated this intense spirit of veneration for Sacred Scripture but also adopted some of the exterior practices of his teachers—for example, always to carry the New Testament, to read some parts of it daily while kneeling and with head uncovered, to devote much reading and many conferences on Scripture and its commentaries, and so on. The Rule that De La Salle prescribes for Holy Week seems to exude the biblical intensity of the *Règlement de la Solitude d'Avron*.

10. Dupriez, *Fénelon et la Bible*, p. 19.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Nicolas Roland (1642–1678)

Rayez¹² criticizes the inclination of De La Salle's biographers to explain all of Lasallian spirituality in terms of Saint Sulpice basically because we have more of these sources available. Certainly, documentation is more sparse when it comes to Roland or Barré, but we cannot for this reason write off the contribution of these men to De La Salle's formation. It cannot be denied that most of his academic and priestly training was achieved under the direction of Nicolas Roland.

Born in Reims and a canon at the age of twenty-two, Roland also went to Saint Sulpice for a time following his ordination and first Mass, partially in order to make up for his lack of formation within a seminary.

After De La Salle was obliged to return to his home because of the death of his parents, he spent six years (1672–1678) under the direction of Roland, who was not only his spiritual director but also his teacher. Under him De La Salle studied Scripture and the Fathers of the Church and completed his ecclesiastical formation.

Roland and De La Salle are two men with the same interests and aspirations. The influence of the former is evident in the writings of the latter, and the assimilation of his doctrine is so complete that Rigault does not hesitate to affirm that between the two, there could no longer exist a mine and a thine. They had merged their richness.¹³

The similarities that exist between the *Avis*¹⁴ written by Roland for the Sisters of the Divine Child (the Community he founded) and certain passages of *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, written by De La Salle for the Brothers of the Christian Schools, are of special interest—for example, the recurrence in both of the same suggestion that after awakening in the morning, the mind should be occupied by some passage of Scripture.¹⁵

So deep was the sharing between the director and the directed that when Roland prematurely found himself close to death, he unhesitatingly asked De La Salle to care for his budding congregation, whose purpose was the education of girls from poor families.¹⁶

12. Rayez, "Lasallian Studies in the Mid-twentieth Century," in *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, p. 124.

13. Rigault, *Histoire générale de l'Institut*, vol. 1, p. 468.

14. *Avis donnés par feu Monsieur Roland, théologal de Reims, pour la conduite des personnel régulières*.

15. Cf. Rigault, *Histoire générale de l'Institut*, vol. 1, p. 119.

16. Blain, Book One, p. 34.

Nicolas Barré (1621–1686)

Another man who most certainly deserves mention is the Minim, Père Nicolas Barré, who shared De La Salle's obsession to provide a Christian education for poor boys.

He was God's angel, sent to advise De La Salle at the decisive moments of his life. Totally supernatural in viewpoint and filled with the spirit of the Gospel, he was a man who did not flinch when it came to preaching to people with the moral fiber of De La Salle the message of Christ in all its stark reality and personal consequences.

When De La Salle, guided by Divine Providence, was considering the propriety of renouncing his personal property and his office as canon in order to go to the poor, on the one hand, or to place them as endowments for his own project, on the other hand, it was Sacred Scripture, quoted by Père Barré, that would incline De La Salle toward the more heroic alternative.¹⁷

In this brief review we believe we have sketchily touched upon the circumstantial factors that in some way molded the spirit of Saint John Baptist de La Salle to the image and likeness of the revealed word. They are not the only ones, but we would go beyond our announced scope if we were to introduce, along with these personal influences, others of a secondary nature, such as the written works he might have used in order to nourish his spirit.¹⁸

De La Salle knows very well how to draw the best advantage from whatever God places in his path. He would never even dream of being the standard bearer of some totally original doctrine. He is too realistic. What is certainly indisputably his own is his dynamic assimilation of many existing elements, which he then introduces into an original synthesis to meet the demands of the new religious family that he is founding. As we will have occasion to show, it is Sacred Scripture, more than any of the influences brought to bear on him, that will become the primary source of Lasallian spirituality.

17. Maillefer, *Two Early Biographies*, p. 51; Blain, Book One, p. 109.

18. "De La Salle had read Cassian and the lives of the Desert Fathers, as well as the lives of founders and reformers from Saint Augustine to Rancé. It was no problem for him to obtain information in his city of Reims, which housed Cordeliers, Jacobins, Augustinians, Minims, Carmelites, Antonines, Maurists, and Jesuits, not to mention women's convents. Almost every one of the religious houses in the town had one of his relatives as a member: La Salle, Moët, Roland, Maillefer, Dorigny, Ravigneau, Ravaux, and so on." (Rayez, "Lasallian Studies in the Mid-twentieth Century," in *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, p. 112, note 83)

The Lasallian Concept of Scripture

De La Salle has left us no systematic treatise in which he develops his thoughts on Scripture in an organic way; therefore, it is only laboriously that his intimate concepts on this matter can be extracted from the mass of his writings. In this section we will try to identify some of his basic ideas concerning the Sacred Books, and the rest will become evident in the course of the development of our investigations.

The Twofold Incarnation of the Word

To meditate on Sacred Scripture is to get in touch with the whole mystery of divine transcendence become imminent in created nature, with the mystery of the absolute poured into the contingent, with the mystery of immutable and limitless oneness assuming plurality by uniting itself to poor human beings. Ultimately, we touch the mystery of the eternal Word of God, who through love assumed human flesh in time, the mystery of the eternal and inexhaustible Word of God enclosed in the finiteness of the human world.

The Bible is the word of God become audible. Be it sonorous or luminous, God has only one Word. He pronounces it in order to bestow it, and he only pre-incarnates it in the Scriptures in order to give it flesh in the womb of the virgin Mary.¹⁹

This profound concept of Sacred Scripture is modestly hidden in one of De La Salle's favorite formulas, whose simplicity belies its profundity. After a few considerations made on the passage of Saint Matthew—"What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, if in the end he loses his soul?"—he professes his humility and docility to the holy word of God²⁰ and exclaims, "I adore this divine truth in you and outside of you as coming from your sacred mouth."²¹

19. Charlier, *La lectura cristiana*, p. 280. As we can readily see, the Word "become incarnate" can only be applied to Scripture through a similarity with the true Incarnation that took place in the womb of Mary and insofar as both are concrete manifestations of God, who is inaccessible to the senses. Other authors speak of *Verbum Dei incarnatum*, *Verbum Dei paginatum*, or other similar expressions, in order to preserve the distinction.

20. "I prostrate myself at your feet in offering you the deepest respect, which I always wish to display in your sacred presence and with which I listen

When De La Salle considers Jesus Christ in the process of teaching a maxim or a truth of the Gospel, he does not limit himself to adoring the human action of Christ and its purpose; he also makes a clear contrast between the two aspects, or states, of the same reality: 1) the eternal Word of God become man in Jesus Christ (“in you”) and 2) the truth, the word of God manifested externally in an oral or a written way (“outside of you”). In either case it is the same divine truth that is deserving of adoration.

This interpretation of the Founder’s formula is solidly confirmed if we examine a parallel text in another part of this same work. In the course of explaining the method of putting oneself in the presence of God by means of reflecting on a passage from Scripture, he uses this verse as an illustration: “I set the Lord ever before me,”²² and he adds:

The grasp that the mind has of the passage and the attention it pays to it not only do not hinder but do not even distract our attention from the passage, which, being of faith, causes the mind to be imbued with this truth.

The understanding the mind has of this truth becomes so clear that it cannot help adoring it in God and outside of God as coming forth from the mouth of God, as it were, according to our human way of expressing ourselves.²³

Since we are dealing with a text of the Old Testament, it is out of place to think of Jesus Christ, in the Ignatian manner of composition of persons and places, while we make our considerations of this truth. De La Salle, merely on the basis of faith, explicitly juxtaposes the terms *in* God and *outside of* God: the Truth, or Word, that is in God from all eternity and that same divine Truth, or Word, transposed into human language in the Scriptures.

In *Meditations*, 192, it might seem that De La Salle is bending the real meaning of the prologue to the Gospel of Saint John by applying to Scripture the words that the Apostle uses for Jesus Christ:

Holy Scripture enlightens the mind with that divine light which Saint John says enlightens everyone who comes into this world.²⁴

with humility and docility to your holy word, which is the life of my soul” (*Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, p. 139).

21. Ibid.

22. Ps. 16:8.

23. *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, p. 49.

Behind the apparently accommodational interpretation of this passage of Saint John—a license that De La Salle rarely uses with direct quotations—lies the strong probability that here we are seeing the same concept of Scripture that we mentioned above: the eternal Word of God expressed in human words, intimately related to the eternal Word of God manifested in our mortal flesh. Only a profound reading of the Scriptures could reveal this meaning to him.

We find something akin to this in the still more typical case of his use of Colossians 2:3. Here the Apostle presents Christ as the deposit in whom every treasure of wisdom and knowledge is hidden. De La Salle uses this text three times in the course of his *Meditations*: two of them are applied to the Scriptures, which are specified as the Sacred Books or the holy Gospel, and only one is in reference to Jesus Christ in the strictest Pauline sense. It is a very significant dualism, given the rigorous and non-oratorical style of the author.²⁵

Thus De La Salle, adoring “*in* God and *outside* of God” the divine truth contained in a passage of Sacred Scripture, adores the eternal and only Word of God through which God expresses his entire Essence and Truth and likewise generates the Word, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. De La Salle adores the same Word of God made flesh in time: the only “human” word capable of containing the “treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God.”

Ultimately, he adores the very Word or Truth of God, which—in order to adapt itself to the capability of our nature—“becomes incarnate,” so to speak, in the created language of Sacred Scripture through

24. *Meditations*, 192.2; the reference is to John 1:9.

25. “It is in these sacred books that the outpouring of all the treasures of God’s knowledge and wisdom are found” (*Meditations*, 170.1). “How fortunate you are to carry the holy Gospel with you at all times, for in it [are] found all the treasures of the knowledge and wisdom of Jesus Christ” (159.1). “Look upon the humanity of Jesus as the One in whom, as Saint Paul says, are all the treasures of God’s wisdom and knowledge” (40.2). Note the parallelism of the doctrine of De La Salle with that of a favorite author of the canon of Reims, Saint John of the Cross. His ideas can be summarized as follows: in the Old Testament, God communicates through the prophets, and they must be heeded. In the New Testament, God communicates himself to us once and for all in Christ, who is the plenitude of his Word (Heb. 1:1). After this, God has, as it were, remained silent, because there was no more to say. In Christ we have all that God wants to communicate to us, and therefore he tells us to listen to him (Matt. 17:5), for in him are all the treasures and wisdom of God (Col. 2:3). That is why the Apostle glories in knowing only Christ and him crucified. Cf. Saint John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, book 2, chap. 22, nos. 2–4.

the action of that Love with which the Father loves the expression of his total Truth.²⁶

This Lasallian formula of the divine truth that is “in God and outside of God,” which binds together so closely both Incarnation and Revelation, brings to mind the “two tables set on either side in the treasury of the Church.”²⁷ We need them to supply food for body and soul and also as light to guide our footsteps. So filled is he with this conviction that De La Salle does not hesitate to say that the word of God is the life of our souls,²⁸ just as Jesus Christ says that the Eucharistic Bread is an indispensable condition of life.²⁹

A Living Message Being Unfolded

From this profound notion of the Word of God, De La Salle anchors all of his subsequent doctrine on Scripture. The ineffable Word of God fits rather poorly in our limited human molds. Actually, the Word of God can only find its adequate expression in Jesus Christ. It cannot be reduced to the dead letters of a codicil or of a book, because it is a living and life-giving Spirit that is incapable of being circumscribed by any one culture or any historical period. It is an inexhaustible fountain of Truth.

This perennial vitality of Sacred Scripture perdures, thanks to the indissoluble bond that unites it internally with Tradition and with the

26. The parallelism established here between Incarnation and Revelation is not a new doctrine in the Church. Saint Augustine compares the Incarnation of the eternal Word of God to the exteriorization of the *verbum mentis* by means of articulated sounds that are audible and intelligible to others (cf. *De Trinitate*, book 15, chap. 11, no. 20). Origen sees in both the Incarnation and Scripture “a sensible manifestation of the presence of the Logos in history” (*In canticum* 3, 8; PG 13, 166). Still, these two *theophaniæ* are not to be confounded with each other. With good reason does Nicolau observe that there is between them only a certain reasoning by analogy. While both are manifestations of the same uncreated Word of God, still, in the Incarnation we have the Word of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, generated by the Father; while in Scripture we have only a communication *ad extra* from God, and this is common to the three Divine Persons (cf. “*De Sacra Scriptura*,” in *Sacræ Theologiæ Summa*, BAC 5, Ed. Madrid, 1965, 1117). This pre-eminence of Christ over the word of God manifested in Scripture means that only in Christ can we find the fullness of Revelation.

27. Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, book 4, chap. 11.

28. *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, pp. 35, 66.

29. John 6:54.

Magisterium of the Church. Scripture and Tradition cannot be totally disconnected from each other. It is so difficult to separate one from the other because Scripture is, in fact, only the richer portion of Tradition, while Tradition, far from being just a complementary element juxtaposed with Scripture, in a way actually constitutes its very life, its proper atmosphere, and its natural light, while the Spirit directs it and inspires its interpretation.

Saint Augustine asks, "Where will we find the Spirit of Jesus Christ, if not in the Body of Christ?" Therefore, it must be in the Church, the body of the living Word of God made flesh, where the Word formerly inspired to mankind remains spirit and life. Tradition does not in any way diminish the importance of Scripture; on the contrary, it shares with it all of its own value and meaning.³⁰

In contradistinction to the Protestant thesis, De La Salle establishes in *The Duties of a Christian to God* that Scripture and Tradition exist on the same plane, and he asks for equal respect for both of these instruments of transmitting the same truth.

The sentences with which he expresses himself are simple and clear, as befits a manual of doctrine destined for the unsophisticated; however, this in no way compromises the solidity and depth of the ideas that it contains.

The title of the section that deals with this theme is quite meaningful in itself: "On the truths of faith, written or unwritten, which are known through Scripture and Tradition."

Having introduced the theme, De La Salle continues:

There are two kinds of truths that we must believe with divine faith and that we must look upon as revealed by God to his Church: those that have been written down and those that we know only by Tradition.³¹

In these words De La Salle uncovers the hidden root that unites these two manifestations of the word of God that are divine to the same degree and therefore, in academic terminology, demand the same total assent in divine faith.

Further on, and continuing with the same succinct and precise language of a theologian who is measuring the import of each word, he affirms the fallacies of the contrary thesis, by way of examples:

30. Bouyer, *La Bible et l'Évangile*, p. 11.

31. *Devoirs, I (The Duties of a Christian to God)*, Cahiers lasalliens 20, p. 7.

It is Tradition that teaches us that there are four Gospels, seven sacraments, and that children are to be baptized, because we find none of these things, or similar ones, in Sacred Scripture.³²

Tradition presupposes the permanent influence of the Divine that perpetuates revealed truth in human history:

Those things we only know by Tradition are those which had been taught by Christ himself but which were not written down. The Apostles had received them orally and confided them to the pastors who succeeded them. These pastors of the Church then taught them to the faithful, and so they have been passed on, across the centuries and up to the present day, as the doctrine of Jesus Christ.³³

However, there is no question here of two parallel sources with no bond between them. De La Salle points to the bond between Scripture and Tradition that guarantees the perpetual vitality of Scripture within the Church:

Traditions are also explanations that have been given, and still are given, of the words of Sacred Scripture by the unanimous consent of the Fathers and pastors of the Church.³⁴

De La Salle is not unmindful that the deposit of Revelation was completed with the death of the last Apostle. However, this treasure—which needs no further addition, objectively speaking—must be lived ever more intensely day after day in the Church and intellectually more profoundly penetrated as a consequence of the continual progress of the Church and its members toward the perfect stature of Christ.³⁵

In this continuous explanation, which at each moment brings to light the most vital aspects of Revelation according to the times, Tradition plays an important role, not as something that belongs to a definite past time but as a reality that perdures in the life of the Church. It embraces all its members, the teachers as well as the taught. This aspect of the participation of the faithful in the Tradition of the Church is very clearly stated by De La Salle in one of the previous quotations; it deserves to be emphasized because of the increasing

32. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. Cf. *Levié, La Bible*, p. 280.

importance that is being given today to the re-evaluation of the role of the laity.

Since Vatican Council II has brought up the problem concerning the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, we might ask ourselves what is the position of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Concerning these polemics, he closely follows the teachings of the Council of Trent, and in his writings he reflects the common doctrine of the authors of his time. It is clear from the extracts presented above that to the question finally addressed by Vatican Council II—whether there are truths that are transmitted only by Tradition and not, at least implicitly, by Scripture—De La Salle answers affirmatively. With regard to the doctrine unanimously professed by the Council Fathers, he offers us his panoramic vision of Tradition, full of actuality because of the intimate connection established between it and Scripture and because of his way of emphasizing its presence within the very times in which we live, as well as the active role that the faithful play in it.

Assurance of Authenticity

The total Christ of the Church continues to be the fullness of the Word of God made flesh, who manifests himself in a most eminent way to the faithful, his members, through channels they can understand. Saint Francis de Sales says it most picturesquely: God is the artist; our faith is the picture he paints; the colors are the Word of God; the brush is the Church.³⁶ He gives proof of this statement in one of his letters:

Scripture, then, is clear in its words, but the mind is obscure, and like a nocturnal bird, it cannot see that clarity. It is the Spirit of God who has given us the Scriptures, and so it must be that same Spirit who also shows us its real meaning. It is not given except through the Church, the pillar and support of all truth.³⁷

Saint John Baptist de La Salle establishes this general principle in his meditation for the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter at Antioch, the whole of which deals with the Magisterium of the Church. It is the role of the Church to give us knowledge of the truth:

The Church is our mother; to her we must be united in every way; on her we must depend in everything concerning religion.

36. *Les Controverses*, *Œuvres*, Annecy, 1817, vol. 1, p. 145.

37. 1 Tim. 3:15; *Lettre à un gentilhomme*, *Œuvres*, vol. 18, p. 403.

We must be submissive to all her decisions and listen to them as oracles. It is the Church, in fact, that makes the truth known to us. We must accept it from her mouth without any hesitation and without examination. All we have to say in answer to what the Church proposes to us is, I believe, without hesitating, without any doubts whatsoever.

We should, moreover, welcome everything the Church proposes to us and do so with great docility. It is Jesus Christ himself who has given the Church his power and authority over us and who tells us that anyone who does not listen to the Church should be looked upon by us as a pagan and a publican.³⁸

Even though De La Salle does not explicitly apply this principle to the situation involving the interpretation of Sacred Scripture, we can see, because of the sentence that immediately follows, that the idea is not beyond the thinking that governs these lines:

This caused Saint Augustine to say that he would not believe the Gospel if he were not bound to do so by the authority of the Church.³⁹

In *The Duties of a Christian to God*, a work that is more pedagogical in nature, De La Salle shows how, in practice, the Church acts in a decisive way in the field of Scripture. One example is the way in which the canon of Sacred Scripture was fixed. After a masterfully precise overview of the various books of Scripture, he concludes:

All of these books have been promulgated by the Council of Trent, which has accepted them as having been dictated by the Spirit of God, because they contain all the written truths that we must accept by divine faith.⁴⁰

The Church, Tradition, and especially the infallible Magisterium offer us Sacred Scripture in a living and authentic way with a continuous unfolding of its potentialities.

38. *Meditations*, 106.1; the reference is to Matt. 18:17.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Devoirs, I*, Cahiers lasalliens 20, p. 13. Notice again the care with which De La Salle chooses his terminology in saying “written truths” in order not to give even a hint of the Protestant idea concerning Scripture as being the only source of Revelation, to the exclusion of Tradition.

As a consequence, their teachings must be received with the same simplicity of heart with which we submit to the Gospel. De La Salle demands it, in no uncertain terms, with words that reflect all the religious vicissitudes of the times, particularly with regard to whatever concerns Jansenism.

Hold fast in all things to what is of faith; shun novelties; follow the tradition of the Church; accept only what she accepts; condemn what she condemns; approve what she approves, whether by her councils or by the sovereign Pontiff. Render her prompt and perfect obedience in all matters.⁴¹

This concern he carried within himself even to his deathbed. Recall the words with which he begins his last will and testament:

I commend to God first of all my soul, and next all the Brothers of the Society of the Christian Schools to whom he has united me. I recommend them above all things to have always an entire submission to the Church, especially in these distressing times, and in order to give proof of this, never to be at variance with our Holy Father the Pope and the Church of Rome, always remembering that I sent two Brothers to Rome to beg of God the grace that their Society may always be entirely submissive to the Holy See.⁴²

Throughout the pages of this work we will have the opportunity to feel the insistence with which De La Salle comes back to Scripture as his primary source. It would not be out of place at this point, however, to add that Scripture is understood by De La Salle not as a dead letter or some pious relic but as a spirit in perpetual and homogeneous development through the uninterrupted influence of the Holy Spirit within Tradition and the Magisterium.

The Power of the Word of God

We do not wish to interrupt the main development of our theme in order to make an exhaustive study of the Lasallian concept of the word of God. In the succession of chapters to follow, we will necessarily include many clarifications that will complete what has already

41. *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, p. 67.

42. Letter of Brother Barthélemy to Brother Gabriel Drolin, *Letters*, 32(B).

been said. Suffice it here to recall some of De La Salle's pertinent thoughts on the power of Sacred Scripture, by way of rounding out this brief presentation.

So convinced is he that Scripture is the very word of God that for him the evangelists are actually "secretaries of Jesus Christ,"⁴³ even though the instrumentality of the inspired author is only used as an analogy in this metaphor. While in fact Scripture is the word of God, it is at the same time, properly speaking, the word of its human author. Therefore there is nothing to prevent relating the human author and the sacred book by means of a possessive pronoun, whether we say "his Gospel" or "his Epistle."⁴⁴ Neither should there be any problem with the expressions of Ezechiel⁴⁵ or of the prophet King,⁴⁶ with what the Wise Man says,⁴⁷ or with what Saint Paul assures⁴⁸ or warns.⁴⁹ These in no way imply that it is not the Holy Spirit who says all of this.⁵⁰ In the same way, the books of Sacred Scripture are "divine books," "holy truths," or "holy maxims" *par excellence* because of their content.⁵¹ In summary, all are the word of God.⁵²

Because this is so, Scripture for De La Salle represents the "outpouring of all the treasures of the knowledge and wisdom of God,"⁵³ a "divine light which enlightens everyone who comes into this world"⁵⁴ with truths that are beyond anything the human mind can of itself conceive.⁵⁵

As opposed to mere human language, which is capable of enlightening the mind but does not necessarily have the capability of moving the will, the divine words for him are "spirit and life"⁵⁶ for those who receive them with love.

In order to explain the irresistible power of the divine word, De La Salle can find no better terms than those used by Saint Paul in his

43. *Meditations*, 178.3.

44. As in *Meditations*, 178.3 and 199.2, referring to Luke and to James, respectively.

45. *Ibid.*, 170.1.

46. *Ibid.*, 177.3.

47. *Ibid.*, 177.2 and 177.3.

48. *Ibid.*, 192.1.

49. *Ibid.*, 204.2.

50. *Ibid.*, 204.1 and 203.2.

51. *Ibid.*, 192.2.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*, 170.1 and 159.1.

54. John 1:9.

55. *Meditations*, 192.2.

56. *Ibid.*, 196.3, quoting John 6:64.

Epistle to the Hebrews.⁵⁷ He comes back to this passage seven times in various meditations⁵⁸ in order to emphasize the idea:

Indeed, God's word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides the soul and spirit, even the joints and marrow.⁵⁹

He argues that if the Apostle Saint Bartholomew had such frequent recourse to the divine word that he found in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, it is because he knew very well that beyond anything he could compose, "only that word is capable of reaching the division between flesh and spirit. This must necessarily be achieved if there is to be complete conversion of soul."⁶⁰ Consideration of this passage, together with his own apostolic experience, forces De La Salle from his usual reserve, and he breaks into these soul-revealing words: "Ah! how powerful the word of God is to touch hearts!"⁶¹

Similarly, in the meditation for the feast of Saint Catherine he ponders the power of the Sacred Books to strengthen us in faith and the practice of good, and he finds support for this explanation in the passage of Saint Paul to Timothy:

This is what teaches salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, what is inspired by God and useful for instruction, reproof, correction, and for training in piety and justice, so that the man of God may be perfect and well equipped for all sorts of good work.⁶²

When speaking of the results that Saint Luke achieved by means of his Gospel, De La Salle shows that only a single passage was sufficient to bring Saint Anthony, Abbot, to give up all his goods and go into the desert for the remainder of his life.⁶³ Such maxims from the Gospel according to Luke will be equally effective in producing similar results in a great number of souls until the end of time.⁶⁴

57. Heb. 4:12.

58. *Meditations*, twice in 159.1; once each in 167.1, 168.3, 180.2, 181.3, and 192.2.

59. *Ibid.*, 181.3.

60. *Ibid.*, 159.1.

61. *Ibid.*, 180.2.

62. *Ibid.*, 192.1, quoting 2 Tim. 3:15–17.

63. *Meditations*, 178.3, quoting Luke 18:22.

64. *Meditations*, 178.3. In more technical terminology, Cardinal Bea expresses the same Lasallian thought: "Sacred Scripture cannot be called a

In *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, De La Salle finds another and more delicate and exquisite fruit coming from Scripture. It consists in the internal attraction exercised by its words, which are capable of bringing us to God and giving us a taste for God. This is a taste that the Holy Spirit grants simultaneously with the gift of wisdom. The passages of Sacred Scripture are the words of God as faith makes them known to us. Of themselves they have a divine unction and lead us to God, give us a taste for God; they help us to see as God sees, and they also sustain in us a certain feeling for God.⁶⁵

Only when we can penetrate the deepest meaning of these words and the mystical peace that they express can we understand the function of Sacred Scripture in the method of interior prayer and in the spirit of faith that Saint John Baptist de La Salle leaves his Brothers as the soul of their Institute. In this interior delight in God, which is far beyond sensible feelings and which ultimately is obtained from the assiduous consideration of the revealed Word, we can see the secret of the entire nights of prayer with which De La Salle regales his soul, not so much with the consolations of God as with the God of consolations, as he is accustomed to say in his letters.⁶⁶

Because this taste for God and for his Word is a gift from heaven, we should ask for it with insistence. De La Salle suggests this in his "Method for Hearing Holy Mass Well:"

From the Collect to the Offertory, we should make acts of faith regarding the truths contained in the passages of Holy Scripture which the priest reads to the people and in the creed which he afterwards recites. In union with the Church, we should beg of God the light necessary to understand these truths and the grace we need to relish the holy maxims contained therein, particularly in the Epistles of the holy Apostle and the Gospel, whereby the Church instructs the faithful so that they may put these truths into practice.⁶⁷

'sacrament' in the technical meaning of the word, but neither can it be defined as a mere 'sacramental,' as if it were producing its effects only *ex opere operantis Ecclesiae*, in virtue of the dignity and powerful intercession of the Church. Inherent in its very words, read and interpreted with the proper dispositions, there are a light and a power that surpass the light and power of mere human words, which give them a special and unique power and authority" (Liturgical Congress of Assisi, 1956); cf. Leloir, *La Biblia, escuela de oración*, p. 16.

65. *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, p. 66.

66. *Letters*, 83.3.

67. *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, pp. 58–59.

All these benefits that flow from Scripture, which De La Salle understands so profoundly, are certainly the reasons that move him to make it the center of his own life and of the spirituality that he leaves to his followers.

Living the Scriptures

We can see in Saint John Baptist de La Salle the man mentioned in the Gospel who, having found a great treasure, went and sold all that he had in order to acquire it.⁶⁸ The treasure that De La Salle has found is Sacred Scripture. He certainly is not deterred by difficulties in his eagerness to possess it as perfectly as possible for himself and for his followers.

In fact, his life is the Gospel put into practice. The Gospel is his only norm of conduct. Blain says that in every situation he studies the Gospel, the sentiments and virtues of Jesus Christ, which are for him the best and only rule of conduct.⁶⁹

De La Salle can never conceive of faith in the word of God as being separate from its fulfillment. His is an eminently practical kind of faith. As he says to the Brothers:

It is in vain that you believe what Jesus Christ proposed to you in the holy Gospel if your actions do not give proof of your belief [an implicit quotation from Jas 2:20]. . . . Are you ready, as they [the early Christians] were, to die to prove the good quality of your faith? . . . How do you show that you possess the spirit of Christianity? Be assured that to possess it, your actions must not give the lie to the faith you profess but rather be a lively expression of what is written in the Gospel.⁷⁰

Consistent with these principles, he is the first to put them into practice, even to the point of heroism. Blain captures the attitude of mind of that first community of teachers. When they are disturbed about their future, De La Salle urges them to a total and evangelical abandonment to Divine Providence, which even cares for the birds and the lilies of the field. Their reply is:

You speak with inspiration amidst your ease, for you lack nothing. You have a rich canonry and an equally fine inheritance;

68. Matt. 13:44.

69. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 69.

70. *Meditations*, 84.3.

you enjoy security and protection against indigence. If our work fails, you risk nothing. The ruin of our enterprise would not affect you. We own nothing. We are men without possessions or income or even a trade to fall back on. Where can we go, and what can we do if the schools fail or if people tire of us? Destitution will be our only portion, and begging our only means to relieve it.⁷¹

These words, spoken from the depths of their honesty and common sense, reveal to De La Salle the profound meaning of the very evangelical counsels he is explaining to his Brothers. Taking these words literally, “If you would be perfect, go and sell all that you have, and give it to the poor; then come and follow me,”⁷² he gives himself ample time to reflect on what he must do, in the light of prayer and the counsel of his spiritual director. Then, no longer listening to the voices of flesh and blood, he first resigns his canonry, not in favor of his brother Louis, who followed him into the priesthood, but rather in favor of Monsieur Faubert, a clergyman of humble but worthy circumstances.⁷³

Instead of using his considerable patrimony to enrich his relatives or to provide a foundation for the works being undertaken by his fledgling enterprise, he prefers to rely only on Divine Providence. He avails himself of the famine of 1684 to divest himself quietly of all of his goods,⁷⁴ to the point where he himself has to go from door to door begging for bread.⁷⁵ Now he feels more identified with the Gospel and in a better position to preach it effectively:

You say you are poor [he writes later to a Brother]; how much pleasure it gives me to hear you say that! For to say you are poor is to say that you are happy. “Happy are you who are poor,” Our Lord said to his Apostles. I say the same to you.⁷⁶

If we are to believe his biographer, the only goods that De La Salle reserves for himself are the same as those granted to every Brother: a New Testament, *The Imitation of Christ*, a crucifix, and a rosary. For himself he chooses the poorest and most uncomfortable room. When anyone makes an allusion to the poverty in which he is now living, he usually answers:

71. Blain, Book One, p. 107.

72. Matt. 19:21.

73. Blain, Book One, pp. 129, 131.

74. *Ibid.*, pp. 152–53.

75. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 130.

My goodness, what are you saying? Isn't a room well furnished when it contains a copy of the Gospels, where one can discover the treasures of eternal life whenever one wishes? Was not that the rich furnishing of the anchorites, the store from which they drew the precious virtues adorning their lives?⁷⁷

And in reality, for him Scripture is always an inexhaustible treasure to which he constantly has recourse and from which he draws whatever he needs for himself and for his followers.

On the other hand, faced with the persistent persecutions that harass his new endeavor, he frequently has on his lips the words of Gamaliel:

If this undertaking is from God, who can destroy it? If my work does not come from God, I would consent to its ruin. I would join our enemies in destroying it if I thought that it did not have God for its author or that he did not will its progress.⁷⁸

This practical faith with which De La Salle translates Sacred Scripture into action is the same faith that he continually preaches to his Brothers. When the occasion arises, he requires it of them.

In one town where the Brothers are established, the community experienced such a great dearth of resources, such a dire state of need, that they began to despair of being able to continue where they were. They tried to convince their Superior, when he was with them and experiencing the same hardship, that it was necessary to move from a place where they could hardly survive and where no one appreciated their gratuitous and charitable work for poor children. De La Salle showed surprise at such talk. He asked the Director, who had spoken to him, "Do you believe in the Gospel?" Then to the Director's reply that he did, he simply quoted those words of Jesus Christ: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things will be provided for you," and that closed the conversation. It was not long before the Brother concerned experienced the truth of the Founder's assurance. He has testified personally that from that time onward, Divine Providence never ceased to supply the community's needs.⁷⁹

76. *Letters*, 38.7.

77. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 427.

78. Blain, Book Three, p. 534.

79. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 128, referring to Matt. 6:33.

De La Salle is also careful to pour this lively faith into the works he writes for the schools. In *The Duties of a Christian to God*, he fuses theological preciseness and scriptural concern:

We should not be satisfied merely to repeat speculative acts of faith. It is important to make real acts of practical faith in those moments when we are tempted to offend God or to ignore certain truths that should be put into action. For example, when we are faced with the difficulty of forgiving our enemies, it is good to say: "My Savior Jesus Christ, I firmly believe that I must not only forgive my enemies but also love them, pray for them, and do good to them, because this is what you have taught us through the words of Saint Paul."⁸⁰

Comparing the word of God that is contained in Scripture with the word of God as expounded by the saints and doctors of the Church, Saint Francis de Sales used to say that they differ only as a whole loaf of bread differs from its slices.⁸¹

In fact, the saints show us Scripture incarnated. They make it easier for us to understand Scripture in those circumstances when, of ourselves, we cannot peel away the roughness and difficulties in which Revelation sometimes cloaks itself. They shell the nut for us, according to a Salesian metaphor, when with our own resources we are unable to enjoy the fruit that lies beneath its exterior cover.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle is always an assiduous reader of the writings of the saints. His preferred authors are the Fathers of the Church, and he highly recommends such reading. However, his first choice remains always the whole loaf of Sacred Scripture, the whole nut, shell and all. His great desire is to have his Brothers receive the word of God, with all its richness and its simplicity, just as it is given to us in the Sacred Books, especially in the New Testament. That is why he personally carries the New Testament with him all the time⁸² and makes it a mandate of Rule for the Brothers.⁸³

Blain also reminds us of the obligation that De La Salle writes into the Rule that every day the Brothers should kneel and read from a page of this Sacred Book. He also mentions how the Founder listens with extraordinary attention to the reading that is customary in the

80. *Devoirs*, I, Cahiers lasalliens 20, p. 6.

81. *Œuvres*, vol. XII, p. 305.

82. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 602.

83. Rule of 1705, chap. 2.3.

dining room. He becomes even more concentrated whenever one of his favorite passages appears.⁸⁴

When he manages, at least partially, to place some of the affairs of the Institute into the hands of Brother Barthélemy, he can then withdraw to his room and the quiet he there enjoys. On such occasions he consecrates a good part of his time to interior prayer, the reading of the Scriptures, and the writing of ascetical works for the use of his Brothers. These works reflect the profound knowledge of the Bible that he has achieved through its continuous use,⁸⁵ a point that we will pursue further on.

De La Salle has the most profound respect for Scripture, and he tries to transmit it to his Brothers as well as to his students. In *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, he says that it is behavior completely contrary to propriety when “some seem to glory in displaying their irreligious spirit in what they say by mingling the words of Holy Scripture with profane things, by mocking and making fun of sacred things and religious practices.”⁸⁶ He likewise brands as reckless and irreligious the conduct of those who make jokes about the words of Sacred Scripture.⁸⁷

Given that these words express the mystery of God that the Holy Spirit has deemed it proper to communicate to mankind because of its participation in the divine Life, they should be spoken only within the context of “a Christian spirit and to encourage yourself to practice what is right and virtuous.”⁸⁸

The word of God enters through our ears into our mind and heart. This is why De La Salle remarks on the fact that women sometimes adorn their ears.

It is, however, more modest and more Christian not to have any accessories attached to your ears, because it is through them that God’s word reaches the mind and heart. The respect you should profess for that divine word should lead you to avoid anything that suggests vanity.

The finest adornment for the ears of a Christian is that they be well disposed and ever ready to hear attentively and to receive submissively any instructions concerning religion and the maxims of the holy Gospel. It was for this reason that laws of the

84. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 71.

85. Blain, Book Three, p. 661.

86. *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, p. 112.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

88. *Ibid.*

Church bade all ecclesiastics to keep their ears entirely uncovered, thus giving them to understand that they should always be attentive to God's law, to the doctrine of truth, and to the science of salvation, of which they are the repositories and the dispensers.⁸⁹

The greatest proof of the love of Saint John Baptist de La Salle for Sacred Scripture can be found in the doctrine that he leaves for the Brothers on the spirit of faith and on interior prayer. Its inspiration is entirely scriptural, and it is a faithful picture of his spiritual life. We will not stop to analyze it here, because it deserves the more detailed consideration that we will undertake later on.

At this point, suffice it to note with his biographer that this frequent use of Scripture is the result of his deep feeling of humility. In reality, because of it, he recognizes that he is so unworthy to converse with God and so incapable of doing it in a way worthy of God's majesty that he does not believe there can be any better way of praying than by the use of the very expressions that the Holy Spirit has consigned to the Sacred Books. Therefore all his interior prayer, instead of proceeding by way of reasoning and intellectual discourse, flows directly to God through channels of faith. Thus the Holy Spirit, who is the best teacher of interior prayer and its indispensable inspiration, is also its only source.

This is why De La Salle always has a special preference for the Psalms. Their verses constitute the ordinary language he uses to talk to God.⁹⁰ The Divine Office, which is made up of these Psalms, is one of the delights of his childhood,⁹¹ as we have seen. In his youth, as a canon of the metropolitan church of Reims,⁹² he is distinguished always by the modesty of his bearing in choir and by the continual edification he gives to his colleagues during the Divine Office.⁹³

89. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

90. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 209.

91. "From an early age, he became very assiduous in attending the Divine Office, and even before he became a canon—which happened early in his life—he had begun when still hardly more than a child to perform the functions of a canon" (Blain, Book One, p. 70; Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 88).

92. "On 9 July 1666, when he was around seventeen years old, he was appointed a canon of the metropolitan church of Reims, through the resignation of Monsieur Dozet, archdeacon of Champagne and chancellor of the University, and he took possession of his canonry the following year, on 17 January" (Blain, Book One, p. 10). There is an evident error in the biographer's designation of the age of De La Salle.

Later on, after he has resigned his canonry and in the midst of his many preoccupations, he always reserves a privileged time for the Divine Office. He usually recites it kneeling, rarely standing or while walking about. However cold the weather, through respect he always recites the Office with his head uncovered, and that includes no calotte.⁹⁴

When reciting the Office of the Most Blessed Virgin with the novices, he follows all the practices that he has established for their benefit. So, whenever he judges that he has made a mistake, he prostrates himself in the center of the oratory, just as they do.⁹⁵

His concentration is such, especially during his later years, that on one occasion while reciting the Divine Office in the infirmary of Saint Yon, he seems not to have noticed, despite the fury of the flames and the commotion of the personnel, that a fire has broken out in the bakery of the house. Only after completing the Office and leaving the room does he come to see what is going on.⁹⁶

However, he does not want attention during the Divine Office to become merely a study of the content of the Psalms. The Church intends the Psalms of the Divine Office to be praise offered to God. Therefore, during the Office, De La Salle wants the Psalms to be nothing other than pure praise.⁹⁷ This is a typical example of the sense of Church that always governs his approach to Scripture.

Dialogue with God by means of scriptural passages goes beyond the ordinary schedule determined by his duty of reciting the Divine Office or by other Church duties. It continues during the entire day in short formulas taken principally from the Psalms.⁹⁸

He draws up a list of passages from Scripture that would be suitable for various daily activities, in order to help the Brothers to perform their actions through the spirit of faith.⁹⁹

This motto from Job is his favorite: "God be blessed." He uses it whenever patience is in order. But whenever more serious trouble arises, he uses the entire passage: "The Lord has given; the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."¹⁰⁰ It is so dear to him that it is one of the few direct quotations he puts into the Rule¹⁰¹ to

93. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 89.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

97. *Devoirs, I, Cahiers lasalliens* 20, p. 478.

98. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 209.

99. *Collection*, pp. 38–44.

100. Job 1:21.

serve as a model of the attitude that the Brothers ought to take when faced with adverse circumstances.¹⁰²

And in the eighth point of his personal plan of life, he says:

I will always look on the work of my salvation and the establishment and guidance of our Community as God's work. For this reason, I leave the care of it in his hands so that I will do what I have to in this matter only at his command. I will often ask his advice about all I have to do, under either aspect, and often repeat these words of the prophet Habakkuk: *Domine, opus tuum*. This is your work, Lord.¹⁰³

In various places throughout his biography, Blain gives us the passages that De La Salle often uses when talking to his Brothers.¹⁰⁴ Even though it be true that many of Blain's scriptural allusions might be considered an effect of the oratorical style of this illustrious biographer, certainly we find ample confirmation of such a practice in the works of De La Salle himself. As we will see later on, everywhere we find the special preference he shows for certain passages.

Sometimes he says these passages "with special joy," especially when suffering some unusual mortification or insult or when giving spiritual advice to the Brothers.¹⁰⁵ His is a language full of faith. It encourages the Brothers in the heat of those calamities that befall them, and it even helps them to find a kind of joy in their sufferings.¹⁰⁶

101. In the Rule of 1705 there are only three scriptural passages; Job 1:31, just mentioned, is in chap. 2; James 3:6 and 3:8 are in chap. 16.

102. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 572. The importance of this passage in De La Salle's life is stressed in the short biography that appears at the beginning of the 1731 edition of *Les Méditations pour les Dimanches et principales Fêtes de l'année*. After the enumeration of the titles of the author—priest, Doctor in Theology, former Canon of Reims—it continues: "who excelled in the practice of all Christian and religious virtues, especially in charity and zeal for the instruction of youth, above all those who were poor. He lived totally committed to Providence during the forty years that he lived with the Brothers of the Institute. In every pain and affliction he usually said: God be blessed! He died in Rouen. . . ." (Rigault, vol. 1, p. 499). Maillefer also stresses his use of this expression. "He opposed [his enemies'] efforts only with those words which became so familiar to him, 'God be blessed.' This was his motto" (Maillefer, *Two Early Biographies*, p. 18).

103. Heb. 3:2; Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 269.

104. Cf. Blain, Book One, p. 105; Book Two, p. 319; Book Three, pp. 627, 634; Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, pp. 216–17, 262, 283, and 411.

105. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, pp. 466–67.

The penances that he gives his followers sometimes consist in a meditation on some passage of Scripture that bears a certain relationship with the fault committed.¹⁰⁷ On one occasion, this zeal of De La Salle to have his Brothers motivate themselves in all things by the maxims of the Gospel brings him unexpected but gratifying confusion.

Blain narrates the incident,¹⁰⁸ which concerns the Gospel maxim that proposes that two or three gather together to pray in moments of difficulty, after which they are to decide on a course of action as the Lord inspires them, being confident in his protection.¹⁰⁹ The Brothers surprise De La Salle, upon his return from a difficult business trip on matters not related to the Institute, by explaining how they have applied the maxim and taken a necessary decision in his absence. He disapproves of the decision but can hardly fail to appreciate their affectionate fidelity to their spirit of faith.

These historical instances, gathered at random from the biography of De La Salle, may give us some idea of how he and his Brothers integrated Sacred Scripture into their daily lives.

From here on, we will let De La Salle himself speak to us through his writings. Whatever he expressly affirms or simply implies will provide confirmation and amplification of these observations.

106. Blain, Book Three, p. 529.

107. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 367.

108. Blain, Book Three, p. 666.

109. Matt. 18:19.

Chapter Two

Sacred Scripture in the Writings of John Baptist de La Salle

His Literary Production

In the preceding chapter, we sought to find the beginning and early development of the personal interest that Saint John Baptist de La Salle manifests in Sacred Scripture and its repercussions in his life. Now we will move on to investigate the manner in which he uses Scripture in his written works. In these we can analyze *in vivo* the profound knowledge of Sacred Scripture he acquires, the veneration in which he holds it, the efficacy he attributes to it, the way he uses it, and the reasons why he employs it so frequently.

All who know De La Salle are aware that in spite of the privileged education that comes with the social position of his family and despite his doctorate in Theology, his talents are dedicated neither to investigation nor to works of a high academic aspiration. Rather, as the founder of a Community dedicated to the humble ministry of teaching youth, as a spiritual guide, and as an eminent educator, he suffuses all of his works with an eminently practical and apostolic character in the fields both of asceticism and of education.

It is beyond our purpose here to make a detailed list of his writings and their respective characteristics. Others have done it commendably, and we can always consult their work.¹ In this study we are

1. Rigault, "*L'Œuvre religieuse et pédagogique de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La*

limiting ourselves only to those works that are pertinent to our goal, together with any other critical information that may be necessary to assure scientific validity.

Ascetical Works

Three works are grouped under this heading.

1) *Recueil de différents petits traités à l'usage des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*. A few copies of the various editions published during the lifetime of De La Salle have been preserved. For the purpose of our study, we will follow the edition of Avignon, 1711 (Chez Joseph-Charles Châstanier, imprimeur et libraire, proche le Collège des RR. PP. Jésuites), in 18°, 258 pages, a copy of which is in the Rome archives of the Institute. This is not the first edition, but it is the oldest complete copy from the time of the author.

2) *Explication de la Méthode d'Oraison, par Monsieur Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, Instituteur des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, 1739, in 8°, 130 pages. This is the first edition of this posthumous work of De La Salle, and our references are made to this copy. Émile Lett, FSC, has published a critical edition of this text (Paris: Ligel, 1957). Cahiers lasalliens 14 contains a photocopy of the original.²

3) *Règles Communes de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*. We have two different editions, both from the time of the Founder.

a) The manuscript preserved in the Municipal Library of Avignon is identified as number 747; dated 1705, it is written on eighty-three notebook sheets; the pagination is indicated only on one side of each sheet.

b) This Rule, revised by De La Salle before his death, was the basis for the subsequent edition, which can be found in the archives of the Institute in Rome; it is a manuscript copy that belonged to the community of Troyes; dated 1718, it has 114 pages, each authenticated by the initials J.T.F.B., the baptismal and religious names of Joseph Truffet, Frère Barthélemy, the Superior.

Salle; Troisième partie: Les textes, les écrits spirituels et pédagogiques de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle," in *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, vol. 1, pp. 435–598; Gallego, *La Teología de la educación en San Juan Bautista de La Salle*, pp. 41–69; Sauvage, *Catéchèse et laïcité; Participation des laïcs au ministère de la Parole et mission du Frère enseignant dans l'Église*, pp. 534–539.

2. Cahiers Lasalliens 50 (Rome, 1990) contains the text of Cahiers lasalliens 14 (*Explication de la Méthode d'Oraison*) along with notes and an overview by Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos.

Our references to the Rule will be to these two editions of 1705 and 1718, but we will keep to the modern division into chapters and articles for those passages that have come down to us almost intact.

Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle

We include under this general heading the following three series that were printed only after the death of their author.

1) *Méditations pour le Temps de la Retraite; À l'usage de toutes les personnes qui s'emploient à l'éducation de la Jeunesse et particulièrement pour la Retraite que font les Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes pendant les Vacances.* Par M. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, docteur en Théologie, instituteur des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes. Rouen, in 8°, 236 pages. The Rome archives of the Institute contain various copies of this edition, dated by the experts at about 1730.

2) *Méditations pour les Dimanches de l'année avec les Évangiles de tous les Dimanches.* Par M. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, docteur en théologie, instituteur des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes. Rouen, in 8°, 236 pages. This volume is followed by another volume with the following title on its first page:

3) *Méditations pour les Principales Fêtes de l'année.* It is also in 8°, has 252 pages, and is followed by an appendix of twenty-two pages. The Rome archives of the Institute preserve various copies of the volume, which contains these last two series of meditations. One of the copies, which is dedicated to the community of Nogent-le-Rotrou, bears the handwritten date of 1731.

All of these meditations are today found in one volume, since the French edition of 1922, which reproduces the original text with slight variations. However, some sections have undergone more extensive alterations in order to bring them into conformity with certain decrees of the Church.³ This edition numbers the meditations as follows:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1 to 77 | for Sundays and feasts of the liturgical cycle, |
| 78 to 192 | for feasts of the saints, |
| 193 to 208 | for the time of retreat. |

3. For example, *Meditations*, 19, 52, and 73 have been modified—with regard to opening one's conscience to a superior—so that they conform to the Decree *Quemadmodum*. Brother Superior Imier-de-Jésus says in his preface to the edition of 1922, "In this new edition of *Meditations of Saint John Baptist de La Salle*, our venerated Father, we have tried to reproduce the original text as far as possible. The only modifications that had to be made are, in the first place, those required by the prescriptions of the Church concerning

Meditations, 94, on the Holy Childhood (2 January), is not found in the original edition; it was taken from *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*.⁴ Even though it is substantially from De La Salle, we are not considering it in this study of the entire book of *Meditations*, for the simple reason that we are taking the original edition as our basic reference.

The French edition of 1922 has been translated into English.⁵ Sauvage, while not proposing to give us a critical edition, has published the original text of *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* in his work, *Les Citations néotestamentaires dans les Méditations pour le Temps de la Retraite*. Cahiers lasalliens 12 and 13 have made available photocopies of the original edition of all the meditations.

For our purposes we use the text of the original edition while keeping to the numbering system of the 1922 French edition, which is universally accepted.

The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle

The archives of the Institute preserve about fifty letters bearing the signature of John Baptist de La Salle. Many of the other letters that he wrote have come down to us in reliable copies or through Blain, his biographer. This constitutes a total of some 133 letters. They were published in a critical edition by Félix Paul, *Les Lettres de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, Édition Critique*, Paris, 1954, 414 pages. This edition was translated into English by Colman Molloy.⁶ Our citations make reference to the original text according to the numbering system adopted by the critical edition, whose equivalents can be found in the 1988 English translation. Even though these letters deal with many topics, the richness of their spiritual content brought us to consider them among the ascetical works of De La Salle.

reddition and daily Communion. These changes have been made in a spirit of humility and submission. In the second place, it seemed necessary to replace some archaic words and to make some expressions more intelligible. However, there are very few changes, and we have always been careful to respect the original meaning" (p. v).

4. "Meditation 94, on the Holy Name of Jesus, first introduced into the edition of 1882, was removed because it was not by the Founder. It was replaced by another meditation whose text was taken from *Explication de la Méthode d'Oraison*" (Brother Imier-de-Jésus, preface to the edition of 1922, p. v).

5. *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, Landover, Md., 1994.

6. *The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle*, Romeoville, Ill., 1988.

Pedagogical Works

Five titles belong to this category of De La Salle's writings.

1) *Les Devoirs d'un Chrétien envers Dieu*. This three-volume work, whose oldest edition is dated 1703, is preserved in the National Library of Paris. Volumes 1 and 2 bear the title *Les Devoirs d'un Chrétien envers Dieu et les moyens de pouvoir bien s'en acquitter; divisé en deux parties*, Paris, 1703, 2 volumes, 494 and 305 pages.

The third volume is entitled *Du Culte extérieur et Public que les Chrétiens sont obligés de rendre à Dieu et des moyens de le lui rendre. Troisième partie des Devoirs d'un Chrétien envers Dieu*, Paris: Chrétien, 1703, 301 pages.

Without any doubt, this is the best-seller of all the writings of De La Salle.⁷ Our references are to the edition of 1703.

2) *Conduite des Écoles Chrétiennes*. This work of Saint John Baptist de La Salle remained in manuscript form during the lifetime of the author. Its first edition was printed in Avignon in 1720.

The National Library of Paris has a manuscript from the time of the Founder entitled *Conduite des Écoles Chrétiennes, divisée en trois parties*, in folio, 300 pages (Ms. Fr. 11.759).

The third part of *Conduite*, which is missing from the above manuscript, has been found in the form of a copy in the Departmental Archives of Vaucluse (Series H, 1, 2, 3) under the title *Règle du Formateur des Nouveaux Maîtres*, a manuscript notebook of twenty-four pages.

The original text of *Conduite* was published in 1951 under the title *Conduite des Écoles Chrétiennes, par Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, Fondateur des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes. Édition du manuscrit français 11.759 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris. Introduction et Notes comparatives avec l'édition princeps de 1720, par Frère Anselm, FSC*, Paris: Procure Général FSC, 1951, 334 pages. This is the edition we refer to in the course of our investigation.

3) *Les Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité Chrétienne*. Another Lasallian work that went through many editions, there are some 176, of which five appeared during the lifetime of the author. Until recently, the earliest edition was that of Rouen, 1715, edited by Jean-Baptiste Besongne. This book was the basis for the critical edition of Albert-Valentin (Paris: Liget, 1956, 552 pages), its most popular format.

7. The National Library of Paris indicates in its Author Card File, under the title of this book, that there were 257 editions of at least the first volume between the years 1703 and 1892. Cf. Dante, "I 'Devoirs d'un Chrétien' di S. G. B. de La Salle," *Rivista Lasalliana*, 3 (1935), pp. 233–256.

Then, in 1960, a copy of the original edition of 1703 was discovered. Its frontispiece reads, *Les Règles de la Bien-Séance et de la Civilité Chrétienne. Divisée en deux Parties. A l'usage des Écoles Chrésiennes à Troyes et se vend à Reims chez François Hodard, Marchand Libraire, rue des Tapisiers*. It contains 252 pages, with two folios of indices and one of copyright. The preface and the title are in roman type, while the rest of the text is in gothic, as was the custom. This copy is kept in the archives of the Institute in Rome. It can be found in Cahiers lasalliens 19 as well as on microfilm.

From a comparative study of the various editions, it is evident that the edition of 1715 is very close to the original edition, except for the final sixty-four pages, where the text is presented only in fragments. However, we must take into account the fact that the edition of Brother Albert-Valentin uses footnotes to complete what was clearly omitted from the 1715 edition. He found these omissions reproduced literally in the edition of 1729. Therefore we can conclude that the above-mentioned critical edition gives us an excellent source for our work. Our references are to this book, given that it is the only text that for the moment is accessible to the generality of readers. However we must keep the original edition in mind when dealing with those variants that might have special significance.⁸

4) *Instructions et prières pour la Sainte Messe, la Confession et la Communion, avec une Instruction méthodique par demandes et réponses pour apprendre à se bien confesser. Par Monsieur Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, Prêtre, Instituteur des Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes. À Rouen, Chez Jean-Baptiste Machuel, rue Damiette, 1734, 284 pages.*

Cahiers lasalliens 17 contains a photocopy of this edition. The original can be found in the Institute archives in Rome.

We have no copy of the editions that appeared during the lifetime of the author. However, the authorization of the Superior General of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the approbations dated 1702 and 1703 present us with serious assurances in favor of the authenticity of the edition mentioned above.

5) *Exercices de piété qui se font pendant le jour dans les Écoles Chrésiennes. À Rouen, chez Laurent Dumesnil, Imprimeur Libraire, au coin de la Renelle, a la Justice triomphante, 1760, 52 pages.*

Cahiers lasalliens 18 contains a photostatic copy of this edition, which can be found in the archives of the Institute. Although we have

8. Cf. Maurice-Auguste Hermans, "Une œuvre du Saint Fondateur désormais mieux connue. Un exemplaire retrouvé d'une première édition des Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité Chrétienne," *Bulletin de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes*, no. 163, October 1960, pp. 198–204.

no copy of the editions published during the lifetime of the author, this edition also presents serious guarantees of its authenticity, because of its authorization by the Superior General of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and because it has the same kind of approbations as were mentioned above, dated 1697 and 1702, that is, before the death of De La Salle.⁹

Scope and Method of Our Investigation

From this presentation of sources, it is apparent that the scope of our study is quite broad. However, we do face the absence of critical editions. Their availability would be an advantage, especially in dealing with very important documents such as *Meditations*, *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, and *The Duties of a Christian to God*. Therefore, we have chosen the only remaining option, which is to go directly to the manuscripts and their original or oldest existing editions.

We are trying in this present work to discover the influence of Sacred Scripture on the spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. As a first and indispensable step, therefore, we investigate the frequency with which the sacred texts appear in his writings. For our purpose, it is not necessary to submit all of his works to the same scrutiny. Even though his eminently scriptural mentality necessarily influences and is reflected in all of his literary production, it stands to reason that purely pedagogical and normative works, such as *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* and the Rule, can hardly be expected to have the same abundance of scriptural embellishment as those which are more ascetical in nature or which are unconstrained due to their theme.

Likewise, we can say that the use of Sacred Scripture will take on a very different approach in a catechetical work such as *The Duties of a Christian to God*, which is subject to a rather rigid outline with the controlled, precise, and condensed language proper in manuals, than it would have in *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, which is of a broader character, yet sharing in the same didactic purpose. Much different still is the set of *Meditations*, in which the author is absolutely free to follow his inspiration as he sees fit.

9. This copy also contains hymns that originally were in a separate booklet; they constitute pp. 53–140. Not all of these hymns belong to the original edition; there were progressive additions made according to need.

This has moved us to hold to certain criteria in our planned investigation of the various books. For our study of the quantitative aspect of the scriptural quotations, we will strictly limit ourselves to the *Meditations*. No other work, in our view, offers us so many opportunities for discovering De La Salle's profound understanding of the Sacred Books, particularly of the ones he prefers among them.

However, when we examine the aspects of his use of Scripture, even though we are taking the *Meditations* as a starting point, we will necessarily also have to make reference to the other works of the author to point out analogies, differences, or peculiarities, as the case may be.

With much greater reason will it become necessary to have his total literary production in mind when, with Scripture in hand, we move into the most sacred recesses of Lasallian spirituality. There will also be ascetical works that call for a special approach, such as the Rule and *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*. The same will hold true in considerations of the scriptural repercussions of this spirituality on the ministry of the school.

Finally, the evidently scriptural character of the spirituality of John Baptist de La Salle will become particularly manifest in a work that of itself is strictly pedagogical in nature and destined for school use, *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*. For this reason we are dedicating an entire section to it.

Statistical Aspects of These Scriptural Quotations

We have already mentioned the reasons that have brought us to select the *Meditations* over all other Lasallian works for our study of the statistical aspects of the use of Scripture by John Baptist de La Salle. This, in turn, will serve as a basis for a deeper investigation into the spirit that guided his selection of passages. The freedom of development and expression that the ascetical nature of this work allows him is undoubtedly the most important reason for analyzing the *Meditations*. Unconstrained by the limitations imposed by didactic requirements, such as rigorous order, necessary conciseness, or administrative demands, De La Salle is at liberty to express himself more freely.

Brother Timothée already observed this when he wrote the preface to the first edition of *Meditations for Sundays*. Having become aware of the profoundly scriptural mentality of De La Salle and the very evident reflection of this mentality in *Meditations*, he wrote, "This holy priest, without being aware of it, has left in this book an

impression of the real spirit that animated him and guided him in all his actions.”

By delving continually into Scripture and then talking to us about it, De La Salle admits us into the intimacy of his soul without really intending to do so. There is no need for him to try to tell us, in the usual stilted formulas, about what goes on there. His very style enables us to see how he reads Sacred Scripture; how he makes it his own, meditates on it, mulls over it, and elaborates upon it; how the intimate union of his soul with the Author of Scripture leads him to find few better words to express himself than those found in the Holy Books.

The “knowledgeable and perceptive person” who revised the *Meditations for Sundays* before their first trip to the printer saw with astonished admiration “the ardent zeal of this apostolic man shining through the simplicity and complete candor of his style, which is far from conscious craftsmanship and the pretense of human eloquence, wholly guided by the Spirit of God, and drawn from the maxims and truths of the Gospel.”¹⁰

A difficulty arises here. If it be true that the meditations for the feast days of the saints allow wide berth to the freedom of the writer, can the same be said about the meditations for Sundays, which deal with a specific Gospel and therefore establish the theme for consideration and the exact passage on which it is based? Will not the quotations from Scripture necessarily be limited by the designated text? How much can the personality of the writer be reflected when it is bound by such predetermined conditions?

A brief glance through these meditations would help to dispel the difficulty; however, for the moment we will not address this matter. The solution is intimately connected with the way De La Salle writes the meditations, and this we plan to analyze further on.

By way of anticipation and assurance that there is a satisfactory explanation, we offer the following references, which speak for themselves.

Meditations, 1, the First Sunday of Advent, whose Gospel is from Luke 21:25–33, contains fourteen scriptural quotations, of which only one belongs to the Gospel of the day. The rest come from Luke, Mark, John, Romans, Job, Psalms, and Malachi.

Meditations, 4, the Fourth Sunday of Advent, whose Gospel is from Luke 3:1–6, has sixteen quotations, with only one from that Gospel.

Meditations, 29, Easter Sunday, whose Gospel is from Mark 16:1–7, offers thirteen quotations, not one of them from the Gospel of

10. Brother Timothée, preface to the first edition.

the day. De La Salle bases his doctrine on Saint Paul: Romans, First Corinthians, Colossians, and Galatians.

Meditations, 65, the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, whose Gospel is from Luke 10:23–37, contains thirteen quotations, and four are from this Sunday’s Gospel.

Meditations, 66, the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, with a Gospel from Luke 17:11–19, gives us twelve quotations, of which only two belong to this Gospel.

From this we can see that the Sunday Gospels, far from being impediments to the revelation of De La Salle’s personality, rather constitute a favorable occasion for a study of his scriptural preferences. As for the quantity of the Lasallian works being examined, the 207 meditations that are the basis of this aspect of our study seem to us to be more than sufficient numerically to justify restricting ourselves to these meditations.¹¹

Kinds of Scriptural Quotations Found in *Meditations*

Before undertaking the classification of the scriptural quotations used in the *Meditations*, it would be proper to define the parameters we set for the word “quotation.”

Our understanding of the term “to quote Sacred Scripture” means that we present a passage of Scripture to the mind. This can be done in the strict sense or in a broader sense. With this given, we establish the following categories.

1) **Explicit quotation** is the presentation of a scriptural passage with an indication of its source and an effort to be as literal as possible. These are “quotations” in the strict meaning of the term. It does not matter whether they are incorporated into the discourse of the author who uses them or quoted as indirect discourse, with the consequent accommodation for grammatical person.

We also consider as explicit those quotations whose original source is obvious, for whatever reason, even though there might be no visible identification. Thus we classify as an explicit quotation the passage of *Meditations*, 147.3, in which it is said, by way of a citation from John 11:21:

11. We remind the reader that *Meditations*, 94, which was previously discussed, is not included in our statistics, for it does not belong to the original edition.

Nothing is more admirable than the faith Saint Martha showed when Jesus raised Lazarus to life. She told Jesus that if he had been with her when her brother was ill, he would not have died, but that she knew that God would grant him all that he would ask.

Notice that the source is not identified, but the context makes it unnecessary. Also, there is a use of indirect discourse by placing in the third person the words of Martha to Jesus. Nevertheless, we find here a real concern to preserve the precise words of the original passage.

2) **Implicit or tacit quotation** is the use of a scriptural passage as above but with no indication concerning its source.

3) **Allusion** is the use of a scriptural passage with no indication concerning its source and no attempt to be literal. We might say that here, rather than a quotation in the strict sense of the term, there is a hint of a scriptural passage. For example, when De La Salle speaks about Saint Catherine of Siena, he says, "This is how God gives even in this life the hundredfold of what we do for him."¹²

It is evident that when he writes this, De La Salle has in mind Mark 10:29–30, "I give you my word, there is no one who has given up home or brothers . . . for my sake . . . who will not receive a hundredfold in this life and life everlasting in the next," even though the text is somewhat adapted so as to make it refer to Saint Catherine.

We also consider as allusion the mere reference to an historical fact mentioned in Scripture but with no intention of going into the whole story. For example, when speaking of penance, De La Salle says, "It was also by means of this same virtue that the Ninevites, who had outraged heaven by their disorderly conduct, induced God to revoke the sentence. . . ." ¹³ The total context is in John 3:1–10.

For the sake of clarity, we classify these allusions as explicit or implicit, depending on whether they do or do not contain some remote hint, albeit indirect, concerning their source. In this way we separate general references from explicit quotations properly so called.

4) **Reminiscence** occurs when the allusion to Scripture is so much a part of De La Salle's style that even though we clearly recognize that the words correspond to a given place in the Bible, they seem to have been used unconsciously by the author. We classify such a citation as a reminiscence.

12. *Meditations*, 118.3.

13. *Ibid.*, 4.2.

For example, when De La Salle exclaims, “It is inconceivable how much Jesus Christ loves those who give up everything for him,”¹⁴ there is no doubt that without his using an explicit allusion, the context is somehow present:

Peter was moved to say to him, “We have put aside everything to follow you!” and Jesus answered, “I give you my word that you who have followed me . . . and he who gives up brothers and sisters. . . .”¹⁵

There is no need to stress the immense value to our study of reminiscence as a surge of Sacred Scripture from the depths of the consciousness of an author.

Whenever we speak about scriptural quotations, we use the term in its broadest sense, including everything from the explicit quotation, properly so called, down to a simple reminiscence.¹⁶ In any case, the tables furnished in the Appendix indicate the category that corresponds to each of the quotations we have identified in *Meditations*.

Even though later on we may consider other ways in which De La Salle employs Scripture in his writings, these will not appear in our tables or statistical comparisons. Their more tenuous relationship with the Sacred Books or the difficulty of finding the exact passage inclines us to omit them. These other modes of usage to which we have just referred and which in themselves are certainly not lacking in importance include the following.

1) **Generalized quotation** is the mode in which De La Salle sometimes makes a reference either to some fact that is frequently repeated in Scripture or to a collection of facts with similar characteristics. It is evident that here we have multiple references:

Detachment from riches and from the comforts of life is one of the first dispositions we should have in order to belong entirely to God and to work for the salvation of souls. This was also the

14. Ibid., 167.2.

15. Matt. 19:27–29; Mark 10:28–30; Luke 18:28–30.

16. This corresponds to the practice of many authors; for example, Vilnet, in *Bible et mystique chez saint Jean de la Croix*, says, “By scriptural quotations we understand both the texts as quoted in the Bible as well as the true biblical reminiscences that are incorporated into the words of the saint, without making distinctions between them” (p. 35); cf. Dupriez, *Fénelon et la Bible*, p. 73.

first thing that Jesus Christ required of his holy Apostles and which they inspired in the first Christians.¹⁷

2) **Biblical terminology** describes the mode that employs words and expressions with a biblical origin or which are commonly used in Sacred Scripture and have become the common patrimony of the language used by the Church and by ascetical authors.

Even though of themselves they are so much a part of ordinary language that they are no longer recognized as scriptural in origin, they are very useful for detecting that deep understanding and assimilation of Scripture which is the basis for the fusion of the style of the author with that of Scripture itself.

De La Salle is using such biblical terminology when he speaks of dying to our passions¹⁸ and of the path of virtue.¹⁹

3) **Biblical image** features an emphasis on the metaphor expressed in Scripture rather than on the precise scriptural wording:

Without them [the spirit of religion and a horror of sin] your soul will be like a city without walls and without fortifications, always open to the attacks of your enemies.²⁰

4) We could also include here **biblical ideas**, that is, a certain way of evoking Scripture that gives us not so much a scriptural text but rather the reflections made by the author concerning it. However, in this case we would be entering an area that we could not possibly define, because all the essential ideas of Christianity can be found in Sacred Scripture, either directly or indirectly.

Detection and Identification of Scriptural Passages

Before we report on the work that we did, it would be proper to discuss the state of the materials that were available for our reference.

It is sufficient to peruse all the *Meditations* to become aware of the many scriptural quotations they contain. And yet, to what degree are these quotations really recognizable? Let us proceed step by step.

17. *Meditations*, 187.1.

18. *Ibid.*, 76.2.

19. *Letters*, 46.2.

20. *Meditations*, 160.1

Before arriving at complete certainty concerning a passage, we must resolve two problems: 1) that of detecting and definitively identifying that these words are actually from Scripture, and 2) that of locating the exact place in Scripture where the passage can be found, so that we can establish that the text is from such an author, such a book, such a chapter, and that it is such a verse.

The problem of detecting a passage is readily solved when it is an explicit quotation. The implicit ones are something else again. When we are locating a passage, everything depends on the degree of explicitness used by the author when indicating the reference.

To make a total inventory of all the scriptural quotations in the *Meditations* is no easy task. If we examine the original edition, we see that the *Meditations* contain many implicit quotations that must first be separated out and then the precise reference identified. The work is that much more complicated because De La Salle incorporates the words of Sacred Scripture into his own discourse in such a way that it is difficult to find where one begins and the other ends.

It is sometimes just as difficult to find the exact reference of the explicit quotations, because in the original edition of the *Meditations*, they are usually identified in a general way merely by naming the author or the book of Scripture.

The French edition of 1922 seems to resolve the problem satisfactorily by way of footnotes. However, we could not use this text for our basic source, because it is not an original edition, and therefore it fails to give us sufficient guarantees. No one will deny the exactness of most of the quotations, but there are exceptions. Next to quotations that are perfectly identified are some whose identification is omitted, and quite a few have been given a wrong identification. Sometimes the correction made in the text of a particular meditation has affected the very structure of some of the scriptural passages. On the other hand, we must remember that the author or authors²¹ of this text had no intention of making a strictly critical edition that would include the detection and localization of biblical reminiscences and of intermingled parallel passages.

Therefore it became necessary to make a complete investigation, going back to the original edition as a basic text. This work was begun by Sauvage, who made a thorough analysis of *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.²² Therefore, apart from these sixteen meditations, the

21. Only a committee-style effort would explain the fact that among difficult cases that were perfectly resolved, there are others that leave something to be desired.

22. *Meditations*, 193–208; cf. Sauvage, *Les Citations*.

major portion of the work still remained to be done. It was not an easy task to sift through the remaining 191 meditations, but it was absolutely necessary if we were to establish a solid basis for conclusions. The project was courageously undertaken. Likewise, we have personally reviewed the passages indicated by Sauvage and duly noted the instances in which discrepancies exist.

The results of all this effort appear in table one and table two of the Appendix, in which can be found all the scriptural quotations used in this Lasallian work, by numerical order of the *Meditations* and by order of the Sacred Books, respectively. For each scriptural quotation in the *Meditations*, there is an indication of the kind of quotation it is and whether it is a quotation that was improperly identified in the 1922 edition, except in the case of *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* (193 to 208), in which the identification refers to Sauvage, *Les citations néotestamentaires dans les Méditations pour le Temps de la Retraite*.

With regard to the system we adopted, a few observations are appropriate.

1) In order to identify and classify a quotation, we were guided not by the number of verses it contains but rather by their conceptual coherence as they are employed by De La Salle himself. Thus a quotation might consist either of segments of verses or of several consecutive verses. We deliberately departed from this norm only when the elements are taken from different Sacred Books or from different Books by the same sacred author.

2) When a passage is quoted that might with equal probability belong to other Gospels, in our Tables we attribute this quotation to the first evangelist who uses it, according to their traditional order. In a footnote we indicate the other possible references.

3) In meditations that are a commentary on the Gospel of the Sunday, we do not indicate the textual allusions to that Gospel unless the author highlights them in a special way.

4) De La Salle, with relative frequency, develops a certain passage in all three points of a meditation, and then he returns to it in another form in the final application or exhortation. This last quotation is not counted, because we consider it a repetition of the first, unless it is a literal quotation or unless the author emphasizes other nuances.

5) We do not show as unidentified by the 1922 edition those quotations in the Gospel of the day of which that edition was clearly aware but which it chose not to reference, believing it to be unnecessary given the evidence of the context.

6) In our biblical references, in order to make it easier for our readers, we do not use the numeration of the Vulgate but rather that

more commonly adopted by modern critical versions. This must be kept in mind especially for the numerical order of the Psalms and for the occasional displacement of verses.

7) So that no one may hastily dismiss as arbitrary some of the less obvious scriptural attributions, we deem it proper here to remark that only by a patient comparative study of the expressions used by De La Salle and by the analysis of possible implicit quotations, in the light of that broader scriptural context which guided his thought, can we distinguish what is his ordinary language from what is scriptural.

For example, the sentence, "This will be a sign that you are pleasing to Jesus Christ, when you are displeasing to men,"²³ might make us wonder whether or not he has in mind Saint Paul's text,²⁴ were it not for the fact that the study of the entire meditation shows us that it is really an implicit allusion by which he prepares the way for the final exhortation, which is contained in the following part. There the exact quotation resolves all doubt: "Often say with Saint Paul: If I were pleasing men, I would not be worthy to be a servant of Jesus Christ."²⁵

Neither could we decide to consider as an implicit allusion to First Corinthians 3:9 the recurring words with which De La Salle affirms that the apostolic ministry of the Brother is the very work of God²⁶ unless we had for support: 1) the biblical atmosphere of the context, 2) the fact that this same phrase appears at other times as part of the complete quotation of a verse that is expressly identified in Scripture, and 3) the literal correspondence with a determined version of the New Testament, as Sauvage has been able to establish for *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.²⁷ Here is an example (1 Cor. 3:9, version of Amelote, 1707):

<i>Nous aidons Dieu dans son ouvrage</i>	(a)
<i>Vous êtes le champ qu'il cultive</i>	(b)
<i>Vous êtes l'édifice qu'il élève</i>	(c)

Meditations, 193.9

C'est là, dit Saint Paul,

le champ que Dieu cultive (b)

et l'édifice qu'il élève (c)

et c'est vous qu'il a choisis

pour l'aider dans cet ouvrage. (a)

Meditations, 205.1

Comme *vous coopérez avec Dieu dans son ouvrage,* (a)

dit Saint Paul,

et que les âmes des enfants que vous instruisez

sont le champ qu'il cultive par vous. (b)

23. *Meditations*, 182.2.

24. Gal. 1:10.

25. *Meditations*, 182.3.

Thus we see how phrases that in some other author or in some other context have nothing to do with Scripture are in our case authentic quotations, even when we have only fragments of a verse. Our study of how De La Salle composes will clarify this further.

Comparative Statistics and Preferences

It would hardly be worth our while to struggle with the boredom of statistics related to scriptural quotations used by De La Salle unless they served to reveal something about this man for whom Scripture is life itself. Admittedly, love and understanding of the Sacred Books cannot be proven from a display of numbers. Nevertheless, they provide a solid and indispensable basis for any further scientific study. It is with this modest hope that we now present the statistics that follow.

If we affirm at the outset that we have no intention of attributing an absolute value to these statistics, it is because they are subject to alteration according to the criteria adopted for the identification of quotations. We cannot exclude the possibility that in the biblical constellation found in the *Meditations*, one fine evening there may suddenly appear some bright star of a scriptural allusion or reminiscence unnoticed until now. However, this will in no way alter the overall appearance of this firmament.

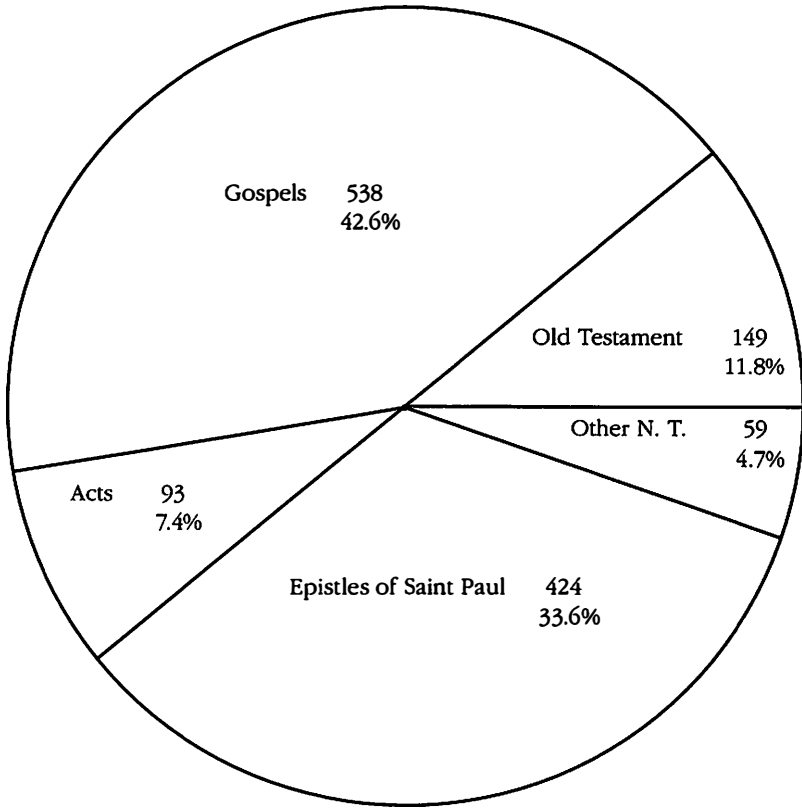
The numbers that follow are based on the tables we have carefully established after much study and according to the criteria we have already explained. We are satisfied that they are sufficiently solid to assure that the conclusions they sustain reach the highest possible level of objectivity. If it be true that from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, the impressive 1,263 scriptural quotations that our search has discovered in the *Meditations* speak volumes about the exceptional love of De La Salle for Scripture. Further on, we will concern ourselves with the way in which he uses his rich knowledge of these Sacred Books. For the moment, we limit ourselves to an investigation of the preferences that guided him within this vast field.

The first surprise that awaits us is the enormous quantitative difference between the use of the Old Testament and of the New. While the New Testament is quoted 1,114 times, the Old Testament is quoted only 149 times, which represents only 11.8 percent of all the 1,263 quotations found in the *Meditations*.

26. *Ibid.*, 57.2; 59.3; 62.1; 67.3: 196.1; 201.1.

27. Cf. Sauvage, *Les Citations*, pp. 5 and xxxff.

Percentage of quotations in *Meditations* from the Old Testament and the New Testament



Old Testament	=	149	=	11.8%
New Testament	=	1,114	=	88.2%
Total	=	1,263	=	100.0%

There are eighteen books of the Old Testament that are never quoted at all,²⁸ and most of the others show only small contributions: eight of them are quoted only once;²⁹ five are quoted twice;³⁰ four are quoted three times;³¹ seven are quoted under ten times;³² Isaiah is quoted ten times; Proverbs, eleven times; Genesis, thirteen times; only the Book of Psalms reaches the relatively considerable number of forty-two quotations. Is this because De La Salle is not very familiar with the Old Testament? Certainly there is no basis for drawing this conclusion from the statistics just presented.

In fact, in his other writings De La Salle changes these proportions considerably in favor of the Old Testament. Thus, for example, quotations from the Psalms in the *Meditations* represent 3.3 percent of the total, while in *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, the proportion rises to 17 percent.³³ Quotations attributed to the Wise Man (Proverbs, Wisdom, and Sirach) are 2 percent of the total in the *Meditations*, while the proportion rises to 41 percent in *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, which is a percentage unequaled by that of the four Gospels and the Epistles of Saint Paul taken together.³⁴

Naturally, these differences have their reason for being. It is logical that the Book of Psalms, even though it is the best-known book of the Old Testament, would be quoted less in the *Meditations*, which develop their themes discursively, than in *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, in which De La Salle must give greater play to affections and aspirations, for which purpose the Psalms are unique as

28. Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Chronicles, Ezra, Esther, 1 Maccabees, Ecclesiastes, Baruch, Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Zechariah.

29. Deuteronomy, 2 Kings, Nehemiah, Judith, 2 Maccabees, Daniel, Joel, Jonah.

30. Numbers, 2 Samuel, 2 Chronicles, Tobit, Lamentations.

31. 1 Kings, Song of Songs, Jeremiah, Malachi.

32. Exodus, six; Leviticus, six; 1 Samuel, four; Job, seven; Wisdom, seven; Sirach, eight; Ezekiel, five.

33. There are twenty-six quotations from the Psalms out of a total of 150. We consider these numbers only an approximation. They are based on quotations identified by the critical edition of this work, which was done by Brother Émile Lett. Although the list of quotations that he offers is not exhaustive, it can give us a close approximation. This observation holds likewise for the percentages of passages taken from the critical edition of *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*.

34. *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* has approximately 100 quotations, of which 38 come from the Wise Man, 21 from the Gospels, and 23 from the Epistles considered as a group.

a genre. This difference was already noted by Brother Timothée in his preface to the first edition of *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.³⁵

As for quotations from the Wise Man, it is evident that *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* could hardly find within the framework of the Sacred Books any that are richer in doctrine and more appropriate to confirm its affirmations than Proverbs and Sirach, which, according to De La Salle, state in an admirable way what is commonly accepted as proper decorum.³⁶

We see, then, that these striking statistical differences are due in part to the nature of the theme that is contained in the respective works and in part to the fact that they are incidental quotations. However, we admit that although they show that De La Salle neither ignores nor neglects the Old Testament, they still do not sufficiently explain the disproportion between the quotations from the Old Testament and from the New Testament in the *Meditations*, which for us continues to be the book that is most independent of constricting influences and, therefore, the one that most objectively reflects the preferences of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

We sincerely believe that the real key to this problem is to be found in the very high esteem in which De La Salle holds the New Testament. With Saint Jerome, he thinks that when the sun is shining, the light of the lamp disappears. In like manner, in the presence of Jesus Christ the Law and the Prophets are eclipsed. The predominance of the New Testament over the Old Testament comes, in fact, from the plenitude of the revelation that is given to us in Christ, the unique Word of the Father, through whom God has revealed all things to us.³⁷ Therefore, De La Salle prefers to speak of the Gospel, “for in it [are] found all the treasures of the knowledge and wisdom of Jesus

35. “We have deemed it proper, through respect for the author, to leave the *Meditations* as they are, even though they appear to be composed more in the style of instructions, exhortations, and norms wherein one does not react by aspirations, affections, and resolutions. But no one can take exception to this if we consider that the author has done it intentionally, just as in the composition of *Meditations for Sundays and Feast Days* he intended rather to instruct and exhort the Brothers than to produce aspirations, affections, and colloquies. On the other hand, to satisfy a need, he did give them a method they could use for interior prayer, and this teaches them very clearly how to use aspirations, affections, and resolutions of their own, easily and profitably” (Brother Timothée, preface to the first edition, p. 4).

36. *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, for example, pp. 110–112, 114, 117–118, 126, 128–129.

37. Cf. Saint John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 1, II, 22.

Christ.”³⁸ This is why he prescribes that his Brothers always carry the New Testament with them³⁹ and why he says that they are fortunate to be able to have it with them always, encouraging them to be faithful to this practice and to nourish their soul daily with the holy maxims it contains, continuing to meditate on them until they become familiar with them. This book, which can be so profitable for their personal advancement in virtue, must also be the source in which the Brothers, as apostles of Christ, find all the truths they are to communicate to their students.⁴⁰ We will have more on this when we address the topic of the spirit of the Institute.

This preference for the New Testament is also evident in the manner in which De La Salle makes his quotations. Thus in those cases in which a text of the New Testament refers to the Old Testament, he attributes the reference to the Old Testament, and he even specifies the book itself if the New Testament fails to mention it. The passage, however, is literally quoted as it is reproduced in the New Testament, for example, in *Meditations*, 38.3: “As the Wise Man so rightly says, God resists the proud and gives his grace to the humble.”

Here De La Salle attributes the quotation to the Wise Man, who in Proverbs 3:34 says, “He mocks those who mock him but accords his favor to the humble.” Yet he writes the quotation literally from James 4:6 as found in the Septuagint, which varies slightly from the Vulgate. It is worthy of note that Saint James attributes the passage in general to Scripture, so De La Salle has to avail himself of marginal notes to give the exact reference. Something similar can be seen in *Meditations*, 87.2, in which he seems to quote directly from Isaiah 53:1, but in reality he is only continuing the preceding quotation from Romans 10:16.

De La Salle’s profound New Testament mentality is even more evident when he comments on passages of the Old Testament. For example, when paraphrasing the words of First Kings 19:14: “I have been most zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts,” says Elias, “because

38. *Meditations*, 159.1, quoting Col. 2:3.

39. Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 3.

40. “How fortunate you are to carry the holy Gospel with you at all times, for in it [are] found all the treasures of the knowledge and wisdom of Jesus Christ. Be faithful to this practice. It is from this holy book that you must draw the truths which you must teach your disciples every day in order to give them by this means the true spirit of Christianity. For the same reason, nourish your soul daily with the holy maxims contained in this wonderful book, and make them familiar to you by often meditating on them.” (*Meditations*, 159.1)

the Israelites have forsaken the covenant which they had established with God,” his application is totally impregnated with Pauline doctrine without any need to quote expressly from any passage in particular:

You must take on this spirit of the prophet Elias when [your disciples] fall into some fault, and driven by this same holy ardor that roused this prophet, you must say to your disciples: I am so zealous for the glory of my God that I cannot see you renounce the covenant you made with him in baptism nor the dignity of children of God which you received in that sacrament.⁴¹

It is evident that the themes of the new covenant through baptism, of the fidelity it requires, and of the dignity of children of God that is given to us in this sacrament and that demands a new way of living—all these are the preferred themes of Saint Paul.⁴²

In this way De La Salle conveys the real meaning of the Old Testament by projecting it into the New, while at the same time hearing in the New Testament the fullness of the word, which was only like a child’s stammer in the Old Testament.

It is interesting to observe that authors who are so obviously scriptural, such as Saint John of the Cross and Saint Francis de Sales, invert the proportion of references to the Old Testament and the New Testament. In point of fact, sixty-four and sixty percent, respectively, of their quotations are from the Old Testament.⁴³

On the other hand, Fénelon, a contemporary and fellow student of De La Salle,⁴⁴ shares his tendencies, even though to a lesser degree. Fénelon makes about one-third of his quotations from the Old Testament and the other two-thirds from the New Testament.

Aside from the theme of the love of God, which both Saint John of the Cross and Saint Francis de Sales specifically address, frequently quoting from the Song of Songs, we believe that the real explanation for the predominance of the Old Testament in their works must be

41. *Ibid.*, 202.1.

42. 1 Cor. 10:1–13; Rom. 3:14–17; Gal. 4:21.

43. Cf. Vilnet, *Bible et mystique chez saint Jean de la Croix*, p. 35. The information relative to Saint Francis de Sales has been taken from a personal study of his treatise *On the Love of God*. Even though this is the most characteristic of his works, the statistics given must be understood only in a general way, as approximations, because of the limited nature of our study.

44. Both men studied during the same period in the Seminary of Saint Sulpice, and both had Père Louis Tronson as Director; cf. Blain, Book One, p. 13, and Dupriez, *Fénelon et la Bible*, p. 16.

sought in the spiritual, mystical, and literary use they make of Scripture, whose Old Testament provides the widest range for this theme.⁴⁵

On the other hand, Fénelon and Saint John Baptist de La Salle place more emphasis on the literal sense, and therefore they go directly to the New Testament, which gives us not the shadow but the reality itself. If we add to this the practical nature and the concise, non-oratorical style of De La Salle, we find more than enough reasons to account for how he differs from Fénelon.

As we look further into the New Testament, we notice only three books that are not mentioned among the quotations used by De La Salle: Saint Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians and the Second and Third Epistles of Saint John. All of the other books are better represented than those of the Old Testament, except for the Epistle to Philemon and that of Jude, which have only one quotation each.

Without any doubt, the New Testament author most often quoted is Saint Paul. His words appear continuously in the *Meditations*, for a total of 424 quotations.⁴⁶ Actually, one-third of all the scriptural quotations in this work are from Saint Paul.

This fact, for which we now have statistical corroboration, has been noted by all those who have made a serious study of the *Meditations*. The author of the preface to the first edition of the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* says:

No one should be surprised that this very apostolic man . . . quotes such an overwhelming number of passages from Holy Scripture in order to confirm what he is saying, especially from the Epistles of Saint Paul, which he had mastered perfectly and on whose authority he relied.⁴⁷

Rayez, in his study of the writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the possible influences of other authors, maintains that the principal characteristic of his teaching is his reliance on Saint Paul:

I have still not mentioned what perhaps constitutes the most original aspect of his teaching—its Pauline character. More than any

45. Cf. Vilnet, *Bible et mystique*, p. 149. In the words of Sainte-Beuve, Saint Francis de Sales has "the sense of symbol and the gift of expressing himself by way of allegory."

46. Rom., forty-seven; 1 Cor., one hundred and eleven; 2 Cor., forty-eight; Gal., thirty-nine; Eph., sixty; Phil., seven; Col., thirty-five; 1 Thess., sixteen; 1 Tim., fifteen; 2 Tim., seven; Titus, seven; Philem., one; Heb., thirty-two.

47. *Méditations pour le Temps de la Retraite*, Rouen, c. 1730, p. 5.

other influence we might find, it is beyond question that the principal source of the thought of the Founder of the Christian Schools is Saint Paul. In *Meditations* and in *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, his recourse to the teaching of Saint Paul is unceasing.⁴⁸

The basic reason for this emphasis on the Epistles of Saint Paul, given the persons to whom De La Salle is addressing himself in *Meditations*, is the theme that underlies them all: the ministry of the word of God. From this it follows that those Epistles in which Saint Paul addresses this theme most thoroughly, such as those to the Corinthians and the Ephesians, alone account for 220 quotations.

This hypothesis is completely corroborated when we consider that thirty-three percent of the Founder's quotations from the New Testament come from Saint Paul. Likewise, of the total number of quotations in the sixteen *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, in which De La Salle concentrates on the teaching ministry, we find sixty-three percent of the quotations from this same Apostle.⁴⁹

For this same reason, the Acts of the Apostles, which contains many practical applications to the ministry of the word, is quite well represented with 93 quotations. The Book of Revelation and the Epistles of James, Peter, First John, and Jude have contributed fewer passages.⁵⁰

In the overall total *Meditations*, only the Gospels surpass the contribution of Saint Paul. The four Gospels considered together reach a grand total of 538 quotations, forty-two percent of the general total.

Now if we consider the Sacred Books rather than their authors, we find that the Gospels of Saint Matthew, Saint Luke, and Saint John are the most quoted of all the Books of Scripture: the Gospel of Saint Matthew with 198, of Saint Luke with 157, and of Saint John with 156. As for Saint Mark, he is quoted only 27 times.

To explain this evident disparity, we cannot allege that the quotations that are literally identical in the Synoptics have all been systematically attributed to the Gospel of Matthew, in which they first appear, according to the canon of the New Testament. Besides the few quotations from Mark, we are faced with the fact that Luke is still

48. Rayez, "Lasallian Studies in the Mid-twentieth Century," in Berger, ed., *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, p. 122.

49. In these meditations De La Salle quotes Scripture 218 times; of these, 138 are from Saint Paul, more than the total of 24 from all four Gospels.

50. Rev., twelve; James, twelve; 1 Pet., thirteen; 2 Pet., fourteen; 1 John, eight; Jude, one.

in the category of Matthew and John. There must be some other reason, of a more general nature, for Mark's small contribution.

With regard to the Gospel of Mark, we must take into account that this apparently exceptional phenomenon is quite common among the more famous authors of this period. If, considering the fifteen percent of the quotations from Matthew in *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, we only have two percent from Mark, we also find a similar small proportion when we examine the works of Fénelon (1 percent), Francis de Sales (0.8 percent), and John of the Cross (0.3 percent).⁵¹

When we consider both the entire overview of Scripture and the copious representation of the Gospels and the Epistles of Saint Paul (always conceding the primacy to the former), we find a clear-cut manifestation of the balance and biblical mentality of De La Salle.

It should hardly come as a surprise to find so much of Saint Paul, who refers to himself as an Apostle, given that he is the author of the first ascetico-theological synthesis of the Gospels.

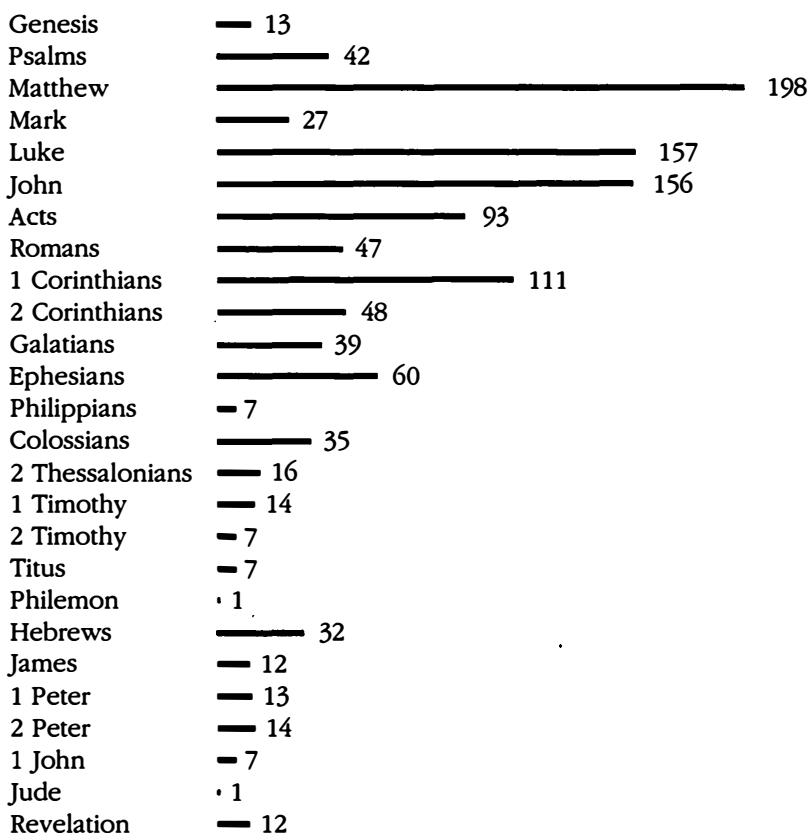
The spiritual currents of the seventeenth century all flowed along the same channels. De La Salle accommodates himself to them, not as a follower of the latest fad but rather as one who can assimilate movements, penetrate their positive values, and carry these to their ultimate consequences.

What has been presented here should be sufficient evidence of the presence of the word of God in the works of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Later on, we will examine the characteristics of his use of Sacred Scripture and the purpose that moves him to include such a large amount of Scripture in his writings.

51. Cf. Dupriez, p. 83; Vilnet, p. 37.

Quotations in *Meditations* from the New Testament

(The two Old Testament Books most quoted are included for comparison.)



(This graph uses the same scale for the Old Testament and the New Testament.)

Quotations in *Meditations* from the Old Testament

Genesis	—	13
Exodus	—	6
Leviticus	—	6
Numbers	•	2
Deuteronomy	•	1
1 Samuel	—	4
2 Samuel	•	2
1 Kings	—	3
2 Kings	•	1
2 Chronicles	•	2
Nehemiah	•	1
Tobit	•	2
Judith	•	1
2 Maccabees	•	1
Job	—	7
Psalms	—————	42
Proverbs	—	11
Song of Songs	—	3
Wisdom	—	7
Sirach	—	8
Isaiah	—	10
Jeremiah	—	3
Lamentations	•	2
Ezekiel	—	5
Daniel	•	1
Joel	•	1
Jonah	•	1
Malachi	—	3

(This graph uses the same scale for the Old Testament and the New Testament.)

Chapter Three

Characteristics of Scriptural Usage

With good reason it has been said that “the style is the man.” In fact, people define themselves not so much by the ideas they advocate but rather by the vital and concrete way in which they make them their own and communicate them. From this it follows that it can be important to study the characteristic patterns and words by which authors express themselves. Our interest is to discover as far as possible the variety of ways in which Saint John Baptist de La Salle uses Sacred Scripture in his writings.

The Word of God and the Word of a Man

We have to ask ourselves, in the first place, about De La Salle’s particular way of quoting the divine word—that which is characteristic of him. Does he present that divine word as it is, directly transposed from its context in the Bible, or does he integrate it into the flow of the thought he is developing for the reader? In the latter case, it would be proper to ask whether in the fusion of the language of God with the style of the man, one or the other prevails.

The case could present itself in which the human interpreter becomes so completely absorbed in God by an assiduous reading of his

word, by meditating on it, or above all by realistically living it that a notable concurrence of the human spirit and the divine Spirit becomes clearly evident. This interior state may be reflected exteriorly by an almost compulsive need to express oneself in the very words that were used by God to transmit his message to men. The presence of God in the words of the writer, in this case, then becomes the evident reflection of the intimate, loving, and efficacious presence of God in the depths of the soul.

Then it becomes extremely difficult to know where the words of the writer begin and where the word of God ends, or where the divine expression ends and the human begins, unless the author himself accepts the responsibility and chooses to solve the enigma for us. Strictly speaking, we cannot here speak of usurpation of the divine on the part of the author but rather that it is the author who has been so caught up by the divine word that he now has a better way of manifesting his thoughts. His union with the source of these insights is always extremely intimate, even when it is not exteriorly manifested.

On the contrary, when the human factor prevails, this intimate union weakens, and even in those persons who seem most convincing, it may be purely extrinsic and accidental. This happens when Scripture is converted into a repertory of oratorical formulas more or less related to their original and true meaning. Using it this way is to remain completely on the fringes or outside the true intent of the inspired Books. It puts the word of God at our service, instead of ourselves at its service. Let us not even consider that human malice or ignorance may make the sacred text a “letter that kills.”¹

If we have a precise concept, however elemental it may be, of Lasallian spirituality, we can foretell *a priori* the manner in which Scripture will be used. A spirituality that is based entirely on faith, a spirituality of the presence of God in souls and of the presence of God through his word, clearly postulates a constant recourse to Scripture as such, that is, as the word of God. In the following chapters we will see this more clearly.

Because it is De La Salle’s own personal experience and spirituality before becoming the norm of life for his followers, this spirituality has to find a proper manifestation in his habitual behavior and writings.

Totally absorbed as he is with Scripture through assiduous reading and meditation, it is predictable that many biblical reminiscences and implicit allusions would creep into the language he uses. Nevertheless, he does not overdo these. In *Meditations*, the genre that

1. 2 Cor. 3:6.

would most lend itself to this kind of quotation, the reminiscences are only three percent of the total, and five percent, at most, can be found in the meditations on the lives of the saints.

The implicit allusions, while somewhat more numerous, do not go beyond twelve percent of the total, nor sixteen percent of the total in the meditations on the saints.

Careful to present the word of God to his followers as the divine word with all the authority of its Author, De La Salle explicitly indicates the source in Scripture for the majority of his quotations: sixty-five percent of all the quotations are explicit. In the meditations for Sundays, the proportion reaches seventy-eight percent.²

Such figures in themselves are quite impressive, given the literary characteristics of those meditations and the proliferation of quotations they contain. However, these statistics require further consideration when we take into account the rest of De La Salle's literary production. Because of the generally didactic or normative character of these works, he uses scriptural passages in a more explicit way, in order to prove the point of doctrine or the ascetical norm with which he is dealing.

We can say that the majority of the quotations in these works are explicit, excepting certain parts of *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* in which, while developing a sample of an act as a model, he betrays his own personal experience and makes the divine word his own, without stopping to give a reference. Nevertheless, even in this book most of the quotations are explicit, because his real intention is to make his followers see how meditations should be based on Scripture.

Therefore, even on those occasions in which he may have allowed himself to be carried away in some implicit quotation, his didactic thrust requires him to go back and make at least some general reference to a source. Thus, for example, after offering us a model for the Act of Contrition, in which there is a mixture of implicit quotations and more or less explicit ones, he calls our attention to the fact that "this act of contrition has largely been taken from the seven Penitential Psalms."³

2. Including citations that because of the context need no specification.

3. Cf. *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, pp. 73–75; the sentence quoted here from the French text is not included in the English edition.

Introductory Formulas

Within the preponderance of explicit quotations, we find much variation in the way the sources are identified, including everything from precision to vagueness.

First of all, we note the irregular use of cursive type in the first edition of *Meditations*. In some of the meditations, this style of print is used to highlight at least the principal quotations, while in others the typography is uniform. Is this the fault of the printer? of the editor? We do not know. It is certainly not that of the author, because he had already died before the book was printed.

However, we find that broader references predominate in *Meditations*. Rather than quote an isolated passage, De La Salle simply incorporates the words of Scripture into the natural flow of his own thought. He manages to achieve this integration by means of a variety of introductory formulas that follow certain fixed rules. Frequently this influences the very structure of the passage, which, in order to fit into his flow of thought, must change from a direct to an indirect quotation or undergo change in the order of its syntax.

Satisfied with the means he has used to indicate the presence of the divine word, De La Salle subordinates the scientific precision of the reference in favor of the thought he is developing.

The introductory formulas he uses take the following forms, more or less. At times he is satisfied with a simple reference to a definite Book:

Say, as it is written in Genesis. . . .⁴

As told in the Acts of the Apostles. . . .⁵

More frequently, he refers his quotation to a sacred author:

This, however, is what Saint Peter exhorts us to do. . . .⁶

This was the advice that Saint Paul gave to the faithful in his day.⁷

This is what Saint Paul brings to your attention, when he says. . . .⁸

According to Saint Luke's account. . . .⁹

. . . often saying to him with the prophet Samuel. . . .¹⁰

4. *Meditations*, 187.1.

5. *Ibid.*, 200.1.

6. *Ibid.*, 145.1.

7. *Ibid.*, 90.3.

8. *Ibid.*, 205.2.

9. *Ibid.*, 134.3; 199.2

... as an angel said to the prophet Daniel. . . .¹¹
... so that you can say to God as the holy King David, . . .¹²
As the Prophet King says, . . .¹³

Under the reference to the Wise Man, we generally find the words of Sirach, Proverbs, and Wisdom:

This led the Wise Man to say. . . .¹⁴
. . . for the source of all sin, says the Wise Man, . . .¹⁵

In other instances the sacred writer is camouflaged beneath a generalized expression:

... as the prophet says. . . .¹⁶
According to the words of the prophet. . . .¹⁷

or an even vaguer reference:

This is why God declared by one of the prophets. . . .¹⁸

Sometimes the quotation has a greater specificity, giving both the name of the sacred writer and the Book:

As Saint Luke tells us in the Acts of the Apostles, . . .¹⁹

or in a more general way:

In one of his epistles, Saint Paul informs us. . . .²⁰

He may also merely use the name of those for whom the Book is intended:

10. *Ibid.*, 85.2

11. *Ibid.*, 208.2

12. *Ibid.*, 201.2.

13. *Ibid.*, 78.1.

14. *Ibid.*, 8.1, referring to Prov. 21:28.

15. *Ibid.*, 63.1, referring to Sir. 10:15.

16. *Ibid.*, 3.3.

17. *Ibid.*, 105.3, referring to a quotation from the Psalms.

18. *Ibid.*, 4.1, in reference to Joel.

19. *Ibid.*, 39.3.

20. *Ibid.*, 145.2.

. . . the same dispositions in which Saint Paul tried to place the Ephesians through the letter he wrote to them.²¹

This seriousness is what Saint Paul recommended so strongly to Titus, his disciple. . . .²²

At other times, it is the protagonists of the Sacred Books who speak, be it Jesus Christ:

. . . as Jesus Christ tells in the Gospel, . . .²³

or simply:

according to what Jesus Christ. . . .²⁴

This is what made Jesus Christ say. . . .²⁵

. . . says Our Lord. . . .²⁶

or God himself:

. . . as he told Abraham. . . .²⁷

and other people:

Job . . . says to God. . . .²⁸

. . . as Saint Stephen told them. . . .²⁹

Occasionally we find an allusion to Jesus Christ under a more rhetorical name; however, since it happens so rarely, it makes us wonder about its authenticity:

. . . what was stated of the scribes and Pharisees whom the Oracle of Truth himself called. . . .³⁰

21. *Ibid.*, 198.3.

22. *Ibid.*, 206.3; cf. 69.1.

23. *Ibid.*, 1.2; 174.3.

24. *Ibid.*, 203.2.

25. *Ibid.*, 201.3; cf. 48.2; 84.1; 202.3.

26. *Ibid.*, 175.3; cf. 202.2.

27. *Ibid.*, 77.3.

28. *Ibid.*, 1.3.

29. *Ibid.*, 87.2, referring to Acts 7:51.

30. *Ibid.*, 11.1.

On certain occasions, De La Salle makes a reference to the Author of Sacred Scripture:

For this is the result which the Holy Spirit says correction must produce in children.³¹

This is why the Holy Spirit says. . . .³²

And finally, there is an occasional, very generalized, introductory expression such as the following:

This is also the way that Our Lord acted, of whom it is said. . . .³³
. . . as reported in a great number of places in his Gospel. . . .³⁴

Although it is most common in the case in which the reference given is that of one of the sacred writers, any of these kinds of references may be followed by a whole chain of quotations that are bound together with expressions such as "he adds that,"³⁵ "he tells us elsewhere,"³⁶ "in another place he says,"³⁷ and so on.

The Precision of the References

These are the usual ways in which passages of Scripture are incorporated into *Meditations*. As we have seen, there is a tendency to stress the divine nature of the words that are quoted, but there is little specificity beyond that. We never do find the number of the verse, and only exceptionally do we have two cases in which the chapter number or the Psalm number is given. These are so exceptional that they cannot but arouse suspicion as to their origin.

The first instance is found in the meditation for the Commemoration of the Souls in Purgatory, 2 November. The first point of this meditation begins with a biblical passage that is used in isolation from the text in which it is found, after the manner in which preachers sometimes begin their sermons. In what follows there is an added reference to Maccabees, with a notation of book and chapter:

31. Ibid., 204.1.

32. Ibid., 203.2, followed by a passage from Proverbs.

33. Ibid., 202.3, referring to Acts.

34. Ibid., 199.2.

35. Ibid., 1.3.

36. Ibid., 1.3; cf. 75.3, 90.3.

37. Ibid., 91.2.

It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be delivered from their sins. This is what Judas says in the *Second Book of Maccabees*, chapter 12. This is, indeed. . . .³⁸

We refuse to believe that such an introduction could have come from the pen of De La Salle.

In the meditation for Our Lady of the Snows, we find another reference that is no less unusual because of its specificity:

For this reason we apply to her the words of Psalm 132: God has chosen her to make his dwelling in her. . . .³⁹

Our suspicions concerning this unusual kind of citation by De La Salle increase with the following quotation, which is not only unusual but actually erroneous:

. . . and these other words of the same Psalm: Your temple is holy.

These words are not from the Psalm previously mentioned but from Psalm 64 (Vulgate). This was properly corrected in the 1922 edition of *Meditations*.⁴⁰

Now that the question of errors has been introduced, we ought to mention another, found in the meditation for the First Sunday after Epiphany, which seems to be due more to some strange accident—which it is difficult to identify—than to carelessness on the part of De La Salle. His knowledge of Scripture precludes any possibility of such a glaring slip. The passage “For, says Saint James, every house where there is division will fall into ruin” is attributed to Saint James when in fact it comes from Matthew 12:25 or Mark 3:25.⁴¹

This imprecision concerning the sources for a few of the quotations in *Meditations* makes it difficult to locate the actual text of Sacred Scripture from which they are taken and sometimes raises our suspicion concerning those quotations that do have exact references.

However, this does not apply to the rest of De La Salle’s work, where, even though he is not consistent in the indication of his references, we do find that most of them even go into the detail of the

38. *Meditations*, 185.1; emphasis added.

39. *Ibid.*, 151.2.

40. *Ibid.*; the English edition of *Meditations* includes this correction.

41. Cf. *Meditations*, 7.2. The edition of 1922 attributes it to Mark, but we believe that it is closer to the text of Matthew.

verse. Far from being the exception, this is rather the rule.⁴² Even in his *Letters*, which because of their style would better lend themselves to references of a general nature, De La Salle gives the complete indication of sources when he has a special reason to emphasize the passage. We have a very good example in the letter addressed to his nephew, Jean-François Maillefer, in which he upbraids him for his position on the Bull *Unigenitus* and for his appeal to civil authorities.⁴³

Implicit Quotations

In what we have just said about the explicit quotations, we believe we are seeing the internal struggle between two tendencies in Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

On the one hand, he feels the necessity to express himself and the word of God in a simple and natural style, free from the restraints of technical demands. His life of faith, his familiarity with Scripture, and the ascetical purpose of *Meditations* create this need within him.

On the other hand, he is aware of the need to give his followers a clear indication of the way in which they can achieve this same life of faith through their use of Sacred Scripture. From this point of view, an indication of his scriptural sources becomes imperative.

The percentages we have given reveal how De La Salle tries to meet the demand for a specific reference that would identify the word of God, at least in a substantial way. Here, then, we must pause to consider De La Salle during those moments in which the interior need takes precedence over didactic requirements, unveiling for us the most intimate depths of his personality.

42. Cf. *Collection*, 1711, pp. 80, 83–84, 88. However, it really continues to be difficult to explain this recurrence of quotations with an irregular pattern of references. See, for example, the list of the “Passages of Holy Scripture That May Help the Brothers to Perform Their Actions Through a Spirit of Faith,” in *Collection*, pp. 38–44. In the 1711 French edition, next to quotations that are perfectly identified there are others that simply give the Book or the sacred author in general, while others give no reference whatsoever. It is possible that many of the quotations of this last category have been written from memory, but this hypothesis is not always valid. Perhaps the work that is most consistent in its use of exact references is *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* (cf. pp. 72, 73, 76, 78, 80, 108, 125, and 141 in the French edition), but the book is posthumous. In *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, De La Salle again makes only general references.

43. *Letters of John Baptist de La Salle*, 120.



For a significant thirty-three percent of his scriptural quotations, he gives no indication whatsoever of the sources he is using in composing his *Meditations*. This total can be broken down as follows:

Implicit quotations	eighteen percent
Implicit allusions	twelve percent
Reminiscences	three percent

The greatest percentage of implicit quotations can be found in *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*—as much as forty-five percent of their total number.

Point three of the Thirteenth Meditation for the Time of Retreat, on the responsibility of the teacher, is a typical example. Basing himself almost completely on the Epistle to the Ephesians, De La Salle—without making a single explicit reference—weaves into his sentences as many as seven quotations that correspond literally with the version of Amelote, 1707, except for a few details and accommodations that are called for by his applying to the ministry of the school a text whose original purpose deals with the ministry of the Apostles.⁴⁴

In making you responsible for the instruction of children and their formation in piety, Jesus Christ entrusted to you the task of *building up his body* [Eph. 4:11–12], *which is the Church* [Col. 1:24]. You are likewise responsible, as far as you are able, to *make her holy and to purify her by the word of life, so that she may be able to appear before him full of glory without stain, without wrinkle, and without any defect, but completely pure and completely beautiful* [Eph. 5:26–27]. It is for this that he wants you to give him an exact account when he calls for it, for he holds this responsibility very much at heart, *having loved his Church so much that he gave himself up for her* [Eph. 5:25].

Since children are the most innocent part of the Church, and usually the best disposed to receive the impressions of grace, Jesus Christ desires that you fulfill so well your task of making them holy, that *all of them will come to the age of the perfect man and the fullness of Jesus Christ, so that they are no longer like children tossed here and there, no longer turned around by every wind of doctrine, by deceit, and by trickery*, whether through the companions with whom they associate or *men leading them into falsehood* by their evil proposals; *rather, in all things they are*

44. Sauvage, *Les Citations*, p. 76.

growing up in Jesus Christ, who is their head [Eph. 4:12–15], through whom the whole body of the Church holds its structure and its union, so that they may always be so united with the Church and in her that, by the hidden power which Jesus Christ furnishes to all his members [Eph. 4:16], they will share in the promises of God in Jesus Christ.

Put yourself, then, in the position to be able, when he questions you, to tell him that you have acquitted yourself well of all these duties. Be assured that the best way to do this and to be pleasing to Jesus Christ, when he judges you, will be to present to him all those children you have instructed *as part of the building of the Church and have brought by your care into its structure to become the sanctuary where God dwells by the Holy Spirit [Eph. 2:22].*

This is how you will show Jesus Christ that you have truly fulfilled your ministry and that you have worked effectively to build and sustain the Church, as Jesus Christ has engaged you to do.⁴⁵

It would have been very difficult to determine the beginning and the end of these quotations, were it not for the fact that we enjoy the good fortune of having the same version of Scripture that De La Salle is using when composing this text. The fusion of language and concepts, both of Scripture and of the author, is absolutely remarkable. This is characteristic of all the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.

Allusions

At other times, rather than quote, De La Salle makes allusions. By this we mean that his mind scans all through Scripture, picking up events or condensing doctrinal expressions, with little concern about being literally precise.

In the meditation for Good Friday, he easily moves about among the four Gospels, selecting the most outstanding aspects of the Passion of Christ. In all there are some twenty-one allusions.⁴⁶

Something similar takes place when he is describing a biblical person: for example, the Apostles Saint John,⁴⁷ Saint Peter,⁴⁸ and Saint

45. *Meditations*, 205.3.

46. *Meditations*, 27.

47. *Ibid.*, 124.

48. *Ibid.*, 139.

Paul.⁴⁹ In these cases the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles contribute deft strokes to sketch the character he has in mind.

At other times there are doctrinal phrases that lie concealed within the broad sweep of his insights. For example, when speaking about those religious who seek their own comfort, he exclaims, "That is something unworthy of a servant of God who is obliged to give up the world and all things."⁵⁰ He probably has in mind the words of the Gospel, "Anyone who does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple."⁵¹

Sometimes there are flashes of original intuition, as when he sees in the faith that inspired Saint Michael's "Who is like to God?" the shield of which Saint Paul speaks as he describes the armor of God.⁵² Or again, as he depicts the gropings of the childish mind, which can only with difficulty understand or relish the things of God, he alludes to the burdens of the man of the flesh described by Saint Paul.⁵³

Reminiscences

Even when it seems that De La Salle has no particular passage of Scripture in mind, it is interesting to see how certain expressions with strong scriptural resonances well up from the subconscious.

As we listen to the words in which he describes the fruits of obedience in a person's life, who can fail to sense the same stylistic rhythms found in Saint Paul's praise of charity in First Corinthians 13:4-7?

Indeed, whoever obeys in a spirit of religion . . . is humble . . . ; he is gentle . . . ; he is silent . . . ; he is patient, because he endures

49. Ibid., 140.

50. Ibid., 167.1.

51. Luke 14:33.

52. Eph. 6:16.

53. "If that is true of all of us, it is incomparably more true of children, whose minds are more dull because they are less free of their senses and of matter. They need someone to develop the Christian truths for them in a more concrete fashion and harmonious with the limitations of their minds, for these truths are bidden from the human mind. If this help is not given, they often remain all their lives insensitive and opposed to thoughts of God and incapable of knowing and appreciating them" (*Meditations*, 197.1; 1 Cor. 2:14). We offer this quotation as an example of implicit allusion rather than of reminiscence, because it seems to us that De La Salle probably has the Pauline text in the back of his mind, judging by the presence of literal fragments.

everything and bears all the burdens imposed on him; he is charitable beyond measure, because obedience makes him undertake all things for the good of his neighbor.⁵⁴

However, let us not forget that De La Salle is talking about obedience. It is a kind of subconscious reminiscence that reveals how deeply Sacred Scripture influences every level of his thinking. There are other examples:

. . . after selling his property and giving the money to the poor;⁵⁵

to preach the Gospel everywhere;⁵⁶

. . . to be entirely freed from the corruption of the world throughout your life;⁵⁷

. . . he nourished his soul with the bread of God's word;⁵⁸

Let us adore God's power, which makes sport of that of men;⁵⁹

. . . we cannot go to heaven save by following the path of tribulation;⁶⁰

. . . we . . . must be conformable to Jesus Christ in this life;⁶¹

. . . he often poured out his heart in the presence of his God.⁶²

These and other similar expressions often intrude themselves spontaneously into his writings, not as something borrowed or even extraneous but as his own thought, his own unique style, and yet, at the same time, the thought and style of Sacred Scripture.

54. *Meditations*, 12.2.

55. *Ibid.*, 128.2; 187.1; reminiscence of Matt. 19:21 and parallel texts.

56. *Ibid.*, 150.3; reminiscence of Matt. 24:14.

57. *Ibid.*, 82.1; 156.2; reminiscence of 2 Pet. 1:4.

58. *Ibid.*, 103.1; reminiscence of Matt. 4:4.

59. *Ibid.*, 149.1; reminiscence of Ps. 2:4.

60. *Ibid.*, 149.3; reminiscence of Acts 14:22.

61. *Ibid.*, 152.1, 3; reminiscence of Rom. 8:29.

62. *Ibid.*, 161.1; reminiscence of Lam. 2:9.

Other Scriptural Usages

In other instances, instead of concepts that are forever fixed in their external form, we find ideas, patiently kneaded in his mind, that cannot be assigned to any concrete source but that have many roots from several places in Scripture. Consider, for example, this passage from his meditation on Saint Joachim, in which he speaks of the obligation of teachers to pray for their students:

You should be their intercessors with God to obtain for them by your prayers the piety which you cannot procure for them by all the care you take to teach them, for it belongs to God alone to give true wisdom, which is the Christian spirit.⁶³

These words constitute a distinctive synthesis of the following themes of Scripture: all wisdom comes from God;⁶⁴ God gives wisdom;⁶⁵ we must ask for wisdom;⁶⁶ there is a distinction between true and false wisdom.⁶⁷

In De La Salle we should not look for the colorful and poetic style of a Saint Francis de Sales. More realistic than imaginative, De La Salle shows much more interest in the content than in the form. The author of the foreword to the first edition of *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* saw in the literary simplicity that characterizes these meditations a certain reflection of the style of the Gospels themselves.⁶⁸

On occasion De La Salle also borrows time-honored images from Sacred Scripture, as when he speaks of piety and humility as the solid base on which every community should be built if it wants to be unshakable,⁶⁹ and this brings to mind the passage of Luke 6:48–49 or the city without walls.⁷⁰ Most of the time, he mentions such images within a definite biblical context.

63. *Ibid.*, 157.2.

64. Sir. 1:1.

65. Prov. 2:6.

66. James 1:5.

67. Rom. 8:6–7; 1 Cor. 1:19–21, 1:30, 2:7; James 3:17.

68. "There are also several repetitions of the same things in some of the meditations. This should not surprise us, since this was also the case with Jesus Christ, as we can see from several places in the Gospels. Such was also the case with Saint Paul and Saint John the Evangelist and with many other saints of the Old as well as the New Testament, who did it under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, so as to impress more profoundly on minds and hearts the holy truths that were being announced." (Foreword, p. 4.)

De La Salle's immersion in Sacred Scripture surfaces frequently through his use of terms and expressions that have a clearly scriptural flavor. The religious community is a holy place,⁷¹ the house of God;⁷² the apostolate is God's work⁷³ and the ministry of Jesus Christ.⁷⁴ Religious and Christians ought to die to their passions,⁷⁵ die to the world,⁷⁶ and die to themselves;⁷⁷ they should not satisfy their senses.⁷⁸ All their care must be to walk always on the way to God.⁷⁹ Through the ministry of the school, we work to make children become God's people.⁸⁰ The members of Christ and of the Church have been confided to the care of the Brothers,⁸¹ who by procuring the salvation of children enter into the designs of God.⁸²

All that we have seen—from the explicit quotation as such through the spontaneous reminiscence, and even to simple scriptural terminology—serves to reveal the biblical style of De La Salle. With him these are not just techniques; they are something that has become part of his personality and therefore cannot be feigned. This is an element of inestimable value for the internal criticism of his works, because it also enables us to discern what is authentic from what are possible subsequent alterations.

We will close this part of the study with one of the many examples that bear witness to the marvelous facility with which De La Salle includes in his writings those words of Scripture that are most appropriate in a given circumstance. We take it from one of his letters, because they offer a better assurance of spontaneity.

A religious woman—to whom Blain refers by saying that she had lived as wickedly as by vocation she should have lived holily and who apparently owed her conversion to De La Salle—one day received this letter from him:

69. *Meditations*, 161.3.

70. *Ibid.*, 160.1.

71. *Ibid.*, 6.1.

72. *Ibid.*, 6.1; 191.2.

73. *Ibid.*, 6.2.

74. *Ibid.*, 99.2.

75. *Ibid.*, 76.2.

76. *Ibid.*, 76.3.

77. *Ibid.*, 158.2.

78. *Ibid.*, 191.1.

79. *Ibid.*, 75.3.

80. *Ibid.*, 168.2.

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*, 56.1.

I pray that God will make you humble, chaste, and penitent. You have equal need of all three. With tears and moans, ask him for these virtues every day. Above all else distrust yourself, and put all your hope in him who can lift the poor man from squalor and, as the Prophet says, seat him with the princes of his kingdom.⁸³

Note the naturalness with which he passes from his own words to those of Psalm 113:7.

His Literary Style

Latin and French

Even though De La Salle is familiar with the Latin of the Vulgate through his studies and its use in the liturgy, yet not even once in all his writings does he use Latin to quote passages from Sacred Scripture. All of his quotations are in French.

It is true that "*Le parfait modèle de Jésus en son Évangile pour servir d'instruction à la jeunesse chrétienne*," a homily that appears in the appendix of the editions of 1715 and 1716 of *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, does contain some quotations in Latin. However, today it is clearly proven that this homily is not by De La Salle.⁸⁴

This abstention from the use of Latin is normal and absolute in his dealings and conversations with his Brothers. If we are to believe his biographer, only in very exceptional cases, contrary to his custom and during moments when he seems to be beside himself with zeal, does he break away momentarily from his usual pattern.

Blain relates one of these occasions, which occurred in 1716. While the Brothers of the schools of Rouen were walking to church in the early morning, they became the victims of an armed attack by two ruffians. The Brothers, fearing that the attempt would go unpunished

83. *Letters*, 110.4.

84. Brothers Frédién-Charles and Maurice-Auguste contributed in a special way to these investigations; the latter discovered the original edition of *Civilité*. Previously, Brother Albert-Valentin had upheld the Lasallian authenticity of this document; cf. *Édition critique*, pp. 481–492.

and might be the beginning of other similar incidents, considered it their duty to notify the sheriff of their neighborhood. De La Salle was living at Saint Yon at the time, and when he became aware of what had happened, he was very saddened.

The reason for his grief was that the Brothers had lodged a complaint with the police; that was a fault which he could not excuse. It was useless for the Brothers to try to justify themselves on the grounds that such outrageous behavior had to be stopped if they wanted to be free to run their Christian Schools without being insulted by godless people. He silenced them with a few words: "*Brothers are supposed to suffer everything and not cause other persons to suffer.*"

This was the language of the Cross, and because it was difficult for them to accept it, he reinforced his words with a reminder of the incident in Scripture when the Holy Spirit had filled the Apostles with his power and *they had left the Council chamber of the Jews rejoicing because they had been judged worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus.*⁸⁵

He quoted this passage from the Acts of the Apostles with intense earnestness because he wanted his disciples to understand that they too, like the Apostles, should find all their joy in suffering for the name of Jesus, since they too were honored with the glorious task of teaching Christian truth. And contrary to his usual custom, he quoted the passage in Latin, something he did only when he felt very deeply about the matter concerned. He avoided Latin altogether in his talks to the Brothers when they were assembled, because he had prescribed that those of them who knew Latin should show no sign of this and make no use of their knowledge. But when in his personal interviews with the Brothers he sought to inspire them with the spirit of Jesus Christ and to bind them, so to speak, to the foot of the Cross, making them ever willing to share the Divine Savior's cup of humiliations and sufferings, a holy enthusiasm would seize him, and he would speak as one no longer in possession of himself but moved and prompted only by the Spirit of God.⁸⁶

It is not difficult to find the reason why De La Salle avoids using Latin, if we know a little about his biography and his writings. Saint

85. Acts 5:41.

86. Blain, *The Mind and Heart*, pp. 574-575.

John Baptist de La Salle, from the very beginning, refuses to prepare any of his Brothers for the priesthood. If there are moments when he hesitates because of existing circumstances, these are without doubt due to his firm resolution to place control of the Institute, despite external pressure, into the hands of one of its own members.

In fact, Brother Henri L'Heureux begins his studies in theology in Paris for this very purpose. The premature death of this favorite son, whom he had chosen, is taken as a sign from God. There would be no better safeguard for the union that must exist among the Brothers and for the effectiveness of their mission than to maintain all the members of the Society in the same status of brotherhood. Therefore, it becomes necessary to sacrifice any aspiration to the priesthood in favor of a total commitment to the teaching ministry.

As a consequence, De La Salle definitively closes the two avenues—the use of Latin and the clerical garb—that in his view might be the cause and the temptation leading to a progressive evolution toward the priesthood and ecclesiastical functions, which are always more attractive than teaching in schools.⁸⁷

Here is the statement from the Rule of 1705 as it relates to the use of Latin. Behind the rigor of the prescriptions, which today we understand only with difficulty, we sense a touch of astute ingenuity:

The Brothers who have learned the Latin language will make no use of it after entering the Society and will act as if they did not know it. It will not even be allowed for anyone to read any Latin book or to speak a single word of Latin without an absolute and indispensable necessity by order of the Brother Director.

There will not be any exclusively Latin book in any of the houses of the Institute except the Office books. There will also not be any that might serve to learn the Latin language, and if there are any Latin books translated into the vernacular having Latin on one side and the vernacular on the other, it will not be permitted to read them except by those who are thirty years of age and in whom no liking for Latin has been noticed, unless it is a public reading and they read the vernacular only.⁸⁸

87. Cf. Blain, Book Two, pp. 228, 284; also, Rigault, "*Mémoire sur l'habit*," in *Histoire générale*, vol. 1, p. 167; Rule of 1705, chap. 1, art. 2: "[The Brothers] cannot be priests or aspire to the ecclesiastical state, nor even sing or wear a surplice or exercise any function in church."

88. Rule of 1705, "The Latin Language."

Taking these norms into account, we can only say that the policy that De La Salle adopts in his writings is merely their logical consequence: he will always quote Sacred Scripture in the French.

Besides these solid considerations, the absence of any oratorical niceties and his extraordinary sense of realism, which moves him to speak mainly in order to be understood, clearly press him toward the same goal. What is important for him is that the word of God reach souls. To achieve it, he uses what he considers to be the most desirable means.

Sources That Are Used

Once we realize that De La Salle uses only French to bring Sacred Scripture into his writings, other questions necessarily arise.

Is it possible that De La Salle translates his quotations from the Vulgate, or does he use Greek or Hebrew versions in order to give more precise meaning to his passages from Scripture? The importance granted to these languages by the humanism that preceded his century suggests this hypothesis, especially since we are looking at a student from the Sorbonne. It is also possible that he can improvise his quotations from Latin texts that are found in the liturgy during the course of the year, or he can simply use one of the French versions current in his day. Even in this case we would be interested to know whether he limits himself strictly to these versions or whether he takes the liberty of giving them his own turn of phrase. It is also possible that he just quotes from memory those passages that he has already seen many times.

Because all of these matters are closely related to one other, we will now address them. Let us begin by recalling the various literary devices that De La Salle uses in his writings. Whereas in *Meditations* we rarely find quotations that do not follow his flow of thought, this is much more frequent in the rest of his literary production.

For the purposes of our present study, each of these quoting procedures offers its own particular advantages and disadvantages. Those quotations that are clearly distinct and perfectly separable from the sentences that De La Salle is elaborating offer us a greater assurance that they have not been altered by him as he uses them to support the development of his thought. That is why, in principle, these would be the best indicators of the source he is using while he writes. However, even these quotations cannot escape the contingency of having been modified by subsequent editors, as new versions of the sources

appeared, especially in the case of books published after the death of their author. The most recent French editions of *Meditations*, as well as the Spanish version presently in use, justify such a reservation, because it is evident that the original text has suffered alteration.

On the other hand, those quotations that are neatly integrated into the author's sentences have a better chance of being carefully preserved. Even when their literalness may suffer a slight alteration due to their adaptation to the author's sentence structure, frequently the quotations preserve enough words to furnish clues as to the possible versions used, or they carry marks of an improvised translation or of a quotation from memory. Because we value these indications, we will continue to focus our study principally on *Meditations*.

We begin by observing that De La Salle is writing for an ascetical and not a scientific purpose. He is writing for an audience of modest culture, and therefore he avoids every hint of erudition. He is looking for solid doctrine based on a correct reading of Sacred Scripture. For this purpose, he is at ease presenting the common teaching of the Church, which he prizes highly, without entering into critical polemics.

No allusions to Hebrew or Greek texts appear in his works, nor are there any indications that he might have used them occasionally.

In the meditation for the First Sunday of Lent, De La Salle makes a unique exception—and an unusual departure from custom—when he presents two versions of the same passage:

What should induce a soul truly given to God to be always ready to meet temptation is what Job says: *man's life is a temptation*, or, according to the Vulgate, *a constant warfare*.⁸⁹

Certainly, the term *warfare* can translate the Vulgate word "*militia*." On the other hand, the term *temptation*, which De La Salle uses in the first expression, follows closely the version of the Septuagint, which uses the term *πειρασμός* (trial or temptation). This has led one author⁹⁰ to consider the possibility that he was a serious reader of the Septuagint. The evidence given seems to be weak and does not exclude the possibility that De La Salle could have found the expression in some French version or in the commentary of some Father of the Church.

Whatever may be the case for or against the use that John Baptist de La Salle makes of the Greek and Hebrew texts, there is no doubt

89. *Meditations*, 17.2, quoting Job 7:1; emphasis added.

90. Cf. Albert-Valentin, "*Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle et la Sainte Écriture*," in *Entre-Nous*, no. 12, p. 2.

about his referring to the Vulgate. Even though this is the only explicit reference he makes to it, the Vulgate must have had great influence on our author, either directly or by way of the liturgical texts.

Therefore, we believe we can identify De La Salle's reliance on the Vulgate in a more implicit manner in certain instances where he seems to follow a definite French version, but amplified by the use of other words that better express the content of the Sacred Text. For example, when speaking of the effects of the union that Jesus recommends to his Apostles, he says:

They would all have one and the same convictions, the same will, the same affections, the same maxims and practices. This is what Saint Paul recommended to the faithful when writing to them.⁹¹

The quotation is expressly stated as coming from Saint Paul, and even though the words of the Apostle are altered by their integration into the flow of the meditation, we can recognize them as coming from First Corinthians 1:10, according to the French version of the New Testament by Amelote, 1683: "to live in perfect union of sentiments and affections." We notice that the expressions "the same will, the same practices" are not found in Saint Paul. They are specifics added by De La Salle as his own clarification of meaning. As for the expression "the same maxims," possibly it is intended to reflect the words of the Vulgate—*in eadem sententia*—which is a better translation of "affections" than the one given in Amelote.

If in *Meditations* the Book of Psalms is the most quoted of all the Books of the Old Testament (and proportionately even more so than in *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*), it is certainly due to the influence of the liturgy, especially the Divine Office.

Besides, we are also certain that De La Salle habitually uses French versions of Scripture. As we have already seen, in the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth, there were many editions of Sacred Scripture in the vernacular, giving him his choice of the best among them.

In his study of New Testament quotations in the sixteen *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, Sauvage has been able to establish that in the vast majority of cases, De La Salle quotes from Amelote's version in its 1707 edition. Only rarely does he make an exception, and when he does so, it is to use another edition by the same author.⁹²

91. *Meditations*, 39.3.

92. Cf. *Les Citations*, pp. xvi and xxxii. When saying that De La Salle uses Amelote, 1707, as his principal reference, it is to be understood that this

As we extended our investigation to the remaining 191 of the *Meditations*, we assumed that Amelote, 1707, would continue to be the principal source. However, from the outset we seemed to find divergencies in many quotations, not only variations from this edition but also from the other editions by the same author. Then again, we found that *Meditations for Sundays and Principal Feasts of the Year* sometimes contains the same passage but with a different reading. For example, De La Salle quotes a text of the Epistle to the Hebrews (4:12) five times, but he uses two or three distinct patterns: one for

could mean either this edition or any of the subsequent editions that contain the same text. Sauvage reduces the numerous editions of Amelote to three fundamental types or groups represented by the editions of 1683, 1694, and 1707. Around these all the other editions group themselves because of the similarity of their texts (cf. p. xvi). We adopted this as our basic supposition at the outset of this study, but we soon discovered some anomalies. Working with the editions preserved in the National Library of Paris (NLP), we concluded that the edition of Amelote printed by L. Roulland (Rouen-Paris, 1694), which Sauvage presents as the head of the second group, has the same text as the Amelote published by Muguet (Paris, 1683) in the NLP, the head of the first group. The footnotes of *Les Citations*, which are attributed to Amelote, 1694, actually correspond to the text we find in Amelote, 1683, in the NLP, while those attributed to Amelote, 1683, do not correspond to this reference. We are hard put to explain this discrepancy. Is there possibly an involvement of the edition of Amelote, 1683, which is in the Institute Archives in Rome, that varies from that same edition in the NLP? There seems to be a need for a more profound comparative study of the various editions of Amelote. Besides, we have also noticed that Amelote, 1688 (which theoretically belongs to the 1683 group), contains some notable differences between both it and Amelote, 1707. Consider, for example, the text of 1 Thess. 4:3–6:

Amelote, 1683:

- v. 3 = Et que c'est la volonté de Dieu que vous soyez saints, et que vous vous absentiez de la fornication.
- v. 6 = Qu'en ce sujet nul de vous ne fasse injure à son frère, parce que le Seigneur prend la vengeance.

Amelote, 1688:

- v. 3 = C'est la volonté de Dieu que vous soyez saints et *éloignez de l'impudicité*.
- v. 6 = Qu'en ce sujet . . . parce que *Dieu venge toutes ces choses*. . . .

Amelote, 1707:

- v. 6 = *Que personne* ne fasse aucune injure à son frère . . . parce que Dieu *punit tous ces péchés*. . . .

We do not know why there is no mention made of the editions that antedate 1683 in this attempt to synthesize the various editions of Amelote. We have the edition of 1677, which is completely incompatible with any of the groups that are established in *Les Citations néotestamentaires*.

Meditations, 181.3, another for 180.2 and 192.2, and perhaps a third for 159.1 and 168.3.

This seemed to indicate that there might be a variety of sources. The search became more complicated, so we had to begin examining all the collections of French editions of the New Testament dating from the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth that are kept in the National Library of Paris. Naturally, it became necessary to make a representative selection from among these many versions. For this purpose we proceeded to group them by families, with each trunk represented by one or several of its editions as the case might be. Protestant and Jansenist versions were also included.

Then we did a close comparative study of a rather large series of quotations from *Meditations* and from the following complete Bibles:⁹³

1) The Bible, version of Louvain. A Catholic version made by the theologians of the university of the same name, it was the best known in France in its day and appeared in many editions; of these we examined the editions of Rouen, 1667, and Paris, 1691.

2) The Bible, version of Geneva. A Protestant version produced by the professors of the university of that city and based on Hebrew and Greek texts, it had numerous editions; we examined the one by Jean Diodati, Geneva, 1644.

3) The Bible of Port-Royal. A Jansenist version made by Isaac Le Maistre de Sacy, it was also well known, especially for its New Testament; of this work we examined the editions of Paris, 1696–1702, and Paris, 1701.

To these we added the Catholic Bibles by Jacques Corbin, Paris, 1661, and by Pierre Frizon, Paris, 1621, which is somewhat old but of special interest because Frizon was the Canon Penitentiary of the Cathedral of Reims, De La Salle's native city, and because of the anti-heretical character of its title page:

The Holy Bible in French based on the vulgar Latin text, reviewed by order of Pope Sixtus V; with summaries, also including the means for distinguishing Catholic French Bibles from those of the Huguenots and the explanations of passages of Scripture according to the meaning of the Fathers who lived before and during the first four Ecumenical Councils.⁹⁴

93. See the bibliography at the end of this volume for a complete list of these versions and of those that are mentioned here.

94. According to Darlow-Moule (*Historical Catalogue of the printed editions of Holy Scripture*, London, 1903, part 2, p. 397), the Bible of Frizon is merely a revision of that of Louvain: "Simon quotes Veron's assertion that all

With regard to versions of the New Testament, we must add the following versions to those contained in the complete Bibles mentioned above:

1) Denis Amelote, one of the best known and with the most editions. We have consulted the following: Paris: Muguet, 1677, 2 vol. in 8°; Paris: Muguet, 1683, in 24°; Paris: Muguet, 1688, 2 vol. in 4°, with notes; Rouen-Paris: L. Roulland, 1694, in 18°; Paris: Hérissant, 1707, in 18°; Paris: David, 1713, in 18°.

2) Bouhours, Le Tellier et Pierre Bessier, Paris, 1697–1703.

3) New Testament of Trévoux, anonymous, by Richard Simon, 1702.

4) Charles Huré, Paris, 1702.

5) Jean Martianay, Paris, 1712.

For the Epistles and Gospels used in the liturgy throughout the year, we have consulted:

1) Charles Huré, *Épîtres et Évangiles qui se disent à la Sainte Messe*, Paris, 1709.

2) *Office de la Sainte Messe en Français*, Paris: C. de Hansy, 1712.

Finally, for further assurance we consulted:

1) *Histoire abrégé de l'Ancien Testament; Histoire abrégée de la vie de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, Paris: Muguet, 1707.

2) *Abrégé de l'histoire de la Sainte Bible . . . pour les fidèles du diocèse de Mans*. By a priest of the diocese. Le Mans: A. Ysambart, 1693.

3) *Abrégé de l'Écriture Sainte et Méthode pour bien faire l'oraison mentale*, Orleans: Fr. Rouzeau, 1716.

Even though our investigation could not include every scriptural passage used by Saint John Baptist de La Salle in *Meditations for Sundays and Principal Feasts of the Year*, the number that we did examine is sufficient to establish the following five conclusions with complete probability.

Quotations from the New Testament

1) *Meditations for Sundays and the Principal Feasts of the Year* uses as its scriptural source the French version of the New Testament by

these revisions are mainly due to the requests of booksellers, who found it easier to sell Bibles with a new name on the title. In fact, there is little variation among them.”

Charles Huré, Paris, 1702.⁹⁵ It is not possible to provide here all the material that we had to accumulate in order to establish this simple affirmation. We will limit ourselves to a few typical samples.

Let us take the case of *Meditations*, 183.2, in the quotation from Hebrews 12:1. From the very beginning it was easy to establish the differences between the quotation of De La Salle and the Bible of Geneva, those of Louvain and Jacques Corbin, and the New Testaments of Amelote, Bouhours, and Trévoux. We were very surprised by their similarity with the Bible of Port-Royal, while the New Testament of Martianay showed yet greater similarity. Finally came the version of Charles Huré, which attained the closest correspondence of all the versions we examined. As on other occasions, De La Salle subjects this passage to some alteration, but the source remains perfectly reconcilable with his text:

Since, then, Saint Paul adds, we are overwhelmed by a great cloud of witnesses who surround us, let us detach ourselves from everything that weighs us down and prevents us from raising ourselves to heaven. Let us run with patience in this race which is open before us.

Hebrews 12:1

<i>Meditations</i> , 183.2	<i>Huré</i> , 1702
a) <i>Puis donc</i> , ajoute-il, <i>que nous sommes</i>	a) <i>Puis donc que nous sommes</i>
b) <i>accablés d'une grande nuée</i>	b) <i>comme accablés d'une grande nuée</i>
c) <i>de témoins qui nous environnent</i> ,	c) <i>de témoins qui nous environnent</i> ,
d) <i>dégageons-nous de tout ce qui</i>	d) <i>dégageons-nous de tout ce qui</i>
e) <i>nous appesantit</i> ,	e) <i>nous appesantit</i> ,
f) <i>et de ce qui nous empêche de nous</i>	f) <i>et des pièges du péché qui</i>
g) <i>élever vers le Ciel</i> .	g) <i>nous assiege, et</i>
h) <i>Courons par la patience</i>	h) <i>courons par la patience</i>
i) <i>dans cette carrière</i>	i) <i>dans cette carrière</i>
j) <i>qui nous est ouverte</i> .	j) <i>qui nous est ouverte</i> .

95. Our remark concerning Amelote, 1707, for the sixteen *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* holds here when we affirm that in the meditations with which we are dealing, De La Salle uses Huré, 1702, it being understood that this includes any posterior edition that reproduces the same text.

The slight variant in b) will not be too much of a surprise for anyone who is familiar with the way in which De La Salle quotes Scripture and fuses scriptural passages into his own words.

The fragments f) and g) that are found in *Meditations*, 183.2, do not belong to the quotation from Hebrews 12:1 as found in Huré, 1702. They are a gloss made by De La Salle that departs from the corresponding fragments of Huré. As we will soon see, none of the other versions that we analyzed contains a text even remotely similar to the scriptural fragments of the quotations we find in *Meditations*, 183.2. The reason is simple: the structure of the Vulgate text is a challenge to any translator.

This is only one of the passages we examined very closely in our quest for the real source used by De La Salle. Confirmation came when twenty-six other randomly selected passages coincided literally.

We present here the variants found in the other versions, which we put to the test and which brought about their elimination. In italics we indicate the words that differ from the text of *Meditations*, 183.2; an ellipsis (. . .) marks an omission of words.

Martianay, 1719:

- b) *comme* accablés d'une *si* grande nuée
- c) de témoins . . .
- f) *et des pièges du péché*
- g) *dont nous sommes environés.*

Le Maistre, 1701:

- b) *comme* accablés d'une *si* grande nuée
- c) de témoins . . .
- f) *et des pièges du péché*
- g) *dont nous sommes environnés.*

Amelote, 1707:

- b) *environnés* d'une *si* grande nuée
- c) de témoins . . .
- e) nous *rend pesants*
- f) *et du péché* qui nous empêche
- g) *de marcher*
- h) *afin de faire avec patience*
- i) *la course*
- j) qui nous est *proposée.*

Amelote, 1683 (text identical to 1694 and 1677):

- a) *Étant donc . . .*
- b) *environnés d'une si grande nuée*
- c) *de témoins . . .*
- e) *nous rend pesants*
- f) *et de tout péché qui nous empêche*
- g) *de marcher*
- h) *afin que par la patience*
- i) *nous accomplissions la course*
- j) *qui nous est proposée.*

Trévoux, 1702:

- b) *environnés d'une si grande nuée*
- c) *de témoins . . .*
- d) *quittons tout ce qui*
- e) *nous rend pesants*
- f) *et le péché*
- g) *dont nous sommes enveloppés*
- h) *afin de continuer avec fermeté*
- i) *la course*
- j) *que nous avons à faire.*

The rest of the versions contain similar or even more variants:

Bouhours, 1697–1703: *Ayant donc nous-mêmes au dessus de nous une si grande nuée de témoins, défaisons-nous de tout ce qui nous charge. . . .*

Frizon, 1621: the same as Louvain, 1667.

Corbin, 1661: *C'est pourquoi de même ayant à nos yeux une si grande nuée de témoins dépouillant tout poids ensemble le péché qui nous enveloppe tout autour. . . .*

Bible of Geneva, Diodati, 1664: *Parquoi nous aussi, ayant autour de nous une si grande nuée de témoins, mettons bas tout fardeau, et le péché qui est propre à nous empêcher, et courons avec persévérance la lice qui est devant nous.*

As we can readily see, the first three versions that we analyzed have very similar texts. Most probably, notwithstanding the claims to independence and originality made in their respective prologues, both

Huré and Martianay were working from the version of Le Maistre. However, there are slight differences that point to Huré as the real source for De La Salle, and this is certainly evident from the analysis we have just presented of the first passage.

Something similar happens in *Meditations*, 170.3, which cites First Corinthians 12:4–11. The text of Huré caused us a certain surprise when we saw an expression that could not have come from the Vulgate (verse 6: Il y a diversité d'opérations *surnaturelles*. . .). We thought this was a theological refinement of De La Salle, and here it appears literally in Le Maistre (in italics), Martianay, and Huré (also in italics). However, in the comparison of the complete text, small variants that appeared insignificant—for example, the use in verse 4 of the word “gifts” (in Le Maistre and Martianay) instead of “graces” (in Huré and De La Salle)—again threw the balance in favor of Huré.

2) The meditations that we analyzed also used Amelote, 1683, as a source, whether it was Amelote, 1683 (Paris: Muguet, in 24°) or another edition that reproduces the same text—for example, the one of 1694, Rouen-Paris: L. Roulland, in 18°—which exactly coincide with one another. It does seem strange that *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* faithfully follows Amelote, 1707, while *Meditations for Sundays and Principal Feasts of the Year* apparently never quotes from this edition. Observe this example:

We have the word of the prophets which is firmly established and to which you do well to attach yourselves, for it is like a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts.

2 Peter 1:19

<i>Meditations</i> , 3.2	Amelote, 1683
a) <i>Nous avons la parole des Prophètes,</i>	a) <i>Nous avons la parole des Prophètes,</i>
b) <i>qui est plus établie et à laquelle</i>	b) <i>qui est plus établie et à laquelle</i>
c) <i>vous faites bien de vous attacher,</i>	c) <i>vous faites bien de vous attacher</i>
d) <i>étant comme une lampe qui éclaire</i>	d) <i>étant comme une lampe qui éclaire</i>
e) <i>dans un lieu obscur, jusqu'à ce que</i>	e) <i>dans un lieu obscur, jusqu'à ce que</i>
f) <i>le jour paraisse, et que l'étoile</i>	f) <i>le jour paraisse, et que l'étoile</i>
g) <i>du matin soit dans nos cœurs.</i>	g) <i>du matin se lève dans vos cœurs.</i>

In what follows we indicate in italics where the other versions differ from the Lasallian text:

Amelote, 1677:

- b) qui est plus *affermie, et que*
- c) vous faites bien de *considérer*
- d) . . . comme une lampe qui éclaire
- g) du matin *se lève* dans vos cœurs

Amelote, 1707:

- c) vous faites bien de *considérer*
- g) du matin *se lève* dans vos cœurs

Le Maistre, Huré, Martianay:

- a) nous avons les *oracles* des Prophètes
- b) *dont la certitude est plus affermie*
- c) *auxquels* vous faites bien de vous *arrêter*. . . .

Corbin:

- a) nous avons une parole *prophétique*
- b) plus *forte*. . . .
- c) vous faites bien de vous rendre *attentifs*. . . .

Frizon:

- a) nous avons *aussi*. . . .
- b) plus *ferme*. . . .
- c) vous faites bien *d'entendre*
- d) comme *à* une *chandelle*. . . .

Bouhours:

- b) qui est *encore* plus. . . .
- c) . . . *d'y* attacher *vos regards*
- d) comme *sur un flambeau qui luit*. . . .

Trévoux:

- a) nous avons *de plus* la parole *prophétique*
- b) qui est *d'une plus grande autorité*. . . .
- c) vous faites bien de vous *arrêter*
- d) *la regardant* comme une lampe *qui luit*. . . .

3) Even though the two sources we have indicated are both important, Huré seems to be the main one. Of thirty-five quotations that we



Photographic reproduction of the title pages of editions of the New Testament by Denis Amelote (1683) and Charles Huré (1702).

have examined, twenty-seven are taken from Huré, 1702, and only eight come from Amelote, 1683.

4) The hypothesis concerning a possible version that unites the characteristics found in both Huré, 1702, and Amelote, 1683, is inadmissible, because, as we have stated, we have passages that are quoted several times with different wording, each of which corresponds to the author indicated.

For example, we have a typical case with Colossians 1:22. It is quoted in *Meditations*, 112.3 and follows Amelote, 1683, literally. Then it is also quoted in *Meditations*, 165.2, where it follows Huré literally.

An even more typical case is found in the already-quoted passage from Hebrews 4:12, which we can now resolve. As cited in *Meditations*, 181.3, it clearly follows Amelote, 1683. As quoted in 180.2 and 192.2, it just as clearly follows Huré. The addition that De La Salle makes in 192.2—"to the most hidden depths," which is not found in the text of Huré—probably has its *raison d'être* in the footnote that this author himself furnishes for the reader: "The Word also reveals and punishes the most hidden sins [*les péchés les plus cachés*]."

As quoted in *Meditations*, 159.1 and 168.3, this passage corresponds to neither of these two versions. It is a rather free quotation. However, the variations that De La Salle imposes on the texts are in full harmony with the notes furnished by Huré, as well as with some of the editions of Amelote, as we will see further on when dealing with scriptural exegesis.

5) The texts of the Gospels that precede the meditations for Sundays come from neither of these two sources nor from any of the versions examined by us. They were probably taken from some French missal by the editors of *Meditations* after the death of De La Salle.

Quotations from the Old Testament

The data resulting from our research do not permit us to decide on any particular version as the one used by De La Salle. We found only sporadic agreement with the Bible of Le Maistre de Sacy: for example, *Meditations*, 1.3, citing Job 9:28—"I trembled at every action I performed, knowing that you do not pardon the one who sins"—but along with this coincidence, we have too many other discrepancies. With regard to the Old Testament, De La Salle probably draws most of his quotations from memory or else translates directly from the Vulgate.

Importance of These Findings

The investigations we have undertaken are not merely an exercise of erudition, but they are of extreme importance both for the relationship that exists between De La Salle and Sacred Scripture and for the work of De La Salle as a whole.

1) The literal similarity of many passages permits us to affirm that he is using a French version for his quotations. Most often, he has the text at hand, but when this is not the case, the versions with which he is familiar flow from his pen. This gives us a good insight into the importance he attaches to the frequent reading of the Sacred Text.

There is certainly no scarcity of passages quoted from memory in *Meditations*, and these are more frequently found in *Meditations for Sundays and Principal Feasts of the Year* than in *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* and in the rest of Lasallian literature. However, we must be cautious about generalizing too hastily.⁹⁶

The frequent recourse of De La Salle to the literal text of the Bible does not imply unfamiliarity with Scripture, but rather it indicates a greater respect for Sacred Scripture and a desire to be as precise as possible.

2) The sources of the scriptural quotations that we have been able to identify furnish us with valuable data for the determination of the date when the meditations were written, because it is well known that we possess only a posthumous edition.

3) The number and variety of scriptural sources employed in the writing of *Meditations for Sundays and Principal Feasts of the Year* and *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* also provide us with extremely interesting details concerning the way they were written and the characteristics of the composition of the various meditations.

4) Finally, we believe that certain procedures already indicated by the alternation between Huré and Amelote, 1683, might be the topic for some very interesting studies concerning the authenticity of a number of the meditations or simply the detection of a possible touching-up done by someone other than De La Salle.

Our survey has not extended to all the meditations. However, it is interesting to note that of the five meditations in which we have

96. Brother Superior Imier-de-Jésus, when he makes the following unqualified generalization concerning quotations from memory, is not fully aware of the process by which De La Salle composes his *Meditations*: "In *Meditations* he often introduces passages that without any doubt are taken from memory and woven into his discourse" (preface to the 5th French edition of *Meditations*, 1922, p. vi).

found literal quotations from Amelote, 1683, (*Meditations*, 3, 112, 149, 168, and 181), the last two, which are for the feast of Saint Yon and of Saint Roman, archbishop of Rouen, are found in the appendix. As for *Meditations*, 3, for the Third Sunday of Advent, we come upon something even more puzzling. The foundation of the meditation rests on literal quotations from Huré, but the quotations that correspond to Second Peter 1:12, 19, and 21 are taken literally from Amelote, 1683, while those from First Peter 4:11 use Huré literally in the first part and Amelote in the second part.

Can it be a mere coincidence that these interpositions by Amelote affect only the quotations that are written in italics in the original edition? It is a fact that those quotations that are more naturally fused into the context offer a better guarantee of authenticity. In such a case, the preference of attribution would here go to Huré. Would this mean that someone subsequently touched up the passage?

A comparative study of the rest of the quotations in *Meditations* might furnish an answer to these questions; however, at this time we cannot undertake such a project. Perhaps we will do so in a subsequent work.

On pages 96 and 97 of this present work, we provide an image from the original edition of *Meditations*, 3, for the Third Sunday of Advent, to which we are referring. We have underlined the passages whose literalness allows us to identify them with a specific version of the New Testament. The solid underscore indicates those terms that are literally (except for slight variants required by indirect discourse) taken from Huré, 1702; the broken underscore indicates the literal transcription from Amelote, 1683.

The quotation from Second Corinthians 5:4, on the fourth of the illustrated pages, omits a negative word (between *nous* and *desirions*), which we indicate by a superscript 1. We will take this up in chapter four on exegesis (Understanding the Meaning of Scripture: Obscure Points, page 149).

The quotation from First Corinthians 4:1 has the same reading in both Huré and Amelote, 1683. Consequently, it cannot be determined which of these two sources was used in this meditation, and for this reason we did not underscore the quotation. The one that we think is most probably from First Corinthians 3:5–7 is a mere allusion with no literal resemblance to any version. Notice, in passing, the differences between the Gospel that precedes the meditation and the quotation from John 1:23 in the meditation itself.

pour le III. Dimanche de l'Advent: 21
 POUR LE III. DIMANCHE
 DE L'AVENT.

Le Saint Evangile de Nôtre Seigneur J. C. selon Saint
 Jean, *évang.* 1. *ch.* 19.

EN ce tems-là : les Juifs envoïerent de Jérusalem des Prêtres, & des Lévites à Jean, pour lui demander : Qui êtes-vous ? Il avoïa & il ne le nia point : il avoïa, qu'il n'étoit pas le Christ. Ils lui demandèrent : Quoi donc ? Etes-vous Elic ? Il dit : Non, je ne le suis pas. Etes-vous un Prophète ? Il répondit : Non. Alors ils lui dirent : Dites-nous donc qui vous êtes, afin que nous rendions réponse à ceux qui nous ont envoïez ? Que dites-vous de vous-même ? Je suis, dit-il, la voix qui crie dans le desert : aplanissez le chemin du Seigneur, comme a dit le Prophète Isaïe. Or ceux qui avoient été envoïez étoient Pharisiens. C'est pourquoi ils lui demandèrent : D'où vient donc que vous baptisés si vous n'êtes ni le Christ, ni Elic, ni Prophète ? Jean leur répondit : Pour moi, je baptise avec l'eau, mais il y en a un au milieu de vous que vous ne connoissés point. C'est lui qui viendra après moi, mais qui a été préféré à moi, & je ne suis pas digne de délier les cordons de ses souliers. Ceci le passa à Béthanie au-delà du Jourdain, où Jean baptisoit.

Que ceux qui enseignent les autres ne font que la voix qui prépare les cœurs. & que c'est à Dieu même de les disposer par sa grace à le recevoir.

- 3.1 L.P. **L**es Juifs aiant envoïé de Jérusalem S. Jean des Prêtres, & des Lévites pour lui demander qui il étoit, & s'il étoit le Christ ou s'il étoit Elic, ou s'il étoit un Prophète, Saint Jean après leur avoir dit qu'il n'étoit ni l'un, ni l'autre : Je suis, répondit-il, la voix de celui qui crie dans le Desert : Rendez droites les voies du Seigneur. Saint Jean voulant donner à Jesus-Christ tout l'honneur de la conversion des ames, à laquelle lui-même travailloit infaiblement sans relâche, dit qu'il n'étoit qu'une voix qui crie dans le Desert pour faire connoître que le fond de la Doctrine qu'il enseignoit n'étoit pas de lui. & que c'étoit effectivement la parole de Dieu qu'il prêchoit, & que pour lui il n'étoit que la voix qui l'annonçoit. Comme la voix est un son qui frappe l'ouïe pour faire entendre la parole, ainsi Saint Jean dispoïoit les Juifs pour recevoir Jesus-Christ, il en est de même de ceux qui instruisent les autres ; ils ne font que la voix de celui qui dispose leurs cœurs à recevoir Jesus-Christ, & la sainte Doctrine ; & celui qui les dispose, dit Saint Paul, ne peut-être que Dieu, qui leur donne le don de parler. Quand donc, selon le même Apôtre, vous parlez toutes les langues des Hommes & des Anges, si vous n'avez pas la Charité, ou plutôt si ce n'est pas Dieu qui vous fait parler, & qui se sert de votre-voix pour parler de lui & de ses sacrez Mystères, vous n'êtes, comme le dit le même Saint Paul, que comme un airain sonnante, & une cymbale retentissante, parce que tout ce que vous direz n'aura aucun bon effet, & ne sera pas capable de produire aucun fruit. Humilions-nous donc dans la vûe que n'étant qu'une voix, nous ne pouvons rien dire de nous-même qui soit capable
- Jn. 1, 19
 Jn. 1, 23
 Ibid.
 I Cor. 3, 5-7
 I Cor. 13, 1
 Ibid.

pour le III. Dimanche de l'Advent.

- de faire aucun bien dans les Ames, ni qui leur puisse faire aucune impression, parce que nous ne sommes qu'une voix qui n'a même que le son, dont il ne reste rien après avoir retenti dans les airs.
- II. P. C'est de Dieu, dont ceux qui enseignent ne sont que la voix, que doit partir la parole qui le fait connoître à ceux qu'ils instruisent; c'est donc lui qui parle en eux quand ils parlent de lui & de ce qu'il regarde: c'est pourquoi dit Saint Pierre, si quelqu'un parle il faut toujours qu'il paroisse que Dieu parle par la bouche, & si quelqu'un exerce quelque Ministère, qu'il se la faite que comme si opérant que par la vertu que Dieu lui communique, afin qu'en toutes choses Dieu soit honoré par Jesus-Christ. Et le même Saint Pierre après avoir dit ailleurs touchant la vérité qu'il prêchoit: je ne cesserai point de vous avertir de ces choses, quoique la vérité en soit déjà connue, & qu'elle soit établie en vous. Ajoutez: Nous avons la parole des Prophètes, qui est plus établie, & à laquelle vous devez bien de vous attacher, comme s'opérant une Lampe qui éclaire dans un lieu obscur, jusqu'à ce que le jour paroisse, & que l'Étoile du matin soit dans nos cœurs. Puis-que se n'adapte par la volonté des hommes qu'on s'en parle, la prophétie a été opérée: mais que s'a été par le mouvement du Saint Esprit que les hommes de Dieu ont parlé
- C'est aussi par le mouvement de l'Esprit de Dieu que tous ceux qui annoncent son Roiaume parlent encore aujourd'hui; mais si Dieu se sert des hommes pour parler à ceux à qui ils font connoître les vérités Chrétiennes, & pour préparer leurs cœurs à s'y rendre dociles: C'est à Dieu seul, dit le Sage, à conduire leurs pas & à donner à leurs cœurs la docilité, qui leur est nécessaire pour goûter les vérités saintes, que Dieu leur fait connoître: Ne vous contentez donc pas de lire & d'apprendre par les hommes ce que vous devez enseigner aux autres, priez Dieu de l'imprimer tellement en vous, que vous n'ayez pas lieu d'être, & de vous regarder

24.

Méditations

- vous-mêmes, que, selon ce que dit Saint Paul, comme les I Cor.4, 1
 Ministres de Dieu & les dispensateurs de ses Mystères.
- III. P. Saint Zacharie, Pere de Saint Jean-Baptiste, dit dans le Cantique qu'il chanta à la naissance de son Fils, que la raison pour laquelle Saint Jean devoit marcher devant Jesus-Christ, pour lui préparer les voies; c'étoit afin de donner à son Peuple la connoissance du salut: mais cette connoissance ne lui étoit pas, il falloit que Dieu même par Jesus-Christ Notre Seigneur nous montrât lui-même le chemin que nous devons tenir, & nous inspirer de marcher sur les pas de son Fils. Quoique nous soupirions en cette vie sous la pesanteur de notre corps, parce que nous désirions d'en être dépourvillés; c'est Dieu qui nous a formé pour cela même, & qui nous a donné pour arrhes son Saint Esprit. C'est donc à Dieu seul à former pour le Ciel nos voies droites, pour y pouvoir arriver sûrement; c'est pourquoi c'a été comme Fils de Dieu que Jesus-Christ est devenu l'Auteur du salut éternel. Comme le salut vient de Dieu, dit le Prophète, la perfection en vient aussi; car, comme dit Saint Jacques, toutes grâces excellentes & tout don parfait vient d'en-Haut, & descend du Pere des Lumières. Demandez donc à Dieu qu'il vous conduise dans le chemin du Ciel, par la voie qu'il vous a tracé lui-même, & qu'il vous fasse embrasser la perfection de votre état, puisque c'est lui qui vous y a mis, & qui par-conséquent a voulu & veut encore que vous y preniez le chemin & les moyens de vous sanctifier.

II Cor.

5,4.5

2a 1.37,39

Sant.1, 17

Characteristics of Scriptural Usage

Photographic reproduction of *Meditations*, 3, for the Third Sunday of Advent, from the original edition [1730?].

Composing the Meditations

We have already indicated the numerical quantities and some of the characteristic patterns assumed by the scriptural quotations that Saint John Baptist de La Salle uses in his written works. However, numbers in themselves can be misleading in what concerns the realm of the spiritual. Further analysis becomes indispensable. If we want the numbers already furnished to supply us with some insight into De La Salle's knowledge of Sacred Scripture, there is no better way than to surprise him while he is at work. There we will be able to discover through which channels the words of Scripture come tumbling into his mind, what values they represent, and what purpose they are intended to serve.

Variety in the Manner of Quoting

We have shown that there are many scriptural quotations in *Meditations*; however, we must call attention to the broad range of variations in the number of quotations from one meditation to the next. Along with meditations that reach a record of twenty-six quotations,⁹⁷ we find others that have one or none at all. In general, the highest count belongs to *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, and the greatest fluctuation is found among those belonging to the sanctoral cycle. This is readily understandable, given the historical and edifying nature of these works.⁹⁸

Once in a while, De La Salle uses long, continuous quotations from Scripture,⁹⁹ but ordinarily his references are short and limited to one or two verses that are not reproduced in all their literal integrity.

97. *Meditations*, 199 and 201.

98. There are eighteen meditations with no scriptural quotation: *Meditations*, 53, 55, 101, 108, 111, 114, 115, 126, 127, 129, 130, 131, 133, 143, 148, 154, 158, and 160. All of these belong to the sanctoral cycle except the first two, which are for Wednesday and Friday in the octave of the feast of Corpus Christi. There are seventeen meditations with only one scriptural quotation: *Meditations*, 16, 19, 47, 51, 102, 117, 118, 120, 121, 123, 125, 132, 135, 136, 137, 171, and 176. They correspond to Ash Wednesday, the Third Sunday of Lent, the feast of Corpus Christi and Monday in its octave. All the others are from the sanctoral cycle.

99. See, for example, *Meditations*, 183.2, which quotes Heb. 11:36–38, and 3.2, quoting 2 Pet. 1:19–21.

Sometimes he works with one or two longer texts, but far from reproducing them as one continuous passage, he subjects them to a delicate task of elaboration by means of doctrinal refinements, adaptations, or applications, fragmentary suppressions of what is not immediately pertinent to the theme, changes in the order of verses, fusion of several texts into one, and so on. All of these remain faithful to the true meaning of the Scriptures, even including the literal expressions themselves. Here is where we observe in a special way his profound knowledge of the Sacred Books and his identification with them, both in the flow of ideas and in the language he employs.

Meditations for the Time of Retreat is typical of this style of writing, and among the rest of the meditations, we find many others that are comparable for their scriptural elaborateness and profundity. They all flow from the same pen.¹⁰⁰

The Selection of Passages

In De La Salle's day there is no lack of scriptural concordances and indices that make it relatively easy to unleash a deluge of passages related to a given theme.¹⁰¹ In no way does this necessarily indicate a great knowledge of Sacred Scripture. Even though we have no grounds to exclude the use of such reference works on the part of De La Salle, we do not believe they constitute his ordinary and preferred approach to composing his works.

These concordances are based on the Latin text of the Vulgate. De La Salle always quotes in French. Besides, we have seen that if on occasion he improvises a translation or quotes from memory, he usually has in mind some specific French version. It is true that there are also collections of scriptural quotations in French,¹⁰² but all of them seem to be of a rather limited scope, since they are destined for the common people. In no way could they satisfy the scriptural finesse of De La Salle.

100. Cf. *Meditations*, 29, 45, 112, 149, and so on.

101. See, for example, *Sacrorum Bibliorum Vulgate Editionis Concordantiæ . . . recensitæ atque emendatæ*, Lugduni, 1701.

102. See, for example, *Maximes chrétiennes tirées de l'Écriture Sainte et des saints Pères, dédiées à Madame la surintendante Fouquet*, Paris, 1701, 208–286. It contains 1,361 plus 1,229 maxims, in alphabetical order of themes, with no references given and a not very literal rendition of passages. Cf. *Rivista Lasalliana* 36 (1962), p. 183.

As we will see, he works more with concepts than with words as he weaves passages of Sacred Scripture into his sentences. Sometimes he focuses on broad themes, alternating the order of passages and leaving out some expressions to which he will later unexpectedly return several pages later on. All of this process allows us to see De La Salle working, often with Scripture at hand but still enjoying great freedom of composition, due to the fact that he has mastered Scripture thoroughly and intimately.

In the archives of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice there is a manuscript in quarto of some 400 pages bearing the title *Répertoire*. Entirely written by the hand of Louis Tronson, it contains a series of passages taken principally from the Bible, in Latin, and classified by themes: *ambulare, abstinentia, adulatio, adulterium, afflictiones*, and so on. The themes continue to increase as he finds new ones.¹⁰³

Does De La Salle use the same technique as his master? There exists no trace of any similar collection, nor can we make an *a priori* negation of its existence. It certainly could be a good system to familiarize oneself with Sacred Scripture. However, for reasons already considered, the scriptural spontaneity of De La Salle would seem to preclude the use of any such contrived schema. De La Salle possesses Scripture within himself, not on sheaves of paper.

Now let us return to his humble room in order to observe him more closely at his work.

Unity and Multiplicity of Passages

The richness of the doctrine of Saint Paul, which De La Salle knows and loves in a special way, gives him the basis to find, sometimes in a single passage, all the elements necessary for the complete development of a theme.

Meditations, 205, gives us a notable example. He composes the entire third point of this meditation based solely on the Epistle to the Ephesians.¹⁰⁴ He does not use any passage haphazardly; he is not driven by simple verbal coincidences; he does not limit himself to verses belonging to the immediate context. He knows the ground he is treading very well and moves easily within the broad context of chapters 2, 4, and 5 to explain the responsibility of the ecclesial ministry of

103. Cf. Dupriez, *Fénelon et la Bible*, p. 62.

104. We reproduced the complete text of this point earlier (pp. 72–73), when we were examining implicit quotations.

the Christian teacher. The adaptations of these sacred texts to the specific work of the Brother in no way alter the Pauline thought of the Epistle. Here is how carefully the argument proceeds.

1) When confiding to them the instruction of children, Jesus Christ entrusts teachers with "the task of building up his body, which is the Church,"¹⁰⁵ "to make her holy and to purify her by the word of life."¹⁰⁶

2) The reason that Jesus Christ will demand an exact account of this obligation is that he "loved his Church so much that he gave himself up for her."¹⁰⁷

3) There is a particular application in the case of children, his chosen ones: the will of God is "that all of them will come to the age of the perfect man . . . growing up in Jesus Christ . . . united with the Church."¹⁰⁸

4) The proper response of the teacher faced with this divine exigency is to present to Jesus Christ "all those children you have instructed as part of the building of the Church . . . the sanctuary where God dwells by the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁹

Something similar occurs in *Meditations*, 195.2, structured completely on Second Corinthians. *Meditations*, 207.3, is built on First Thessalonians. *Meditations*, 207.2 and 208.1 respectively, are based on First and Second Corinthians.

Just as frequently, we also find examples in *Meditations for Sundays and Principal Feasts of the Year*; for example, the second point of the meditation for Good Friday¹¹⁰ is completely based on the First Epistle of Saint Peter.

This eagerness to set his doctrine in a broader context is made explicit on one occasion by De La Salle himself. He begins the meditation for the Vigil of the Ascension with these words: "In today's Gospel and in the rest of the same chapter . . . Jesus Christ teaches us. . . ."¹¹¹

Very often he builds the points of his meditations from many passages, starting with one that forms the outline, as it were, and then enriching it by contributions from other passages in Scripture.

An interesting case in point is found in the meditation for the feast of All Saints.¹¹² The second point is based on the context of

105. Eph. 4:11-12.

106. Eph. 5:26-27.

107. Eph. 5:25.

108. Eph. 4:12-16.

109. Eph. 2:22.

110. *Meditations*, 28.

111. *Ibid.*, 39.1.

112. *Ibid.*, 183.

chapters 10, 11, and 12 of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with a contribution from only one passage of Second Corinthians, 4:17, which in turn is a springboard for making a transition to the third point, which is based on chapters 4 and 5 of Second Corinthians, with a contribution from Romans 8:29.¹¹³

It is not unusual for De La Salle to quote from one of the sacred authors even when that passage does not constitute the principal topic of the meditation. However, it opens the door to other passages from that same author, which then cascade like links on a chain.¹¹⁴

At other times he makes a general reference to Saint Paul and then proceeds to glean his doctrine from various Epistles, without further references to sources. Thus in *Meditations*, 199.1, he chooses from Galatians, First Corinthians, and Hebrews those passages that define the apostolic ministry, using as one generic reference: "Saint Paul says. . . ."¹¹⁵

Or else he begins the narration or explanation of a point of evangelical doctrine by referring to one Gospel and then proceeds with absolute abandon to select parallel passages from others, in order to give further details or variations as best suits the idea he is pursuing.¹¹⁶

In this work of selection, he sometimes reveals his consummate mastery. The account he gives of the Transfiguration in the meditation for 6 August¹¹⁷ is very closely woven from the three synoptic Gospels. De La Salle strings into a single passage the literal expressions of the three Gospels, in order to relate the event as completely as possible, adding practically nothing of his own. The passage can be subdivided as follows.

With this in view, he led [the three Apostles] to a solitary place on a high mountain.¹¹⁸

113. Cf. *ibid.*, 24, which is based in its entirety on John, with illustrations from Mark and Luke.

114. Cf. *ibid.*, 1.3, which three times in a row quotes Job 9 and 12; 3.2, which quotes three times consecutively from 1 and 2 Peter.

115. Notice the fluidity with which, in other cases, De La Salle passes from one quotation to the next but with definite references to their origin: "Although Saint Paul warned his disciple Titus . . . and also told Timothy . . . he wrote to him at the same time. . . . This is the way the prophet Nathan went about it, when he was sent by God to King David." (*Meditations*, 204.2)

116. Cf. *Meditations*, 23, 24, 27, 138, 144, 162, and 203.

117. *Ibid.*, 152.

118. Matt. 17:1.

There he first gave himself to prayer and, while praying,¹¹⁹
was transfigured in their presence.¹²⁰
His face became as bright as the sun,¹²¹
his garments all shining¹²²
with light¹²³
and as white as snow.¹²⁴

In a similar way, in the meditation for the Second Sunday of Lent,¹²⁵ commenting on the Gospel of Saint Matthew on this same theme, he integrates the circumstance relative to prayer, which belongs in Saint Luke's account of this event, and then uses it as a springboard to develop the relationship between prayer and spiritual consolations.

On many other occasions, it is the central idea of the theme that predominates, and in such cases the quotations come one after another from a variety of sources, there being no other motive behind their selection than the logical demands of the organic development of the argument.¹²⁶

Being a man who is both methodical and sparing with his words, De La Salle never falls into excess by overwhelming his readers with a mosaic of quotations that are as ostentatious as they are superficial and useless. He proceeds austerely, opening up for his followers the richness of the word of God. He writes only to make it more accessible to them, to pattern that word into themes of vital interest to those who have a definite ecclesial mission to fulfill. That is why he has no difficulty in humbly being silent and withdrawing when the word of God is sufficient unto itself by the mere fact of its presentation.¹²⁷ It is

119. Luke 9:29.

120. Mark 9:2.

121. Matt. 17:2.

122. Mark 9:3.

123. Matt. 17:2

124. Mark 9:3.

125. *Meditations*, 18.

126. Cf. *ibid.*, 152.1, in which we find the harmonious succession of 1 John, 2 Cor., Isa., 2 Cor., Ps., Rom., Eph., 1 Cor., Rom., and Eph.; also in 112, with Luke, Philem., Matt., Heb., Matt., Isa., Rom., John, Col., Eph., Gal., and Eph.

127. We find a typical case in the meditation for the feast of Saint Peter in Chains (*Meditations*, 149). All of the second point consists of the literal quotation of Acts 12:5–11, with some slight omissions and changes of order. De La Salle disappears and reserves for himself only three lines, not by way of explanation but as an encouragement to give thanks: "Let us thank God with the Church for having freed Saint Peter in this way in order that he might have the chance to preach the Gospel and increase the flock of Jesus Christ."

the greatest proof he can give us of the legitimacy and sincerity of his use of Sacred Scripture in its own deepest meaning.

In contrast to this frequent multiplicity of scriptural quotations, De La Salle sometimes prefers to mull over only one quotation, whose richness then pervades the ensuing commentary and application.¹²⁸

Key Words

Previously we warned against limiting De La Salle's acquaintance with Sacred Scripture to a mere consultation of concordances.¹²⁹ We have just seen, in fact, that it is rather the ideas and the broader context that guide our author in the selection of his scriptural quotations. However, to be completely objective, we must, on the other hand, recognize the importance of words in that selection. Words give rhythm to the sentence. That is why we have been extremely careful not to make any *a priori* exclusion of the possible use of collections of scriptural passages, whether his own or those of others.

We see, in fact, that sometimes one word can suggest a series of passages that contain this same word. In *Meditations*, 65.2, the word "kind" calls for a succession of passages that extol the excellence of charity: First Corinthians 13:4, Proverbs 15:1, and Matthew 5:4 and 11:29. In *Meditations*, 186.3 and 187.1, the word "soul," taken literally,

In other cases it is not just one passage. De La Salle, with special mastery, goes about weaving into his flow of thought the various passages in which he finds his best possible expression. There is no room for human rhetoric. See, for example, *Meditations*, 112.3, for the feast of the Annunciation of the Most Blessed Virgin. There the author disappears completely behind the quotations from Phil. 2:6–7, Matt. 1:21, Heb. 10:8–9, Matt. 3:15, Isa. 53:4–5, and Rom. 6:6; cf. also, *Meditations*, 112.2, 183.2, 198.2–3, and 201.

128. Cf. *Meditations*, 176, which in spite of the fact that it presents only one allusion, remains completely impregnated by the scriptural spirit throughout; 204.2 and 3, in which he develops at length the beautiful pedagogical lesson given by the prophet Nathan on the manner of challenging David for his sin (2 Sam. 12:1–12); also, 197, 205.2, and 206.1–2.

129. We cannot forget to mention here the conversation we had in one of the libraries of Rome. Our companion knew certain aspects of the personality of De La Salle very well, but he thought that the scriptural richness of his writings could be reduced to a mere use of the quick and easy methods that were in vogue at the time. This piqued our interest in the topic. Today we see with joy how much this *a priori* hypothesis differs from the reality. In the clarification of this point we cannot forget to give credit to Brother Michel Sauvage, who was the first to delve into the matter.

calls for quotations from Hebrews 13:17, Deuteronomy 19:21, and Genesis 14:21. In the same way, we find an interesting series with "spirit;" in *Meditations*, 45, he quotes Romans 8:2, Ephesians 4:30, Galatians 5:17 and 5:25, Romans 8:11 and 8:13. Notice that even here two principal sources (Romans 8 and Galatians 5) are invoked, while the author could have brought in a great variety of Sacred Books. However, in *Meditations*, 189, the series of quotations containing this word comes basically from First Corinthians 2.

Speaking of the medieval exegetes, Spicq says that they are like living concordances. One scriptural maxim automatically awakens the remembrance of all the other passages that express the same ideas or contain the same words.¹³⁰ Without placing De La Salle on a par with the exegetical experts—for this would be an evident exaggeration—we can, nevertheless, include him among them due to his profound knowledge of Scripture. In fact, for the selection of his passages, he takes into consideration not only the central idea of his presentation and the general scriptural context that expresses it, but also the sound of words and their rhythm: elements that unleash suggestions and memory and sometimes inspire associations between quotations quite separated from one another.

Thus, in *Meditations*, 152.1, he quotes the victory of the just over their tribulations, which Saint Paul describes in Romans 8:35–37, and he concludes: ". . . amidst all these evils we will remain victorious, inspired by the example of him who has loved us so much and who delivered himself up to death for love of us."

Here we observe that at the end of the quotation from Romans, "of him who has loved us so much," he has been so carried away by its cadence that he is inexorably led to complete it with Ephesians 5:2, "loved us so much and who delivered himself up to death for love of us."

In the same way, in *Meditations*, 175.3, he quotes John 13:16, "The disciple, says Our Lord, is not greater than his master, nor the apostle greater than the one who sent him." Then he continues with John 15:20, "If they have persecuted me, he adds, they will persecute you also." Evidently the link between the two statements is "the disciple is not greater than his master," which is common to both passages of Saint John but which De La Salle omits in the second reference.

In *Meditations*, 198.2, as Sauvage observes,¹³¹ the words of Colossians 1:12—in the version of Amelote, 1707, "God, the Father of light"—

130. *Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exégèse latine au Moyen Age*, Paris, 1944.

131. *Les Citations*, p. 28.

suggest the modification, “God, the Father of light and of all good,” inspired no doubt by James 1:17, “Every worthwhile gift and every genuine benefit comes from on high and descends from the Father of light.”

This indisputable tendency to be influenced by the sound and rhythm of words is confirmed in *Meditations*, 32.3, in which we can put aside any suggestion of the use of concordances, since here there is an echo from outside of Scripture, where we find the words of John 20:28, “My Lord and My God” (“*Mon Seigneur et mon Dieu*”) suggesting to De La Salle those of Saint Francis of Assisi, “My God and my all” (“*Mon Dieu et mon tout*”).¹³²

In this stylistic trait we will find the key to a good number of fusions of various passages into one and to many scriptural reminiscences suggested by verbal resonance.¹³³

Some events of his childhood that come to us from his biographers contribute to create the opinion that De La Salle is inept in the art of music. If we did not know the importance he gives to music in both his liturgical and pedagogical writings and the adaptations that he himself makes of some popular songs destined to be used during religion lessons, the presence in his literary works of themes evolved from the resonance of words would be sufficient to make us aware of the importance of the element of music in his psychological makeup.

Repetition and Emphasis

Another aspect of his selection of passages—and which bears some relationship with what has just been said—is his tendency to return to a quotation just cited. Sometimes this becomes a veritable *leitmotiv* that in some way contains the essence of a meditation and that De La Salle delights to repeat so that its sound becomes fixed in the ear. Thus, *Meditations*, 75, which deals with human respect, ends its second point with these words of Saint Paul: “If I were pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Jesus Christ,”¹³⁴ words already textually quoted midway through that same point.¹³⁵

132. The French language better reflects the point we are trying to make here.

133. Remember especially the reminiscence of the Pauline eulogy on charity (1 Cor. 13:4–7) in *Meditations*, 12.2, to which we have referred.

134. Gal. 1:10.

135. Cf. *Meditations*, 22.2–3, with regard to Col. 3:15, and *Meditations*, 67, concerning Matt. 6:33.

This kind of repetition does not always have the same purpose. De La Salle frequently returns to an already-quoted passage in order to emphasize a part of it, precisely the part omitted in its initial presentation.

At times it happens by way of a methodical commentary that breaks the texts into meaningful fragments in order to explain each part better. The text of Acts 2:38, "Do penance and be converted so that your sins may be forgiven," which we find in *Meditations*, 4.2, is completed in the third point of the meditation, which follows: "In the same way you will return to the grace of Our Lord, and according to Saint Peter, you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."¹³⁶

In other cases these repetitions are not part of a commentary on a continuous text but constitute the argument the author is pursuing. He avails himself of those passages that best express the point he is trying to make. In his preference for conciseness, he skips those fragments not directly required by the theme to which he is addressing himself. However, later on, many of them will appear as the focus of attention and thus complete the presentation.

Consider, for example, the text of Ephesians 2:20–22, which says, according to Amelote:

Verse 20:

- a) You are the building that has been constructed upon the foundation of the Apostles
- b) and of the Prophets,
- c) with Jesus Christ himself
- d) as the chief cornerstone.

Verse 22:

- e) . . . by which you come to form part of the structure of the building,
- f) and you become the sanctuary in which God dwells by the Holy Spirit.

These verses are quoted in *Meditations*, 199.3, 200.1, and 201.2. Fragment a) is quoted in all three meditations; fragment b) is omitted in all three. But while the first of these meditations omits fragments d) and e), the second gives only e), omitting fragments b), c), d), and f), and the third is the only one to give d), c), and e), omitting only f).

136. Cf. also, *Meditations*, 4.3, with regard to 2 Pet. 3:14, and 91, with regard to Matt. 23:8.



Fragments e) and f) are only found together in *Meditations*, 205.3, which does not quote verse 20 at all.¹³⁷

This distribution is graphically presented below. The solid line indicates inclusion of the fragment; the dotted line, its exclusion.

<i>Meditations</i>	Eph. 2:20			Eph. 2:22		
	a	b	c	d	e	f
199.3	_____	[.....]	_____	[.....]	_____	_____
200.1	_____	[.....]	_____	[.....]	_____	[.....]
201.2	_____	[.....]	_____	_____	_____	[.....]
205.3	[.....]	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

All things considered, we have found that there exists a notable preponderance of variety over repetition in John Baptist de La Salle's use of scriptural quotations. Of all the quotations he makes in *Meditations*, only seventy-eight verses are repeated, in whole or in part, more than twice.¹³⁸ The overall total is 299 scriptural quotations.

De La Salle's Respect for Sacred Scripture

By this analysis of his use of Sacred Scripture, we can begin to appreciate the mastery that Saint John Baptist de La Salle has of it. We say "appreciate," because he uses Scripture just as he learns it through his persistent personal study and, above all, because of the way he constantly meditates on it and lives it. Therefore, we will only be able to understand the depth of his knowledge of Scripture after having studied his personal approach to reading, meditating, interpreting, and assimilating Sacred Scripture throughout his life.

Allow us to make an introductory remark to the effect that within the variety of De La Salle's meditations—extending from the few that have no scriptural quotation at all to the many that are practically Scripture become meditation—we notice that he shows himself to be perfectly identified with the spirit and the doctrine of the Scriptures. When we live the realities that we find in Scripture, there exists

137. Cf. also *Meditations*, 206.1 and 208.2, regarding Eph. 1:18, and 195.2 and 193.1, regarding 2 Cor. 4:6.

138. As for the frequency of repetitions—one verse is repeated thirteen times; three verses, seven times; two verses, six times; eight verses, five times; fifteen verses, four times, and fifty-one verses, three times; the other verses appear only once or twice.

a special instinct for discovering the true meaning of the passages, since our thoughts are then spontaneously in harmony with them.

Always respectful with regard to words, De La Salle invariably seeks the profound reality that is hidden within them. This allows him 1) to choose among parallel texts those best suited to the theme he is developing;¹³⁹ 2) to change the order of the verses and to intertwine various passages, while always remaining faithful to the real meaning of the sacred author, and 3) to make abstraction of place and time, in order to follow only the doctrinal line of thought.

His atemporal approach sometimes results in apparent incongruities. Thus De La Salle sees no problem in saying that Saint Paul writes advice to his disciple Timothy at one and the same time, when he actually wrote only at intervals over several months.¹⁴⁰ Likewise, by the simple insertion of a verb that he adds, he ties together certain texts that belong to different times or to different correspondents.¹⁴¹ Or he may even find the reason given by Saint Paul for an affirmation made to the Corinthians in an epistle written to the Ephesians about six years later.¹⁴² De La Salle shrugs off considerations of time and space; what interests him is the thought of Saint Paul.¹⁴³

It is intriguing to see how he ties two scriptural texts together by means of an ephemeral bond that does not exist in the passages that are quoted; yet he does no violence to the thought of the sacred author. Let us take an example from *Meditations*, 200.1:

. . . you must do your work as the Apostles carried out their ministry.

As told in the Acts of the Apostles, *every day both in the temple and in homes, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming Jesus*

139. We find a good example in *Meditations*, 64.2, in which, speaking of the "gift of tongues," De La Salle unexpectedly does not refer to 1 Cor. 14:1, which speaks explicitly of this gift but also manifests its problems with regard to believers. He seems, rather, to prefer Acts 2:4, 8, and 41. Here there is a more positive but indirect description that does not contradict Saint Paul. More of the same kinds of examples are in *Meditations*, 193–208, on the ministry of the school.

140. *Meditations*, 204.2, referring to 1 and 2 Timothy.

141. Cf. *Meditations*, 45.2, where he makes such a relationship between Gal. 5:24 and Col. 3:5.

142. *Meditations*, 199.3, using this formula to relate 1 Cor. 1:17–21 and Eph. 3:2, 3:8.

143. Cf. Sauvage, *Les Citations*, p. 40.

Christ.¹⁴⁴ It followed that every day the Lord increased the number of faithful and the union of those who were being saved.¹⁴⁵

Here we can see that De La Salle is not content simply to invert the order of these two passages from Acts but that he even goes so far as to present the one that comes first in the text, Acts 2, as a consequence of the one that comes later, in Acts 5. Yet this bold modification agrees perfectly with the profound idea of the sacred author, who in this book shows us the growth of the Church as intimately bound up with the ministry of the word.

On the other hand, Acts 2:47 is the conclusion of a chapter in which we find a description of the first Christian community, made up of those who were converted by the first discourse of Saint Peter¹⁴⁶ and who remained faithful to the teaching of the Apostles.¹⁴⁷ This first causal bond that De La Salle establishes between the preaching of the word of God and the progress of Christianity is found literally expressed later on in Acts 6:7: "The word of God continued to spread, while at the same time the number of the disciples in Jerusalem enormously increased."¹⁴⁸

In *Meditations*, 134.3, inverting the historical order of the life of Saint Barnabas, the companion of Saint Paul,¹⁴⁹ De La Salle shows how the results of the apostolic work of this saint were due primarily to the grace of the Holy Spirit, who chose him for this ministry and caused his words to influence the hearts of those who heard him.

On the other hand, in *Meditations*, 175.1, De La Salle makes a simple inversion of a means-to-end relationship. According to Saint Paul, in his discourse on the Areopagus, "from one man, God has created the whole human race to dwell on the face of the earth. It is he who set limits to their seasons and fixed the boundaries of their regions. They were to seek God, and perhaps eventually to find him."¹⁵⁰

De La Salle, however, mentions only that God "has made the human race so that persons may search for him and try to find him."

144. Acts 5:42.

145. Acts 2:47.

146. Cf. verses 37–41.

147. Verse 42.

148. Cf. Sauvage, *Les Citations*, p. 42. A similar case can be found in *Meditations*, 199.3, in which De La Salle establishes the same causal bond, "that which brought about," between Eph. 3 and Eph. 2 and the relationship between preaching and the salvation of those who believed.

149. Acts 13:2–3 and 11:22–26.

150. Acts 17:26–27.

Thus we see how he omits the process and summarizes the double relationship expressed by the Apostle. Departing somewhat from the literal statement of Scripture, he remains faithful to the spirit that inspired it, and by so doing, he emphasizes the central idea (man has been created by God), stripping away the secondary ideas, which are not of immediate interest (the unity of the human race, the possibility of a natural knowledge of God).¹⁵¹

Given this presentation of Sacred Scripture, we can better understand other interesting omissions by which De La Salle goes to the heart of biblical passages that he deems useful to his present purpose—either by keeping only the fundamental verses¹⁵² or by limiting himself to quoting only the literal statements of the passage.¹⁵³

Finally, we must recall those instances in which De La Salle disassembles the sacred text and rearranges the order of presentation in order to emphasize its logical development.¹⁵⁴

All of these kinds of alterations of the biblical text are not driven by whims or subjectivism. They bear the marks of reverence and respect for the word of God and are always motivated by necessity or by some useful purpose.

The word of God is the food common to all persons everywhere and under all circumstances, but their capacity to understand it may require various approaches. Likewise, different times and circumstances may make it necessary to think about one truth rather than another. The nature of our understanding, which cannot fully comprehend all the immeasurable riches of the word of God, makes it necessary to undertake a periodic concentration on some truths apart from others. What is important is that this isolation not induce a distortion.

Neither the omissions nor the modifications that De La Salle introduces into his writings are undertaken to alter the meaning of Scripture. On the contrary, they clarify it. The greatest proof that his mastery of Scripture is in his mind and heart lies in this reverent fidelity to the meaning and the spirit of the sacred text, which take precedence over all accidental variations.

151. See a similar case in *Meditations*, 200.1, in which De La Salle limits himself to interrelating the extremes of the narrative, Luke 19:47 and 21:37.

152. Cf. *Meditations*, 165.1, quoting 1 Cor. 1:23b, 1:23a, 2:2, 1:17, 1:24, 2:7–8.; *Meditations*, 175.2, quoting James 2:17, 19, and 24; also, *Meditations*, 28.2, 29.1, 149.3, and 183.3.

153. Cf. especially, *Meditations*, 196.2.

154. Cf. *Meditations*, 198.3; notes in Sauvage, *Les Citations*, p. 33, refer to this; see also a similar case in *Meditations*, 205.3.

The Purpose of the Scriptural Quotations

There now arises the interesting point regarding the reason why Saint John Baptist de La Salle makes such an intensive use of Scripture. Nothing is further from his mind than to use Sacred Scripture as a mere ornament of style. As a man dedicated by vocation to distributing the bread of truth to ordinary people, John Baptist never falls into rhetorical excesses. He is eager to make straight the way to the truth—and then to disappear. In this he is exactly like his holy patron, who said, “He must increase, and I must decrease.”¹⁵⁵

Besides, De La Salle has too great a reverence for the word of God to try to make it subservient to himself or to use it as a literary vanity. His work absolutely excludes using the Bible as a mere oratorical ornament or literary technique. Saint Francis de Sales does not consider it disrespectful toward Scripture to use it from time to time as an ingredient of the *préciosité* of the epoch. He is an eminent advocate of style at the service of zeal.¹⁵⁶ De La Salle inherits from the humanism of the preceding century its love for the study of sources, but without any doubt he prefers the straightforward clarity of a rigorous exposition of doctrine to elegance of form. His close conciseness sometimes makes him seem rigidly formal, while underneath lies his burning desire to preach the Lord, not himself. Like the Prophets, he can truthfully say, “Thus says the Lord.”

So consistent is this sincere style in John Baptist de La Salle that throughout his writings we are unable to find any usages of Sacred Scripture that are purely ornamental. When sporadically we do find some traces of oratory, by that very fact we become suspicious with regard to their authenticity.¹⁵⁷

155. John 3:30.

156. “Form, says the Philosopher, gives being and soul to things. Say wonderful things but say them badly, and you have said nothing, but say little and say it well, then you have said much.” (Saint Francis de Sales, *Lettre sur la Prédication*). On the other hand, remember that this zealous apostle is far from practicing art for art’s sake. He himself says, “I have taken into account what the spirit of the times requires, and I did what I had to.” Cf. *Œuvres, Édition complète*, Annecy, vol. 5, p. 1.

157. In *Meditations*, 188, for the Dedication of Churches, we read in point three some biblical allusions that poorly dissimulate their oratorical rhythm: “It is there [in the church] that this Father of mercies with open arms welcomes the prodigal, where the Good Shepherd brings back to the fold the strayed sheep, where the afflicted find comfort, and where the sick are healed. . . .” It comes as no surprise that this text is considered spurious. “It is

A close examination of the scriptural quotations in *Meditations* reveals that the end De La Salle has in view is none other than explaining doctrine and inspiring others to teach it. That is why the majority of the quotations, in the final analysis, fall into the categories of proof and exhortation.

Understanding and affection are the two elements intimately connected in Lasallian pedagogy. We will never find De La Salle floating on a cloud of simple affections, however holy they may be, without establishing a solid foundation of truth in support of even the most intense trials of the affective dark night. Yet he also avoids arid niceties. And so, as we will see later on, De La Salle manages to find the difficult balance of structuring prayer on affective considerations flowing from the solid foundation of a correct understanding of Scripture.

It is unseemly strange, then, that the majority of his quotations explain the doctrine of Sacred Scripture either by way of proofs, properly so called, or by way of corroboration. Often he begins with a passage of Scripture. At other times, having stated an idea, he proceeds to support it by the Sacred Books. In either case, the solidity of the proof rests on Scripture. Then, if the situation requires it, he gives a short explanation, or he applies it to a concrete circumstance:

Today's Gospel relates that *Jesus Christ delivered a man possessed by a dumb demon*. . . . This is a figure of those who. . . .¹⁵⁸

If we truly love God, *everything we do should be for his glory*, Saint Paul says.¹⁵⁹ It should be for no other reason that you have withdrawn yourselves from the world, for it is God who must be the purpose of your actions. . . .¹⁶⁰

Reflect on what Saint Paul says, *that it is God who has established in the Church apostles, prophets, and teachers*,¹⁶¹ and you will be convinced that he has also established you in your work.¹⁶²

neither by De La Salle nor by his biographer" (Gallego, *Teología de la Educación*, p. 57).

158. *Meditations*, 19.1, quoting Luke 11:14; emphasis added. This is the usual form that is used in *Meditations for Sundays*.

159. 1 Cor. 10:31.

160. *Meditations*, 90.3; emphasis added.

161. 1 Cor. 10:31.

162. *Meditations*, 201.1; emphasis added.

At other times, De La Salle explains his point of view concerning a given theme—always with moderation—and then proceeds to confirm it with Sacred Scripture. He seeks not merely to rephrase the affirmation but rather to put in evidence the ultimate support for his ideas. These quotations are generally accompanied by introductory formulas along these lines:

This is why the Holy Spirit says. . . .

This is why . . . as Saint Paul says. . . .¹⁶³

The Wise Man likewise forewarns us of this when he says. . . .¹⁶⁴

So, consider it a great misfortune when you are not tempted; this is in reality a sign of reprobation and of God's abandonment. For he *exercises those he loves*¹⁶⁵ and is pleased when he sees them tempted, as was the case with Job and Tobias, two of his most faithful servants.¹⁶⁶

Perhaps using the expression “to confirm” in a way that means both additional proof and confirmation properly so called, Brother Timothée indicates:

We should not be surprised that this apostolic man has so highly dignified the work of persons consecrated to the Christian instruction of children by using so many scriptural passages to confirm what he is asserting. His principal source is Saint Paul, whose Epistles he knew intimately and on whose authority he relied constantly.¹⁶⁷

Proof by Sacred Scripture appears in a more explicit way in his works that are predominantly didactic. Consider this extract from the *Collection* as a model of scriptural conciseness and depth:

The first effect of faith is to lead us efficaciously to the knowledge, love, and imitation of Christ and to union with him. Faith

163. *Ibid.*, 203.2.

164. *Ibid.*, 17.1.

165. Rev. 3:19.

166. *Meditations*, 17.3; emphasis added; cf. also, 118.3, regarding Mark 10:29–30, and 149.3, regarding Acts 14:22.

167. Foreword to the first edition, *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.

leads to the knowledge of Christ, since *eternal life is knowing him*.¹⁶⁸ Faith leads to love of Christ, since *anyone who does not love him is a reprobate*.¹⁶⁹ Faith leads to the imitation of Christ, since *the predestined ought to conform to him*,¹⁷⁰ and to union with him, since we are to Jesus Christ like *branches to a vine, dead when separated from him*.¹⁷¹

In *The Duties of a Christian to God*, scriptural proofs take on a more academic tone. Scripture and Tradition are both more expressly used as references, and passages are quoted as authoritative proof, after the manner of theological treatises.¹⁷²

Assuming that the principal purpose of interior prayer is union with God, John Baptist sometimes uses Scripture to exhort. In this case the quotations then have the advantage both of unifying the doctrinal intent and of stirring the will. In this way they are specially suited to conclude the exposition of an idea while leaving the soul at the point of readiness for interior prayer:

Because by rising Jesus Christ destroyed sin, you must take care, following Saint Paul's advice, *that sin may no longer reign in your mortal body*.¹⁷³

If you wish to profit by the coming of Jesus Christ in you, you must let him be the master of your heart and make yourself docile to whatever he may require of you, often saying to him with the prophet Samuel: *Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening*,¹⁷⁴ and with David, *I will hear what the Lord God will say in me*.¹⁷⁵

168. John 17:3.

169. 1 Cor. 16:22.

170. Rom. 8:29.

171. John 15:4-6; *Collection*, p. 67; emphasis added.

172. See, for example, the proof of the existence of the Sacrament of Holy Orders: "We know about the ordination of ministers in the Church by the testimony of Scripture as well as by apostolic Tradition. Saint Paul teaches us about the ordination of priests in his Epistle to Titus, bishop of Crete, 'I have left you in Crete to ordain and establish priests in each city' (Titus 1:5), and to Timothy, 'Take care not to impose your hands on anyone too quickly' (1 Tim. 5:22), and again, 'I admonish you to awaken the grace of God which is in you for the imposition of hands'" (2 Tim. 1:6); *Devotrs, I*, pp. 366ff.

173. Rom. 6:12; *Meditations*, 29.2; emphasis added.

174. 1 Sam. 3:10.

175. Ps. 85.9; *Meditations*, 85.2, emphasis added; cf. also, 177.3, quoting Luke 17.5, and 145.1, quoting 1 Pet. 4:13.

We must mention here another use of scriptural quotations, which can easily be confused with the established categories of proof, confirmation, and exhortation. It is actually of a nature different than any of these. It consists of those quotations that result from the normal way in which the revealed word is used by De La Salle to say what is on his mind. We have already alluded to his biblical style, which is the result of his absorption of the spirit of Sacred Scripture into his own soul. He not only thinks with Scripture, but he also lives in it and by it, and he is eager to have others do the same.

The Need for Scriptural Quotations

What we have already said has prepared us to address the matter of the need for such a large number of scriptural quotations in the work of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

Based on the abundant evidence presented, we can safely say that it is neither a pretense of rhetoric—which is inconsistent with his personality—nor a conformity to the current fashion that moves him to adopt his special literary manner. Neither is it the urge to be different that determines the style of this great teacher, who is always so methodical, balanced, and concise.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle quotes Scripture because he is moved by an internal need to do so. He quotes because his entire life rests on faith, a faith solidly grounded on Sacred Scripture as interpreted by the Church. Therefore Scripture is an integral part also of his style. If we were to eliminate all of his scriptural quotations, his work would be essentially altered—in some cases annihilated—because its style would be lost.¹⁷⁶

De La Salle provides no preface to his *Meditations*. However, had he done so, he would surely make his own the words of one of his preferred authors, Saint John of the Cross, who, in speaking of the “dark night of the soul,” remarks:

To say something [for instance, in my *Meditations*] I will rely neither on my own experience nor on my own knowledge, for one or the other may fail me or deceive me. But using whatever assistance these are able to offer me, with the help of God I will

176. We will have an opportunity to clarify these affirmations when we discuss both De La Salle's *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* and the spirit of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

rely on Sacred Scripture in all that I may say. With it as my guide, I cannot fall into error, because the Holy Spirit speaks to me therein. And if in anything I be in error, either because I did not understand correctly what it says or because I said something without consulting what it says, it is not my intention to separate myself from the holy meaning and doctrine of our Mother the Church, because I hereby submit and resign myself not only to her commands but also to anyone who, with better credentials than mine, might pass judgment on it.¹⁷⁷

What Saint John Baptist de La Salle does not explain in a preface—which he never intends to write in the first place—becomes sufficiently clear as we read through his meditations. In them, as far as it is possible for anyone to do so, he leaves us a legacy of his spirit, which is the spirit of Sacred Scripture.

177. *Subida al Monte Carmelo* [*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*], prologue, in *Vida y Obras de San Juan de la Cruz*, 1955, p. 508. Notice the complete agreement with the above text of the assertion by Blain: “The humble servant of God deemed himself unworthy and unable to commune with God in a manner worthy of him, and he made a point of using only expressions and terms suggested to him by the Spirit. . . . [He] spoke to God in terms taught by God himself; [his] prayers were those composed by the Holy Spirit, the unique teacher of true prayer.” (Blain, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 209)

Chapter Four

Interpretation of Sacred Scripture

It has been said that God makes us in his own image and likeness and that we return the favor in kind. In fact, there exists in mankind an enormous propensity to make God according to its own standards and to do likewise with his word. This substantial alteration of the reality of the Divine and its verbal Revelation is what Guelluy calls “the incredulity of believers.”¹ It is one thing to serve God and to obey his word; it is quite another to use him and to re-cast his word to suit our tastes and to make it subservient to our demands.

That is why it can be of great interest, before delving into the scripturally based spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, to consider his way of dealing not only with the textual aspects of Sacred Scripture but also with its formal elements, that is, the concepts and the intent that the Holy Spirit deposited therein. Then, from his approach, his understanding, his respect for, and his use of these formal elements of Sacred Scripture, we will be in a better position to acquire some very valuable information that will enable us to appreciate the faith of Saint John Baptist de La Salle more fully and to estimate the solidity of the spiritual edifice that he builds on it.

1. *À l'écoute de Dieu*, pp. 17ff.

The Senses of Sacred Scripture

The scientific terminology used for the meanings, or senses, of Sacred Scripture has undergone many fluctuations throughout history, and it still has not taken on a definitive form. That is why, in order to avoid misunderstandings concerning the terms that will be employed here, the following clarifications are in order.

As in any other book, the Sacred Text has its direct meaning, which flows from the words it uses in their common acceptation. It expresses the idea intended by the sacred writer. Technically, this is called the *literal sense*.

However, given the fact that Scripture has God for its sole and principal Author, it has other senses that are uniquely its own. As God, he can freely make use of persons and events. He can also use them to prefigure future realities. In this case, together with the reality expressed by the literal meaning, we also have that which the text suggests. Here we have the *typical sense* of Scripture.² It does not exclude the literal meaning but rather presupposes it. The existence of the typical sense can be known with certainty only by divine Revelation. Thus, through Saint Paul³ we know that the historical person of Melchizedek is a figure of Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest.

Next to the typical sense, experts usually place the *sensus plenior*, or the *fuller sense*, by which God intends to reveal by the very words that he places in the mouth of the human writer something that transcends in richness and clarity the concepts expressed by that author, but in accord with what he is actually saying. Messianic prophecies, understood in the light of total Revelation, clearly show us what the prophets could only imperfectly foresee when they spoke their inspired words.

Only the above meanings belong, strictly speaking, to the Sacred Texts, if we keep in mind the intention of their principal Author. Nevertheless, the Tradition of the Church admits of other scriptural senses that, although they do not enjoy the preeminence of those indicated above, can be used to advantage within certain limitations.

The *accommodated sense* is the use of a passage outside of its context and its real meaning. It has these two variations: 1) *accommodation by extension* (*iuxta mentem auctoris*), when because of the

2. This sense is designated in the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* as the *spiritual sense*, while other authors refer to it as the *mystical, real, or figurative sense*.

3. Heb. 7:1–10.

manner of speaking or because of the circumstances, the text is used to create an analogy between the thought of the sacred writer and the idea that the interpreter wishes to convey, and 2) *accommodation by mere allusion to the words*, when the meaning given to them by the interpreter has no relation whatsoever with that intended by the sacred writer. This is a literary artifice that frequently lends itself to abuse.

The *allegorical sense*, also called spiritual or figurative, uses words or events that of themselves have literal value in order to suggest other realities, but without a sufficient typological basis for them. Thus the allegory is distinguished from the "type" by the lack of express intention on the part of the Author of Scripture to unite the two realities that the interpreter is trying to link together. It also differs from pure symbol in that a symbol has no existence of itself, but only insofar as it signifies another different reality.⁴

Finally, there is the *consequent sense*, which, strictly speaking, is more theological than scriptural, because it refers to truths not formally contained in the Sacred Text but inferred from it by reason. It has its foundation in that unique characteristic of the Author of Sacred Scripture whereby God infallibly foresees the consequences that will logically be deduced from the message by those for whom it is intended.⁵ All of these senses, within their given limitations, have been accepted by the Church; however, not all have the same value.

The *literal sense* is the biblical sense *par excellence*. It is the one to which we must turn first of all and which alone, strictly speaking,

4. The allegorical sense has been understood in different ways throughout the history of exegesis and is frequently confused with the typical sense. The Fathers of the Church have often designated it by the term "spiritual sense." It has also been called "figurative sense." De La Salle frequently uses the expression "it is a figure of." Here we understand it according to the definition given above and as it is used by Maldonado, for example, when commenting on the cure of the deaf-mute in Mark 7:32ff. He asks why Christ took him aside from the crowd to cure him, and he adds, "Jerome and the Venerable Bede answer that it is because those who wish to be cured by Christ must withdraw from the noise of the crowd." But the exegete continues looking for the real cause for this way of doing things: "That is all right, but it is an allegorical application." Cf. *Comentario a los Evangelios de San Marcos y San Lucas*, Madrid: BAC, 1951, p. 132.

5. For explanations of biblical meanings, consult: Simon, *Propedeutica Biblica*, pp. 239-257; E. Mangenot, "Sens de l'Écriture," *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, vol. 5, col. 1609-1611; *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. 73, a. 6, and Q. 79, a.2, ad. 1; Robert-Feuillet, *Introduction à la Bible*, pp. 191 and 211; J. Renié, *Manuel d'Écriture Sainte*, vol. 1, pp. 205-218; M. Nicolau, *De Sacra Scriptura*, BAC, pp. 1082-1100; J. Vilnet, *Bible et mystique*, p. 84.

has probative value.⁶ It is not to be confused with what Saint Paul refers to pejoratively as “the letter that kills.”⁷

The *typical sense*, while having the same value, in practice offers fewer possibilities, because it requires the guarantee of divine Revelation in each case.

The *accommodative sense*, in its various forms, has of itself no probative value; however, it can be “useful as an illustration and as a recommendation of those things that are of faith . . . provided this is done with moderation and reserve.”⁸

Allegories and symbols that are apt, although they offer no authentic proof, can nevertheless be effective for the fostering of virtue and piety, and they also serve as an excellent point of departure for the exposition of doctrine, especially when they are vividly presented and supported by Tradition.⁹

On the other hand, the *consequent sense*, if firmly established on the word of God from its point of departure to its ultimate conclusion, can, with a process of valid reasoning, present conclusions of unquestionable worth.

From all this it follows that in order to determine the validity of any scriptural usage, attention must be paid to these two points: 1) that the interpretation of the revealed word, according to an established biblical sense, suggests no error or abuse, and 2) that the value attributed to the biblical usage does not exceed the characteristic value of the *biblical sense* that one has opted to employ. Thus, the use of the *accommodative sense*, which is legitimate in itself, would cease to be valid from the moment one attempts to use it as a strictly probative argument.

Once these minimum requirements are in place, it becomes possible to set up a scale that would pass from true validity to the most subtle insight into divine Revelation.

6. Benedict XV, *Spiritus Paraclitus*, 1920, EBB, 498; Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 1943, EBB, 561.

7. 2 Cor. 3.6.

8. Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, EBB, 562.

9. “Neither should those passages be neglected that the Fathers have understood in an allegorical or figurative sense, more especially when such interpretation is justified by the literal and when it rests on the authority of many. For this method of interpretation has been received by the Church from the Apostles and has been approved by her own practice, as the holy Liturgy attests; although it is true that the holy Fathers did not thereby pretend directly to demonstrate dogmas of faith but used it as a means of promoting virtue and piety, as such, by their own experience, they knew to be most valuable.” (Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*, 1893, C, 1, d; EBB, 97.

De La Salle's Preference for the Literal Sense

Even with such clearly defined categories, it would still be improper to begin summarily to ask ourselves into which of these De La Salle fits his scriptural quotations. Let us begin by clearly establishing that he is not an exegetical specialist, nor is he a ranking research scholar. To present him as such would seriously distort his basic intent.

De La Salle is simply an ascetical author who, as an educator and founder, provides the best spiritual nourishment he can possibly find for his followers and their students. He does this without pretense or conceit. In vain will we search his writings to find scientific terminology that will answer our questions in a carefully nuanced response. It is even more futile to attempt to fit his thought into the schemas of modern exegesis, which were unknown at the time.

An eminently practical man, "instead of allowing himself to be obsessed by disputed questions, as did many of his contemporaries, he turned by preference to the assimilation of whatever his intelligence, sustained by grace, showed him to be clear and beyond the shadow of a doubt."¹⁰

We find him in perfect agreement with the spirit of *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, when it tells seminary professors that exegetical presentations must be primarily theological, avoiding useless disputes and omitting anything that merely satisfies curiosity while contributing nothing to foster true doctrine or solid piety.

But in any reading of the Bible, however straightforward it may be, there are always latent ideas and nuances that careful consideration can bring to light, provided that the facts are not distorted by pre-conceived notions.

We will now try to synthesize the exegesis of De La Salle, using categories that are familiar to us today, but at the same time we will be careful to avoid any *a priori* position.

It is useful here to remind ourselves that the meditations of John Baptist de La Salle that directly concern us here can be divided into three distinct groups: 1) *Méditations pour les Dimanches* (*Meditations for Sundays*), 2) *Méditations pour les Fêtes de l'Année* (*Meditations for*

10. Frère Albert-Valentin, "Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle et la Sainte Écriture," in *Entre-Nous*, no. 12, p. 2. This spirit inspired article 9 in the Rule of 1705, chapter 6 ("How the Brothers Ought to Conduct Themselves During Recreation"): "Neither will they speak of what has occurred in the world, the schools, nor of what they have learned there, but they will converse on edifying topics that could lead them to love God and practice virtue." Cf. "Topics on Which the Brothers Ought to Converse During Recreation."

the Feasts of the Year), and 3) *Méditations pour le Temps de la Retraite, sur le Ministère de l'École* (*Meditations for the Time of Retreat, on the Ministry of the School*)

As we have already said, a cursory reading of *Meditations* may easily lead us to underestimate the exegesis of De La Salle. In fact, in *Meditations for Sundays* he often makes use of the allegorical or spiritual sense of Scripture in a rather personal way in the development of his commentary.

Never has there been a stigma attached to a spiritual writer who makes use of Scripture in these two senses. The transfer to a *spiritual sense*, being rather striking when associated with well-known scriptural episodes, more easily engraves itself on the mind but may leave the impression of inadequate or unfounded exegesis. An example occurs in *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, in which it might appear rather arbitrary for De La Salle to apply to teachers what the Apostle says of himself or of his companions in the ministry.

We will have the opportunity later on to consider these instances. For the moment, we are interested in presenting the reality hidden behind such mirages, a reality that has no need of convoluted rationalizations to do justice to the solidity of Lasallian exegesis.

Having examined, one by one, all the scriptural quotations in *Meditations*, we can testify with total certainty that the literal sense predominates in Lasallian exegesis. The overall proportion reaches seventy-three percent of all the quotations. It rises to seventy-eight percent in the meditations for the sanctoral cycle. In those areas in which we expected to find lesser percentages, such as in *Meditations for Sundays* and in *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, the proportions are seventy and sixty-seven percent, respectively. The allegorical sense used in *Meditations for Sundays* is not over fifteen percent and disappears completely in *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.

Of themselves these statistics may appear irrelevant; still, they can be revealing. They confirm that when it comes to interpreting Sacred Scripture, De La Salle above all prefers the authentic word of God, the formal sense intended by its Author, and rejects the option of subjective interpretations. He considers Scripture, understood in its literal sense, to be the most solid foundation for his spirituality. This will become even more evident when we look at the way De La Salle uses the Bible in a non-literal sense.

Use of the Spiritual Sense of Scripture in *Meditations For Sundays*

We have mentioned the use of Sacred Scripture in a *spiritual sense*, which depends on allegory. This occurs almost exclusively among the meditations for the Sundays and movable feasts of the liturgical year.

While always recognizing the predominance of interpretations in the literal sense in this series of meditations—and its almost exclusive use in many of them¹¹—we are aware also that De La Salle has recourse with relative frequency to some spiritual interpretation of the Gospel of the day for the presentation of his Sunday meditations.

Going a little further, we can say that many times he is not making a commentary on the Gospel; rather, he is taking one of its sentences as a point of departure for the development of a unified ascetical theme. This is a common technique that distinguished orators of the day do not hesitate to use. It is very important to insist on this approach of De La Salle when we evaluate his work. We should not look for an effort toward systematic exegesis where he absolutely does not intend to use it. Then we will be able to understand why De La Salle, who elsewhere manifests such a profound grasp of Sacred Scripture, does here what no exegete of average competence might allow himself to do.

As a matter of fact, a less significant phrase of the Gospel of the day sometimes suffices to provide him with an inspiration for the development of his meditation, and he completely sets aside the rest of the text, even though it might be objectively more important.

The simple greeting of the risen Christ, "Peace be with you," from the Gospel for the Tuesday after Easter,¹² becomes a springboard to talk about interior peace, together with passages from Jeremiah and the Epistle to the Romans, but with no further reference to Saint Luke's narrative.¹³

From the Gospel for the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost, which tells about the cure of the woman with a hemorrhage and the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus,¹⁴ De La Salle focuses on the simple statement, "She is not dead but sleeping." He takes the opportunity here to speak of those religious who, having left the world, are

11. Cf. *Meditations*, 1–7, for Advent and Christmas; 22–28, for Holy Week; 43, for Pentecost Sunday; 59, for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, and so on.

12. Luke 24:36.

13. *Meditations*, 31.

14. Matt. 29:18–26.

really dead to it only in appearance, since they continue living according to its spirit.¹⁵

Sometimes, on the other hand, the Gospel of the day becomes a continuous allegory. We have a typical example on the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, in which the Gospel narrates the cure of the deaf-mute.¹⁶ Consider this extract from the third point, where De La Salle is speaking of spiritual deafness and its cure:

To cure his deafness, Jesus Christ placed his fingers in the deaf man's ears, which indicates that Jesus Christ must touch a soul interiorly to make that person hear, understand, and appreciate what he says.

He had to take the man aside so that the noise of the world might not prevent him from hearing his words and appreciating them.

Then he raised his eyes to heaven and heaved a deep sigh to show how much he suffers before God because of the blindness of this soul caused by its spiritual deafness.

He even had to make an effort and say in a loud voice in the deaf man's ears, "Be opened." This he did so that this soul might open his ears wide enough to hear the words of Jesus Christ easily and become docile to them.

He cured the mute by placing some saliva on his tongue in order to show him that it would be of little use to speak unless he spoke wisely.¹⁷

Another outstanding—and certainly a more personal—example is in the meditation for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost,¹⁸ in which De La Salle applies the narrative of the widow of Naim,¹⁹ sentence by sentence, to those who have lost the spirit of their state, and then he suggests the means by which they might recover it.

All this notwithstanding, in general the themes for *Meditations for Sundays* arise spontaneously from the Gospel of the day. This gives rise to a certain variety of subject matter, and yet, all of them in some way or other are designed to satisfy the needs of religious and their apostolic life:

15. *Meditations*, 76; cf. also, 10, 11, 13, 17, and 19.

16. Mark 7:31–37.

17. *Meditations*, 64.3.

18. *Ibid.*, 68.

19. Luke 7:11–16.

The passage, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing,"²⁰ leads to an explanation of the relationship between holiness and the religious habit. The words that Our Lord spoke when referring to the Temple—"My house is a house of prayer"²¹—are successively applied to the religious community, to the body, and to the soul. The parable of the Good Shepherd²² suggests magnificent symbolism on the relationships between teacher and students, and so on.

However, sometimes a theme is the determining factor, and then over several Sundays he ingeniously searches for a passage or an idea from each Gospel that will further his purpose. Such is the case in *Meditations*, 7 through 15, a series built around the theme of obedience. Here the literal sense alternates with the spiritual sense, as we can readily see by simply listing the aspects of obedience that he considers:

7—The series begins on the First Sunday after Epiphany, with the Presentation of the Child Jesus as a model for the Brothers: "and he was subject to them."²³ Then he speaks to them of the necessity of obedience in the Christian teacher.

8—The wedding at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you . . . and they filled them to the brim. . . . My hour is not yet come. . . ."²⁴ The theme is that obedience must be exact.

9—The cure of the centurion's servant.²⁵ The theme is that faith must be a part of obedience.

10—The tempest is calmed.²⁶ The theme is fidelity to obedience in spite of violent temptations.

11—The parable of the good and the bad seed.²⁷ The theme is the excellence and merit of obedience.

12—The grain of mustard seed.²⁸ The theme is the abundant fruits of obedience, even though the action in itself has little significance.

13—The parable of the workers in the vineyard: "Why stand you here all the day idle? . . . because no one has hired us."²⁹ The theme

20. Matt. 7:15, in *Meditations*, 60.

21. Luke 19:46, in *Meditations*, 62.

22. John 10:14–16, in *Meditations*, 33.

23. Luke 2:51.

24. John 2:2–11.

25. Matt. 8:1–13.

26. Matt. 8:23–27.

27. Matt. 13:24–30.

28. Matt. 13:31–32.

29. Matt. 20:6–7.

is the need for persons who are consecrated to God to be exercised in obedience often.

14—The parable of the sower.³⁰ The theme is the three classes of disobedient religious.

15—The cure of the blind man: “What do you want me to do?”³¹ The theme is the three kinds of religious who obey without having the merit of obedience.

It is easy to see that in this series we find the general theme of obedience, which determines the commentaries that follow. In such a long series it is to be expected that there will probably be some applications that appear to be somewhat forced. Necessarily De La Salle has to reconcile his own plan with the limitations imposed by the demands of exegesis. He does not proceed haphazardly or capriciously. His position, although not constantly maintained at the same level, is always the correct one, precisely because he is carefully aware of the real values of each text. He is not a counterfeiter trying to pass off as a literal interpretation what is merely an allegory, nor does he ascribe to allegory the power of reliability that rightly belongs to the literal sense. De La Salle is simply presenting asceticism within a scriptural ambience. He knows perfectly well that even aside from the literal sense, the word of God, of itself, has other undeniable possibilities of moving souls.

In the cases of allegorical usage, because De La Salle knows full well that he is moving in the area of analogy, he is content to borrow from the allegory a theme, a setting, and a certain biblical flavor, but it is never used as proof or confirmation of the doctrine being presented. This he will offer within the framework of a meditation, with the help of other scriptural passages that are frequently independent of the Gospel of the day and that he uses in a literal or consequent sense.

As for the spiritual and allegorical senses, De La Salle forestalls against abuse by means of certain restrictive formulas. Although these have no scientific or constant value, they are adequate as signals that identify this kind of interpretation. Here are a few examples:

This man *represents* three kinds of deaf persons who can be found occasionally in communities.³²

The blind man whom Jesus cured in the Gospel of this day . . . [“this man,” “this crowd,” “this paralytic”] . . . is *a figure*.³³

30. Luke 8:4–15.

31. Luke 18:41.

32. *Meditations*, 64.1; emphasis added here and in the following examples.

[The transfiguration of Our Lord] is *a symbol* of the spiritual consolation which God sometimes gives to souls.³⁴

It seems in today's Gospel that Jesus Christ *wants to suggest*.³⁵

To live in a community that is faithful to the Rule is *to live* in the boat with Jesus and his disciples.³⁶

[Obedience] *can be compared* to the good seed sown in a field.³⁷

At other times, De La Salle uses less specific formulas, leaving it up to the context to clarify them: "The same can be said;" "in like manner it can be said;"³⁸ "this helps us understand;" "is brought home to us;" "these words make known;"³⁹ "which indicates."⁴⁰

In using the spiritual sense of Scripture, De La Salle does no more than borrow a practice quite common among the Fathers and the masters of the spiritual life. While many of these usages are of a rather personal nature, others contain clear evidence of the influence of Tradition. Exceptionally, he does not hesitate to adapt the interpretation of some of the Fathers of the Church to his purpose:

It is as if one of you, [Jesus Christ] says, goes at midnight to find one of your friends and tells him, "Lend me three loaves of bread. . . ."

In his explanation of this parable, *Saint Augustine* says that this traveling friend is someone who has walked the way of sin.⁴¹

Noteworthy is the care with which De La Salle knows how to distinguish between a more or less personally invented allegory ("is a symbol of" or "is an image of") and the truly *typical sense* that is supported by the weight of Tradition—is "*looked upon* as a figure."⁴²

33. *Ibid.*, 15.1 (19.1, 68.2, and 71.1).

34. *Ibid.*, 18.1.

35. *Ibid.*, 20.1.

36. *Ibid.*, 10.1.

37. *Ibid.*, 11.1.

38. *Ibid.*, 12.1, 76.1.

39. *Ibid.*, 17.1, 18.1, and 68.3.

40. *Ibid.*, 64.3.

41. Luke 11: 5–6; *Meditations*, 37.1; emphasis added.

42. *Meditations*, 48.2, refers to the bread that gave Elias strength to walk for forty days to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:8) as an image of the Eucharist.

With such careful use of qualifiers, we have strong assurances that the legitimacy of this allegorical usage of Sacred Scripture is solidly supported. Quantitatively, the allegorical usages are few in number and are always respectful of the originally intended meaning of the divine word.

On the other hand, the opinion of Battersby that *Meditations for Sundays* was composed to serve as topics both for meditation and for conferences is not entirely without some foundation.⁴³ This would explain those series of meditations that depart from the central idea of the Gospel of the day and take up ideas basic to the religious life. De La Salle, who knows that continuous instruction is needed but who cannot find time to impart it to the Brothers, who are totally absorbed by their apostolic work throughout the week, takes advantage of these Sunday talks to present systematically the essential ideas of religious asceticism. Concrete circumstances must prevail over the abstract ideal.

The Accommodative Sense in Lasallian Exegesis

Bearing in mind that we must allow for the absence of current scientific terminology when we scrutinize the exegesis of our author, we can now begin an examination of what, in modern terms, is called the accommodative sense. De La Salle does not avoid using it. However, aware of the fact that this usage is "somewhat outside of and added on to" the Scriptures, he always employs it with great "moderation and measure," as required by the Church, the guardian of the sacred deposit of Revelation.⁴⁴

Only exceptionally does he use Scripture as a mere *accommodation to the words*, and even then it involves only fragments and not complete passages.

Previously we talked about literal reminiscences, which easily creep into the language of one who frequently uses Sacred Scripture as his primary inspiration. But in De La Salle it is a fact that whenever the words of the Bible can best condense a thought, they always

Saint Thomas, speaking of this relationship between the Eucharist and this passage, uses the expression, "*in cuius figuram legitur*" (*Summa Theologica*, III, q. 73, a. 2, ad. 1), understanding by the word "image" what modern terminology calls "type." Saint Thomas also calls the Paschal Lamb the principal "image" of the Eucharist (*Summa Theologica*, III, q. 73, a. 6).

43. Cf. Battersby, *De La Salle, Saint and Spiritual Writer*, p. 152.

44. Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, EBB, 562.

tend to change from verbal similarities to some sort of analogy, which may range anywhere from accommodation by extension to the consequent sense.

An explicit and characteristic example of this tendency of Lasalian exegesis can be found in the meditation for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.⁴⁵ De La Salle defines the attitude of worldly people toward the things of God by using the words of the Psalmist, which refer to idols: "They have ears and hear nothing."⁴⁶ Then he hastens to give the reason for this reference: "because all they can grasp is what strikes their senses." It is as if he is saying that just as the idols only appear to hear the words addressed to them, so also these people only appear to understand the things that pertain to the spirit. This resolves any apparent difficulty. Here there is no question of using Scripture in a way that is completely contrary to the thought of the sacred Author.

There may be a case, now and then, in which it seems that De La Salle has surrendered to the fascination of appealing words, which appear in certain passages. He says to the Brothers:

The zeal you are obliged to have in your work must be so active and so alive that you are able to tell parents of the children entrusted to your care what is said in Scripture: *Give us their souls; keep everything else for yourselves*, that is, what we have undertaken is to work for the salvation of their souls.⁴⁷

As we can see, De La Salle is clearly referring to the gift with which the king of Sodom wished to reward the support he received from Abraham: "Give me the people; the rest you may keep for yourself,"⁴⁸ except that he takes the words of the Vulgate literally: "*Da mihi animas, cætera tolle tibi.*"

Is this merely some error in the translation? We prefer to think it is not, especially when we keep in mind the exegesis that De La Salle himself gives us for the word "soul" in *Meditations*, 70.2.⁴⁹ Besides, this accommodation has certainly become privileged by the frequent

45. *Meditations*, 58.3.

46. Ps. 115:6.

47. *Meditations*, 201.3; emphasis added.

48. Gen. 14:21.

49. "It is not possible for us to love God with all our heart without loving him also with all our soul. This means that we are prepared to give up not only all external and sensible goods but our very life itself, signified by the word *soul*, rather than be for a single instant deprived of the love of God."

use made of it by spiritual writers. Saint Francis de Sales likes it very much. Even in the period following De La Salle, it continues to be so employed. We know that Saint John Bosco has this motto displayed on the wall in his office and that it plays an important role in the formation of the spirit of Saint Dominic Savio. But above all, we must keep in mind that this passage is repeated in the Bibles of the seventeenth century in the form quoted by De La Salle. Consult, for example, the text of the Bible of Louvain, 1691: “*Donne moi les âmes, et prend le reste pour toi*” (“Give me the souls, and take the rest for yourself”).

In a similar vein, we understand the law of the talion, expressed in Deuteronomy 19:21, which De La Salle applies literally—“soul for soul”⁵⁰—in order to stress the responsibility of the teacher with regard to the souls of his students.⁵¹

Other instances of verbal accommodation are based on the imperfection or the ambiguity of the versions of Scripture used by our author.⁵² Given the proportionately minor incidence of the accommodative sense, we can still affirm that accommodations by extension are somewhat more abundant.

De La Salle makes these accommodations with full awareness of what he is doing and always against the background of their literal meaning. He uses a series of introductions and restrictive formulas, in order to avoid any ambivalence, thereby signaling to us the honesty of mind with which he always deals with Sacred Scripture. And as if this were not enough, he also likes to add the reasons that support such usage. Here are a few examples:

In today’s Gospel, Jesus Christ tells us that *many are called but few are chosen*.⁵³ He said this in reference to heaven, but this truth

50. *Meditations*, 186.3.

51. Cf. Gallego, *La Teología de la Educación*, p. 260.

52. In *Meditations*, 164.1, we find a paragraph inspired by chapter one of Saint John, in which—speaking of the Most Blessed Virgin as the star that shines on us all—he says to the Brothers, “Because she knows the truth perfectly, it is easy for her to instruct you in the truth and to make you understand what you, who are only in *darkness, cannot understand*.” Evidently, De La Salle is alluding to the words of the Vulgate: “*Et tenebræ eam non comprehenderunt* (John 1:5) or to a somewhat literal version of the same passage, in which the term “*comprehenderunt*” is taken in the phonetic meaning of “to comprehend” instead of “to accept or to receive.” In the New Testament of both Huré, 1702, and Amelote, 1683, the words of the Vulgate are translated as “and the darkness did not accept it.”

53. Matt. 22:14.

is no less applicable to communities. Although a great number of persons enter them, only a few remain faithful to the grace of their vocation, and take on the spirit of their state, or remain faithful after being committed to it.⁵⁴

We can without doubt say of a community where God is faithfully served what Jacob says in Genesis, *that the Lord is truly in this place and this place is the house of God and the gate of heaven.*⁵⁵ In fact, if we consider its institution and its purpose, we can say of it what is said of the temple built by Solomon, *that God has chosen this dwelling and he himself has sanctified it, so that his name may be blessed there forever.*⁵⁶ This is true since his name is so often invoked there and since those who dwell there are together there, or should be, only to save themselves through the sanctification of their souls. It is in this way that this place is the gate of heaven, because it enables us to take the path leading to heaven and prepares us to enter it.⁵⁷

We can, therefore, with much reason apply to those who generally refuse to receive Communion because of their temporal affairs what Jesus Christ says in the Gospel: *When the Son of Man comes, that is, when he offers himself to be the spiritual nourishment of his people, do you think he will find faith on earth?*⁵⁸ Indeed, it is a lack of faith that makes people stay away from Communion.⁵⁹

Perhaps one of the examples that demonstrates most vividly the profound respect of De La Salle for the word of God can be found in the meditation for the Third Sunday of Advent.⁶⁰ Speaking about the instrumental role of the ministers of the word of God, he wants to express the ineffectiveness of the instrument when abandoned to its own devices, and he is tempted to employ the powerful image with which Saint Paul states the need for charity: "without it, I am like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."⁶¹ Knowing perfectly well that

54. *Meditations*, 72.1; emphasis added.

55. Gen. 28:17.

56. 2 Chron. 7:16.

57. *Meditations*, 77.1; emphasis added; cf. 77.2.

58. Luke 18:8.

59. *Meditations*, 50.2; emphasis added.

60. *Ibid.*, 3.1.

61. 1 Cor. 13:1.

the Apostle is referring to the third of the theological virtues,⁶² and even though he must momentarily sacrifice his own style, De La Salle prefers to quote literally from Scripture, showing the parallelism between his thought and the Pauline text by means of the expression “or rather,” which leads the reader to the transition:

According to the same Apostle, when you speak all the tongues, both angelic and human, if you lack charity, *or rather*, if it is not God who makes you speak and who uses your voice to reveal himself and his sacred mysteries, you are nothing but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. All you say will produce no good effect and will not be capable of bringing about any good results.⁶³

It is apparent here that De La Salle really works at this text in order to use the words of Saint Paul for his own purpose while leaving their original and literal meaning perfectly clear. Both terms of the parallelism are equally present.⁶⁴

The Accommodative Sense and the Doctrine on Ministry

Where we find this kind of accommodation by extension most often is in *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. De La Salle here deals with the ministry of teaching by applying to the Brothers the entire Pauline doctrine on the ministry of the word, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly.

He wants them to consider themselves “*as the ministers of God and the dispensers of his mysteries*,”⁶⁵ as “*chosen*” by Jesus Christ “*to*

62. Cf. *Meditations*, 194.3, in which the author makes a clarification along this same line.

63. *Ibid.*, 3.1.

64. In the letter addressed to his nephew, Jean-François Maillefer, canon of Saint Symphorien, the delicacy of the topic and the caliber of the person compel him to refine his expression even further: “You could apply to this situation, though not in quite the same sense, what Saint Paul says in the sixth chapter of his First Letter to the Corinthians: ‘Dare any of you, having a quarrel with a fellow Christian, bring your case to be judged by the unjust, that is, the Gentiles, and not by the saints, that is, by Christians?’

“As for me, I am quite prepared to say of any cleric who brings legal proceedings against his ecclesiastical superior, ‘Does he dare to submit himself to civil rather than to ecclesiastical judges, who are his rightful judges in such matters?’ ‘Do you not know,’ adds the holy Apostle, ‘that the saints will be appointed judges of this world?’” (*Letters*, 120.8–9)

do his work,"⁶⁶ as writing "the letter which [God] has dictated not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh which are the hearts of children."⁶⁷

This poses a problem, because the accommodations that De La Salle employs up to this point simply to illustrate his teaching now seem to become the foundation or confirmation of his theology of the ministry of teaching.⁶⁸ What reliability can we expect from a theology based on mere biblical accommodations? Is he aware of this inconsistency? Does he allow himself to be drawn too far afield by oratory?

There is neither oratory nor aberration. Seldom does De La Salle present us with as solid a work, so well structured and so profoundly scriptural as what we find in these meditations.⁶⁹ Here he has achieved a very thought-provoking synthesis; however, in every synthesis there are things that must be taken for granted.

Many of the passages concerning the ministry, at first sight and considered in isolation, might seem to be pure accommodations; however, they take on a different character when they are seen within the setting of the fundamental ideas that form the structure of these meditations. What seems to be simply an accommodation is, in reality, the conclusion of a rigorous theological deduction.

De La Salle chooses his words carefully and weighs his affirmations precisely when he applies the words of Saint Paul to the ministry of the school. He is well aware that bishops are the successors of the Apostles:

The Bishops have been established by God to be the defenders of the Church. They are also, says Saint Paul, *the first ministers of Jesus Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.*⁷⁰

Yet he does not hesitate to tell the Brothers, "You, then, who have succeeded the Apostles in their work of catechizing and instructing the poor. . . ."⁷¹

65. 1 Cor. 4:1, in *Meditations*, 193.1.

66. 1 Cor. 3:9, in *Meditations*, 196.1.

67. 2 Cor. 3:3, in *Meditations*, 201.2.

68. Cf. Gallego, *La Teología de la Educación en San Juan Bautista de La Salle*. For all practical purposes, this work is based on these *Meditations*.

69. "Inevitably, we think of the alpinist who has laboriously scaled a high mountain, and then from the peak he can see the entire trail" (Savage, *Les Citations*, p. xxxv).

70. 1 Cor. 4:1, in *Meditations*, 106.3; emphasis added.

71. *Meditations*, 200.1.

De La Salle makes this leap with complete assurance. The argument is rigorous: 1) the bishops are the principal successors of the Apostles; 2) the Brothers authentically exercise the same ministry as the Apostles, within the proper limitations of their own particular mandate; 3) they do this insofar as they are associated with the bishops, who confide to them the work of teaching, that is, the ministry of the word of God; 4) therefore, they participate in the dignity, the obligations, and the responsibilities of their bishops, and in the final analysis, to the Brothers can be legitimately applied all that is said in Scripture about the ministry of the word.

We quote the words with which De La Salle expresses this doctrine in *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, a doctrine he occasionally completes in various other meditations:

Without comparing yourself to this great saint (and keeping in mind the due proportion between your work and his), you can say that you are doing the same thing and that you are fulfilling the same ministry in your profession.

You must, then, look upon your work as one of the most important and most necessary services in the Church, one which has been entrusted to you by pastors, by fathers and mothers.⁷²

Thank God for the grace he has given you in your work of sharing in the ministry of the holy Apostles and the principal bishops and pastors of the Church. *Honor your ministry*⁷³ by making yourselves, as Saint Paul says, *worthy ministers of the New Testament*.⁷⁴

Since bishops have been appointed by God to watch over the doctrine and morals of those who labor under their ministry and are in charge of the entire spiritual guidance of their diocese, all those who are employed in this labor to procure the salvation of souls must do so only in dependence on them.⁷⁵

Since you are substitutes for their fathers and mothers and their pastors, you are obliged *to keep watch over these children as the one who is accountable for their souls*.⁷⁶

72. *Ibid.*, 199.1.

73. Rom. 11:13.

74. 2 Cor. 3:6; *Meditations*, 199.3; emphasis added.

75. *Meditations*, 106.3; cf. 200.1, in which it is the Church that directly associates the Brothers in the ministry of the word.

Once these premises are established, there can be no doubt that the application to the work of the Brothers of the Pauline doctrine on the ministry of the word is no mere illustration but has real probative value. This value, of course, is defined within the proportion that lies between the work of the Brothers and that of the Apostles, as the Founder himself very precisely indicates.⁷⁷

It comes as no surprise, then, when De La Salle, merely substituting the persons, speaks directly to the Brothers in the very words with which Saint Paul refers to himself and to his fellow Apostles.

"You cooperate with God in his work, and the souls of the children whom you teach are the field that he cultivates through you," is what Saint John Baptist de La Salle says,⁷⁸ whereas Saint Paul writes to the Corinthians, "We are God's coworkers, while you are the field that he cultivates."⁷⁹ Similarly, he does not hesitate to say to his Brothers:

Be convinced of what Saint Paul says, that you plant and water the seed, but it is God through Jesus Christ who makes it grow and brings your work to fulfillment.⁸⁰

These words are taken from the Apostle: "As for me, I planted, Apollo watered, but it is God who gave the increase."⁸¹

The validity of this line of reasoning is in no way weakened as a result of De La Salle's scriptural transpositions when, together with the pillars that support his reasoning, there also appear some simple accommodations presented by way of clarification or exhortation.

Slightly more complicated is the difficulty found in *Meditations*, 198, in which De La Salle applies to the angels some Pauline texts that really do not refer to them at all. Here our author is moving along the lines more of a comparison rather than of a structured argument. The Brothers, as "visible angels" sent by God to watch over children,

76. Heb. 13:17; *Meditations*, 203.3; emphasis added.

77. *Meditations*, 199.1; cf. Sauvage, *Les Citations*: "This is rigorously theological. Were there need to justify his affirmations, there is no doubt that the Founder would have recourse to the double argument from the life of the Church and from the Sacred Texts: his Brothers truly exercise the apostolic ministry since the bishops exercise theirs through them and by the very fact that the living Church recognizes the reality of the Pauline message about the ministry of the word of God" (p. xxxix); *ibid.*, p. xl.

78. *Meditations*, 205.1.

79. 1 Cor. 3:9.

80. *Meditations*, 196.1; emphasis added.

81. 1 Cor. 3:6, and so on.

ought to imitate the ministry of the invisible angels. Concerning certain Lasallian accommodations that attribute to the angels actions that Scripture predicates directly of God,⁸² we think we have a remote theological foundation for them in the ordinary action of God through secondary causes. However, we would not at all be surprised to find that these accommodations might be more directly inspired by a patristic commentary.

We have a similar case in *Meditations*, 172.2, in which De La Salle expressly quotes Saint Bernard. It is a passage in which he attributes to the angels what Saint Paul affirms concerning the fidelity of God, but with no mention of the heavenly spirits.⁸³ Apart from these exceptions, the general line of doctrinal exposition is completely scriptural.

Understanding the Meaning of Scripture

All of the preceding considerations prepare us for the more important study of the way in which Saint John Baptist de La Salle discovers the deepest meanings of the revealed word. First of all, let us identify the criteria that guide him in the interpretation of that word.

Criteria for Interpretation

Saint John Baptist de La Salle knows perfectly well that all of Sacred Scripture, as it comes from only one Author, must be perfectly consistent in all of its parts. Eternal Truth must necessarily communicate itself in a human and fragmentary manner. It follows that these fragments of the one word of God mutually clarify each other, and in their contrasts they contribute to a fuller manifestation of God's word. This is the basis for the principle known as the analogy of faith.

Without mentioning it expressly, De La Salle uses this principle whenever he interprets a passage of Scripture in the light of its entire sacred context. A beautiful example of how the New Testament

82. Cf. *Meditations*, 198.2, quoting Col. 1:10–13.

83. "We should, then, fear nothing under the protection and guidance of these angels of God, for, says Saint Bernard, *they will not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength*" (*Meditations*, 172.2, quoting 1 Cor. 10:13; emphasis added).

throws light on the Old Testament can be found in the meditation for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost:

Since the Church has a great zeal for the sanctification of her children, it is your duty to share in her zeal, so that you can say to God as the holy King David, *the zeal of your house has consumed me.*⁸⁴ For this house is none other than the Church, since the faithful form *this building which has been built on the foundation of the Apostles and raised up by Jesus Christ, who is the main cornerstone.*⁸⁵

He achieves the same purpose in other passages by the fusion of two different quotations into one, resulting in the enrichment of both:

In making you responsible for the instruction of children and their formation in piety, Jesus Christ entrusted to you the task of *building up his body*⁸⁶ *which is the Church.*⁸⁷

Or more incisively, he writes:

*For this reason, declares the same Apostle, if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the flesh (that is, by the Spirit of God who dwells in you), you will live.*⁸⁸

As we can see, in quoting Romans 8:13, De La Salle provides as a clarification of the word "Spirit" an idea previously expressed by Saint Paul himself in Romans 8:11. This procedure occurs frequently in the explanation of the Gospel events.⁸⁹

We have already suggested the high regard in which he holds Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church. This has a direct application here. In Tradition the truths contained in Sacred Scripture attain full maturity under the benign influence of the Holy Spirit. In Tradition De La Salle seeks the delicate insight into heavenly things that Pius XII mentions.⁹⁰

84. Ps. 68:10.

85. Eph. 2:20; *Meditations*, 201.2; emphasis added; cf. 39.3, regarding John 17:22 and 1 Cor. 1:10.

86. Eph. 4:11–12.

87. Col. 1:24; *Meditations*, 205.3; emphasis added.

88. *Meditations*, 45.2; emphasis added.

89. Cf. *ibid.*, 2.2, 18.3, 196.2, and so on.

90. *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, EBB, 563.

In his *Meditations* alone, De La Salle refers one hundred and eleven times to the Fathers of the Church and other spiritual writers. Among the many included in this parade of experts are Theodoret, Saint Cyprian, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Gregory the Great, Saint Francis of Assisi, and Abbot Rupert. Beyond any doubt, however, he prefers Saint Augustine, Saint Bernard, and Saint Jerome.⁹¹

Sometimes he merely makes a general reference to “the Church’s ancient discipline”⁹² and to the universal consensus of Tradition—“the holy Fathers understand,”⁹³ “the Fathers of the Church say,”⁹⁴ “the saints call her,”⁹⁵ and so on.

It is interesting to see how he sometimes quotes Scripture, with hardly any commentary, by quoting one of the Fathers of the Church,⁹⁶ or else he makes his own some lengthy scriptural exegesis that he borrows from them.⁹⁷

These frequent quotations from the Fathers, which stylistically might appear somewhat pedantic and heavy because of their nature, appeal to the humility and docility of the Founder and ultimately to his faith. Only heretics hold to a highly individualistic and smug opinion.⁹⁸ The authentic believer, diffident of self, wishes only to be part of the one Faith of the Church, expressed by the uninterrupted flow of Tradition. De La Salle finds his originality in his way of living this faith and in its application to concrete situations.⁹⁹

In *Meditations* there are very few direct quotations from the extraordinary Magisterium of the Church.¹⁰⁰ It is more common that we find him alluding to the “praying magisterium.”¹⁰¹

91. In *Meditations* Saint Augustine and Saint Bernard are quoted eighteen times each; Saint Jerome, twelve times. The rest are variously scattered throughout, with no more than five quotations from any one author.

92. *Meditations*, 16.1.

93. *Ibid.*, 26.3.

94. *Ibid.*, 48.2.

95. *Ibid.*, 164.2.

96. *Ibid.*, 172.2.

97. *Meditations*, 37, is entirely based on the commentary of Saint Augustine on the parable of the importunate friend, from Luke 11.

98. Cf. Rigault, *Histoire générale de l’Institut*, vol. 1, p. 502.

99. As we shall see later, this concern to base the interpretation of Scripture on the solid foundation of Tradition is a patrimony that De La Salle wants to leave to his disciples. To achieve this, it is interesting to see how often he includes a patristic commentary at the end of the public readings of Sacred Scripture.

100. *Meditations*, 60.1 and 184.1–2.

101. Cf. *ibid.*, 4.3, 82.1, 89.2, 138.2, 162.2, 169.3, and 191.3.

The Duties of a Christian to God is where he shows his great reverence for the Councils. His biblical and theological doctrine is regularly supported by passages from the Council of Trent, particularly abundant on pages that deal with the sacraments and prayer.

According to the Council of Trent, Jesus Christ gave to the Church the power to grant indulgences when, after having said to Saint Peter, “*I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven,*” he adds, “*All that you will bind on earth. . .*”¹⁰²

The use of this sacrament [the Anointing of the Sick], according to the Council of Trent, is suggested in Saint Mark . . . and is recommended to the faithful by the Apostle Saint James. . . .¹⁰³

This indicates to us that if De La Salle is not as explicit in the use of the Magisterium in *Meditations*, it is merely due to the nature of that work. Nevertheless, the doctrine proposed never fails to reveal openly the transparent teaching of the Magisterium.¹⁰⁴

Finally, we cannot move on without considering the interior attitude with which De La Salle approaches Sacred Scripture. He is always keenly aware of the difference that separates these Books from all others. That is why he undertakes penances and long vigils to ask God for light and for respect and moderation in his interpretations.

Blain, his biographer, tells us that De La Salle in his later years—in spite of the fact that he has a greater knowledge of Scripture than any of the Brothers—suggests to a novice who has come to ask him for an explanation of the New Testament that he should consult his Director, convinced that because the Director “is the one who has charge of him, he would have the grace of state to explain it to him.”¹⁰⁵ This incident, which for anyone else might be taken as an evasive strategy, shows us the importance De La Salle places on grace when it is a question of interpreting Scripture. We will return to this theme later on when we deal with the reading of the Bible.

These, then, are the principal criteria that govern De La Salle in his work of interpreting Scripture. Now let us turn our attention to the specific means he uses to penetrate ever deeper into its meaning.

102. *Devoirs, I*, Cahiers lasalliens 20, pp. 339–340.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 353.

104. See, for example, *Meditations*, 155.1, in which the words themselves bring to mind some fragments of the Decree on Justification of the Council of Trent.

105. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 530.

Means to Understand Sacred Scripture

Concerning the maxims and the precepts of Sacred Scripture, De La Salle writes:

Among these maxims or sentences, some include truths which are also precepts and which impose on us the obligation of practicing the truths contained in these maxims; for example: *Stop judging and you will not be judged. . . . Forgive and you will be forgiven.*¹⁰⁶

These are maxims of precept because Our Lord positively commands us to carry them out under pain of damnation.

Others express counsels; in other words, we are not absolutely obliged to practice them in order to be saved, but they are suggested as necessary means in order to acquire greater perfection; for example: *If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.*¹⁰⁷

Some of these counsels are perfectly clear, intelligible, and easy to understand, like this one: *Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you.*¹⁰⁸

Others are more obscure and difficult to understand and need to be explained, such as the following: *If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.*¹⁰⁹ *If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple.*¹¹⁰

There are a number of other similar texts which must not be taken literally.¹¹¹

De La Salle is perfectly aware that this variety and difficulty of interpretation extend not only to the moral maxims but also to all of Scripture. That is why he continually tries to clarify the texts in different ways, always seeking to bring his followers face to face with the deepest and most intimate meaning of the Sacred Books.

106. Luke 6:37.

107. Matt. 19.

108. Matt. 5.

109. Matt. 5:29.

110. Luke 14:26.

111. *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, pp. 134–135.

Theological Clarifications

In many instances he tries to achieve this by including theological explanations, either within or following his quotations from Sacred Scripture. Sometimes these explanations appear as concise clarifications that are theologically precise and introduced by the expression "that is" or some equivalent:

Saint Paul also says, If I knew all the mysteries . . . but have not charity (*that is, sanctifying grace*), I am nothing.¹¹²

In other cases the clarification is done in two or three words:

. . . you plant and water the seed, but it is God *through Jesus Christ* who makes it grow *and brings your work to fulfillment*.¹¹³

Sometimes a turn of phrase clarifies the biblical idea. Thus instead of saying that the disciples of Emmaus *recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread*, De La Salle writes that they recognized him when "*Jesus gave them his sacred body*."¹¹⁴ At other times the clarification may also be more developed:

All that remains on your part, Saint Paul says, is *to complete what is lacking in the Passion of Christ*, that is, the application which ought to be made of the Passion to yourselves through the sharing that you will have in his sufferings.¹¹⁵

When precision of meaning requires it, De La Salle will even depart from his usual simplicity of style and use the appropriate technical vocabulary. Thus the union that Jesus Christ asks of his disciples in his priestly prayer must be

so close and stable that it resemble the union which exists among the three Divine Persons. It will not be exactly the same, because the three Divine Persons have only one *essence*, but the union among the Apostles would *participate* in the union of the Trinity in such a way that their union of mind and heart, desired

112. *Meditations*, 194.3, quoting 1 Cor. 13:2; emphasis added; cf. 78.2, regarding Matt. 4:19, and 172.2, regarding Ps. 91:12-13.

113. *Meditations*, 196.1, quoting 1 Cor. 3:6; emphasis added.

114. *Ibid.*, 30.3, quoting Luke 24:30-31.

115. *Ibid.*, 25.3, quoting Col. 1:24; emphasis added.

by Jesus Christ for them, would have the same effect as the *essential* union of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They would all have one and the same convictions, the same will, the same affections, the same maxims and practices. This is what Saint Paul recommended to the faithful when writing to them.¹¹⁶

There is no need to stress the theological profundity of this statement, which rises to the consideration of the essence of God and the most perfect life of the Blessed Trinity in knowledge and love, in order to deduce by way of analogy and participation the essence and effects that should be produced by Christian charity, insofar as it implies a grafting of the divine life into man.¹¹⁷

Argumentation

Argumentation, properly speaking, represents a step up from mere theological clarification. Beginning with revealed data, it deduces new truths by way of reason. We experience the process of the use of the consequent sense of exegesis as another means of arriving at the truth of Scripture. Because he is so orderly in his thinking, De La Salle has a special preference for this sense, by which we are progressively shown the word of God at the height of its efficacious power. Argumentation in Lasallian usage is sometimes explicit and at other times implicit, but it will always address the real facts so as to assure the logical rigor of the deductions.

This use of the consequent sense exists in approximately ten percent of the quotations in *Meditations*. Thanks to this sense, De La Salle properly attributes to the Holy Spirit or to the entire Holy Trinity what Saint John or Saint Paul says of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁸ In the same way, he has no difficulty transferring the effectiveness that Saint Paul attributes to the word of God—*which is sharper than any two-edged sword; it penetrates and divides the soul and spirit*—to the subjective application of this word to interior prayer.¹¹⁹

In the meditation for the Third Sunday of Advent, the use of the Gospel of the day in a consequent sense is clearly manifest in the explicit progression of its reasoning:

116. *Ibid.*, 39.3, alluding to John 17:22, with commentary based on 1 Cor. 1:10; emphasis added.

117. Another case of this theological approach is 208.3, where he explains the fullness of the happiness of the elect, basing himself on Ps. 16:1.

118. *Meditations*, 45.1, quoting John 10:10, and 46.1, quoting Phil. 2:10.

119. *Ibid.*, 181.3, quoting Heb. 4:12.

Scriptural basis:

[The precursor] said, therefore, that he was only *the voice of one crying in the desert: make straight the way of the Lord.*¹²⁰

Explicative link:

He thus showed that the substance of the doctrine he taught was not his own and that it was indeed the word of God he preached; as for himself, he was only the voice that proclaimed it. In the same way that a voice is a sound that strikes the ear and makes it possible for a word to be heard, so it was that Saint John prepared the Jews to receive Jesus Christ.

Conclusion:

The same thing is true of those who instruct others. They are only the voice of the One who really disposes hearts to accept Jesus Christ and his holy teaching. *The one who disposes them, according to Saint Paul, can only be God, who imparts to humans the gift of speaking of him.*¹²¹

Through such reasoning De La Salle solidly establishes the instrumentality of the ministers of the word, who have Saint John the Baptist as their most perfect model. We have already had occasion to remark that some apparent accommodations in the meditations on the ministry rise completely out of this category, because in reality they are actual usages in the consequent sense.

The Commentary

Finally, we must say a word about that less rigorous form of exegesis, the ascetico-theological commentary. Alongside those meditations in which the quotations are set in place piece by piece, using the strict literal sense and giving a granite-like solidity to the meditation,¹²² we have others in which De La Salle offers a more leisurely discourse on some scriptural idea. A notable example of this can be seen in the meditation for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, in which he

120. John 1:23.

121. 1 Cor. 3:5–7; *Meditations*, 3.1; emphasis added.

122. See the typical example in *Meditations*, 29, regarding the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and its repercussions on the Church and on the faithful.

enlarges on the words “heart,” “soul,” and “mind,” which are part of the formulation of the first commandment.¹²³ His incursions in this instance into the realm of theology have an air of depth and simplicity; however, these are not the commentaries that most vividly attract our attention.

We would like to pause here to watch De La Salle as he reads and speaks about Sacred Scripture with all the authority of a spiritual writer—as a soul filled with God and his word—and writes for those who make profession of striving for holiness. Then, without distorting the literal sense, he sees deeper meanings in the passages of Scripture, which only the Holy Spirit can give to souls who are seeking the full reality of his word. Some call this “interpretation by the saints.”¹²⁴ In one of his *Conferences*, John Cassian asserts:

In the measure in which our mind renews itself by means of this study, Scripture will seem to take on a different aspect for us. It will be another deeper and more mysterious understanding that is communicated to us, whose beauty increases in direct proportion to our progress. This is because the Sacred Text effectively accommodates itself to the receptive capacity of human intelligence. In proportion to our willingness to learn, understanding is given to us. That is why for carnal men the Scriptures seem to belong to this world, while for spiritual men they are heavenly and divine. Those who once saw them wrapped in thick darkness are now capable of penetrating their depths and of sustaining the brilliance of their light.¹²⁵

Then he continues by explaining that while a man is still a slave to vice, he will take the commandment “Thou shalt not commit adultery” literally, and he who is free from its passions will observe it spiritually, avoiding superstitions, but he who is more spiritually perfect will understand it as a subtler sin that lurks in the idle wanderings of our thoughts.

Notice the extraordinary similarity of these words with those of De La Salle in the meditation for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost. He quotes First Thessalonians 4:3—“*This is God’s will, your sanctification, that you abstain from fornication*”—in the following way: “The will of God is that you be holy and pure.” But the word

123. *Meditations*, 70, commenting on Matt. 22:35–37, and 34.2–3.

124. Vilnet, *Bible et mystique*, p. 172.

125. *Conferences* (Madrid: Rialp, 1962), vol. 2, p. 106.

“pure” he defines not in the meaning of purity as opposed to the concupiscence of the flesh but rather as a higher form of purity and fidelity, which is the rectitude or purity of intention—“meaning that your actions be pure, having no other motive than to please God.”¹²⁶ As fornication is the grossest form of idolatry,¹²⁷ so likewise is the lack of purity of intention one of the most subtle forms of infidelity to the one and only Love of spiritual men.

In his commentary on Matthew 5:20—“Unless your holiness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of God”—he states:

Apply these words to yourself, and be convinced that Jesus Christ is addressing them to you, that if you do not have more virtue than people in the world, you will be more liable to condemnation than they on the day of judgment.¹²⁸

Such an application of this text, which at first sight strikes us as unexpected and arbitrary because of the sudden transition from the scribes and Pharisees to the people of the world, has its justification in the commentary that follows. Basically what Christ is condemning is the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who are satisfied with appearances. De La Salle intends to delve as far as possible into the threat made by Christ. Where the ordinary Christian often sees little more than a matter of minimal and external fulfillment of the law, De La Salle considers that the religious, with his duty of tending toward perfection, cannot be without fault if he is “satisfied with observing the external and outward practices of religion . . . *without any interior spirit.*”¹²⁹ He who lives in this way behaves like the Pharisees. His justice may have value before men but not before God:

You who have given yourself to God and consequently should consecrate to him every moment of your life should do everything in a spirit of religion, without being content to do only what is exterior in the duties of your state. For if people are satisfied with what is external in actions, God, *who looks into the heart,*¹³⁰ will consider such works as worthless.¹³¹

126. *Meditations*, 75.3.

127. Recall the constant parallelism established by the Prophets between idolatry and fornication.

128. *Meditations*, 58.1.

129. *Ibid.*; emphasis added.

130. Rom. 8:27.

De La Salle continues to be explicit in this distinction:

Some people in the world who have a certain amount of piety believe that they have fulfilled their obligations when they do not show any outstanding vices and when their exterior conduct is not wholly reprehensible. But Jesus Christ condemns this attitude in those who claim to be serving him faithfully.¹³²

Even within a spiritual or allegorical commentary, De La Salle comes through to us at times as one filled with a very intimate and personal experience of God. Because of this, he belongs among the best spiritual authors. His meditation for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost,¹³³ on the cure of the paralytic of Capharnaum, is a magnificent example, but due to its length we cannot present it here.

Sometimes his understanding of the word of God brings about extraordinary insights and rich psychological and pedagogical applications, as we can readily see in the entire meditation on the Gospel of the Good Shepherd.¹³⁴

The privileged point of view from which De La Salle contemplates Sacred Scripture inspires him with exquisite commentaries that are full of transparent clarity and delicacy. When speaking of the multiplication of the loaves, he calls attention to the fact that 5,000 persons were filled with those five loaves, and then he continues:

But since Jesus Christ lived in poverty, he fed them what the poor eat, giving them only barley bread and some fish.¹³⁵

When he concludes a commentary with one sentence that contains the essence of the doctrine presented, it is interesting to note how often he chooses the words of Scripture itself. This is not due to an absence of literary finesse, but rather it is one more manifestation of the identification of his mind with the word of God.

131. *Meditations*, 58.1; emphasis added.

132. *Ibid.*, 58.2.

133. *Ibid.*, 17.

134. *Ibid.*, 33.

135. *Devoirs, I*, Cahier lasalliens 20, p. 33; the value of this detail is much more interesting in that it appears in a didactic rather than in an ascetical work.

Obscure Points

In all fairness, we must not overlook some minor difficulties that seem to reveal limitations to be found in De La Salle's work and that are inherent in any human effort. In the preceding pages we have tried to make a fair evaluation as we went along, indicating both the pluses and the minuses. Always keeping in mind the primarily ascetical framework of *Meditations*, we have been able to identify real and positive values from the exegetical point of view. And now it is a pleasant surprise for us to have to admit to one defeat. We truly expected to reap many negative aspects relative to De La Salle's exegesis and knowledge of Sacred Scripture. We have to confess that our harvest was meager and almost insignificant, as we can see.

From the point of view of terminology, *Meditations* does contain some inaccuracies. The meditation for the feast of Saint Matthew¹³⁶ places Capharnaum as a city in Judea instead of in Galilee. For the feast of Saint Barnabas, on 11 June, the meditation inverts the destination of the collection organized by the Apostles, sending it from Jerusalem to Antioch.¹³⁷ These are minor lapses, even possibly errors of a printer, because the 1922 edition carefully tried to correct them.

Something similar might be said about a rather vague passage of the meditation for the Third Sunday of Advent in which the quotation of Second Corinthians 5:4 omits the negative word—"because we do [*not*] wish to be stripped [*naked*]"—which radically changes the meaning of the sentence.¹³⁸

It is unacceptable to suppose in dealing with a passage that De La Salle quotes literally that he may have intended to invert the meaning without including one of the formulas he normally employs when using the accommodative sense, even in cases of lesser importance than this one. Then, too, we must not forget that *Meditations* was published posthumously, and therefore such slips are more easily accepted as such.

At first sight De La Salle seems to fall into another error in the previously mentioned meditation for the feast of Saint Matthew. He says that this evangelist wrote his Gospel "in the same language in which Jesus had preached it, Syriac, which was a corrupt Hebrew."¹³⁹ Today we know that the language spoken by the Jews in the time of

136. *Meditations*, 167.1.

137. *Ibid.*, 134.2.

138. *Ibid.*, 3.3; this comment does not apply to the English edition.

139. *Ibid.*, 167.2.

Christ was Palestinian Aramaic. Nevertheless the term Syriac is not entirely out of place. In fact, Aramaic was the language of Assyria since the eighth century B.C.,¹⁴⁰ and this is why some have identified it with the language of that country. Saint Jerome, evidently basing himself on Daniel 2:4, called Aramaic what is really Chaldean, as did many other authors who followed his lead.¹⁴¹

On the other hand, the fact that Aramaic replaced Hebrew among the Jews after the exile has raised the possibility that there is here a question not of a language belonging to the Hebrew line but rather of a dialect. So De La Salle, in a text that we have on hand, says that the language in which Saint Matthew wrote his Gospel is *un hébreu corrompu*. In *The Duties of a Christian to God*, speaking in a simpler manner, in order to accommodate himself to the students, he says that Matthew wrote his Gospel "in Hebrew."¹⁴² There is, therefore, no fundamental error, nor should we demand from De La Salle a modern knowledge of linguistics or today's advanced terminology.

It is a bit more difficult to explain the slight contradiction involving Acts 11:26, where Saint Luke places the initial use of the name "Christian" in Antioch. In *Meditations*, 134.3, De La Salle seems to attribute that fact (as related in Saint Luke) to the large number of conversions wrought by the faithful among the diaspora as a result of the persecution initiated by the incident of Saint Stephen and, subsequently, to the preaching of Paul and Barnabas. In *Meditations*, 106.1, he attributes the origin of the name "Christian" to the establishment of the Chair of Saint Peter in Antioch and his recognition by the faithful as the Vicar of Christ. As we can see, the biblical basis of this assertion is missing, even though in themselves the two affirmations are not absolutely irreconcilable.

The slaughter wrought by the angel of Yahweh on the ranks of the army of Sennacherib¹⁴³ is simply attributed by De La Salle to Saint Michael.¹⁴⁴ Such an affirmation is nowhere expressly contained in any text of Scripture. However, as part of any discussion on the identity of the angel of Yahweh, it could find a possible foundation in Daniel 10:13 and 12:1, which actually names Michael as the heavenly prince who is charged to watch over the people of Israel.

140. Cf. A. Diez Macho, "Arameo," in *Enciclopedia de la Biblia*, vol. 1, col. 665–672, p. 193; in the same work: M. Black, "Jesucristo, La lengua de," vol. 4, col. 518–525.

141. Cf. Saint Jerome, *Adv. Pel.* 3, 2, ML 23, 570.

142. *Devoirs, III*, Cahiers lasalliens 23, p. 264.

143. 2 Kings 19:35.

144. *Meditations*, 169.3.

In his meditation for the Presentation of the Most Blessed Virgin, De La Salle makes a rather unusual use of the expression "the day of the Lord," in a messianic sense, by means of this broad reference: "as told by a prophet."¹⁴⁵ The precise location of this phrase is extremely difficult, because it is an expression often used in Sacred Scripture. Besides, the quotations that most literally approximate the sentence used by De La Salle connote rather the day of vengeance and punishment for the enemies of Israel and for the Israelites themselves.¹⁴⁶ All things considered, we must bear in mind that if we focus on the concept of the "day of Yahweh," it actually had two meanings for the people of Israel since the very beginning: calamity for sinners and salvation for the just. When mentioned before the deportation, its preferred use is for the day of punishment and anger. The post-exile prophets stress rather the aspect of salvation.¹⁴⁷

We cannot deny, therefore, the messianic aura of the expression that De La Salle quotes here in passing, remembering the words of Sacred Scripture but without being able to attribute them to a specific author. This is evident from the reference he gives.

There is another inadvertent confusion, in *Meditations*, 145.2. De La Salle, without doubt taking for granted the usual triumvirate of Peter, James, and John that is so often repeated in the Gospels, refers to James, the son of Zebedee, as the James who begins the trio in Galatians 2:9. In reality, Saint Paul is referring to James, the son of Alphaeus, the head of the church in Jerusalem.

Another series of difficulties, upon examination, points to a profound awareness of meaning rather than to a defect in exegesis. For instance, when De La Salle quotes Hebrews 4:12, instead of contrasting soul (*alma*, ψυχή) and spirit (*spiritus*, πνεῦμα), as Saint Paul does, he contrasts flesh and spirit.¹⁴⁸ Taking into account that for Paul *psyche* (ψυχή) means the rational soul as the principle of natural life and πνεῦμα means the soul raised to the supernatural order by grace, De La Salle is merely calling attention to the distinction between these two principles so that they may be more clearly understood. This is done with no alteration of Pauline thinking, because he includes in the term "flesh" all that is earthly and natural, even though it be not material and sensible, as opposed to that which belongs to the supernatural life. Elsewhere he always uses typical Pauline terminology.¹⁴⁹

145. *Ibid.*, 191.3.

146. Cf. Isa. 13:6; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 2:1; Zeph. 7 & 15.

147. Haag, *Diccionario de la Biblia*, col. 463–465; cf. Pautrel, *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément*, vol. 4, col. 1324.

148. *Meditations*, 159.1.

The versions of Sacred Scripture employed by De La Salle, in the footnotes they furnish, justify this interpretation. For example, see the explanatory note given for this passage in the New Testament of Huré, 1702: "By *soul* the Apostle understands the animal and sensual part of man, and by *spirit*, all that is intellectual and reasonable." The versions of Amelote that include notes also abound in this same meaning, for example, in Amelote, 1688:

It penetrates even to the division of soul and spirit. The Word sees what proceeds from the soul as being alive, that is to say, whether it proceeds from the sensual and earthly man or whether it proceeds from the spiritual man; from man as flesh or from man as spirit; as the old man or as the new man.

We consider weaker the exegesis of the passage in *Collection of Various Short Treatises*,¹⁵⁰ where he says, "The *animal nature*, that is, one who loves the pleasures of the senses, *cannot conceive and taste well the things of God.*"¹⁵¹ De La Salle, along with other spiritual authors, exaggerates the intent of the expression "animal nature," taking it to mean not only man inasmuch as he is acting with his own natural powers but also man as given over to those instincts that he has in common with animals.

We have already mentioned some inadvertence in the translation or interpretation that can essentially be explained by deficiencies in the versions of the Bible or of the Vulgate in use in those days.¹⁵²

149. Gal. 5:16ff.

150. "Reflections That the Brothers May Make on the Means of Becoming Interior," *Collection*, p. 47.

151. 1 Cor. 2:14.

152. We find a remarkable example of this possibility in *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* (p. 112). De La Salle, in order to explain "You must not pronounce the names of God and of his saints irreverently and without reason," has recourse to Sir. 23:9–11, which according to modern authors reads as follows: "Do not take on the habit of spouting oaths or of pronouncing the name of the Holy One [Saint], because as the slave under continuous torture will not be free of welts, in the same way he who is always using oaths and the name of God needlessly will not be free from sin." According to this version, the name of Holy One [Saint] must clearly be said of God, and therefore in no way is the intended point proven. But if we consult the Vulgate, we find something completely different. In verse 10 it says: "Nominatio vero Dei non sit assidua in ore tuo, et *nomini*bus sanctorum non admiscearis, quondam non erit immunitas ab eis." For the same reason, there is an incorrect usage of Phil. 3:20, in which the word *conversatio* is translated

Concerning One Particular Source

At the conclusion of our investigation into the importance and value that Sacred Scripture assumes in the spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, it would be profitable to make a comparison with one of the indisputable sources of the Lasallian meditations. This will clearly show the originality of the author and the compelling necessity he feels to express himself by way of Scripture.

Today it is beyond doubt that De La Salle knew the meditations written by Girya¹⁵³ and that they are the inspiration for *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.¹⁵⁴ The Brothers themselves must have known and used Girya's meditations before De La Salle published his own. The proof lies in the manuscript made for the use of the Brothers, a copy of which is in the archives of the Generalate in Rome. In it the word *sœurs* is replaced by *frères*.¹⁵⁵

There are ten meditations by Girya, whereas De La Salle has sixteen; nevertheless, it is easy to see the similarity that exists between some of them, particularly numbers one, two, and ten. From them De La Salle borrows some general ideas as well as quotations from Scripture. However, as he incorporates these into his own meditations, there is a certain something that is undeniably original to De La Salle and that makes his meditations characteristically distinct. It consists of and is essentially based on his reaching into the sources of Revelation to provide a solid theological foundation for his assertions. Not that this is totally absent from Girya, but there is no comparing the role of Scripture and Tradition in the works of these two authors.

Girya hardly ever quotes from the Church Fathers; De La Salle has 218 quotations from Scripture to the 66 of Girya.¹⁵⁶ These statistics in

phonetically as "conversation" (*Collection*, p. 47). The versions of the New Testament used by De La Salle contain the same translation of this passage. Huré, 1702, has "*Mais pour nous notre conversation est dans le ciel.*" Amelote, 1683, has "*Nous avons notre conversation.*"

153. *Méditations pour les sœurs maîtresses des écoles charitables du Saint (Enfant) Jésus, de l'Institut de feu le R. P. Barré, minime, principalement au temps de leurs retraites et de leurs exercices spirituels, sur les principaux devoirs de leur état; lesquelles pourront aussi servir à tous les autres maîtres et maîtresses d'école pour leur faire connaître l'importance et les obligations de leur profession.* Par le R. P. F. Girya, Exprovincial des minimes, et Directeur du même Institut, à Paris chez Pierre de Launay, rue St. Jacques. À l'Enseigne de la ville de Rome, proche St. Severin, 1687. Avec approbation et permission.

154. Rigault, *Histoire générale de l'Institut*, vol. 1, p. 493.

155. Gallego, *La Teología de la Educación*, p. 66.

themselves indicate not only that there is no servility in De La Salle's following of a predecessor but also that there is a completely different approach to the theme.

Furthermore, De La Salle shows his independence in the choice of quotations. He does not use all of the quotations of Giry—far from it. Of all the scriptural passages quoted by Giry, only nineteen, or one third of the total, are common to both authors, and some of these are not even used in the same context.

In contradistinction to the already indicated preference of De La Salle for the literal meaning of Scripture, Giry frequently employs the accommodative sense, and he sometimes gives certain quotations an interpretation that differs notably from the doctrine proposed by De La Salle. The text of Saint Matthew—"What would it profit a man to gain the whole world if he suffers the loss of his own soul?"¹⁵⁷—which explains the vanity of earthly things as compared to those eternal, is transferred by Giry to the apostolate, declaring that it would be of little use to save the souls of others if one should lose his own.¹⁵⁸

De La Salle does not quote this passage. Basing himself on Hebrews 13:17, he offers a much more optimistic doctrine. God will first of all ask teachers for an account of the souls of their students. The basic reason for this is that when they properly carry out their function as guides and counselors of the souls entrusted to them, they fulfill at the same time their own responsibilities before God. God will fill them with such abundant graces that they will sanctify themselves at the same time they are contributing as far as they are able to the salvation of others.¹⁵⁹

What distinguishes De La Salle from Giry is that he has not only a significantly greater number of quotations than Giry but also, above all, a doctrinal meaning that is clearer and richer, as Sauvage emphasizes. It is worthy of note that in Giry's *Meditations* there is an almost

156. Cf. the tables of quotations from the New Testament and the Old Testament in the meditations of P. Giry, in Sauvage, *Les Citations*, p.100–104. Along with these, there is a comparative study with the quotations of De La Salle. "In Giry there are few scriptural quotations and hardly any of the Fathers" is the conclusion of Gallego (p. 67) in his older work based on the imperfect references of the 1922 edition of *Meditations*, at which time a good portion of the scriptural quotations were still unknown.

157. Matt. 16:26.

158. "Que lui servirait de gagner tout le monde si elle laissait périr misérablement son âme et qu'elle n'eût aucune part aux biens qu'elle tâcherait de répandre sur ses disciples" (Giry, *Meditations*, 1, second point).

159. *Meditations*, 205.2.

total absence of the important Pauline texts that relate to the ministry of the word of God. This originality of De La Salle in the use of Sacred Scripture, and especially of Saint Paul, has been recognized by all those who have carefully studied his writings.¹⁶⁰

Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle provides a tapestry whose warp and woof are Sacred Scripture. His doctrine is entirely biblical; his style, the essence of conciseness. Giry is more rhetorical, so he is usually satisfied to illustrate his exposition with some quotations from Scripture.¹⁶¹

This brief comparative study of the only other possible source that might bring into question the originality of De La Salle bolsters the fact that his use of Sacred Scripture is neither in conformity with the current fashion nor merely an occasional reference or stylistic technique.

Because Saint John Baptist de La Salle makes Sacred Scripture his preferred food for thought, which he assimilates into his life, Scripture becomes something necessary and essential to his self-expression and his style, just as it is both necessary and essential to the spirit that animates all his actions. To this spirit we will now turn our attention.

160. "As yet, I have said nothing about what constitutes perhaps the most original facet of his own teaching: his use of Pauline teaching. Above and beyond all the extracts we can bring to light, there is no doubt that the main source of the thought of the Founder of the Christian Schools is Saint Paul. In *Meditations* and in *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, his recourse to the teaching of Saint Paul is unceasing." Rayez, "Lasallian Studies in the Mid-twentieth Century," in *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, p. 122.

161. Sauvage, *Les Citations*, p. 102.

Chapter Five

Definition of Terms Used in Lasallian Spirituality

After the background studies we have just presented, we are in a better position to take up a direct consideration of Lasallian spirituality itself. However, as in nature we cannot get to the kernel without first dealing with the shell, so also before focusing fully on the spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, we must have a clear understanding of the basic terms of his spiritual vocabulary.

The words “maxim” and “spirit,” followed by various qualifiers, continually flow from his pen. Therefore, it is in our best interest to know the precise scriptural intent of such words for De La Salle, so that in what follows we will not be burdened by the need for continual clarifications. As we begin this study of Lasallian spirituality *per se*, the first step must necessarily be a precise definition of the terminology he uses.

Maxims

It is truly amazing that defining such common words as “maxims of the Gospel,” a term so frequently used by De La Salle, could have been neglected for so long a time. It was not until 1962 that an express and lengthy study of the matter was undertaken.¹ Until that time, the Lasallian bibliography contained only a few allusions to it.

Every epoch has its peculiar style, its concepts, and its preferred vocabulary. In French literature of the *Grand Siècle*, the word “maxim” became part of the catalogue of current terminology. The high aristocracy dedicated its leisure in the salons to the intellectual and linguistic exercise of condensing the fruits of experience and wisdom into cleverly wrought capsules.² Spiritual authors counterbalanced this cleverly phrased wisdom of the world by presenting the teachings of Jesus Christ and of the saints in similarly concise formulas.

Thus in the seventeenth century we find an enthusiastic proliferation of all kinds of maxims, from *Maximes de La Rochefoucauld*,³ which is quite pessimistic in tone and reduces virtue to mere hypocrisy and self-interest, to *Maximes des Saints sur la Vie Intérieure*, in which Fénelon expounds his ideas on the “pure love of God.” Because of the raging polemics concerning Quietism, this brought down on him the condemnation of Innocent XII. Add to this list *Maximes et Réflexions sur la Comédie* of Bossuet and the myriad publications destined to propagate among the faithful “maxims of Scripture,” “maxims of the Gospel,” “maxims of Solomon,” “Christian maxims and affections,” “maxims and counsels of Divine Wisdom,” “maxims of Jesus Christ,” and so on.⁴

These influences of the times can also be found in Saint John Baptist de La Salle, and in point of fact, the term “maxim” appears 157 times in his writings. We find it used with various qualifiers: maxims “of the Gospel,” “of Jesus Christ,” “of Christianity,” “of faith,” “of the Church,” and so on, just as they likewise appear in other writings of his day. But already at this point we must call attention to the particularly preferred formula that become characteristic of him. While the most frequently used terms in the rest of the religious literature of the eighteenth century seem to be “Christian maxims,” “maxims of Scripture,” and perhaps also “maxims of Jesus Christ,” in De La Salle the preference falls beyond any doubt on the expression “maxims of the Gospel.” It accounts for fully fifty percent of the total usage of such references.⁵

1. Umberto Marcato, “*Le massime del vangelo nella formazione del fanciullo secondo S. G. B. de La Salle*,” *Rivista Lasalliana*, 36 (1962), pp. 142–190.

2. Cf. Albert-Valentin, “*Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle et la Sainte Écriture*,” p. 5.

3. *Reflexions ou sentences et maximes morales*, edited anonymously in 1665, originating in the salon of Mme de Sable; cf. *Larousse du XX^e siècle*, vol. 4, p. 753.

4. Cf. the catalogue of works in this genre compiled by Maurice-Auguste Hermans, in *Rivista Lasalliana*, 36 (1962), pp. 181–185.

Ordinarily, “maxim” is understood to mean “a thought expressed or adopted as a norm of conduct,”⁶ a practical principle or norm of action expressed as an axiom, that is, as a brief and subtly thought-provoking statement.⁷

As for the complete expression “maxims of the Gospel” in itself, it does not necessarily require a strictly scriptural identification, that is, a norm of conduct taken *literally* from the text of the Gospels. It could just as well refer to that broader usage in which the concept expressed, while essentially biblical, appears in an original literary form. It could even include an expression of truth that is closely related to what Sacred Scripture says; therefore, it is necessary that we study carefully how De La Salle uses this and other similar expressions, in order to discover the real meaning of “maxim” in his mind. And it is especially of vital importance that we grasp its scriptural meaning. Unless this is done, we would be on very unstable ground when working with Lasallian texts that contain such expressions.

Scriptural Character of Maxims

It would be too cumbersome to reproduce here all the relevant material gleaned from the writings of De La Salle. Of necessity some selection is called for, in order to avoid needless repetition. A judicious and objective selection will be sufficient to enable us to understand the thinking of the Founder of the Christian Schools.

A mere perusal of his works is enough to make us aware once again that the love of truth predominates in all of them. There is no attempt at oratory, only a clear presentation that communicates the truth as convincingly as possible.

For him there are only two possible standards for our conduct: one determined by God and the other by the world. Although he in no way neglects the intermediate role of the Church, he is going to

5. Marcato, p. 150.

6. *Larousse du XX^e siècle*, vol. 4, p. 753.

7. *Enciclopedia Universal*, Espasa-Calpe, vol. 33, p. 1250. We will not dwell on the verification of these general characteristics of the “maxims” of our author, because this has already been done by the previously quoted writer, Brother Umberto Marcato. In his study of the speculative–practical aspects of the maxims, he concludes: “In some of them there is stress on the active aspect, and in others, on the intellectual aspect or norms for judgment. However, the ‘maxims’ are always ‘practical’ principles, that is, they are a part of living and of our exercise of freedom.” (Marcato, p. 154)

seek the divine standards for human activity in the Bible, especially in the Gospels, which are the crown of Revelation.

Of around one hundred passages in which De La Salle uses the term “maxim,” properly so called, about twelve refer to “maxims of the world.” Seventy-five have scriptural connotations—forty-six “maxims of the Gospel,” fifteen “maxims of Jesus,” and the small remaining group divided among “Christian maxims,” “maxims of Christianity,” “maxims of faith,” “maxims of religion,” “pious maxims,” and so on.

We will now try to determine the specific meaning of these qualifiers with regard to their relationship to Sacred Scripture. In *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, De La Salle is explicit with regard to what he means by “maxims of the Gospel.”

In the second part of interior prayer, we can consider a maxim of the holy Gospel and take it as the subject of our prayer.

We call maxims sentences or passages from Scripture which teach us some of the truths necessary for salvation or interior words which make us understand what we should do or avoid, what we should esteem or despise, what we should seek or flee from, what we should love or hate, and the like. The New Testament is full of such passages.⁸

As we can see, the phrase “maxims of the holy Gospel,” in its strictest sense, must be understood to mean “from the Gospel,” in the form of axioms that constitute a divine standard for our judgment and our conduct.

The meaning of the expression “interior words” (*paroles intérieures*) is not easy to explain.⁹ We must take into account the terminology of the time and especially the way it is used by De La Salle, in order to understand the word *intérieures* adequately. If we examine the way in which this word is used in other parts of *Explanation of*

8. *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, p. 134.

9. A proof of this can be found in the French edition of *Explication de la Méthode d'Oraison*, Paris, 1898. In this edition, whose title page proclaims its fidelity to the original edition of 1739, the term *intérieures* is simply suppressed. Thus the text becomes clear but to the prejudice of the thought of the Founder (cf. p. 127). Stranger yet is the fact that when Marcato, in his study, “*Le massime del vangelo nella formazione del fanciullo secondo S. G. B. de La Salle*,”—quite complete otherwise—examines this text in detail, he pays no attention to the difficulty presented by the expression *intérieures* and even omits it when he reproduces the Lasallian text, perhaps because he is using the French edition of 1898 (cf. Marcato, p. 154).

the Method of Interior Prayer, we can observe that De La Salle always establishes a close parallelism between “interior things” or “spiritual things” in an evident contrast with those which are “exterior,” “sensual,” and “material.” The attributes *interior* and *spiritual* are eminently proper to God and to divine realities, insofar as they refer to the activities of the soul.¹⁰

While trying to explain the first part of the method of interior prayer, De La Salle has a passage that can be of great help toward our understanding of the expression “interior words.” He speaks about the reflections that can be made during the act of faith in the presence of God and gives an example of how they may be done. He recommends that there be “only a few words,”¹¹ and he calls these words “interior words,” “words of the mind and of the heart.”

Without dwelling further on the matter, we can conclude that the expression “interior words” of itself implies no strictly scriptural connotation, and in the context of the Lasallian definition of “maxim” it must be understood as an explanation for—rather than the equivalent of—the preceding expression, “sentences or passages of Scripture.” It merely emphasizes the spiritual and divine character of these passages. De La Salle continues by listing the characteristics that must be present so that a passage of Scripture might be considered a “maxim.” He finishes by remarking that the New Testament is the most abundant source for these maxims.

10. “Therefore, when we wish to apply our mind to interior prayer, we must begin by withdrawing it entirely from attention to exterior and material things and by being attentive only to spiritual and interior things. It is for this reason that we must begin by being attentive to the presence of God.” (*Explanation*, p. 22) We find the same parallelism on page 23: “Attention to God has the characteristic of being incompatible with attention to exterior and material things, because God is a spiritual being, and attention to God is in no way compatible with attention even to spiritual creatures, because God is infinitely above all created things, however detached from matter and however perfect they may be. . . . It follows necessarily that the more a soul is attentive to God, the more will it disengage itself from all attention to creatures. . . . It is in this way that the soul, imperceptibly filling itself with God, detaches itself from creatures and becomes what we call *interior* by turning away and disengaging itself from *material* and *exterior* objects.” Cf. also, Tinsley, *The French Expressions for Spirituality and Devotion*, pp. 223–227, in which the author comes to similar conclusions regarding the use of these terms in the epoch of De La Salle.

11. *Explanation*, p. 65; the expression “interior words” occurs on page 134, “Considering a Maxim.”

Ultimately, we must say that Sacred Scripture is for De La Salle the *interior word par excellence*, as is evident from the rest of the quotation we have just referred to:

Some passages of Holy Scripture are often very useful to help us who make reflections of this sort in few words, especially because, being the words of God as faith makes them known to us, they possess their own divine unction.¹²

Having established the intimate relationship between maxims and passages of Sacred Scripture, we must emphasize that we mean passages taken *literally* from the Sacred Books. The examples of the

12. Ibid., p. 66. Perhaps the expression “interior words” has some relationship with the terminology of Saint John of the Cross. This Mystical Doctor distinguishes three kinds of “locutions,” or “interior words,” which he calls “successive, formal, or substantial” (*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, book 2, chap. 28). He describes the first category this way: “These successive words always come when the spirit is recollected and absorbed very attentively in some meditation; and, in its reflections upon that same matter whereon it is thinking, it proceeds from one stage to another, forming words and arguments which are very much to the point, with great facility and distinctiveness, and by means of its reasoning discovers things which it knew not with respect to the subject of its reflections, so that it seems not to be doing this itself, but rather it seems that another person is supplying the reasoning within its mind or answering its questions or teaching it. And in truth it has good cause for thinking this, for the soul itself is reasoning with itself and answering itself as though it were two persons convening together; and in some ways this is really so; for, although it is the spirit itself that works as an instrument, the Holy Spirit oftentimes aids it to produce and form those true reasonings, words and conceptions.” (*Ascent*, book 2, chap. 29; 3rd revised edition, 1952, translated and edited by E. Allison Peers from the critical edition of P. Silverios de Santa Teresa.) Now, if to all this we add that book 2 of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, from which the above quotation is taken, deals with “the proximate means of ascending to union with God, which is faith,” we can readily see the analogy that unites the thought of these two saints. In fact, De La Salle speaks in *Explanation*, pp. 37–45, about faith considerations of a passage of Holy Scripture, which change to “interior words” by which the eyes of the soul become successively aware of the rich potentialities of the divine word. He speaks of the insights and affections that are stirred by this word, allowing it to germinate internally when it is sown with humility in the depths of the soul. On the other hand, Saint John of the Cross does not limit these deep prayer moments to high mystical states. Often they can be experienced in the normal activity of the soul when it receives the normal actual graces that usually accompany the word of God.

maxims that De La Salle then lists constitute a most valuable illustration of his meaning:

Stop judging, and you will not be judged. . . . Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you.

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple.¹³

These are all literal quotations of Luke 6:37, Matthew 19:21, Luke 6:27–28, Matthew 5:29, and Luke 14:26. As if this were not sufficient, when he speaks of the way to use these maxims, De La Salle continues to insist on their origin:

We should begin by convincing ourselves interiorly, through a sentiment of faith, of the necessity or the utility of the maxim on which we desire to make interior prayer, *by recalling to mind the passage of Holy Scripture* in which the maxim is found.¹⁴

When speaking of the ministry, he says to the Brothers that they should be like “visible angels” for their students, in order to teach them “*the practical maxims that are found throughout the holy Gospel.*”¹⁵

13. *Explanation*, pp. 134–135.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 135; emphasis added; cf. also, a similar passage (p. 112): “We make an act of faith in the maxim. . . . To convince ourselves more fully of this truth, we should call to mind the passage of the New Testament where this maxim is found.”

15. *Meditations*, 197.2; emphasis added.

Equivalent Formulas

The above comments also apply to the parallel formulas used by De La Salle. The “maxims of Jesus Christ” are any statements taken literally from the Gospels. “*Carefully study the Gospel of Saint Matthew,*” he says in his meditation for the feast of this evangelist, “in which we find proposed the holiest maxims of Jesus Christ. . . .”¹⁶

“Maxims of Scripture” and “maxims of Jesus Christ” are considered to be one and the same in the meditation for the feast of Saint Cyprian, and the intended meaning becomes evident from the decision of Saint Cyprian, who, *filled with these maxims*, which he found in Sacred Scripture, *sold all his possessions and distributed the proceeds to the poor.*¹⁷

The divine origin of these scriptural passages induces De La Salle to refer to them often by the term “holy maxims,” and to this he frequently adds the source from whence they come: “holy maxims [of Jesus Christ],”¹⁸ “holy maxims [of Our Lord],”¹⁹ “the holy maxims contained in this wonderful book [the Gospel],”²⁰ “the holy maxims contained therein [Sacred Scripture], particularly in the Epistles of the holy Apostles and the Gospel,”²¹ “the holy maxims contained in this saint’s [Mark’s] Gospel,”²² and “the holy maxims contained there [the Epistles of Saint Peter].”²³

What should be understood by the “Christian truths and maxims”²⁴ or the “maxims of Christianity,”²⁵ with which the Brothers ought to inspire their students, we will find clearly explained, among other places, in *Meditations*, 202.2. Here, making only the alterations necessary to turn the Beatitudes from direct to indirect discourse,²⁶ he concludes by saying:

These are the kinds of maxims and practices you must continually inspire in your disciples if you have any zeal for their salvation.

16. *Ibid.*, 167.2; emphasis added.

17. *Ibid.*, 166.1; emphasis added.

18. *Ibid.*, 30.3.

19. *Ibid.*, 2, the heading.

20. *Ibid.*, 159.1.

21. *Collection*, p. 59.

22. *Meditations*, 116.2.

23. *Ibid.*, 116.1.

24. *Ibid.*, 197.1.

25. *Ibid.*, 191.2.

26. Matt. 5:37, 5:44, 6:1, 6:5, 6:6, and 5:3.

Then, in *Meditations*, 1983, five more literal quotations, this time from the Epistle to the Ephesians,²⁷ break into an urgent appeal:

Is this the way you have instructed your disciples up to now? Are these the maxims with which you have inspired them?

But none of these examples is as convincing to support the point we are making than that which flows from the passage in which De La Salle, speaking of the evangelical counsels and commenting on the Beatitudes and the works of mercy, says:

There is, besides, an enormous number of *Christian maxims*, which we did not judge proper to include here, since they can be found *in all the pages of the New Testament*.²⁸

And when speaking of all the unique features of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, he singles out one that the evangelist records for us in the Sermon on the Mount, in which he teaches us the principal “Christian maxims.”²⁹

There is one instance, however, in which the expression “Christian maxims” is clearly used in a non-scriptural sense. *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, in a chapter dealing with the teaching of handwriting, contrasts “sentences from Holy Scripture” and “Christian maxims taken from the works of the Fathers or from devotional books.”³⁰ And although this constitutes a unique exception in Lasallian literature, we in all honesty conclude that for De La Salle the expressions “Christian maxims” and “maxims of Christianity” are used in a general sense that includes all those statements, be they scriptural or not, that correctly express Christian doctrine. However, we must take great care to note their undeniably scriptural orientation in the great majority of cases.

We can see something similar in the expression “maxims of faith,” which appears twice in the *Collection*.³¹ In principle it is not strictly necessary that they be scriptural. However, De La Salle here continues to demonstrate his predilection for Sacred Scripture by giving them, almost exclusively, some kind of a scriptural overtone.

27. Eph. 4:30, 4:22, 4:25, 4:32, and 5:2.

28. *Devoirs, I*, Cahiers lasalliens 20, p. 192; emphasis added.

29. *Devoirs, III*, Cahiers lasalliens 23, p. 264. On the following page, he refers to these as “maxims of the Christian life.”

30. *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, p. 74.

31. *Collection*, pp. 30 and 32.

We deliberately say “almost” because this leaves the door open to comment that the spirit of faith, the soul of all his spirituality, must always be guided by maxims and sentiments of faith taken principally from Sacred Scripture.³² According to the previous definition, there can also be maxims of faith outside Scripture, but the fundamentally biblical lines that guide Lasallian living are here clearly drawn. When the time comes to speak about the spirit that De La Salle leaves as a heritage to his Institute, this discussion will become much clearer.

In *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, another parallel expression can be found that will throw more light on the meaning of the one mentioned above. It is “passages of faith.” De La Salle does not expressly say that by “passages of faith” he means passages of Sacred Scripture, although the opposite is true.³³ However, in practice the only passages referred to by this term will be from the revealed Books.

He explains the various ways to place ourselves in the presence of God at the beginning of interior prayer. He proposes six different methods, although all of them have the same common denominator. This “must always be done through a sentiment of faith, based on a passage taken from Holy Scripture.”³⁴ The examples he then suggests for each method confirm the fact that he means *literal* quotations.³⁵ He concludes:

This is how, through attention to some *passage of faith* . . . we can gradually acquire a certain facility for making ourselves aware of the presence of God by simple attention.³⁶

This conclusion states clearly the ultimate universal practicality of the scriptural character of the “passages of faith,” according to De La Salle.

“A Collection of Subjects on Which the Brothers Should Speak During Recreation”³⁷ suggests as the eighth topic, “The spiritual maxims and practices of the saints.”³⁸ Even here, where the uninitiated

32. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

33. *Explanation*, pp. 49ff.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–44.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 50; emphasis added.

37. This list “reproduces, comments on, and now and again modifies the memorable list compiled by the Jesuit Jerome Nadal” (Rayez, “Lasallian Studies in the Mid-twentieth Century,” in *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, pp. 113–114, with reference to *Epistolæ P. Hieronymi Nadal*, vol. 4, *Selecta Natalis monumenta*, in *Monumenta historica Societatis Jesu*, Madrid,

might think about statements made by saints or about ascetical principles, we believe that we cannot remove from the word “maxim” its clearly scriptural connotation.

We should note, in the first place, that the suggestion of such a topic of conversation is unique to Saint John Baptist de La Salle, in that it is not to be found in the lists of Père Nadal or in those of the *Institutum Societatis Jesu* in which De La Salle found inspiration. On the other hand, we know from the Lasallian context what “maxims” motivated the saints “to develop a deep contempt for all that worldlings love,” to resist “the vicious inclinations that lead us to sin,” and “not to seek the comforts of nature.”³⁹ Also noteworthy are the “various maxims and practices which the pupils should be taught in order to make them enter into the Christian spirit” (topic twenty-nine in the above-mentioned list).⁴⁰ We will come back to this later on.

Finally, we should not forget how, in the meditation for the feast of Saint John Chrysostom, De La Salle underscores this interpretation when—in perfect accord with “A Collection of Subjects on Which the Brothers Should Speak During Recreation”—he speaks of the maxims that can be found in Sacred Scripture and prescribes that they be “the usual topic of your conversation.”⁴¹

As we end this part of our investigation, we must add that the expression “pious maxims” is the only one that is exempt from the scriptural gravitation suggested by the word “maxim.” Yet even this expression is significant enough, because it appears only twice in all his works.⁴²

1905, pp. 450–452). That De La Salle uses this list as a source and inspiration is beyond doubt. Nevertheless, as Maymi establishes in his thesis, he knows the work of the learned Jesuit only indirectly by way of an altered copy found in *Institutum Societatis Jesu*, Amberes, 1635, vol. 4, in “*Instructiones ad Provinciales et Superiores Societatis*,” pp. 78–80, under the title “*Quibus de rebus nostri recreationis tempore colloqui possint*.” Here again, along with the borrowing, we find that when De La Salle adapts something, he infuses into the work a spirit that is characteristically Lasallian. In the Lasallian bibliography this list appears in three different entries, and there are variants among the three: *Recueil*, no. 1 (Generalate archives, Rome), Rule of 1705, and *Recueil*, 1711. From this latter other editions were made. Gallego dates *Recueil* no. 1 as 1692–1694 (*La Teología de la Educación*, p. 48, n. 19). As we can see, these three different versions appeared during the lifetime of De La Salle. Because of this fact, we always refer to the last-mentioned edition of 1711.

38. *Collection*, p. 26.

39. *Explanation*, p. 136.

40. *Collection*, p. 29.

41. *Meditations*, 100.1.

In summary, then, we can state a number of conclusions.

1) By “maxims of the Gospel,” “of Scripture,” “of the Apostles,” and “of Jesus Christ,” De La Salle means literal passages of the Bible, preferably from the New Testament.

2) He concedes to “Christian maxims,” “maxims of Christianity,” and “maxims of faith” a broader meaning, but preferably scriptural; the same can be said of “spiritual maxims.”

3) There are other such expressions that do not contain sufficient clues to enable us to determine their scriptural identity; however, the word “maxim” as used by De La Salle has a scope sufficiently broad to refer either to a norm of Sacred Scripture or to a wise norm of the world, with the predominance in favor of the former; it is enough for us to recall that seventy-five percent of the time when the word “maxim” is used, its meaning is clearly scriptural.

4) Only the expression “pious maxim” has a clearly ascetical and non-biblical character in the two situations in which it is employed.

5) Excluding “maxims of the world,” the only exceptions to the clearly scriptural character of the word “maxim” are to be found in the works that are more didactic in nature.

All this leads us to affirm, as a general thesis, that in his ascetical works, De La Salle uses the word “maxim” in a scriptural sense.

Maxims and the Spiritual Life

Once we have defined the nature of the maxims, we must still identify some of their specific characteristics, in order to tie all of this into the thesis we are sustaining, that is, the role of Sacred Scripture in the thinking of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

Maxims are expressed manifestations of uncreated truth, and therefore, with due regard to the propriety of analogy, we can adore

42. According to *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, “This [the advice that she not put them into the same bed] is what Saint Francis de Sales recommended to Madame de Chantal in regard to her children, when she still lived in the world, as something extremely important and as much a practice of decorum as one of Christian morality and piety” (p. 45). *Conduite des Écoles chrétiennes* (ms. fr. 11.759, National Library of Paris, p. 50) speaks of two lists for use in the schools, “one of passages from Sacred Scripture, the Old as well as the New Testament, and the other of pious maxims, taken from some good book.” The comparison is clear, but remember that this expression also appears in the context in which De La Salle mentions “Christian maxims,” and it bears a certain affinity with them.

them as we adore Jesus Christ, Truth made flesh.⁴³ Jesus Christ is their author. He speaks them with his own lips, and like all the words that come from his mouth, they are “words of eternal life.” That is why Jesus Christ is “our one and only Teacher,” before whom no one can arrogate to himself this title. He is “the Teacher sent by God,” who “humbled himself to come down from heaven to earth to reveal [each of these maxims] to us, to dissipate our darkness, and to give us a share in [his] admirable light.”⁴⁴

Precisely for this reason, the world, because it “does evil, hates the light,” and is blinded by sin, “follows maxims entirely contrary to those that the Holy Spirit teaches to holy souls.”⁴⁵ Therefore we ought to practice making acts of faith in each maxim, “paying our homage to Our Lord teaching us this maxim, keeping ourselves attentive and in deepest respect before him,” and telling him, “I acknowledge you as the teacher sent us by God,” listening “with humility and docility to your holy word, which is the life of my soul,” and “expressing our gratitude to Our Lord for the goodness he showed us in teaching us this maxim.” This thanksgiving demands total effort, “with all my heart and with all my soul,” and needs to be ratified by our behavior.⁴⁶

In Confirmation the bishop signs our forehead with holy chrism precisely “to give us to understand that the person confirmed must make a public profession of faith and of the maxims of the Gospel and must never be ashamed of them.”⁴⁷

Given that the maxims constitute a divine language that transcends human demands and limitations and that “they are far above all that the human mind can conceive by itself,”⁴⁸ it is only with the light and help of the Holy Spirit that we can penetrate their profound meaning. Humble prayer is our indispensable means. “It will be by this means that the Holy Spirit will come to you and will teach you . . . all the truths of religion and the maxims of Christianity which you should know and practice very perfectly, since you are obliged to inspire them in others”⁴⁹ as ministers of his word.

The truths which the Holy Spirit teaches to those who receive him are the maxims found in the holy Gospel. He helps them to

43. *Explanation*, pp. 29, 139.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

45. *Meditations*, 44.3, 189.2, 182.1.

46. *Explanation*, pp. 139–141.

47. *Devoirs*, I, Cahiers lasalliens 20, p. 238.

48. *Meditations*, 192.2.

49. *Ibid.*, 191.2.

understand these maxims and to take them to heart, and he leads them to live and act in accordance with them.⁵⁰

The reason De La Salle gives for this categorical assertion is clear:

For the Spirit of God alone can give us a correct understanding of these maxims of the Gospel and can inspire us to put them into practice, because they are above the level of the human spirit. How, indeed, can we ever realize that *blessed are the poor*,⁵¹ that we should *love those who hate us*⁵² and *rejoice when we are calumniated and when people say all sorts of evil against us*,⁵³ that we should *return good for evil*,⁵⁴ and so many other truths entirely contrary to what nature suggests, unless the *Spirit of God* himself teaches them to us?⁵⁵

From this De La Salle draws an important conclusion for his followers, on whom rests the obligation “to teach these holy maxims to the children you are charged to instruct.” Since no one can give what he does not have, “you must be thoroughly convinced of them yourself, so that you may impress them deeply on the hearts of your pupils.” How will the Brothers become capable of corresponding to such a serious responsibility? Impressive treatises have been written about the divine word, but these are not always available, nor are they at the level of a poor community. Daily study is necessary, and time is at a premium. However, De La Salle knows a shortcut that can bring them quickly to their goal without neglecting human means and personal effort. “Make yourself docile, therefore, to the Holy Spirit, who can in a short time procure for you a perfect understanding of these truths.”⁵⁶ No one can explain them better than the Author himself.

When De La Salle writes these words, still fresh in his mind are those with which he describes the truth by referring to the experience of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost:

An amazing thing: that these men, up to then so earthly minded that they could not grasp the sacred truths that Jesus Christ taught

50. *Ibid.*, 44.2.

51. Matt. 5:3.

52. Matt. 5:44.

53. Matt. 5:11.

54. Matt. 5:44.

55. *Meditations*, 44.2; emphasis added.

56. *Ibid.*, 44.2.

them, were all at once so enlightened that they could now explain clearly and with all imaginable accuracy the words of Holy Scripture! As a result, those present were completely surprised.⁵⁷

Human teachers try to enrich our minds and mold our hearts, but they can do so only from the outside. The “soul’s most welcome Guest” alone has the power to act from within and to penetrate the recesses of our mind, which are hidden even from ourselves. There he communicates to us his divine knowledge without the sound of words.

When De La Salle speaks of the “perfect understanding” of maxims, he is not referring merely to a mechanical exercise that makes memory a file of scriptural passages. His intent goes much further. Assuming that this effort of the memory is there, it is still necessary to enter into the real and profound meaning of the revealed word. In *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, De La Salle frequently repeats the expression “penetrate oneself with the spirit of the maxim.”

When he says, “spirit of the maxim,” De La Salle has in mind “the holy impression and the salutary effect which the maxim should produce when it is seriously considered and understood.”⁵⁸

The process of interiorization must continue after the initial intellectual understanding. At this point the maxim stops being a mere concept and becomes alive—a living, vivifying spirit and an internal principle of action. He illustrates his definition with some examples. We offer one of them here:

The spirit of this other maxim—*Whoever would save his life would lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it*—is to despise and reject sensual pleasures, not to seek the comforts of nature, not to fear, at least voluntarily, sufferings and mortifications, and still less to flee from them.

It leads us to do penance willingly and to endure labors, especially those which are of obligation and are imposed by our state in life, without concern that they may affect our health; it even makes us willingly sacrifice our health to the Lord, keeping in mind these words of the Gospel: *Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

It was the spirit of this maxim that made the early Christians face martyrdom joyfully and which induced the ancient desert Fathers to embrace such excessive and lengthy austerities with so much courage and constancy.⁵⁹

57. *Ibid.*, 43.3.

58. *Explanation*, p. 135.

In the meditation for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, De La Salle has a passage that seems to radiate the spirit of this maxim, when applied to the real and daily life of the Brother:

It is truly to sacrifice your life for God, to spend it only for him. This is what you can do in your profession and your work, not being concerned whether you die in a few years, provided you save yourself and win souls for God.⁶⁰

From the many things we have said, we can see that according to De La Salle, the “good effect” that meditation on the maxims ought to produce in us can proceed from a simple act of mortification to the most heroic act of charity, which is the immolation of our life for God and for our neighbor.

To possess the spirit of a maxim in all its perfection, as proposed by De La Salle, it is not necessary to have special exegetical knowledge but a practical, spiritual sense of integrating a given maxim into our life. To a greater or lesser degree, we cannot achieve this without light from the “Teacher of souls.” This is why De La Salle reminds us, in a passage previously quoted, that only docility to the Holy Spirit can give us “perfect understanding” of the “maxims” in a short time.

Spirit

Another word that frequently appears in the literature of seventeenth-century France is *esprit*. It is used in the field of religion with a wide variety of qualifiers: “spirit of Christianity,” “Christian spirit,” “spirit of faith,” “spirit of religion,” “spirit of Jesus Christ,” “Spirit of God,” and so on.

Saint John Baptist de La Salle does not insulate himself from the influence of his times. He makes the “spirit of faith and zeal” the characteristic mark of the spirituality of his followers, and he reminds us of the various kinds of “spirit” mentioned above, with his preference being the “spirit of Christianity.”

We will investigate the spirit proper to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at greater length later on. At this point,

59. *Ibid.*, p. 136–137.

60. *Meditations*, 70.2.

however, we need to study the concept of *spirit*, which will provide a foundation for our main consideration.

Spirit of Christianity and Sacred Scripture

The intimate relationship that exists in Lasallian thought between “spirit of Christianity” and “maxims of the Gospel” arises spontaneously from the writings of De La Salle. Therefore the clarification just made concerning the maxims becomes an indispensable basis to establish more precisely the nature of the “spirit of Christianity” and its relationship to Sacred Scripture. De La Salle says to his Brothers:

It is from this holy book [the Gospel] that you must draw the truths which you must teach your disciples every day, in order to give them by this means the true spirit of Christianity. For the same reason, nourish your soul daily with the holy maxims contained in this wonderful book, and make them familiar to you by often meditating on them.

In order to bring the children whom you instruct to take on the Christian spirit, you must teach them the practical truths of faith in Jesus Christ and the maxims of the holy Gospel with at least as much care as you teach the truths that are purely doctrinal.⁶¹

In these crystal-clear passages we see how the “spirit of Christianity” is based on the Gospel and its maxims in such a manner that communicating them in a living way is an indispensable means of forming students to the “true spirit of Christianity.”

What De La Salle says of the Gospel he also says of the Epistles—for instance, on Saint James:

Study also the admirable instructions that this saint has set forth in his Epistle. They will help you very much to sanctify yourself and to form the spirit of Christianity in those for whom you are responsible.⁶²

It is logical likewise to find that De La Salle extends his category of maxims to the entire New Testament, even though he generalizes them within the term “maxims of the Gospel.”

61. *Ibid.*, 159.1; 194.3.

62. *Ibid.*, 119.2.

But the intimate relationship between maxims and the spirit of Christianity becomes definitively established when he considers as an identical reality “to form the spirit of Christianity” and “to educate according to the maxims of the Gospel,” or when he considers as parallel formulas “to live according to the spirit of Christianity” and “to observe the maxims of the holy Gospel.”⁶³ From this we can already form some idea of the meaning De La Salle attaches to the “spirit of Christianity.”

If by “maxims of the Gospel” we understand those norms of judgment and conduct that emanate from the Gospel and that govern the concrete activities of each moment of our lives, conforming them to those of Jesus Christ, there is no doubt that habitual adaptation to these maxims will create in us a consistent principle of life capable of determining our behavior in complete Christ-likeness. The principle that directs our lives in this way is none other than the “spirit of Christianity.”

As indicated when considering the maxims, we find here also a certain balance that sometimes emphasizes the intellectual aspect, considering the spirit of Christianity as a *mentality*, and then again emphasizes the practical aspect, regarding it as a *principle of action*. However, for De La Salle neither a maxim nor the spirit of Christianity is viable without an immediate and vital interaction between both of them, which is manifested in behavior.

This pendular oscillation, which presumes control by judgment when we are considering action and which makes action the ordinary

63. “God sends [children] to you so that you may give them the spirit of Christianity and educate them according to the maxims of the Gospel” (*Meditations*, 37.2). “Yet it would be of little use to be enlightened by the light of faith if we did not live according to the spirit of Christianity and if we did not observe the maxims of the holy Gospel” (175.2). The conjunction “and” that joins the two subordinate clauses of this sentence has an explicative more than a copulative meaning. It is a characteristic of Lasallian prose that it contains many duplications of similar expressions in which the second adds nothing substantial to the first but serves, rather, to specify its meaning. Gallego calls attention to this trait (*La Teología de la Educación*, p. 100). Maymi is working on an exhaustive study of this phenomenon. The validity of this interpretation is corroborated in our case in an analogous passage in which De La Salle substitutes for the conjunction “and” the expression “that is to say,” leaving the meaning of the joined clauses intact: “The Brothers of the Society will strive by prayer, by instruction, and by their vigilance and good conduct in school to procure the salvation of the children confided to them, bringing them up in piety and in a truly Christian spirit, that is (*c'est à dire*), according to the rules and maxims of the Gospel” (Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 10).

result of a truth previously established in the mind, is beautifully condensed in Lasallian terminology by the expressions “practical maxims”⁶⁴ and “practical truths of faith.”⁶⁵ Only given this bipolarity can we understand this somewhat enigmatic and apparently contradictory sentence:

It is, then, not enough to procure for children the Christian spirit and teach them the [*speculative*] mysteries and doctrines of our religion. You must also teach them the *practical* maxims that are found throughout the holy Gospel.⁶⁶

At this point in the meditation from which the above quotation is taken, De La Salle contrasts speculative and practical truths. The “Christian spirit” that is here declared insufficient is one that is reduced to the possession of a nucleus of purely speculative truths without resonance in life. In fact, in this case it is not “the true spirit of Christianity.” The real spirit is concerned with life and must be built upon foundations of both the speculative truths of the Gospel and their integral practice in daily life. The passage already quoted from *Meditations*, 194.3, leaves no room for doubt,⁶⁷ and De La Salle confirms his intent by other affirmations in this same vein, as in the meditation for the feast of Saint Thomas the Apostle:

How do you show that you possess the spirit of Christianity? Be assured that to possess it your actions must not give the lie to the faith you profess but rather be a lively expression of what is written in the Gospel.⁶⁸

64. *Meditations*, 197.2.

65. *Ibid.*, 194.3.

66. *Ibid.*, 197.2; emphasis added. In order to avoid this apparent identification of “the Christian spirit” with “mysteries and doctrines,” in a flagrant contradiction of *Meditations*, 194.3, in which it is expressly stated that the teaching of the “practical truths of faith” is an indispensable means of communicating the “spirit of Christianity,” the French edition of 1922 substitutes the expression “spirit of Christianity” by “knowledge of Christianity.” The Spanish edition of 1930, which is based on this French edition, contains the same alteration and adds others. [Editor’s note: the word “speculative” does not occur in the English edition.]

67. Marcato interprets in this same manner the text from *Meditations*, 197.2 (“*Le massime*,” p. 167).

68. *Meditations*, 84.3.

For De La Salle, the mind and the heart must vibrate in unison: “Be convinced that the main conversion is that of the heart and without it the conversion of the mind is quite sterile.” Therefore he concludes, “This is why if you strive to strengthen your faith, let it be in order to increase your piety.”⁶⁹

Parallel Expressions

The same reality that presupposes conformity of our mind, heart, and entire life with the mind, heart, and life of Jesus Christ according to the Gospel maxims appears in Lasallian literature expressed in different formulas, whose similarity with what we have just seen should be clearly identified.

The “Christian spirit” is the closest formula. De La Salle finds no problem with using this expression at any time to allude to the goal he so often proposes to the Brothers in their ministry, which is “to educate in the spirit of Christianity,” thereby affirming their identity.⁷⁰ Likewise, to educate “in a truly Christian spirit” is the same as doing it “according to the rules and maxims of the Gospel.”⁷¹

At other times it is the expression the “spirit of religion” that we find as a perfect parallel to “the spirit of Christianity,”⁷² and also the formulas “Catholic spirit”⁷³ or “spirit of the Gospel,”⁷⁴ which because of their content convey the same meaning. Nevertheless, it must be remarked that each has its own particular shade of meaning. For example, “spirit of religion” includes more of the respect and adoration proper to the word of God, and “Catholic spirit” connotes the need to

69. *Ibid.*, 175.2.

70. Thus in *Meditations*, 132.1; emphasis added: “Since you are obliged by your state to instruct children, you must be powerfully motivated by the *Christian spirit* in order to procure this spirit for them.”

71. Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 10.

72. “If you do not put all your care to give [children] the *spirit of religion*, should you not be considered by God as thieves who have broken into his house, who remain there without his consent, who, instead of inspiring your students with *the spirit of Christianity* as you should, only teach them things which will be of use to them in this world?” (*Meditations*, 62.1; emphasis added); cf. 116.2 and 176.3.

73. According to our synonymous expressions, so frequent in De La Salle, to be “filled with the spirit of Scripture” is the same as being “filled with the Catholic spirit” (*Meditations*, 166.1).

74. *Ibid.*, 176.3.

understand “the maxims of the Gospel” in the light of the authentic Magisterium of the Church.

We must also discuss the relationship between the “spirit of Christianity” and the “spirit of faith,” but we will do so only after we have sketched the characteristics of the latter.

Spirit of Jesus Christ

The expression “Spirit of Jesus Christ” deserves special attention. This formula is so frequently found in the authors of the French School of spirituality that it has become one of its characteristics. Without any doubt, Saint John Baptist de La Salle borrows it from the French School, but what is not so clear is whether he uses it with the same meaning.

We can find in Bérulle, Olier, Surin, and Guilloché many passages that identify the “spirit of Jesus Christ” as the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.⁷⁵ If we take into account that De La Salle, in *Meditations*, 196.3, says that the “Christian spirit” is the “very spirit of Jesus Christ,” it would be easy to slip into the danger of confusing “Christian spirit” and all of its equivalents (“spirit of faith,” “spirit of religion,” “spirit of Christianity”) with the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, known as the Holy Spirit.⁷⁶

Let us begin by observing, with Rayez, that “these expressions which were commonly used at this particular time in history, nevertheless take on diverse meanings that are sometimes difficult to discern.” Let this stand as a prudential norm when it comes to deciding on expressions of the French School whose influence on De La Salle is far from being definitively understood. Rayez himself becomes an echo of Dom Jamet, who finds in Saint-Jure four different meanings for the expression “spirit of Jesus Christ.” These form a gradation with respect to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity: 1) considered in itself, 2) considered as now residing in souls, 3) considered as operating concurrently in the divine life of Jesus Christ, God made man, and 4) considered in our participation and likeness to Christ by grace and with his ways of thinking and acting.⁷⁷

Whatever might be the meaning of this expression in the Bérullian School, we believe that we have sufficient data to assert that De

75. Cf. Cognet, “*Esprit*,” *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 4, col. 1238–1246.

76. This is what Clément-Marcel concludes (*Par le mouvement de l'Esprit*, pp. 25–26).

77. Cf. *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, 28 (1952), p. 287.

La Salle, in the great majority of cases, takes the “spirit of Jesus Christ” to mean only our likeness to Christ in our way of thinking and in governing our behavior. Ultimately, to possess the “spirit of Jesus Christ” consists in “living our life conformably to his life and to his maxims as they are expressed in the Gospel and in the entire New Testament,”⁷⁸ in practicing the evangelical counsels and virtues perfectly,⁷⁹ in “clothing ourselves with Jesus Christ,” according to the words of Saint Paul,⁸⁰ in not only conforming ourselves exteriorly to the conduct of Jesus Christ but also “entering into his purposes and his goals.”⁸¹ All of these coincide perfectly with what we said previously about the “spirit of Christianity” and which lead us to consider the “spirit of Jesus Christ” as something truly distinct from the Divine Person of the Holy Spirit, even as we hold the Holy spirit to be the cause of the development of this new breath of life in us.⁸²

A solid confirmation of all that we have affirmed can be found in the chapter of the Rule of 1705 dedicated to the daily exercises, where De La Salle prescribes prayers that are relatively similar to each other, asking for “his spirit” from the “Child Jesus” and from “Saint Joseph.”⁸³ However, we would not be faithful to the norm of prudence that we set for ourselves, following Rayez, unless we considered the possibility

78. *Devoirs, I*, preface, Cahiers lasalliens 20.

79. *Meditations*, 166.1.

80. *Meditations*, 189.1. In Galatians 3:27 Saint Paul uses this expression on the ontological plane to indicate a reality brought about in us by Baptism. On the other hand, in Romans 13:14 he employs it in a dynamic, psychological, and moral sense to refer to something that the Christian ought to realize progressively within himself with the help of grace. It is in this sense that De La Salle quotes Saint Paul. Therefore the intent is that the Holy Spirit comes to the soul of both the Brothers and their students, not by Baptism but rather by the gradual acquisition, the “putting on,” of the habits of thinking and doing that correspond to this presence of the Holy Spirit within us and of which Jesus Christ is the perfect model.

81. *Meditations*, 196.3.

82. Cf. Gallego, *La Teología de la Educación*, p. 99. It is strongly suggested, for those who have tried to uphold that Bérulle and Saint Sulpice are the only sources contributing to Lasallian spirituality, that they seriously consider these discrepancies.

83. “After breakfast they will go to the oratory, where they will say the Litany of the Holy Infant Jesus to dispose themselves for going to school and to ask Our Holy Infant Jesus for his spirit in order to be able to communicate it to the children under their guidance” (Rule of 1705, chap. 27, art. 15). “At 1:00 the Brothers will assemble in the oratory to say the Litany of Saint Joseph, Patron and Protector of the Community, to ask for his spirit and his assistance in the Christian education of the children” (*ibid.*, art. 22).

that in De La Salle this expression might be used with various shades of meaning. In reality we must confess that this phenomenon is not only possible but that in fact it actually exists. There are rare cases in which, in our view, the expressions “spirit of Jesus Christ” and “spirit of Our Lord” must refer to the Divine Person of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁴ However, we must note carefully that in these specific cases the expressions are no longer identical to the “spirit of Christianity” or the “spirit of faith,” which refer at all times to a reality distinct from the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Spirit of God

There is notable ambiguity in the use of the expression “spirit of God.” De La Salle almost always employs it to refer to the Holy Spirit, who fills the Apostles on the day of Pentecost,⁸⁵ who produces the life of grace in us,⁸⁶ and who illumines us interiorly so that we can savor the maxims of the Gospel and live by them.⁸⁷ However, there are cases in which a clear identification with the Holy Spirit in this sense is not possible.

The obligation that you have to instruct children and bring them up in the spirit of Christianity should make you very assiduous in prayer, in order to obtain from God the graces you need to carry out your work well and to draw down upon yourselves the light you must have to know how to form Jesus Christ in the hearts of the children who are entrusted to your guidance and give them the *spirit of God*.⁸⁸

It is evident that in this passage we find three parallel expressions that insist on the same obligation: 1) to instruct children and bring them up in the spirit of Christianity, 2) to form Jesus Christ in the hearts of the children, and 3) to give them the spirit of God.

The parallelism in this case points to the identification of the “spirit of God” with the “spirit of Christianity,” in the sense previously explained.

84. Cf. *Meditations*, 4.3 and 195.2–3; also, *Explanation*, p. 79, regarding the “Spirit of Our Lord.”

85. *Meditations*, 43.3

86. *Ibid.*, 45.1.

87. *Ibid.*, 44.2–3.

88. *Ibid.*, 80.2; emphasis added.

Spirit of the World

Perhaps there yet remains something to say about another kind of “spirit,” one that is the antithesis of all that we have been discussing. Just as the world raised its “maxims” against the “maxims of God” expressed in Sacred Scripture, it now raises its “spirit” and its “wisdom” against the “spirit of Christianity” and the “wisdom of God” given to us by this spirit.⁸⁹

Continuous contact with the maxims of the Gospel makes us like Christ. It is a beneficent contact that gives us his spirit and his life. Frequenting the world exposes us to the contagion of its spirit of death. The antagonism between these two “spirits” is such that they cannot simultaneously coexist in the same soul. From this fact flow the clear-cut norms of De La Salle, which reveal the war without truce between these two irreconcilable principles.

Thank God for it [the grace of having left the world] every day, and in order to live according to the spirit of your vocation, despise the world, consider it as the enemy of Jesus Christ, and be always opposed to it and to all its maxims. Have a horror of frequenting it, and do not have communication with persons who live in it except insofar as necessity obliges you to do so. This is the way to protect yourselves against all its snares and all the dangers you meet there and preserve the spirit of your vocation. By communicating with the world, we adopt its spirit, which is contrary to that of Jesus Christ. As the two cannot exist together in a soul, if we fill ourselves with the spirit of the world, we necessarily lose that of Jesus Christ.⁹⁰

It should then come as no surprise that these concerns remain with De La Salle even to his deathbed and that he includes them among the last recommendations he leaves to his followers.⁹¹ Even

89. *Ibid.*, 194.2.

90. *Ibid.*, 182.1.

91. “If you wish to preserve yourself in your state and to die in it,” he said, “never have any familiar dealings with people of the world. Little by little, you will acquire a liking for their way of acting and will be drawn into conversation with them, so that through politeness, you will not be able to avoid agreeing with their language, however pernicious it may be. This will cause you to fall into infidelity, and no longer faithful in observing your rules, you will grow disgusted with your state, and finally you will abandon it.” (Blain, *Life of John Baptist de La Salle*, Book Three, p. 738)

though such considerations may cause a certain discomfort, they are, nevertheless, absolutely necessary to a clear understanding of Lasallian terminology. They will eventually stand us in good stead in the investigations to follow.

In particular they emphasize the completely scriptural character of the expression “spirit of Christianity” and its equivalents, because of their fundamental relationship with the “maxims of the Gospel,” considered in a strict sense. They also furnish a firm foundation for the two extremes between which all of Lasallian spirituality easily moves: maxim vs. maxim, spirit vs. spirit. Ultimately, it is the “word of God” versus the “word of the creature.”

In the following pages we will try to furnish more evidence to support this trend of Lasallian thought by a more specific consideration of the spirit proper to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Chapter Six

Sacred Scripture as the Foundation of the Spiritual Life

The Function of Sacred Scripture in the Spiritual Life

Christian spiritual life is an eminently interpersonal relationship. The more personal the relationship between God, the Person *par excellence*, and man, also a real person, the more authentic will be the spiritual life that unites man with God.

This entails a consequence of very great importance: the absolute necessity of building all spiritual life on the foundation of the word of God and faith. As a matter of fact, it is through words and dialogue that persons manifest themselves to each other. Therefore Christian life cannot even begin with a mere knowledge or idea of God as a personal being. Rather, Christian life bursts forth within us by the fact that God has manifested himself to us as a Person; that is, he has spoken to us, and his Word became flesh and lived among us. We respond by faith in this Word, which has been given to us, and then the circuit of this dialogue, which God initiated, is complete. For us God ceases to be something and becomes Someone. He enters the life of man, not as a pure, ideal abstraction but as a living Person. Aware of this totally gratuitous call from God and our totally free response in faith, we accept to be personal participants in this dialogue. Therefore the fact that God has spoken to us and that we believe in his word is not only an important element of our spiritual life but its very source.¹

1. Cf. Bouyer, *Introduction à la vie spirituelle*, pp. 9–27. If we wish to

This basic insight, which is essential to some degree for every spirituality, De La Salle understands with utmost clarity: 1) when he puts forth every effort to endow his followers with the legacy of the “spirit of faith” as the spirit of their state, which he defines as “a spirit which is regulated and guided in all things by the maxims and sentiments of faith, taken especially from Holy Scripture;”² 2) when, as a consequence, he recommends that his Brothers make constant use of Sacred Scripture and when he gives them a method of interior prayer that is eminently scriptural; and 3) when he proposes to them, as the ideal of their apostolic function, to educate children “according to the rules and maxims of the Gospel.”³

We will use these fundamental principles of Lasallian spirituality as benchmarks in the further development of our investigations. Before beginning, however, we must clearly understand that when we speak of biblical spirituality, in no way do we wish to infer the possibility of other spiritualities, just as authentically Christian, which might spring up side by side with the message of God to men. Every Christian spirituality, as we have already said, must necessarily be founded on the word of God. Therefore only in a relative and restricted sense, bearing in mind the differences between epochs and schools of spirituality, can we discuss biblical spirituality.

Given this specification, we must be careful to assess the degree of awareness of Sacred Scripture as a fundamental consideration and also the clarity of the presentation of the meaning and feel for Scripture in the characteristic traits of the spirituality being studied.⁴ These factors, which we intend to keep in mind, will allow us to employ our terminology with precision.

clarify further the spirituality that is typically Catholic, we would have to insist on the fact that this Divine Word is given to us not as something past and dead but rather as a Word ever “living, relevant, and present for the Church and in the Church.” On our part this involves an assent that is strictly ecclesial. However, this is understood as a mark of truly Christian spirituality insofar as “Catholic Christianity is none other than integral Christianity,” as Bouyer states (pp. 12 and 16).

2. *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, p. 32.

3. Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 10.

4. Nicolau aptly states: “The road to perfection is fundamentally and essentially one and the same for all, with the difference between the Schools ultimately arising from the *emphasis*, the *tone*, in what is being urged and what is insisted upon” (*Laicado y santidad eclesial; Colegialidad y libertad religiosa*, pp. 113–114, 117).

The Spirit of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools

The spirit of this Institute is, then, first, a spirit of faith, which should induce those who compose it not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith. . . .⁵

The spirit of the Institute is, second, an ardent zeal for the instruction of children and for bringing them up in the fear of God. . . .⁶

These words, repeated both in the Rule and in *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, determine the specific spirit of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Later on, we will take up the question of the unity or the dualism of this spirit. For the moment, we will address ourselves to each of the elements that constitute the spirit of the Institute—the “spirit of faith” and the “spirit of zeal”—in order to determine their essence.

Inasmuch as the preceding analysis of the Lasallian concept of “maxim” and “spirit” has identified their eminently scriptural character, we will now use this insight in order to consider its value and importance. It could hardly be otherwise. If the scriptural orientation, which we have been seeing throughout this investigation, were at some point to receive an official promulgation, it could hardly be other than the declaration of De La Salle by which he constitutes the specific way of life of his followers and defines the essential traits that are to characterize them—the same traits that constitute the historical image and heritage of the Founder. This is exactly what Saint John Baptist de La Salle achieves by defining the spirit of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

We need not enter into a long series of deductions in order to demonstrate the importance the Founder attaches to this spirit. Without any apologies, he himself proclaims it in the introduction to the chapter of the Rule that deals with “The Spirit of This Institute.” For the Brother this is something transcendental, a matter of life or death:

That which is of the utmost importance and to which the greatest attention ought to be given in a Community is that all who compose it possess the spirit peculiar to it, that the novices apply themselves to acquire it, and that those who are already members

5. Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 2; *Collection*, pp. 30–31.

6. Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 9; *Collection*, p. 31.

make it their first care to preserve and increase it in themselves. For it is this spirit *that ought to animate all their actions and be the motive of their whole conduct*. Those who do not possess it and those who have lost it ought to be looked upon *as dead members* and they ought to look upon themselves as such because they are deprived of the life and grace of their state, and they ought to be convinced that *it will be very difficult for them to preserve the grace of God*.⁷

All italics are ours and require no further commentary.⁸ Therefore, we will address ourselves immediately to the detailed consideration of the fundamental issue.

The Spirit of Faith

The concept of faith as the only light and guide of the Christian is one that is dear to Saint John Baptist de La Salle. What is more, his whole life is a confirmation of this intimate conviction. When De La Salle speaks of darkness and light, he knows very well what he is talking about. Like the pilot at the rudder of a ship, who, having plotted his course, grasps the wheel and holds it stubbornly on course through the storm, so does De La Salle's courageous spirit, sustained only by his faith, guide him through the many trials sent to him by Divine Providence. The biographies we possess bear witness to this. Only a soul experienced in such struggles could write the beautiful meditation for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost, on the paralytic of the Gospel. It describes the anguish of the soul, chained by its own impotence and deprived of all interior and exterior light and help. It also leaves us a definitive and energetic piece of advice: "Let us rely on the firmness of our faith, even though we have no feeling of God and are without any movement toward God."⁹

7. Rule of 1718, chap. 2, art. 1; emphasis added.

8. With regard to this closing affirmation, we see that De La Salle establishes an intimate relationship, although not a necessary one, between the loss of the spirit or grace of one's state and the loss of the grace of God. Not being one to mince words, he presents us with what he considers to be a logical conclusion: a bad religious can hardly be a good Christian. In his meditation for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, he gives some reasons in support of this affirmation (*Meditations*, 68.2–3).

9. *Meditations*, 71.2. See the reverberation of these words in *Letters*, 117.

To a Sister who has recourse to him in the anguish of the dark night of her soul, the saint writes these words, which while revealing his deep understanding, also show us his clear vision of the role of the first of the theological virtues in God's plan of salvation:

I realize, my dear Sister, that you are in great suffering, and I deeply share in your difficulties, but you should not, it seems to me, grieve so much. Your feelings of abandonment touch only the exterior. The profound darkness which you experience is the means that God gives to draw you more surely to himself. You know quite well that the more darkness and doubt you experience in your life, the more you will live by faith, and you know that it is faith alone which should motivate the lives and actions of those who belong to God.¹⁰

Blain reminds us that De La Salle has a special preference for chapter eleven of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which Saint Paul praises the faith of the patriarchs, prophets, and saints of the Old Testament, and that he can hardly conceal his emotion when this text is read in public.¹¹

The *Collection* has a very interesting introduction to the short treatise, "The Spirit of the Institute." It appears neither in the 1705 edition of the Rule nor in that of 1718. Here De La Salle shows how the spirit he has chosen for his followers is set like a jewel in the very essence of what it means to be a Christian.

Faith should be the light and guide of all Christians, to lead and direct them in the way of salvation. This is why Saint Paul tells us that the just, that is, true Christians, live by faith (Rom. 1:17), because they are guided by and their actions are performed with views and motives of faith. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that we who belong to an Institute whose aim is to educate the children confided to our care should, in the spirit of Christianity and to procure this for them, be imbued and so completely filled with the spirit of faith that we will consider the sentiments and maxims of faith as the rule of our conduct, and the spirit of faith as the spirit of our Institute.¹²

10. *Letters*, 108.6.

11. Blain, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 71.

12. *Collection*, p. 30.

At this point we must ask, “What then is this spirit of faith?” De La Salle has his answer ready in a brief commentary found in the *Collection*: “It is a spirit which is regulated and guided in all things by the maxims and sentiments of faith, taken especially from Holy Scripture.”¹³ Knowing the nature of the spirit of Christianity, we can better understand the meaning of these words that define the spirit of faith.

By the theological virtue of faith, giving our total assent to the word of God, we participate analogically but really in the intimate knowledge of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity. By the spirit of faith we actualize this supernatural gift to its maximum, making it the only normative principle of our mind and therefore of our behavior. In order to illustrate this idea, De La Salle aptly employs a text of Saint John relative to the coming of the Holy Spirit:

This is why Jesus Christ told his Apostles in another place in the Gospel that when this Holy Spirit, whom he calls the Spirit of Truth, would come, he would teach them all truth. He would make all things known to them by showing things not only as they appear outwardly but as they really are in themselves, and as we can know them when we understand them truly with the eyes of faith.

In reality this light, the true gift from on high, is what enables us

to judge all visible things and to learn what is true and false about them, what is only apparent and what is substantial.¹⁴

It is the only light that matters for those who live as followers of Jesus Christ.

Alluding to this same idea and calling it “Christian prudence,” De La Salle has a sentence with profound theological insight in *The Duties of a Christian to God* in which he tells us that Christian prudence judges “according to the rules and maxims of the Gospel and with that discernment which God himself has of things.”¹⁵

This helps us understand why De La Salle can say that the spirit of faith “is a sharing in the Spirit of God who dwells in us,”¹⁶ insofar as the spirit of faith is the result of the Trinity, dwelling in us, and our participation in its knowledge, views, and modes of action.¹⁷

13. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

14. *Meditations*, 44.1, quoting John 16:13.

15. *Devoirs, I*, Cahiers lasalliens 20, p. 185, and *Meditations*, 32.3.

16. *Letters*, 100.

The Spirit of Faith and Sacred Scripture

Our faith is our acceptance of and our adherence to the testimony of God. This testimony is found principally in his written word—in Sacred Scripture. However, the truths of faith often reach the believer by way of a long trail of theological elaboration, which can sometimes be the reason why the original source may be somewhat obscured. De La Salle has nothing against these efforts to synthesize and systematize. We have already seen his indomitable fidelity to Tradition as a source of Revelation and to the Magisterium of the Church as its infallible interpreter. But De La Salle's eagerness to drink of the spring of the word of God is such that from the outset he considers as an essential element, practically inseparable from the very notion of the spirit of faith, the constant use of the texts of Sacred Scripture.¹⁸

We have just quoted some passages in which he speaks of the "rules and maxims of the Gospel" or of the "maxims of faith," whose scriptural nature was duly clarified in its proper place. Couple this with the definition that De La Salle gives of the spirit of faith in the

17. This last passage has provided a pretext for some to identify the "spirit of faith" with the "Holy Spirit" (cf. Clément-Marcel, *Par le mouvement de l'Esprit*, pp. 25ff). We do not believe that this can possibly be done. We will not go into what De La Salle understands by "Spirit of God" (bear in mind that the orthography of the time gives us no basis for solving the problem), although most probably he is referring to the Person of the Holy Spirit. Leaving aside also the extent and rigor with which he uses the word "sharing," the clause that follows later in this same letter—"be wholly occupied in *acquiring*" this Spirit, written to a religious who can logically be supposed to be "a living temple of the Holy Spirit"—indicates to us that the "spirit of faith" is something very distinct from the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, even though intimately ascribed to it. Were this not the case, De La Salle would have had to say "increase" instead of "acquire." This is the only valid exegesis within the overall context of Lasallian doctrine. In his meditation for Pentecost Sunday, he says: "You need the fullness of the Spirit of God in your state, for you should live and be guided only according to the spirit and the light of faith; it is only the Spirit of God who can give you this disposition" (*Meditations*, 43.2). De La Salle is clearly speaking about the Holy Spirit throughout this meditation, and he tells us with emphatic clarity that only the Holy Spirit can dispose us to live and be guided according to the spirit of faith. The best proof of this real distinction lies in the relationship of causality. We will not discuss the matter further, because De La Salle himself banishes any doubt by his own definition of the spirit of faith.

18. Maurice-Auguste Hermans, *Pour une meilleure lecture de nos Règles Communales*, p. 15.

Collection as “a spirit which is regulated and guided in all things by the maxims and sentiments of faith, taken especially from Holy Scripture,”¹⁹ and we are centered fully on his perspective, which is at once totally scriptural and uniquely Lasallian.

This same concurrence of the spirit of faith and of Sacred Scripture becomes evident when De La Salle explains the effects of this spirit and the means that the Brothers are to use to acquire it and to increase it in themselves.

The chapter entitled “The Spirit of Faith” in the *Rule* as well as in *Collection of Various Short Treatises* is a description of the effects of the spirit of faith, rather than a definition:

The spirit of this Institute is, then, first, a spirit of faith, which should induce those who compose it not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith, not to do anything but in view of God, and to attribute all to God, always entering into these sentiments of Job: “The Lord gave all to me, the Lord has taken all from me; nothing is happening to me but what pleased the Lord,” and other similar sentiments so often expressed in the Holy Scriptures and in the mouths of the patriarchs of old.²⁰

It is interesting to see that when he gives the third effect, which is “to attribute all to God,” he cannot resist the temptation to give us its biblical model in the passage from Job 1:21, always being careful to leave the door open for “other similar” examples from Scripture.

The scriptural references for the other “effects” are merely enumerated in this statement, but they are clearly explained in the *Collection*. Regarding the *first effect*, “not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith,” he explains that this means “to see created things as God sees them and as faith requires us to think of them.” By way of example, he mentions a beautiful building. Transcending its external appearance, we should consider its transitoriness, remembering that in it will be fulfilled the prediction of Jesus Christ when he foretold the destruction of the Temple—“that there will not remain a stone upon a stone, or any idea of it.”²¹

Or he will tell us that “as Saint Paul says, we should regard those given to excessive eating as being similar to idolaters, *who make a god of their belly and who glory in their shame.*” Or, finally, that “we

19. *Collection*, p. 32.

20. Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 2; *Collection*, pp. 30–31.

21. *Collection*, p. 32, quoting Matt. 24:1–2, Mark 13:1–2, and Luke 21:6.

are to regard poverty as a blessing because Our Lord said in the Gospel that *the poor are blessed*.²²

When speaking of the *second effect*, “not to do anything but in view of God,” De La Salle is not as explicit in giving us a scriptural reference. Nevertheless, it certainly does exist. Without prejudice to the other possible scriptural passages that are applicable, the presence of God, which is given top priority in the explanation of this second effect, is always based on a passage of faith, as we will have occasion to point out in what follows.²³

The *means* of acquiring the spirit of faith and of regulating our conduct accordingly also have their relationship with Sacred Scripture. The *first means* proposed by De La Salle is “to have a profound respect for Sacred Scripture.”²⁴

In order to enter into this spirit and to live up to it, first, the Brothers of this Society will have a most profound respect for Holy Scripture; in proof of this, they will always carry with them the New Testament and pass no day without reading some of it through a sentiment of faith, respect, and veneration for the divine words contained in it, looking upon it as their first and principal rule.²⁵

It is interesting to note the primacy that De La Salle grants to this means and especially to understand the richness of the insights contained in the signs of respect for Sacred Scripture that he recommends to the Brothers: 1) to carry the New Testament with them always, 2) to pass no day without reading something from the New Testament 3) through a sentiment of faith, respect, and veneration, and 4) to look upon the New Testament as their first and principal rule.

1) To carry the New Testament with them always—De La Salle is certainly inspired here by *Règlement général du Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice*, which he observed during one period of his priestly formation. However, his own Rule goes one step further. The seminary

22. *Collection*, p. 33, quoting Phil. 3:19 and Luke 6:20.

23. Cf. *Collection*, p. 33.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

25. Rule of 1718, chap. 2, art. 3. The edition of 1705 omits the words “and live up to it, first,” as well as the ending “looking on it as their first and principal rule.” Something similar occurs in *Collection*, page 31, which includes the explicit category “first,” and on page 45, which includes a phrase that does not appear in any edition of the Rule: the reference to “a spirit of regular observance of the Rule.”

Règlement merely indicates that each seminarian ought to *have* a New Testament and mentions the “convenience” of carrying it.²⁶

Certainly it is true that this concerns only a sign that in itself is external and material but that actually does facilitate other desirable effects. For instance, it becomes a tangible and sincere proof of love for the word of God and of esteem for its presence. On the other hand, for one who ought daily to fill his thoughts with Scripture, study it continuously, and make it the foundation for his *interior prayer*, it most certainly is an indispensable tool that he must always have at hand. This is why it is one of the privileged objects that a Brother can own for his personal use, according to the specification of the Rule in the chapter entitled “Poverty:”

The Brothers will have nothing for their personal use except a New Testament, an *Imitation of Christ*, a rosary, and a crucifix.²⁷

The New Testament contains the fullness of Revelation, and Saint John Baptist de La Salle considers himself—and looks upon his Brothers—as sufficiently rich when they possess the Gospel as their own, so that they can draw from it at any moment the treasures of eternal life.²⁸

2) To pass no day without reading something from the New Testament—this prescription indicates the functional aspect that is included in the external practice recommended above. The New Testament is not to be carried because of an enthusiasm for legalism or as one wears a talisman but rather because of an appreciation for the divine riches it contains and a desire to profit by them as much as possible.

3) Through a sentiment of faith, respect, and veneration—nor can the reading be a simple external ritual, because De La Salle wants it done with an exclusive attention to the real values assured by this contact with the divine word. He says that this reading ought to be made “through a sentiment of faith . . . through veneration for the divine word.” The *Collection* adds an interesting touch with the expression “through veneration,” which better underscores the exclusivity of the motivation.²⁹

26. Cf. Rigault, *Histoire générale*, vol. 1, p. 522, quoting the French manuscript, no. 11760, which is in the National Library of Paris.

27. Rule of 1705, chap. 19, art. 2. In the 1718 edition these rights are extended to include “a wallet.”

28. Blain, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 427.

29. *Collection*, p. 35.

To read Sacred Scripture in this manner is to read the divine word as something really divine, to accept it as the testimony of God, and to adhere to it with all one's soul, consequently making it "the first and principal Rule." Ultimately, this leads to a life of faith. This explains why De La Salle places the manifestation of respect for Scripture as the first among the means of acquiring the spirit of faith. He also indicates that he understands how far a person is from grasping the importance of this Lasallian prescription who believes that it is sufficient merely to carry the New Testament in his pocket.

4) To look upon the New Testament as their first and principal rule—De La Salle only introduces this concluding phrase in the chapter on "The Spirit of Faith" in his final revision of the Rule, in 1718. However, for quite some time this doctrine has already been an integral part of his writings. In the *Collection* of 1711 we find it magnificently stated in the definition of the spirit of faith, which we have already quoted, and once again in his statement on the virtue of faith:

Always remember these words, "The just live by faith."³⁰ Let your first care be to act by the spirit of faith and not by caprice, inclination, or whim. Do not let yourself be governed by human customs, or those of the world, or by mere reason, but solely by faith and the words of Jesus Christ, making these the rule of your conduct.³¹

In the *Collection* he also suggests a practical and clear application of the process he has in mind when—speaking of "Reflections That the Brothers May Make on the Means of Becoming Interior"—he develops a series of recommendations on purifying the senses in which each one of the privations suggested is motivated by one or several passages of Scripture, as in the following examples:

We must deprive ourselves of what nature seeks, *because* Saint Paul says, "You can live by the spirit only to the extent that in faith you mortify the inclination of nature."³²

We must dispense with useless words because, as Our Lord says in the Gospel, we will render an account in the day of judgment for all the useless words we have spoken.³³

30. Rom. 1:17.

31. *Collection*, pp. 66–67.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 47; emphasis added; Rom. 8:13.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 48; emphasis added; Matt. 12:36.

We must renounce . . . because. . . In a similar way, sixteen passages of Sacred Scripture become the motivation for as many recommendations.

Another prime example of the practical interpretation that we can give to the words of the *Collection*—“regulated and guided in all things by the maxims and sentiments of faith, taken especially from Holy Scripture”³⁴—is found in the model for an act of application of a maxim, presented by De La Salle in *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*. After passing in review all of the temptations that might come from the exercise of our ministry, he successively opposes each of them with the maxim that is the subject of this particular interior prayer: “What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?”³⁵

Following the monastic tradition very closely, De La Salle considers the Rule simply as the specification made for religious of the norms of the Gospel:

From now on, look on your Rules as an explanation and an application of what is contained in the Gospels. Observe them as such. The spirit of faith will lead you to give practical application to this frame of mind.³⁶

It follows, then, that all particular rules notwithstanding, religious ought always to consider the Gospel as their first and principal Rule.

Finally, if religious have a special obligation to tend toward perfection according to the norms of the Gospel, this does not apply exclusively to them, but it applies to all Christians alike. The spirit of Christianity, which the Brothers are to try to develop in their students, has no purpose other than that of seeing to it that their lives conform to the maxims of the Gospel.³⁷

34. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

35. *Explanation*, p. 145, quoting Matt. 16:26.

36. *Letters*, 106.4; cf. *Explanation*, p. 29.

37. Cf. *Devoirs*, I, Cahiers lasalliens 20, pp. iv, 99, 187–192; *Meditations*, 170.1, and *Instructions et Prières*, Cahiers lasalliens 17, p. 76. By way of example, we can quote the prayer that De La Salle composes in *Instructions et Prières* so that the students can recite it from time to time at the Gospel of the Mass: “This is, Oh my God, not only your word; it is your holy Law, the Law of every Christian. I adore it in you; I listen to it with respect; I firmly believe it. You yourself have proclaimed it; your Apostles have written it down under the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, and it is I, Oh my God, who must practice it. I thank you for having given me so excellent a doctrine to be my guide

The *second means* to acquire the spirit of faith is “to animate all our actions with sentiments of faith.” We achieve this

by performing them through some motive of faith, calling to mind, for instance, such passages of Holy Scripture as may help to incite us to do them well. Thus, when eating, we might recall these words of Saint Paul: “Whether therefore you drink, or eat, or whatever you do, do everything for God’s glory.”³⁸ Or again, “The kingdom of God does not consist in drinking or eating³⁹ but in putting on Jesus Christ Our Lord.”⁴⁰

In order to facilitate this effort, after his “Explanation of the Spirit of Faith” in the *Collection*, De La Salle offers the Brothers a list of seventy-eight scriptural passages related to the various actions of the day. The list of “Passages of Holy Scripture That May Help the Brothers to Perform All Their Actions Through a Spirit of Faith” begins as follows:

To rise mornings in the spirit of faith, we must think as Saint Paul tells us to.

Awake, you who sleep, and Christ will enlighten you, or as it is so well said in the Acts, Arise quickly.⁴¹

Then he continues with various passages that refer to the other activities of the day: “When Putting on the Religious Garb,” “When Washing,” “When Making Interior Prayer,” “When Entering a Church or Oratory,” “When at Lunch or Dinner,” and so on.⁴²

This is not intended as an exclusive list, nor does De La Salle limit the Brothers to this series of passages. The heading implies this, and the author confirms it elsewhere by choosing other passages for these activities when they appear in another context.⁴³

Each Brother who truly wishes to possess the spirit of his state ought to familiarize himself with Sacred Scripture to such a degree

and the rule for all my conduct. I will read it; I will meditate on it, and I will never be ashamed to observe it, no matter how contrary to the maxims of the world. And with the help of your grace, I will try to live up to it entirely during my whole lifetime” (p. 77).

38. 1 Cor. 10:31.

39. Rom. 14:17.

40. Rom. 13:14; *Collection*, p. 35.

41. *Collection*, p. 39; Eph. 5:14, Acts 12:7.

42. *Collection*, pp. 39–44.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

that he can find there, for any circumstance, the motivation he needs. The purpose of the list is simply to serve as a model or as an incentive in the personal search for appropriate passages.

It is interesting to observe how De La Salle stresses that this practical and reflective use of the word of God should be associated with our personal reading of Scripture. In his remarks on the spiritual reading Brothers make during the time of retreat, he begins with these recommendations: "You should often call to mind some text of the New Testament or *The Imitation of Christ*. You should always keep some such passage in mind." And only at this point does he present norms to be used when reading these books.⁴⁴

De La Salle exhorts the Brothers in a special way to fill their minds with these sentiments of faith from the very first moments of the day. In the section on "Means That the Brothers of the Christian Schools Should Use to Perform Their Actions Well," he describes the manner of rising in the morning:

As soon as you awake, think of God, and from the first sound of the bell, imagine that it is Jesus Christ who is addressing you in these words: "Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Jesus Christ will enlighten you."⁴⁵ Or as in the Song of Songs, "Rise up and hasten, my spouse, my beloved, my dove."⁴⁶

Comply with these sentiments and answer from the bottom of your heart, "Now I will arise and search for him whom I love with all my heart."⁴⁷

These passages set the tone for the daily activities to follow, so that the word of God will be relevant and active throughout the day.

What has been said so far reveals that the spirit of faith, as conceived by De La Salle, is eminently scriptural by its nature, its effects, and the means through which it is attained. It is *materially scriptural* because it brings us into physical contact with the written word of God. But above all, it is *essentially scriptural* in that it emphasizes what is inherently specific to the revealed word and what vision and dispositions are required of those who hear it or read it.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

45. Eph. 5:14.

46. Song of Sol. 2:10.

47. *Ibid.*, 3:2; *Collection*, p. 54.

The Spirit of Faith and the Spirit of Christianity

There yet remains one more question to be resolved. Is the spirit of faith something distinct from the spirit of Christianity? Is the spirit of faith exclusive to the Brothers of the Christian Schools? After having made an analysis of both spirits, we cannot but affirm that fundamentally there is a very close relationship. Both are essentially scriptural, based on the maxims found in the inspired Books, and both tend to shape our judgment and our behavior according to divine wisdom and the will of God.

However, our task is not that simple. We must take into account certain indications that seem to establish the fact that there is a distinction between these two spirits. Speaking in general terms, Marcato observes that when De La Salle is dealing with students, he refers to the spirit of Christianity and the maxims of the Gospel and when he is dealing with the Brothers, he refers to the spirit of faith and the maxims of faith or the maxims of Scripture.⁴⁸

By putting them into a relationship of causality, he even seems to make a real distinction between these two spirits. For example, beginning with the end of the Institute, which is “to educate children in the spirit of Christianity,” he then establishes as a consequence the necessity for the Brothers to be deeply penetrated with the spirit of faith and to consider it “as the spirit of this Institute.”⁴⁹ It would have been more logical to require of them the same spirit that they were to communicate to others.

However, a closer scrutiny of Lasallian doctrine will reveal an abundance of passages in which De La Salle, arguing from the premise that no one can give what he does not have, urges the Brothers to penetrate themselves with that very same Christian spirit, or spirit of Christianity, with which they ought to imbue their students:

God sends them to you so that you may give them the spirit of Christianity. . . . Ask God, then, for what you lack and to give you what you need in full measure, namely, the Christian spirit and deep religious convictions.⁵⁰

Since you are obliged by your state to instruct children, you must be powerfully motivated by the Christian spirit in order to procure this spirit for them.⁵¹

48. Cf. Marcato, “*Le Massime del Vangelo*,” p. 157.

49. *Collection*, p. 30.

50. *Meditations*, 37.2.

Your work does not consist in making your disciples Christians but in helping them be true Christians. This is all the more useful because it would avail them little to have received Baptism if they did not live according to the spirit of Christianity. To give this spirit to others, you have to possess it well yourself.⁵²

In these paragraphs the spirit of Christianity assumes the role of cause that was previously attributed to the spirit of faith in the *Collection*. De La Salle thus seems to establish an equivalence between the two expressions that permits their interchangeable usage.

At the same time, we see how the spirit of Christianity is not something that De La Salle uses exclusively for students. The Brothers should also possess it. The clearest evidence for this identity between the spirit of faith and the spirit of Christianity comes from the explicit declaration of De La Salle himself. In the *Collection*, he clearly states, “the spirit of the Institute, which is the spirit of faith. As this spirit is the spirit of Christianity and the spirit of our state. . . .”⁵³ In his meditation for 25 August he writes:

The more you accept mortification, whether external or internal, especially the latter, the more you will possess the spirit of Christianity and of your state.⁵⁴

There does not seem to be much room to doubt the categorical value of these affirmations or the fundamental identity between the spirit of faith and the spirit of Christianity.

Always guided by his preoccupation with what is essential, De La Salle wants both the sanctity of the students and that of the Brothers to have the same foundation as that of every true Christian, that is, faith brought to its ultimate perfection.

In this respect it is interesting to remember how the introduction to the chapter on “The Spirit of the Institute” in the *Collection* makes us realize that both the spirit proper to the state of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, as well as that which should animate the life of every Christian, comes essentially from the same source:

Faith should be the light and guide of all Christians. . . . This is why Saint Paul tells us that the just, that is, true Christians, live by

51. *Ibid.*, 132.1.

52. *Ibid.*, 171.3; cf. 84.3.

53. *Collection*, p. 38.

54. *Meditations*, 160.2.

faith, because they are guided by and their actions are performed with views and motives of faith.⁵⁵

If we look closely at these words, which are of universal application within Christianity, we find the definition of the spirit of faith, except for his explicit reference to Sacred Scripture. The text continues:

It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that we who belong to an Institute whose aim is to educate the children confided to our care should, in the spirit of Christianity and to procure this for them, be imbued and so completely filled with the spirit of faith.⁵⁶

Here the mention of these two “spirits” separately can be justified because the two principal terms are “faith” and “Christianity.” The students, as authentic Christians, must live the spirit of Christianity. Now, given that this spirit “is guided by and . . . actions are performed with views and motives of faith,” those who are responsible for developing it in them must also habitually motivate themselves in this way, that is to say, by the spirit of faith. Therefore we are simply saying the same thing in two different ways.

However, given the frequency with which De La Salle makes use of both expressions, we must concede that there must exist at least some psychological nuance that differentiates them in some way and that leads our author normally to use the words “spirit of faith” when he is referring to the spirit proper to the Brothers and “spirit of Christianity” when he is referring to the students.

This shade of difference must certainly have a foundation in their scriptural origin. As we have seen, the maxims to be taught to the students, in the majority of cases, are referred to as “maxims of the Gospel,” whereas they are more generally called “maxims of Scripture” when he is speaking to the Brothers.

This broader context for the Brothers is understandable, but the reason for it is not mutually exclusive. For students, he does not exclude what is outside the Gospel; for the Brothers, he incessantly recommends that the New Testament ought to be their principal source.

As we see it, this shade of meaning, which we are trying to identify, will ultimately be found in the fact that for De La Salle, the Brothers and the students each require a different approach to arrive at the same point of convergence: that Sacred Scripture itself is the real norm of our judgment and behavior.

55. *Collection*, p. 30.

56. *Ibid.*

The students are obliged by Baptism to have the spirit of Christianity. The Brothers, in virtue of their vocation and especially because of their mission to communicate that spirit to others, are obliged to possess it to a greater degree. In most cases it is sufficient for the students to conform their behavior to the objective norms expressed in the revealed word. The Brothers, however, are expected not only to conform objectively to Scripture but also to manifest the deeper reasons that sustain such conformity. In other words, they must give greater witness of their faith so that students will not merely conform to the letter and the external forms of the maxims of the Gospel. De La Salle demands of every Christian that he be “guided by views and motives of faith,” as we have already seen.

But what we seem to perceive is that for the Brother there is a greater insistence on the interior element of his activity, which befits his maturer capabilities for action. This, in turn, presupposes the voluntary and conscious acceptance of his vocation and his special mission that further redounds to the greater interior perfection of his act of adherence to the word of God. In this sense, “spirit of faith” and “spirit of Christianity” would be the same thing, but in its expression there would be attributed to the former a note of greater perfection, of excelling in the spirit of Christianity.

This would explain why De La Salle sometimes speaks to the Brothers of the spirit of Christianity, but he does not usually speak to the students about the spirit of faith. This would also give us a key to the thought of Blain, when he somewhat paradoxically tells us about the spirit of faith as the spirit that “should be common to all Christians and proper to the Brothers of the Christian Schools.”⁵⁷

The Spirit of Zeal

From the oneness of the formal principle essential to every being, we could draw the *a priori* conclusion that the spirit of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, considered as a moral entity, should also be one. But we have no need to appeal to such reasoning, because we possess positive evidence that speaks for itself. De La Salle states:

The spirit of this Institute is, *first*, a spirit of faith.

The spirit of this Institute consists, *secondly*, in an ardent zeal for the instruction of children and for bringing them up in the fear of God.⁵⁸

On the basis of the words employed, we cannot conclude that we are dealing here with two different spirits. We ought rather to think of only one spirit with two manifestations, both of which are essential, but with one enjoying a certain pre-eminence over the other.

In fact, the whole Lasallian context leads us to believe that the spirit proper to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is really the spirit of faith. However, we must immediately add that this spirit of faith has a special characteristic that makes the spirit of faith animating a Brother distinct from that which might animate another religious of a contemplative order. This differentiating trait, besides its scriptural character (which we noted previously), is *zeal* for the salvation of the souls of children by means of the Christian Schools.

This total view of the spirit of faith is suggested by the title of the chapter of the *Collection* concerned with the spirit of the Institute: "The Spirit of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Which Is the Spirit of Faith."⁵⁹

No mention is made of any other spirit, even though within this chapter the spirit of zeal is mentioned. Similar statements occur elsewhere.⁶⁰ But the strangest thing of all is that in the entire study dedicated to "Explanation of the Chapter on the Spirit of Our Institute," there is no mention whatsoever of the spirit of zeal.⁶¹ If we are dealing with two distinct and independent spirits, this is illogical and inconceivable.

Rather, we have to conclude that in the Lasallian context, to speak of the spirit of faith is to speak of the one and only spirit proper and unique to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, properly understood, and insofar as the spirit of zeal is concerned, it is taken for granted that it is included therein as an essential manifestation, a necessary consequence, and also as a requirement of the spirit of faith.

The same spirit that brings about the interior perfection of the Brother is also the one that directs, vitalizes, and determines his apostolic activity. If the Brother is to sanctify himself by his work in the schools, the zeal that urges him thereto will be the fruit of the particular orientation that the spirit of faith gives to it.⁶²

57. Blain, vol. 2, *Abrégé de la vie de quelques Frères de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes morts en odeur de sainteté*, Cahiers lasalliens 8, supplement at the end of the volume, p. 34.

58. Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 2 and 9; emphasis added.

59. *Collection*, p. 30.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 31–32, 38; *Meditations*, 139.2.

61. *Collection*, pp. 32–38.

This internal unity between the spirit of faith and the spirit of zeal now shows us how the latter participates in the scriptural character that is proper to the former. This fact will become clearer when we consider that in the words of De La Salle, the spirit of zeal has for its object to communicate to the students what has been acquired by the spirit of faith. All the means invented by the spirit of zeal are geared to the salvation of souls through education in the spirit and maxims of the Gospel:

In order to enter into this spirit, the Brothers of the Society will strive by prayer, by instruction, and by their vigilance and good conduct in school to procure the salvation of the children confided to them, bringing them up in piety and *in a truly Christian spirit, that is, according to the rules and maxims of the Gospel*.⁶³

The definitive argument by which De La Salle animates the Brothers to penetrate themselves well with the spirit of faith and the spirit of Christianity is precisely that they can thus fulfill the end of the Institute, which is to educate students in this spirit of Christianity. This would not be possible unless each member were fully imbued with it himself.⁶⁴

His meditation for 29 April, after commenting on the life and martyrdom of Saint Peter of Verona, concludes:

Do you have a faith as lively as that of this saint? You are bound to excel in the spirit of faith, for you have to teach children the maxims of the holy Gospel and the mysteries of our religion. Often say to God with the holy Apostles: Lord, increase our faith!⁶⁵

The spirit of faith is so integral a part of the apostolic mission of the Brother that De La Salle boldly affirms:

Be convinced that you will contribute to the good of the Church in your ministry only insofar as you have the fullness of faith and are guided by the spirit of faith, which is the spirit of your state and by which you should be animated.⁶⁶

62. Maurice-Auguste Hermans, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, p. 12.

63. Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 10; *Collection*, p. 32; emphasis added.

64. *Collection*, p. 30; *Meditations*, 132.1, 171.3, and so on.

65. *Meditations*, 117.3, quoting Luke 17:5.

66. *Ibid.*, 139.2.

These passages, among many others, serve to show that while the *spirit of faith* is aimed at personal sanctification, for the Brother of the Christian Schools it is oriented toward his concrete apostolic and social function, expressed by *zeal* for the education of youth in the spirit of Christianity.

As a nursing mother thinks of the nourishment she must give her child when she nourishes herself, so the Brother nourishes and perfects his soul in order to be as capable an instrument as possible for the sanctification of his students.

His readings, his studies, his interior prayer, and his sanctification must have that extra personal and apostolic dimension that Saint John Baptist de La Salle condenses in these momentous words: "Do not distinguish between the duties of your state and what pertains to your salvation and perfection."⁶⁷ But we must not forget that while zeal constitutes a specific characteristic of that spirit of faith which is proper to the Christian Brother, it is not the only one. Even supposing the almost impossible situation in which a Brother might be denied the possibility of exercising his zeal, his intensely scriptural mentality, fostered by the spirit of faith as defined by De La Salle, would be sufficient to maintain his identity, even though it might not be as visible.

The thrust of our study thus far and the intimate links among its elements—maxims of the Gospel, spirit of Christianity, and spirit of faith—show how Sacred Scripture is the touchstone of Lasallian spirituality and of the apostolic activity that flows from it. Certain elements of this spirituality deserve special study. To these we will address ourselves in the following pages.

67. *Collection*, p. 78.

Chapter Seven

Sacred Scripture as Nourishment for the Soul

From the fields comes the joy of the harvest; from the vineyards, the fruits that are our nourishment; from Sacred Scripture, the doctrine that gives life. The fields yield their harvest in due time, and the vineyards give their wines at their proper season, but Sacred Scripture breathes its saving doctrine each time it is read. The fields, once harvested, are plowed and lie dormant; the pruned vines no longer serve any purpose and are discarded. Sacred Scripture, on the other hand, even though it is harvested every day, never lacks stalks of grain, which can be gathered by interested readers. Even when the scythe passes daily, the roots of hope contained in Scripture are never exhausted. Let us then enter this field and enjoy the life-giving furrows, rejoicing in the grains of life.¹

The spirit that inspired these words of Pseudo-Ephrem has always made its home in the Church, even from the dawning of the Old Testament. The psalmist enthusiastically describes the treasures of wisdom contained in Sacred Scripture and the delights to be found in meditating on them.² Jesus ben Sirach, author of the Book of Sirach,

1. Pseudo-Ephrem, *Serm. in Transfig.*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2, p. 41; cf. Leloir, *La Biblia, escuela de oración*, p. 11.

2. Especially recommended, Ps. 119:1–2; cf. Robert, “*Le sens du mot Loi dans le Ps. 119.*”

presents Sacred Scripture as the wellspring of life;³ Saint Paul praises its efficacy to his disciple Timothy,⁴ and Jesus Christ himself, quoting Deuteronomy, states that the word of God is food more necessary for man than even bread for the body.⁵ In fact, even before the Word made flesh could offer himself to us as our food, that same Word was being offered in Sacred Scripture as the nourishment of mankind.

Fully aware of this profound truth, the Church does not present us the Body of Christ during the eucharistic banquet of the Holy Mass without first offering us a taste of his word.⁶

From Origen to Bossuet

The *lectio divina* constitutes the source *par excellence* for the reflections and counsel contained in early spiritual literature, especially in the monastic tradition. It is presented as the basic element, and we could also say the foundation, of all spirituality. This *lectio divina* is a reading that always has the “word of God” as its object, even though Sacred Scripture may not always be its immediate text. It may also be taken from a liturgical text or a scriptural commentary of the Fathers of the Church. What is essential is that the text have Sacred Scripture as its point of departure and ultimately lead back to it, like the faithful echo of a distant voice, which is more distinct at one time than another but never altered by its own resonance.⁷

With interior prayer and the reading of the Scriptures, contemplative religious close the circle of their dialogue with God. When they pray, they speak to God; when they read, it is God who speaks to them. These two moments of contact fuse together in a continual meditation or reflection on some sacred text, and this constitutes a major part of the life of a monk or a nun.

However, this intense contact with Sacred Scripture is not the exclusive patrimony of monks and nuns. Since the very first centuries of Christianity, the Bible has served as nourishment for the faithful of every walk of life. We know, for example, how Origen is educated from his earliest childhood by his father Leonidas through the study of the Bible and how Saint John Chrysostom teaches parents their duty

3. Sir. 39.

4. 2 Tim. 3:14–17.

5. Matt. 4:4, quoting Deut. 8:3.

6. Consider the importance Vatican Council II placed on the reconsideration of this point; cf. *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, chap. 2, nos. 51, 56.

7. Bouyer, *Introduction à la vie spirituelle*, p. 54.

to see to it that their children read the Scriptures assiduously from their tenderest years. Saint Jerome deserves special attention. Not only does he recommend to the virgin Demetria that she consider the Sacred Books as jewels that adorn her neck and ears and to the virgin Eustochia that she prolong her study of Scripture until her tired head falls onto the Sacred Book, he also draws up a detailed program of formation for the maiden Paula, using the Bible as its essential core.⁸

The Middle Ages work mightily to present Sacred Scripture to the eyes and the imaginations of Christians in a thousand different ways: sculpture, painting, theater, poetry, preaching, books, and so on. It makes the Bible the basis of all knowledge and of all civilization, to such a degree that the knowledge of Scripture that it attains in many respects is almost an embarrassment to us.⁹

With the advent of humanism, there is a notable return to sources, and there is a hint of textual criticism. As a reaction to the medieval glosses that drown the Sacred Text, there is a tendency to reestablish the text and its literal meaning in all its purity. Erasmus, one of the leaders of this movement, suggests that Sacred Scripture be available to all Christians without distinction.¹⁰ Of course, the diffusion of the printing press plays an important role in this project.

The principle of free interpretation, which is at the basis of the Protestant revolt, and the lack of instruction of the common people make it necessary for the Church to adopt certain reservations, which are entirely justified as far as the translation and reading of Scripture in the vernacular are concerned. Unfortunately, the results of these measures, in the course of time, go far beyond the intent of the legislators. Almost imperceptibly, distrust insinuates itself into minds concerning the suitability of reading the word of God, and what is more lamentable, this distrust continues even after the circumstances that motivated it have long since disappeared. Thus among the faithful the door is open for a kind of biblical Jansenism. The same mentality that tries to reserve the Body of the Incarnate Word for a select minority winds up considering the word of God as the exclusive patrimony of an even more restricted intellectual elite.¹¹

8. Cf. Sauvage, *Catéchèse et laïcité*, chap. 3.

9. Cf. Peter and Rayez, "*Écriture Sainte et Vie Spirituelle au XVI siècle*," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 4, col. 213ff.

10. "Neither age, sex, nor social condition should deprive one of such reading. . . . I would like to see good women reading the Gospel and the Epistles of Saint Paul, the weaver chanting them during his work, and the traveler reciting them in order to forget the difficulty of the journey" (*Paracletis*, vol. 5, p. 140; cf. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 4, p. 209).

Charles Berthelot du Chesnay¹² points out that in the Golden Age in France, the reformers of both clergy and religious are in agreement in recommending that priests read the Scriptures often, especially the New Testament. However, they are much more reserved with regard to the use of the vernacular and to reading by the laity. Saint Vincent de Paul (†1660) eagerly recommends that his priests read the New Testament, but he does not advise it for the laity.¹³ The Sulpician Charles-Louis de Lantages (†1694) restricts the reading of vernacular editions to a few prudent people.¹⁴ Armand-Jean de Rancé (†1700), the famous reformer of La Trappe, unleashes a real storm with the publication of his book, *La sainteté et les devoirs de la vie monastique* (1683). He is much criticized for stating that the reading of the Old Testament—except for Proverbs and Psalms—is not advisable for religious women. This book occasions the publication by Mabillon of *Traité des études monastiques* (1691), which nevertheless hews to a very moderate line of thought.¹⁵

During the second half of the seventeenth century, partly because of the influence of Port-Royal, a more open position evolves. The faithful are invited to read the Scriptures for themselves and to ignore the plethora of extracts and commentaries, which convey only a fragmentary notion of the word of God, when they do not actually distort it. Of course this movement instigates a strong reaction on the part of some. Outstanding names among them are Nicolas Le Maire, with his work, *Le sanctuaire fermé aux profanes ou la Bible défendue au vulgaire* (Paris, 1651), and Charles Mallet, with *De la lecture de l'Écriture sainte en langue vulgaire* (Rouen, 1679), which categorically affirms:

I do not know if any truth, except what is of faith, can be more solidly supported than the prohibition to read Scripture in the vernacular.¹⁶

In answer, Arnauld writes *De la lecture de l'Écriture sainte contre les paradoxes extravagants et impies* (Anvers, 1680).

11. Cf. Charlier, *La lectura cristiana de la Biblia*, p. 7.

12. "Écriture Sainte et vie spirituelle; le 17e siècle," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 4, pp. 226–238.

13. *Correspondence*, vol. 7, p. 207; cf. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 4, p. 227.

14. *Catéchisme de la foi et des mœurs*, Paris: Migne, 1857, p. 31; cf. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 4, p. 228.

15. Cf. Berthelot du Chesnay, *Écriture sainte et vie spirituelle*, p. 230.

16. Mallet, *De la lecture de l'Écriture sainte*, p. 310.

Perhaps the most famous partisan of the cause in favor of greater openness toward the reading of the Bible is Bossuet (†1704), who has a deep appreciation of Sacred Scripture. He never hesitates when it comes to recommending to the laity and to religious Sisters alike that they read it. He himself has versions of the Sacred Books in French distributed throughout his diocese. However, we must not draw the conclusion that his policies contain no cautions. He always recommends the reading of the New Testament, but he is more careful with regard to the Old Testament, as to both the persons who are cleared to read it and the notes that accompany the various versions. Yet even here he tries not to fall into rigidity. These words, written in 1690 to Rancé, show the common sense of his position:

It is true, sir, that some have criticized these reservations concerning the reading of the Old Testament. The real solution to this difficulty lies in discretion when recommending the reading and weighing the capabilities of each person.¹⁷

Such is the existing atmosphere with regard to the reading of the Bible in the vernacular during the time-frame in which De La Salle is living.

De La Salle and the Vernacular Versions of Sacred Scripture

Just as Saint John Baptist de La Salle is an ardent defender of the frequent reception of the Body of Christ,¹⁸ he is no less a champion of frequent participation in the banquet of the word of God. As we have previously suggested, direct and continuous contact with Scripture is essential for the spirit of faith, and at the same time it is an excellent means to acquire it. These two elements mutually support and progressively intensify each other. The assiduous reading of Scripture gives us the mind of God, the “spirit of faith;” this in turn gives us

17. Bossuet, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 115; cf. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol 4, pp. 234–237.

18. In the Jansenistic atmosphere of the time, these words that De La Salle writes to one of his Brothers are significant: “You should regard it as a great happiness to receive the Eucharist frequently. You should take steps to correct yourself of your faults, but it would be an even greater fault not to receive Holy Communion” (*Letters*, 89.4–5). For De La Salle, “Nothing disposes us so well for the next Holy Communion as the previous one” (*Collection*, p. 94).

new insight with which to read it as the divine word, a new understanding to sound its depths, a new heart to receive it with sincerity and to make it produce results very richly.

Now we will look at the recommended characteristics of such a reading according to De La Salle. As we do so, it would be wise to bear in mind all the scriptural controversies of the time, so that we can make a better evaluation of the position adopted by De La Salle.

First, all of his recommendations relative to the reading of the Sacred Books are directed to religious who are not priests and to lay people. Second, the great majority of these religious not only have no knowledge of Latin, but its study is positively prohibited to them, as we have previously shown. From this it follows that all of his recommendations must be understood as applying to Sacred Scripture in the vernacular.

Within the framework of the debated question concerning the reading of Scripture, both as to its language and as to the discrimination among persons allowed to read it, we will now examine fully the judgments and the decisions of De La Salle.

His repeated recommendations to his followers to read Sacred Scripture frequently,¹⁹ to nourish their souls with its holy maxims,²⁰ as well as to ponder the advantage it is for the Brothers to carry with them the New Testament and to read it frequently²¹—all these have their first and prescribed declaration in the Rule, which indicates those times when the Brothers, as a duty of their state, ought to go to the source of the divine word. Aside from the general obligation of the Brothers always to carry the New Testament and not to pass a single day without reading some of it,²² the following readings are prescribed:

Daily, the Brothers ought to read the New Testament publicly (the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles) as the first book during dinner.²³ During supper, the first book is a public reading from “the New Testament, the Epistles of the holy Apostles and the Apocalypse,” and the second book is “a chapter of Bible history.”²⁴ Also, every day

19. *Meditations*, 119.2, 170.1, 171.3, 178.3, 192.1, 200.1.

20. *Ibid.*, 59.2, 159.1.

21. Blain, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 427; *Meditations*, 159.1, 84.1

22. Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 3.

23. *Ibid.*, chap. 27, art. 20.

24. *Ibid.*, chap. 27, art. 34. Bible history is not Sacred Scripture, properly speaking, but more a commentary on it. This becomes clear in the Rule of 1718, in which we find a directive to read during Holy Week “the Passion of Our Lord according to the four evangelists” and then “Bible history, beginning

the Brothers “will begin [their evening spiritual reading] by reading half a page of the New Testament on their knees.”²⁵ With regard to the subject matter of spiritual reading itself, no special book is prescribed, but the Brothers consider it as understood that Sacred Scripture ought to be one of their preferred books.²⁶

On Sundays, the Brothers begin interior prayer standing and listening to the reading of the Gospel of the day. There is no prescription to this effect, but the practice, according to Brother Imierde-Jésus, goes back to the origins of the Institute.²⁷ In fact, the first editions of *Meditations* suggest this, because they place public reading of the Gospel of the Sunday before public reading of the points for meditation.

On Sundays and feasts, after returning from Holy Mass, the Brothers have a community meeting focused on Sacred Scripture, consisting of a public reading of a chapter of the New Testament, followed by an explanation in the form of a conference–colloquium on what was read.²⁸ On these same days, according to the Rule of 1705,

with the Last Supper of Our Lord” (chap. 30, art. 13). Note that De La Salle is not looking for another rendition of the same passage but a complement for the text from Sacred Scripture, to which he always grants the primacy.

25. Rule of 1705 and Rule of 1718, chap. 27, art. 29.

26. See the directives in *Collection* (p. 61) concerning spiritual reading. According to De La Salle, the Brothers should have a different and more devoutly attentive attitude when they are reading from the Sacred Books.

27. “The practice of reading the Sunday Gospel immediately before the points of the meditation that is based on it goes back to the origins of the Institute. For this reason, we should maintain this practice in spite of the custom, which has been in vogue for some time now, of reading this Gospel and its commentary during supper on Saturday. The reading of the points of meditation will surely help the Brothers make a better interior prayer” (*Meditations*, 1922, preface, p. vi).

28. The Rule of 1705 mentions a “recitation” after the reading and suggests that the one who presides over the session is to give the “explanation” or summary. It does not mention the “conference” that seems to be included in the “explanation:” “There will be a public reading of the New Testament, then a recitation and explanation” (Rule of 1705, chap. 28, art. 1). The Rule of 1718, in a passage that is literally the same today, seems, on the contrary, to indicate that the “explanation” takes place by way of a reading and that the conference has the form of a colloquium: “On their return from Holy Mass, there will be a reading of a chapter of the New Testament with an explanation of the same chapter and talk about it until 8:00” (Rule of 1718, chap. 28, art. 1). This “explanation” seems to be the same as the patristic commentary mentioned in the *Coutumier de Saint Yon* (1781), p. 60, in which we read concerning the “Rule for Retreats:” “At 8:15 A.M., the explanation of the Fathers

besides the usual prescribed daily spiritual reading in the evening, the Brothers have an additional half hour of spiritual reading at the end of the morning, which likewise begins with the reading of half a page from the New Testament while kneeling.²⁹ This same double period of spiritual reading also takes place on free days during the school year, which are ordinarily on Thursday of each week. It also takes place every day during vacation.³⁰

During vacation, a special period for reading in the New Testament is added to the ordinary schedule on three days of the week, preferably after Holy Mass.

During the last three days of Holy Week, Sacred Scripture occupies a place of honor. Besides the normal readings assigned to feast days, as noted above, the readings in Scripture are increased. On Holy Thursday and Good Friday, instead of the ordinary readings in the dining room, the only reading is the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the four Evangelists. When these are finished, there is a reading of some commentary on them.³¹ On each of the last three days of Holy Week, the Rule prescribes a public reading from Scripture, followed by a "recitation" and an "explanation" or "conference."³²

of the Church regarding the chapters (of the Gospel) indicated by the Rule;" cf. Maurice-Auguste Hermans, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, p. 28. This shows us that De La Salle sought the authentic interpretation of Scripture in the best sources of Tradition.

29. One directive ordinarily refers to Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays of vacation time and states: "At 6:00 they will assist at Holy Mass; then each will read by himself in the New Testament" (Rule of 1705 and Rule of 1718, chap. 31, art. 2). This reading will last until 7:30 (Rule of 1705) or until 7:15 (Rule of 1718), which is the time for breakfast (chap. 31, art. 3).

30. Rule of 1705 and Rule of 1718, chap. 29, art. 6; chap. 31, art. 2.

31. Rule of 1718, chap. 30, section on "The Last Three Days of Holy Week," art. 13; articles 14, 16, and 17 specify the reading proper to each day. It is clear that the Bible history reading mentioned on these days actually calls for a commentary, as both it and the previous reading in the New Testament have the Passion of Our Lord as their common theme.

32. "At 7:00 (on Holy Thursday) there will be public reading of the New Testament, followed by recitation and explanation." On Good Friday: "They will read in public the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to Saint John, after which the Brother Director will give a conference on the subject of the Passion of Our Lord" (Rule of 1718, chap. 30, art. 28). On Holy Saturday: "At 7:00 there will be public reading of the New Testament and then recitation and explanation" (Rule of 1718, chap. 30, art. 39). The exercise prescribed for Friday differs somewhat, as to the content and the hour, with respect to those indicated for Thursday and Saturday. That on Friday there is a rule to read an "explanation" of the Passion according to Saint John, instead of the Passion

On Holy Thursday, as a preparation for the exercise of pardon, there is a public reading in community, immediately after dinner, of chapters 13 through 17 of the Gospel according to Saint John,³³ and on Holy Saturday, when attendance at the parish sermon is not possible, there is a reading of the Passion according to Saint John, followed by a conference on the same theme.³⁴

We can easily see that during these days the scriptural readings follow upon each other at regular intervals. If to these we add those liturgical services in which the reading of Sacred Scripture is an integral part, we could ask ourselves if even Saint Jerome himself would have wanted so ambitious a program for his own followers.³⁵

itself, is perfectly justified, because the Passion is read previously on that day (Rule of 1718, chap. 30, art. 35).

33. Rule of 1718, chap. 30, art. 19.

34. "At 8:00, if there is a sermon in the church where they go to hear Holy Mass, they will go there to hear it . . . otherwise, they will read in public the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to Saint John, after which the Brother Director will give a conference on the subject of the Passion of Our Lord" (Rule of 1718, chap. 30, art. 28).

35. Thus we can see that on Holy Thursday, for example, according to the Rule of 1718, the Brothers are to have six readings in Sacred Scripture, which, completed by the liturgical-scriptural readings, gives us the following schedule for the day (not counting those exercises in which the presence of Scripture is purely optional):

- 6:00 Prime, Tierce, Sext, and None
- 7:00 Public reading of the New Testament, with recitation and explanation
- 8:00 Holy Mass (Liturgy of the Word)
Spiritual reading (begun by reading a half page of the New Testament)
- 11:00 Vespers
- 11:30 Examen (*De profundis*)
Meal (reading of the Passion according to Saint Matthew and a commentary)
Miserere
Reading of Saint John, chapters 13–17; conference.
- 2:00 Compline
- 3:30 Office of *Tenebræ*
Spiritual reading (a half page of the New Testament)
De profundis
Supper (reading of the Passion according to Saint Mark and a commentary).
Miserere

Note that the most repeated reading during these days is the Passion according to Saint John; it appears four times between Thursday and Friday:

On days of retreat, which are part of the program for vacation time, De La Salle prescribes the supplementary public reading of the Sermon on the Mount or the Discourse at the Last Supper and the priestly prayer of Christ.³⁶

He is even careful that the reading of Sacred Scripture not be omitted during travel from one town to another. When the Brothers are traveling, they should read at least one page from the New Testament, by way of spiritual reading, and another selected page before the principal meals.³⁷

The novices, in their schedule, have one hour daily to memorize a selection from the New Testament and to recite it.³⁸

Finally, it is interesting to note the eagerness of De La Salle to foster in the Brothers such a taste for reading in Scripture that in their leisure moments between religious and teaching duties, or during moments of indecision, they would spontaneously turn to it. For this purpose the Brothers have the tremendous advantage of always having the New Testament with them.

It is in this sense that we understand the recommendation of the *Collection* to read the New Testament and *The Imitation of Christ* progressively and in order, or sometimes to open them at random, during the short intervals of time when the Brothers might be free during the

Thursday: Five chapters, in preparation for the exercise of pardon.

Friday: Public reading, followed by a conference (if no sermon).
Reading during supper.

Reading of a commentary, followed by a summary and conference (based on the Gospel for the Mass of Good Friday).

36. "At 8:00 there will be a public reading of a chapter of the Gospel, one chapter each day; those read will be chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Saint Matthew and chapters 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 of Saint John" (Rule of 1705 and Rule of 1718, chap. 32, art. 13). Notice the choice of chapters of the Gospel and the emphasis on the first chapters of the Passion according to Saint John, which were so prominent during the last days of Holy Week.

37. "They will daily read daily a page of the New Testament and a page of *The Imitation of Christ*, which will serve as their spiritual reading" (Rule of 1718, chap. 24, art. 6). "When they must eat at an inn, they will read . . . a selected page from the Gospel before the principal meal and another from the Epistles of Saint Paul before supper" (*Recueil*, "Directoire" for traveling, p. 18, Cahiers lasalliens 15, p. 131).

38. "Beginning around 7:00, the novices will learn by heart, while they walk in the garden or in a room, what their Director has given them to learn from the New Testament, and then they will recite it to the Director of Novices. At 8:00 . . ." (Rule of 1705, "Daily Exercises for the House of the Novitiate," art. 4).

day.³⁹ A directive in *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* states that the teachers ought to occupy themselves with reading the New Testament from the time of their arrival until the beginning of class.⁴⁰ Likewise, during morning interior prayer, Brothers who so desire may spend the final fifteen minutes reading in the New Testament.⁴¹

This collection of recommendations and prescriptions is quite eloquent in itself. The reading of Scripture in the vernacular is widely recommended by De La Salle. However, from all the references supplied, one difficulty might arise: none of them expressly mentions the Old Testament. Whenever there is a specific reading to be made, the Rule invariably calls for the New Testament. What are we to make of this? Does De La Salle join Le Maire, Rancé, Mallet, and others in making the Old Testament a domain that is off limits also to the Brothers?

The Reading of the Old Testament

The frequency with which Saint John Baptist de La Salle returns again and again to the New Testament ought not lead us to infer an exclusion of the Old Testament. In the first place, note the fact that nowhere in his writings does there appear any restriction upon the Brothers concerning the reading of Sacred Scripture in general or the Old Testament in particular.

Given the attitude of his contemporaries, it would be perfectly natural to expect the Founder to make such a restriction, had it been in accord with his way of thinking. His meticulousness about directives and recommendations would certainly have facilitated such a statement, had he cared to make it. In the absence of any categorical prohibition, the conclusion is absolutely established. On the other hand, we do find passages in his writings in which the need for the Brothers to know the Old Testament as a point of duty is clearly understood and explicitly stated.⁴²

39. *Collection*, p. 88.

40. "From the time the teachers take their seats until school begins, they will apply themselves to reading the New Testament and will remain silent in order to give an example to the students. They will observe, however, all that takes place in the school, in order to maintain good order" (*Conduct*, p. 50).

41. "Spiritual reading may be made either in the New Testament or in *The Imitation* from 5:45 to 6:00" (Rule of 1718, chap. 27, art. 8).

42. We choose not to argue the point on the basis of the daily reading from Bible history during supper (Rule of 1705, chap. 27, art. 34); this article probably alludes to a synthesis or commentary, rather than to Scripture itself.

We already know well that the spirit of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is “a spirit which is regulated and guided in all things by the maxims and sentiments of faith, taken especially from Holy Scripture”⁴³ and that “the first means of acquiring it is to have a profound respect for Scripture.”⁴⁴ It is significant that from the very beginning, this definition has recourse to the Old Testament when attempting to define the spirit of faith and its effects. Thus we read:

The spirit of faith should constantly penetrate us with the sentiments of Job—“*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. As it has pleased the Lord, so is it done*”—and other similar sentiments so often expressed in Holy Scripture and uttered by the Patriarchs of old.⁴⁵

Within the Lasallian context, this invitation to a personal search for a particular passage can only be interpreted as the need for a rather thorough knowledge of all of Scripture, which is demanded by the very spirit of the Institute. In his commentary on the above-quoted passage, Brother Maurice-Auguste says:

Either the words have no meaning or they indicate that in fact the acquisition and the practice of the spirit of faith presuppose a certain advanced stage of familiarity with the Sacred Books and specifically with the Old Testament. It is hard to conceive how such recommendations could be proposed to one who has only an indirect knowledge of the Wisdom Books and also of the historical Books. Job and Genesis appear here, but it is evident that the mention of these two should in no way be considered as restrictive, because the expression “and other similar sentiments so often expressed in Holy Scripture” can only be taken in its broadest sense.⁴⁶

In the *Collection*, when De La Salle again offers some scriptural texts that might help the Brothers perform certain specific actions through the spirit of faith, we discover passages from Genesis, First Samuel, Isaiah, and the Song of Songs.⁴⁷ These are only suggestions, which anyone can complete or adapt according to his own needs.

43. *Collection*, p. 32.

44. Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 3.

45. *Ibid.*, art. 2.

46. Maurice-Auguste Hermans, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, p. 33.

47. *Collection*, pp. 38–44, 54.

Let us also recall that in the quotations found in *Meditations*, despite the quantitative superiority of those from the New Testament, twenty-eight Books of the Old Testament are represented. The paragraph in which De La Salle speaks his mind most clearly in this regard is to be found in his meditation for the feast of Saint Jerome:

If you wish to be filled with the mind of God and entirely fit for your work, make the sacred books of Scripture your special study, and particularly the New Testament, so that it serves as a rule of conduct both for yourselves and for those whom you instruct.⁴⁸

From these words we can deduce that when De La Salle says "Scripture," he really has in mind all of the Sacred Books. He is not merely using the term as a synonym for the Gospel or the New Testament. "All of Sacred Scripture and particularly the New Testament" is the formula that best represents the Lasallian program.

Nevertheless, we must not fail to include certain reservations when we speak of De La Salle and the Old Testament. If the passages we have just quoted leave no room for doubt as to the inclusion of all of Scripture in the program of readings, it is no less certain that within his doctrine on Scripture and spirituality, we might hope to find a more detailed presentation of his thought concerning the reading of the various Books of the Old Testament, some of which cannot be read profitably without some preparation.

It is true that here, as in all Lasallian writings, his love for what is essential comes into play.⁴⁹ There can be no doubt that in his mind, notwithstanding the unity and harmony of the whole of Sacred Scripture, the New Testament must be given the primacy, and therefore De La Salle concentrates his attention in a special way on it.

It is also highly significant that there is complete agreement here, in content as well as in terminology, with the manner in which the modern encyclicals on Sacred Scripture express themselves:

As for us, Venerable Brothers, after the example of Saint Jerome, we will never cease to exhort all Christians to read daily from the

48. *Meditations*, 170.1.

49. Marcato, justifiably stressing De La Salle's preoccupation with what is essential in matters of education, says, "Fundamentals and clarity are the characteristics of Lasallian catechetics. They require a maximum of simplicity and concentration, not through a love for brevity but through a love for truth" (*Le massime del Vangelo*, "Rivista Lasalliana", 36, 1962, pp. 166, 157).

Bible, principally from the holy Gospels of Our Lord Jesus Christ as well as from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, so that these may become the life of their souls.⁵⁰

De La Salle's insistence on essentials is especially apparent when he speaks directly to students or to Christians in general. To them also he recommends not to be satisfied with maxims found in pamphlets or collections but to search earnestly for them in the inexhaustible fountain of the New Testament:

There are, besides, many Christian maxims that we did not think it necessary to write down here, because they can easily be found in many places in the New Testament. Jesus Christ, having called Christians to a high degree of perfection, has given them to us personally or through his holy Apostles, who wrote them down. It is for us to read them often and to meditate on them in order to dispose ourselves to put them into practice and in this way to become perfect Christians.⁵¹

The Necessity for Reading Sacred Scripture

The assiduous reading of the Bible is not an optional luxury for a Brother of the Christian Schools. It provides him with an excellent means to achieve personal sanctification,⁵² to be "strong in the faith and in the practice of good,"⁵³ and to fill himself with the Spirit of God,⁵⁴ as it does for every good Christian. However, for the Brothers the frequent reading of the word of God is an imperative related to the spirit proper to their state and to the apostolic mission confided to them. Concerning the spirit of faith, we can add nothing to what has already been said, and Sacred Scripture is the best means to attain it.

The spirit of zeal that ought to animate the Brothers in the exercise of their apostolic mission also demands of them an adequate knowledge of the revealed word. From the very foundation of the Institute, we can almost see De La Salle somehow haunted by the same lament that Pope Benedict XV later expresses:

50. Benedict XV, *Spiritus Paraclitus*, EBB, 490; cf. Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, EBB, 571.

51. *Devoirs*, I, Cahiers lasalliens 20, p. 192.

52. *Meditations*, 119.2, 166.1.

53. *Ibid.*, 192.1.

54. *Ibid.*, 64.1, 170.1.

How many sacred ministers have perished from hunger themselves and also allowed a very great number of souls to perish because they neglected the reading of the Scriptures! It is written: "The children begged for bread, and there was no one to give it to them."⁵⁵

With all his might, De La Salle strives to prevent the day in which such words might apply to his followers. Being persuaded with Saint Augustine that exteriorly "he will be a useless minister of the word of God who does not himself listen to it interiorly,"⁵⁶ De La Salle plans for his Brothers such an excellent preparation for receiving this divine word and for communicating it to others that they might become, in imitation of the Most Blessed Virgin, real "tabernacles of the Divine Word."⁵⁷ Referring to his favorite theme of the Gospel, he categorically affirms:

You are in a state where you should know well the maxims of the holy Gospel, both to work at your own sanctification and to procure that of others.⁵⁸

For this reason, it is not enough for the Brothers to be satisfied with a general knowledge of these truths of the Gospel: they should also master them in such a way that "you are able to expand on them sufficiently to make them understood clearly and in detail by your disciples."⁵⁹ The Brothers should consider the duty of making a serious study of the truths of the Gospel and impressing them profoundly on the souls of children "as the most important [responsibility] in their work" and therefore that which demands their "main concern."⁶⁰

We quote from the meditation of De La Salle for the feast of Saint Matthew to hear him insist on the need for Sacred Scripture in the apostolate of the school:

55. *Spiritus Paraclitus*, EBB, 495.

56. *Sermon*, 179, 1.

57. *Meditations*, 191.3.

58. *Ibid.*, 166.1.

59. *Ibid.*, 198.1.

60. *Ibid.*; cf. 116.2. These words of De La Salle are the echo of those of Saint Jerome, another saint in love with Sacred Scripture and much admired by our author: "Read the Scriptures again and again, or better still, never leave them out of your hand; learn what you have to teach; the language of a priest must be seasoned with the words of the Scriptures" (Ep. 52, to Nepociano, PL, 22, 533).

Attach yourself only to Jesus Christ, to his doctrine, and his holy maxims, since he has done you the honor of choosing you in preference to a great many others in order to announce these truths to the children who are his well-beloved.

Think highly of your work, which is apostolic, and carefully study the Gospel of Saint Matthew, in which we find proposed the holiest maxims of Jesus Christ and the fundamental truths of Christian piety. The more you apply yourself to this, the more learned you will become in the science of the saints and the better prepared you will be to instruct others.⁶¹

The Dynamics of Reading Sacred Scripture

Up to this point, we have referred only to the mere reading of Sacred Scripture; however, for De La Salle, this reading, considered in a broader sense, is extremely richer because of its many latent dynamics and possibilities.

Just as Saint Benedict established his well-known order: *lectio–cogitatio–studium–meditatio–oratio–contemplatio*, De La Salle rarely speaks of reading in itself without considering it as the dynamic beginning of a chain of effects that are its complement and natural result. The reading of Scripture is the start and support of the entire movement of the Christian and the religious toward total union with the revealed word.

According to De La Salle, *reading as such*, which we will examine shortly, must have as its indispensable condition a serious study that will lead to a “perfect grasp of Scripture,”⁶² both for the benefit of our own souls and to qualify us for our apostolic mission. Such a knowledge of Sacred Scripture will offer us very valuable means for its progressive interiorization and will have as an immediate consequence the *occupying of the mind* with a leisurely musing on the divine word:

Frequently review interiorly and strive to engrave upon your heart what you have most relished in your reading.⁶³

61. *Meditations*, 167.2.

62. *Ibid.*, 116.2, 171.3, 178.2.

63. *Collection*, p. 61. This and other general directives for spiritual reading are applicable, according to De La Salle, “above all” when it is a question of Sacred Scripture.

You should often call to mind some text of the New Testament or *The Imitation of Jesus Christ*. You should always keep some such passage in mind.⁶⁴

The early monks emphasized in a special way the necessity of uninterruptedly supplying the mill of their minds with the grain of the word of God, and they constantly pondered Sacred Scripture, turning it over and over in their minds, even during somnolence, as one of the best means of penetrating its secrets.⁶⁵

The privileged moment of this frequentation of Scripture takes place during *interior prayer*. Reading Scripture is not an end in itself but only a means that puts us on the road to prayer and to habitual intimacy with God, who is known and attained through the inspired word.⁶⁶ Recall the way De La Salle insists on placing spiritual reading immediately before interior prayer, “so as to prepare” for this exercise. And so it comes as no surprise when we hear De La Salle insist so much on the “reading” of Scripture, the “meditation” on Scripture⁶⁷ and especially on its “maxims,”⁶⁸ because he believes that the knowledge that God gives of his Word in these moments of intimacy with him in Sacred Scripture are far more useful and profound than anything we might achieve through a mere intellectual study.

You must have knowledge in order to teach, but be convinced that you will know the Gospel better by meditating on it than by committing it to memory.⁶⁹

64. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

65. “For this reason we must try to memorize Scripture and think about its passages incessantly. This will produce two effects. First, while our attention is occupied in reading and studying, it is freed from negative thoughts. Second, after having gone over certain passages many times, we will have memorized them, and whereas we may not have been able to understand them at first (because our minds were not sufficiently free), now, liberated from the distractions that tugged at us, we go over them again in silence, especially during the night, and we receive great insights, sometimes even to the point of seeing the most hidden meanings. What we could not understand during the day, we see now during the night in our deepest sleep” (Cassian, *Colaciones*, Madrid: Rialp, 1962, vol. 2, p. 106).

66. Cf. Vilnet, *Bible et mystique chez saint Jean de la Croix*, p. 10.

67. *Meditations*, 84.1, 100.1, 116.2, 159.1, 178.2.

68. *Ibid.*, see especially, 192.2, 159.1.

69. *Ibid.*, 170.2.

Later on we will have occasion to speak of Sacred Scripture as the backbone of Lasallian interior prayer.

If we fill our interior life with the word of God, its exterior manifestations will certainly become evident, and our personal reflections will ultimately become *dialogue*. This is why De La Salle wants us to speak of Scripture and to make it “the usual topic of your conversation.”⁷⁰

Through dialogue, the richness accumulated in our interior is poured forth, enhanced, and consolidated on a more objective level, and therefore it is even more authentically scriptural.

Having arrived at this point in the progressive assimilation of the revealed word, we need to consider the element of intention or purpose, which is always a factor in the reading of Scripture.

By the *practice* of the teachings of Scripture, the word of God becomes incarnate in us and achieves its maximum effect in our lives. Here the realism and practicality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle again become manifest. His insistence on the inseparability of reading, study, and meditation of Sacred Scripture and of putting it into practice is relentless.

70. *Ibid.*, 100.1. At first sight it may come as a surprise that De La Salle, who loves Scripture so earnestly, does not include it in his list of “Subjects on Which the Brothers Should Speak During Recreation” (*Collection*, pp. 24–29). They are inspired by Nadal, as we have already seen; Nadal indicates them under no. 24, “*De evangelio eius diei*,” and no. 26, “*De historiis sacræ scripturæ*.” However, the reason is not hard to find if we consider that a) these two topics do not appear in the revision of the list of Nadal by the *Institutum Societatis Jesu*, which was used by De La Salle as his source, and b) the content of these two topics is, for all practical purposes, included in the following items of the Lasallian list:

“1) What has been read in the refectory. This is the first subject that should be spoken about in recreation.

“2) What they have read in spiritual books.

“8) The spiritual maxims and practices of the saints . . . and other maxims and practices in harmony with the spirit of our Institute.

“19) The means we should take to perform [all our actions] always in this spirit [of faith].

“29) The various maxims and practices which the pupils should be taught in order to make them enter into the Christian spirit.” (*Collection*, pp. 25–29)

After what has been said concerning spiritual reading and reading in the refectory, and the proper understanding of the terms “maxim,” “spirit of Christianity,” and “spirit of faith,” there is no need to insist any further on the role played by Sacred Scripture in these topics of conversation.

Read the Gospel frequently, then, with attention and affection, and let this be your principal study, but study it especially in order to put it into practice.⁷¹

Besides, the only way to learn Sacred Scripture is “to begin by putting it into practice.”⁷²

However, just as the Brothers cannot make a separation between their own perfection and the duties of their state,⁷³ neither can their reading of the word of God, together with the study and meditation that accompany it, be deprived of apostolic resonance. When a Brother fills himself with Scripture by reading and meditation, he knows that he is indirectly enhancing his competence to transmit the word of God to children in a more effective way. By his study he is making a proximate preparation, and by his practice he is qualifying himself to ask at least as much of his students.

This same relentless emphasis, which we mentioned above—to bring his followers to penetrate deeply into the spirit of Christianity in order to pass it on to the children confided to them—is found again in a different guise. The Brothers should do whatever is necessary to acquire a perfect command of Scripture and to put its teachings into practice. By their ministry, which continues that of the Apostles, they are held responsible for *infusing* the word of God into the souls of children and for *helping them to incarnate it in their own lives*.

Since you are bound to teach every day the doctrine of the holy Apostles and of Jesus Christ himself, you are obliged to learn it well so that you possess it perfectly and by this means make your students true disciples of Jesus Christ. Are you careful to learn thoroughly the holy maxims contained in this saint's Gospel [Mark] and to meditate on them often, so that you may be able to inspire them in those for whom you are responsible? Your first care for them should be to make sure they grasp fully the doctrine of the holy Apostles, to give them the spirit of religion, and to make them practice what Jesus Christ has left us in the holy Gospel.⁷⁴

Now we are in a position to see how the latent potentialities and demands of reading Scripture, according to the Lasallian concept,

71. *Meditations*, 171.3, 84.1, 100.1, 116.1, 178.2, 192.1–2, 178.2, 192.1–2.

72. *Ibid.*, 170.2.

73. *Collection*, p. 78.

74. *Meditations*, 116.2; cf. 84.1, 100.1, 159.1, 171.3.

become a progressively dynamic process: 1) reading, 2) study, 3) occupying the mind, 4) meditation, 5) conversation, 6) personal practice, 7) transmission to students, and 8) helping them put it into practice in their lives.⁷⁵

The reading of Scripture is the keystone of this circular movement that moves from the word of God incarnated in Scripture to the word of God incarnated in hearts. It corresponds perfectly to the plan of the divine economy of salvation, which prepares by God's written word for the coming of the Word made flesh, so that God may grow in us unto the plenitude of the "perfect man" and the "total Christ."

In the mind of De La Salle, to incarnate Scripture is to "live according to the spirit of Christianity," to "be true Christians,"⁷⁶ to incarnate Christ, and to contribute to his increase in historical time.

75. In *Meditations*, Saint John Baptist de La Salle brings up topics as the occasion calls for them. He makes no pretense of establishing a systematic theory of spiritual reading, and therefore we find no specific text in which this system appears in its entirety. However, as we have often seen, it is not difficult to structure it, given the complementary nature of the allusions made, some of which are almost complete in themselves. Thus referring only to the places recently mentioned, we find the following elements of our schematic (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) in each of these meditations:

<i>Meditations</i> , 100.1	<i>Meditations</i> , 116.2	<i>Meditations</i> , 178.2
1	1	1
2	2	2
4	4	4
5		
6		6
7	7	
	8	
<i>Meditations</i> , 171.3	<i>Meditations</i> , 84.1	<i>Meditations</i> , 159.1
1	1	1
2		
	4	4
6	6	
7	7	7
8		

If we examine a quotation against this series, we can observe that the basic common elements of this "scale" are reading–meditation–practice–transmission. As a model of conciseness, we offer the quotation from *Meditations*, 178.2, for the feast of Saint Luke: "You will establish between yourselves and Saint Paul a close friendship, as Saint Luke did, if you often read his Epistles, if you select and study the principal maxims contained in them, if you meditate on them attentively, and if you make it your glory to practice them."

76. *Meditations*, 171.3.

With this panoramic insight into Lasallian spirituality, we can now understand how incredibly different is the prescription of De La Salle always to carry the New Testament from the formalistic practice of wearing phylacteries (for which Jesus reproaches the Pharisees).⁷⁷

From the passages of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and 11:18–20, which gave rise to the Israelitic use of phylacteries, the Pharisees stopped at the material suggestion of the metaphor: “Bind them [the words of Yahweh] as a sign on your hand; fix them as an emblem on your forehead.” But they neglected the essential thought of these passages: “Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. You will put these words of mine in your heart and soul.” It is on this essential thought that De La Salle bases himself, and every external practice is ordered toward this same end.

How to Read the Word of God

Medieval libraries distinguished between two kinds of books in their catalogues: the profane books and the divine books. The latter contained the “divine Scriptures,” which are also the object of a “divine reading,” and so the name *lectio divina*.

This *lectio divina*, which constituted the principal occupation of the early monks, should therefore be distinguished from “study,” because it is more of a meditative reading, consecrated in a special way to Sacred Scripture and its authentic interpretation by the Fathers of the Church. It is a reading that by its nature and its object inclines more toward edification than toward scientific speculation.⁷⁸ De La Salle very clearly perceives this difference in the *lectio*, and he keeps it in mind when he says to the Brothers, “Carefully distinguish between spiritual reading and reading for study, and see to it that you observe the distinction exactly.”⁷⁹

What are the characteristics of true spiritual reading according to De La Salle? We will here consider his answer to this question.

The most solid doctrine on this subject is found in several sections of *Collection of Various Short Treatises*.⁸⁰ De La Salle gives very

77. Matt. 23:5.

78. Cf. Leclercq, *La lecture divine*, pp. 21–23; Merton, *Aux sources du silence*, p. 28; Butler, *Le Monachisme bénédictin*, p. 33; Maurice-Auguste Hermans, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, p. 27.

79. *Collection*, p. 88.

80. Cf. “Spiritual Reading,” under “Means That the Brothers of the Christian Schools Should Use to Perform Their Actions Well” (*Collection*, p. 61);

precise norms concerning “spiritual reading” in general, but it is evident that if we apply them to a specific book, they all point to Sacred Scripture, according to De La Salle himself.⁸¹ For the Founder of the Brothers, the reading of the Scriptures is the reading *par excellence* and the *analogatum princeps* of all other reading.⁸²

As was the case with so many other things, here again the originality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle must be sought not in novelty but rather in the vital synthesis resulting from his ability to assimilate and adapt the best of traditional thinking to the needs of his new enterprise.

Scripture is just as sacred a ground as that from which Moses contemplated the burning, yet unconsumed, bush. To enter it, we must also remove the sandals of the mind: pride, self-sufficiency, and curiosity. God must be approached with faith, humility, veneration, docility, prayer, and openness:

Do not begin reading without placing yourself in the presence of God and asking him, by some short prayer, for the grace and light to understand and to practice what you will read.⁸³

Curiosity and negligence are the two great obstacles to the spiritual profit which we should draw from hearing or reading the word of God. Have you not fallen into one or another of these faults?⁸⁴

The spirit proper to the Institute places the Brothers in optimum conditions to approach Sacred Scripture with profound respect, and we have already seen that to manifest it, they should pass no day without reading in the New Testament “through a sentiment of faith, respect, and veneration for the divine words contained in it.”⁸⁵

“Regarding Exhortations, Conferences, and Spiritual Reading,” under “Reflections on Their State and Employment That the Brothers Should Make from Time to Time, Especially During Retreat” (ibid., pp. 87–89). Add to these main references the other quotations that are dispersed throughout *Meditations* and the Rule, which round out his doctrine on this topic.

81. “Read your spiritual book. . . . Above all, read Holy Scripture” (*Collection*, p. 61).

82. We could say something similar concerning the expression “the word of God,” which De La Salle uses in the broad sense that we use today (cf. *Collection*, p. 87).

83. Ibid., p. 61.

84. Ibid., p. 87.

85. Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 3.

De La Salle—like Saint Charles Borromeo, who never reads the Scriptures except with head uncovered and kneeling—follows a practice introduced by Olier in the Seminary of Saint Sulpice. He applies this common practice with his own practical adaptation in the Rule he gives to his Brothers. They are to kneel and read daily at the beginning of spiritual reading “half a page in the New Testament.”⁸⁶

Authentic reading of the word of God must be a reading that leads to wisdom, that is, a reading that is deliberate, open-minded, felt, enjoyed, and savored by calm reflection, always directed toward assimilation into one’s actions and life.

Never read through curiosity, and do not read hurriedly to get through a book quickly. Stop from time to time to relish your reading.

. . . .

Frequently review interiorly and strive to engrave upon your heart what you have most relished in your reading.⁸⁷

In the *lectio divina* we can never take the attitude of a mere spectator. Sacred Scripture is the history of salvation, and we are all living participants in that history. Reading Scripture is more than receiving its message intellectually. It is actually a commitment of oneself to live it.⁸⁸

Thus, Scripture is to be a *mirror* for the Brothers—to use an Augustinian expression common during the Middle Ages—in which they can recognize their own features. In it they ought to examine whether there is similarity or disparity with what they see, always trying to achieve as close a resemblance as possible.⁸⁹

When you read or hear the word of God, do you apply it to yourself? Have you examined to what extent your exterior and interior conduct is in conformity to or at variance with the truths which you hear announced?⁹⁰

86. *Ibid.*, chap. 27, art. 29.

87. *Collection*, p. 61. In the “*Directoire*” for the reddition of conduct, reference is made concerning whether the Brother “has read much or little at each spiritual reading” and “whether he reflects from time to time during his reading” (*Recueil, Cahiers lasalliens* 15, p. 126).

88. Cf. Charlier, *La lectura cristiana de la Biblia*, p. 338.

89. Cf. Leclercq, “*La Lecture divine*,” chap. 5, p. 26.

90. *Collection*, p. 87.

Reflect on and examine yourself about what prevents you from practicing what you read. When it is something you could perform, ask yourself why you do not do so.⁹¹

While it is true that Scripture contains a message for all mankind, it is nonetheless true that because of the unique and personal traits of each individual, God has included for every person a very special and non-transferrable message that he must make an effort to discover. For this reason, De La Salle wants each of his Brothers to read Scripture “as if it were a letter sent by Jesus Christ himself to make known to you his holy will.”⁹²

Perhaps it is when De La Salle chooses his terminology most carefully that he is trying to insist on this personal contact in faith, which should be frequent for every Brother. He does not ignore the transcendency of the truths contained in Scripture and the difficulties created for the intelligence of the reader by the verbal clothing of revealed doctrine. Just as in Scripture the prophecies of the Incarnation are perfectly fulfilled, so also does Scripture expect of the reader an active participation in the mystery of the death and resurrection of our Savior. It is a participation in his death through an attitude of faith that is required, and this includes a kind of death to intellectual pride when we submit our understanding to the human aspects assumed by the word of God as a condition for resurrection unto the clarity of divine light.⁹³

De La Salle makes these realities concrete in the following directives: 1) from the material aspect—extreme respect for the integrity of the text, and 2) from the formal aspect—submission of mind, interiorization and practice of the truths known through Scripture, adoration of the truth of God in the obscurities that may present themselves, and an energetic approach to resolving them by adequate means. Here are his words:

Above all, read Holy Scripture with the most profound respect; reverence even the least syllable. Read it with a submissive spirit; practice what you understand; adore what you do not understand. If you wish to know the meaning, ask the sense of the passage of those who have the intelligence for it.⁹⁴

91. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

92. *Ibid.*; Maurice-Auguste Hermans furnishes us with copious patristic reverberations of this same idea; cf. *Pour une meilleure lecture*, p. 30.

93. Cf. Charlier, *La lectura cristiana de la Biblia*, p. 338.

Notice that for De La Salle, Scripture is “read” not in order to wander off subsequently into speculative constructs but rather to live according to its truths. Also note that the previously counseled attitude of submission and adoration when confronted by difficulties is not followed by a posture of indolent conformity but rather by an active trust that the light of God itself will continue to grow within us,⁹⁵ provided that after accepting the purifications wrought by God on our self-sufficiency, we willingly take the means at our disposal to resolve them. Among these, certainly, the reading of the Fathers of the Church occupies the highest place, because De La Salle always considers their writings to be inseparable from Scripture.⁹⁶

An important element for the understanding of Sacred Scripture is the coherence of its composition. Within the multiplicity of its Books, Scripture is the work of one sole Author. Within the variety of its events and its literary forms, of the time–space disparity in which its various elements are born, it develops a single theme: the story of salvation. That is why it has been likened from of old to a harp whose lowest string has no harmony of its own but only when it vibrates in conjunction with all the others.⁹⁷

94. *Collection*, p. 61. Here again De La Salle shows himself to be a master summarizer of a doctrine that has been repeated many times across the centuries in the Church. By way of example, we give a few notable references: “Those in the Church who are truly humble and learned can both know some of the secrets of heaven by way of meditation as well as reverence others they do not understand. They hold in veneration those they understand and wait humbly to come to know those they do not” (Saint Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, XX, 8–9, 18–20; PL 76, 147–149). “When you find some passages that are particularly edifying, kiss them and adore them. What you understand, accept with joy; that which remains hidden from you, whatever it may be, adore it with a simple faith, and venerate it from a distance. Put aside all frivolous curiosity!” (Erasmus, *Ratio seu methodus perveniendi ad veram theologiam; Opera omnia*, vol. 5, Lugduni-Batov, 1704, pp. 76–77; cf. Pourrat, *La spiritualité Chrétienne*, vol. 3, p. 87). Finally, consider these words of a contemporary, Fénelon, in *Lettre sur la lecture de la Bible*: “Following the rule of Saint Augustine, one passes over what one does not understand, and one is edified by what one does understand; one listens with docility to what his pastors say, in order to clarify these difficult passages. In this way one allows oneself to be judged by that word without wanting to stand in judgment over it” (cf. Dupriez, *Fénelon et la Bible*, p. 134).

95. Cf. Saint Augustine, *In Job.*, tract. 14, 5, *Corpus Christianorum*; Ser. Lat. 36, 144: “Yesterday you understood but little; today you understand more; tomorrow you will know still more; the light of God himself is growing in you.”

96. Maurice-Auguste Hermans, *Pour une meilleure lecture*, p. 30.

97. Saint Bonaventure, *Colaciones sobre el Hexæmeron*, 19, 7.

It is for this reason that if De La Salle permits a random reading of Scripture, “when you have a moment to spare,” he prefers that ordinarily it “should be read from beginning to end methodically.”⁹⁸ Only with a grasp of the whole of the divine message can there be life in those isolated readings that the Brothers make during short snatches of time and in those “passages of faith” with which they should continually nourish their minds.

De La Salle finishes with some comments about what to do at the end of a reading. They are an indispensable complement to the atmosphere of reverence within which the *lectio divina* is best made. Since the reading begins in the presence of God with a prayer asking for his indispensable light, it is fitting that it conclude with a short moment of recollection before God to assure its fruits.

At the end of the exercise, do not fail to thank God for the truths you have appreciated and remembered, and beg God to enable you to practice them.⁹⁹

What do you do after spiritual reading. . . ? Do you thank God for having allowed you to read . . . these holy words? Do you ask pardon for the faults you have been made conscious of by these means? Do you ask yourself what profit you might derive from this book. . . ? Or are you just satisfied with merely reading . . . without striving to do anything more?¹⁰⁰

It is easy to see that this final recollection includes 1) a general thanksgiving for the gift of the word of God; 2) a particular act of thanksgiving for the special work of God in us: his lights, his personal message (“the truths you have appreciated and remembered”); 3) an act of contrition for the disparity that we have noticed between our behavior and the ideal that God proposes to us; 4) our intention to identify closer with Scripture in the future, and 5) a petition for the necessary graces to carry out this proposal.

In conclusion, this approach to the reading of Sacred Scripture shows us once more the profound understanding that Saint John Baptist de La Salle has of the revealed word and its power.

Such delight in Scripture, differing as it does from reading abstract concepts, is actually real prayer. It incorporates us concretely

98. *Collection*, p. 88.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

into the history of salvation contained therein, bringing into play not only our understanding but also our affective life and our sensitivities. It is to feel in our own flesh the drama of Abraham, the anguish of Job, the joy of David, the exiles and triumphs of Israel, the thirst of Christ, and the burning zeal of Saint Paul.

At this point it becomes very clear why De La Salle insists so much on the difference between a study of Scripture and a thorough “reading” of it, and why he puts this *reading in faith* at the foundation of his spirituality. The teachings of Scripture can be presented in a way that is better adapted and more accessible to the one who is studying them, but these adaptations would have no purpose unless they prepared the reader for a direct contact with the inspired Books. No “Bible History,” no “Life of Jesus Christ,” can ever replace it.¹⁰¹

To conclude this discussion, we present here the prayers that De La Salle suggests to his students at the proclamation of the Epistle and the Gospel during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Together they constitute a beautiful compendium of everything that has been said here concerning the reading of Sacred Scripture, and they also provide a short treatise on the theology of the word of God:

For the Epistle:

O God, by your Prophets you foretold what would happen in the law of grace. By your holy Apostles you have taught the rules and maxims of the Christian life. Grant me an understanding of the holy mysteries, which lie hidden in the Prophets and which Jesus Christ Our Lord has fulfilled in his Person. Grant me also the grace to listen with submission of soul to what you teach through your holy Apostles, to appreciate the truths and practices that are so abundant in their writings, and to regulate my life and my behavior according to all they say to us. I adore each and every word contained in them as your divine word, of which they are only the instruments and ministers. I accept them with respect. I submit to them with humility and gratitude. I am resolved, with the help of your grace, to conform to them with the utmost fidelity.¹⁰²

101. Lefèvre, “*Écriture Sainte et Vie Spirituelle*,” p. 132.

102. *Instructions et Prières*, Cahiers lasalliens 17, p. 76f.

For the Gospel:

O my God, this is not only your word, it is your holy law; it is the rule for all Christians. In it I adore you. I listen to it respectfully; I believe it firmly. You yourself have proclaimed it. Your holy Apostles have written it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is I, O my God, who ought to practice it. I thank you for having given me so excellent a teaching to be the rule and guide of all my conduct. I will read it; I will meditate on it. I will never be ashamed to observe everything it contains, however opposed it may be to the maxims of the world. With the help of your grace, I will try to practice it faithfully during the course of my whole life.¹⁰³

Notice particularly 1) the emphasis placed on the oneness of Sacred Scripture through the convergence of both the Old and the New Testaments, and 2) the identification of all of Scripture with the word of God and the plenitude of its expression in Jesus Christ. Respect for “even the least syllable”¹⁰⁴ of the Sacred Text, which is recommended to the Brothers, finds its resonance here in the adoration of “each and every word.”

The line of a dynamic reading and of its gravitation toward practice is also found here in its essential elements. The fact is, Sacred Scripture cannot be understood as the exclusive patrimony of a select few, but rather it must be the bread of all Christians. Through Scripture, in proportion to their capabilities, God’s little ones also must be offered this bread.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 77f.

104. *Collection*, p. 61.

Chapter Eight

Sacred Scripture as the Soul of Interior Prayer

Interior Prayer and the Word of God

The ideas presented here concur exactly with the line of thought we have been pursuing. We have been able to establish how interior prayer is the necessary complement, if not an integral part, of the authentic *lectio divina*. Access to the Mystery of Christ by way of Sacred Scripture is achieved progressively, and the deepest understanding comes only after a prayerful reading of the Sacred Texts.¹

We have seen that as far as De La Salle is concerned, spiritual reading is an immediate preparation of the soul for interior prayer.² Therefore all that has been said about the scriptural character of reading done the Lasallian way has its repercussions on his particular approach to interior prayer itself.

Now as we continue our study, we will see that if De La Salle places so much importance on Scripture in interior prayer itself, it is due to his intimate, personal conviction that all true interior prayer has its ultimate foundation in the revealed word of God, and vice versa, all of God's words naturally lead to and even require interior prayer. In fact, each word of itself is an invitation to dialogue, and in the dialogue of God and man, the word of God always has the initiative.

1. Origen, *In Levit.*, 5, 5, PG 12, 454.

2. Rule of 1705, chap. 27, art. 29.

Furthermore, a life of authentic meditation must also be nourished by authentic sources.³ If contemporary forms of interior prayer, in spite of their rich contributions from a psychological point of view, often seem sterile, it is without any doubt due to the fact that they lack direct nourishment in the *lectio divina*.

In the act of eating, attention must be paid not only to the food itself but also to its presentation. Given that the assimilation of Christian truth is done by way of interior prayer, it becomes extremely important to be concerned about the way in which this truth is presented as nourishment for our soul.

According to Bouyer, the efforts of modern spirituality since the Middle Ages have too often been focused on subjective methods of meditation, and they have neglected the objective form of presenting Christian truth as matter for contemplation in a way that would be meaningful. The change from the former tradition has placed interior prayer in our modern times in a situation where it is exposed to two dangers: either it dries up in the aridity of a highly individualized feat of rationalization, or it drowns in waves of sentimentality.

Perhaps Bouyer oversimplifies the situation in this sweeping view of the modern scene, but as he himself indicates, the best way to avoid these extremes is to begin by taking up Christian truth in the form in which God has given it to us. Since the word of God is life, he has given it to us in a form that can easily and readily be assimilated. His intent is not to furnish us with a pabulum for our mind and our imagination but rather to enable us to share his own divine life. Although systematic reasoning about revealed truth is necessary in order to obviate the introduction of confusion and error into the mind, it is nonetheless true that the understanding of revealed truth by way of subtle rationalization is not the most appropriate means to make it an integral part of our lives.

There is nothing better suited to each individual than the word that God says Person to person. And while it is true that God is entirely free to speak to souls in any manner and in any language, no channel enjoys such excellence because of its objectivity nor protects us so well from dangerous illusions as does the word of God written in Sacred Scripture and authentically interpreted by the Church.⁴

Surely there is no denying the usefulness of other spiritual books, which may help make the written word of God easier to understand subjectively. However, on the objective level the written word of God

3. Camelot, Thomas, "Lecture et oraison," *Vie spirituelle*, June 1948, p. 643.

4. Cf. Bouyer, *Introduction à la vie spirituelle*, pp. 28, 29, 48ff.

is given to us directly as a source of spiritual life. Spiritual books are especially useful when they clarify those passages that seem obscure to us. In any case, the value of these books is always a function of their relationship to the word of God. They will be better appreciated in the measure in which they help us to understand it; in no case can they substitute for it. In the last analysis, interior prayer is born of the word of God and has no validity except in relation to it.⁵

The Lasallian Method of Interior Prayer

We have three principal sources for the method of interior prayer composed by Saint John Baptist de La Salle for his followers:

1) the brief schematic presentation that is found on pages 7 to 12 of *Collection of Various Short Treatises* under the title "Method of Interior Prayer;"

2) three lessons, or conferences, on interior prayer composed for the novices by De La Salle upon his return from the Seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet (7 March 1718), contained on pages 21 to 31 of manuscript number 8 in the Rome archives of the Institute and entitled, "Collection of Several Talks on the Manner of Doing All Our Actions Well in Order to Regulate the Day Properly," by M. J.-B. de La Salle, Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (1734);

3) *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, a well-known work of the Founder that best expresses the essence of his method of interior prayer in full detail. We will refer to it extensively.

Besides these basic texts, there are considerable contributions on this matter in the book *Meditations* and in his correspondence. We are going to study all the fine points of the method here. There are already several other serious books dedicated in whole or in part to this task.⁶

Basically, we are interested in highlighting two fundamental aspects that from our point of view define the Lasallian method of interior

5. Hamman, *La Prière*, vol. 2, p. 334.

6. Cf. especially: Lett, *Explication, Édition critique*; Frédien-Charles, *Oraison d'après Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*; Lercaro, *Métodos de oración mental*; Pourrat, *La Spiritualité Chrétienne*, vol. 4; Rigault, *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, vol. 1; Battersby, *De La Salle, Saint and Spiritual Writer*; Rayez, "Lasallian Studies in the Mid-twentieth Century;" Emiliano, "Aspetti ascetico-pedagogici della 'Explication de la Méthode d'Oraison' di S. Giovanni Battista de La Salle." Ignacio Mengs is presently preparing an interesting study on this theme.

prayer in its essence but have not received due emphasis from other authors. We can summarize these as follows:

1) Lasallian interior prayer is prayer based essentially on Sacred Scripture and faith;

2) in virtue of these two important sources and regardless of the external schema of the method, Lasallian interior prayer tends in a special way toward simple attention. We will try to prove these affirmations in the following pages.

Interior Prayer Based Essentially on Scripture and Faith

According to the Lasallian method, interior prayer involves three main parts: 1) preparation of the soul for interior prayer, 2) concentration on the subject of interior prayer, and 3) thanksgiving at the end of interior prayer.

We need not be very perceptive to notice from a first reading either of *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* or its summary in *Collection of Various Short Treatises* that Lasallian interior prayer constantly focuses on Sacred Scripture. The preparation as well as the subject of interior prayer and the manner of centering ourselves on it are all eminently scriptural.

Preparation for Interior Prayer

For De La Salle this First Part of interior prayer—which is also called “recollection”—substantially consists in filling ourselves profoundly with the presence of God. Cardinal Lercaro aptly observes that this exercise is presented here as a preamble for interior prayer, but such is the importance given to it that it evidently transcends the limits proposed. This effort to become aware of the presence of God, which occupies the first part of interior prayer—and De La Salle willingly recognizes that occasionally it may occupy the whole time of interior prayer⁷—should always be done through sentiments of faith based on some passage of Sacred Scripture:

The first thing to be done in interior prayer is to become filled interiorly with the thought of God’s presence, which must always

7. “Our beloved father used to say that it would be commendable even if a Brother were to apply himself only to the First Part for one or two years” (Letter of Brother Ireneus, Director of Novices, to Brother Stanislaus; cf. Lett, *Explication, Édition critique*, p. 186, note 38).

be done through a sentiment of faith, based on a passage taken from Holy Scripture.⁸

This general principle is immediately applied by indicating several specific ways of placing ourselves in the presence of God. De La Salle suggests six different methods for becoming aware of the presence of God; with two suggestions for each, they correspond to a consideration of God 1) in the place in which we are, 2) within ourselves, and 3) in the church. For each one of these possible choices De La Salle presents one or several passages from Sacred Scripture. In the schematic text of the *Collection* he says:

The first thing to be done in prayer is to become interiorly permeated with the presence of God through a sentiment of faith, and for this purpose, we may consider God as being present in three different ways: first, in the place in which we are; second, in ourselves; or third, in the church, going there in spirit if we are not there in fact.

We may consider God present in the place in which we are, first, because God is everywhere, saying by the prophet Jeremiah: "*I fill heaven and earth;*" second, because Our Lord has said in Saint Matthew, chapter 18, "*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them.*"

We may consider God present in ourselves in either of two ways. First, God is in us to preserve our being, as Saint Paul says in Acts, chapter 17, "*God is not far from us, for we have our life, our movement, and our being only in God.*" Second, God is in us by grace and Spirit. That is what Our Lord teaches us by these words: "*The kingdom of God is within you.*" And Saint Paul expresses the same thing when he says, "*The temple of God is holy, which you are,*" and "*Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you?*"

We may consider God as present in the church for two reasons. First, because it is the house of God, as Our Lord tells us in Saint Matthew, chapter 21, "*My house is a house of prayer.*" Second, because Our Lord is there in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar.⁹

These basic passages are multiplied with a profusion of scriptural quotations in the full *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*.

8. *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, p. 25.

9. *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, p. 7.

For example, see “The Second Way of Placing Ourselves in the Presence of God Within Us by Considering God Present in Us Through His Grace and Spirit.” Its key passage, “*For behold, the kingdom of God is among you,*” is amplified and confirmed by the following passages:

Anyone who loves me will be true to my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him (John 14:23—the reason for the indwelling of the Holy Trinity within us).

For we are, [Saint Paul] tells us, the temple of the living God; *I will live with them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people* (2 Corinthians 6:16—the kingdom of God in a soul gives it the honor of becoming the temple of God).

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19—the divine indwelling extends to our very body).

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16—emphasizing the divine indwelling).

Because if anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person, for the temple of God, which you are, is holy (1 Corinthians 3:17—consequences of that indwelling).

For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depth of God (1 Corinthians 2:10—this same Spirit becomes a source of wisdom for the souls in whom he dwells).

Happy those who live and act only by the Spirit of God; it is of them that we may say that *they live no longer but that it is Jesus Christ . . . who lives in them* (Galatians 2:20—Jesus must constitute the only principle of action, so that by our not living and acting except by the Spirit of God, Christ lives in us).¹⁰

In the concluding passage, De La Salle returns to the quotation from First Corinthians (3:17) that we find in *Collection of Various Short Treatises*: “*The temple of God, which you are, is holy.*”

It is easy to see that the purpose of this whole series of quotations from Scripture is not to disperse attention but rather to focus it on the essence of the key passage. In fact, all of them are focused

10. *Explanation*, pp. 35–38, quoting Luke 17:21.

upon God's presence. By considering these various aspects, we find that it becomes easier, especially for beginners, to occupy ourselves with the presence of God for a longer time, although this is not absolutely necessary.

What is important is that the consideration of the presence of God always begin with a sentiment of faith based on at least one passage from Sacred Scripture. Although we notice that in the last of the ways of placing oneself in the presence of God mentioned in the *Collection*, De La Salle does not give a quotation from Scripture, that omission is supplied in the more detailed *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*. There he applies the words of Revelation 21:3 according to a correct exegetical accommodation to the sacramental presence of Jesus among us: "*This is God's dwelling among men. He will dwell with them and they will be his people, and he will be their God who is always with them.*"¹¹

These and other variants again remind us that these passages are intended only as examples. De La Salle does not intend to restrict the attention of his followers to one definite quotation, nor does he try to save them from the inevitable personal effort needed to acquire a wide knowledge of Scripture.

By imitating the models provided, the Brother, who always carries the New Testament with him and reads it frequently, ought to be capable of recalling passages from Sacred Scripture that would aptly fit the circumstances at hand. This is the only way to explain why, for example, when De La Salle tries to develop the first manner of placing ourselves in the presence of God, in *Explanation*, he does not even mention the passage from Jeremiah that he uses in the shorter explanation he places in the *Collection*. Instead he bases himself on Psalm 139:7–10:

Where can I go from your spirit?
From your presence where can I flee?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I sink to the nether world, you are present there.
If I take the wings of the dawn,
if I settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
and your right hand hold me fast.¹²

11. *Explanation*, p. 43.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Similarly, when speaking of the acts of the First Part and addressing himself to the first means of placing ourselves in the presence of God, he begins by bringing up an example that has no relationship whatsoever with any of the previously cited passages. Instead he uses the words of Jacob in Genesis 28:17: "*Truly, the Lord is in this spot, although I did not know it.*"¹³ Thus he shows that it is not necessary to feel bound to any particular passage; we can draw upon our own knowledge of the Sacred Text.

This is all the more significant in that he has just posited the general principle that this act of faith, which is made at the beginning of the First Part, should bear some relationship with one of the passages used to penetrate ourselves with the presence of God:

Immediately after impressing the mind with the thought of the presence of God by one of the six ways proposed above, or by attention of the mind mixed with a few reflections, or by simple attention, it is fitting to make an act of faith on this truth that God is present to us, according to the way that we used to become imbued with this truth of faith.

To make this act of faith more alive and more moving, and to remain in this sentiment of faith for a longer time, we can profitably call to mind one of the passages of Scripture mentioned above, or some other that is related to the way by which we have placed ourselves in God's presence.¹⁴

These words further confirm the significance of the presence of Scripture in Lasallian interior prayer. This presence of the word of God, which is the distinctive trait of the spirituality and the writings of De La Salle, as we have already shown, is not a mere protocol or an external, stylistic technique. It is the indispensable essence of his spirituality and interior prayer, because both are entirely based on faith.

In De La Salle we always find Sacred Scripture as a guarantor 1) that the word of God is proclaimed to men and 2) that it is testimony worthy of absolute trust.

Faith, then, will be the principle that causes this word to germinate in our souls to become the life of our life.¹⁵ On the other hand,

13. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

14. *Ibid.*

15. This insistence appears in a special way in the act of union with the Spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in which De La Salle urges us to pray to that Holy Spirit to grant us the grace of the particular virtue that is the subject of our interior prayer, "not only exteriorly as philosophers and people of the

the word will always accompany our faith, furnishing it with a solid foundation and assuring its effectiveness. Faith wells forth from the purest springs of Sacred Scripture and then hovers over it as a life-giving breath: Scripture and faith, an absolutely inseparable combination.

De La Salle has a magnificent passage in which he shows that the soul can gain little profit from a consideration of the presence of God by any of the means presented if the reflections made on a passage of Sacred Scripture lack the foundation of sentiments of faith. The section is entitled "Attending to the Presence of God by Few but Prolonged Reflections:"

The six ways of placing ourselves in the presence of God should help the soul maintain this awareness for some time during interior prayer. But it can be said that they make us aware of God's presence only in a passing manner that is external to the soul, because they lead us to recognize the presence of God only through reasoning and multiplied reflections. These reflections, with respect to truths of faith, darken the mind rather than enlighten it and shut it up rather than open it to a deeper understanding of the sacred mysteries which these truths contain. Unless these reflections are based on faith and supported by views of faith, they keep the soul away from God instead of drawing it closer to God.¹⁶

The reason why the Lasallian method of interior prayer places such great importance on the First Part, which is dedicated to an awareness of the presence of God through Sacred Scripture and faith, rests on his special concept of interior prayer. According to De La Salle, we do not make interior prayer just to think about God but to fill ourselves with God and to unite ourselves interiorly to God.

What will be totally realized in us in a future life has already begun in us: ontologically by grace and actively by the theological virtues. For this purpose, De La Salle wants the whole person involved in this prayer, which cannot be realized only on the periphery of our life; it must necessarily proceed from a burning desire for union with God in the most intimate center of our being:

world do or through merely human motives, but through views of faith, in union with the spirit and attitudes of our Lord, and by the movement of his grace (*Explanation*, p. 129).

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49.

Interior prayer is an inner activity in which the soul applies itself to God. . . .

It is called interior because it is not simply an activity of the mind but of all the powers of the soul and because, in order to be genuine and effective, it must take place in the depths of the soul, that is to say, in the innermost part of the soul.

If interior prayer took place in the mind only or in the superficial part of the heart, it would easily lie open to human and material distractions which would prevent it from being fruitful, and this activity of the mind would only be temporary, not having penetrated the soul, and would consequently leave the soul in dryness and devoid of God.¹⁷

De La Salle concedes the highest priority of interior prayer to faith, making it the continuous exercise of the first of the theological virtues. In this way, interior prayer becomes an apprenticeship and a foretaste of heavenly life.

But the principal activity of the soul in prayer that is truly interior is to fill itself and to unite itself interiorly with God, which through a lively faith is for the soul a sort of apprenticeship and foretaste of what the soul should do in reality for all eternity. It is for this reason that interior prayer is called an inner activity in which the soul applies itself to God.¹⁸

From this we can infer that the faith to which De La Salle alludes here is total faith, which does not stop at the limits of the understanding but also brings into play all the affections of the will. If faith enjoys such pre-eminence in interior prayer, it is clearly evident that nothing is further from true interior prayer than pure reasoning and nothing is more apt to develop the spirit of interior prayer than whatever directly supports our faith. For this purpose, beyond any shadow of a doubt, the place of honor must go to the word of God that Scripture offers to us. This is the key to the special presence of Sacred Scripture in the First Part of interior prayer and the reason why De La Salle insists that much time be given to it, especially by beginners:

When we are just beginning to make interior prayer, it is well to pay special attention to the First Part, because when we come

17. *Explanation*, p. 21.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

from the world, little is known about who God is. We can hardly speak of him, because we are not filled with him. Nevertheless, we become filled with God during the First Part and by spiritual reading.¹⁹

The reason for this special efficacy of the First Part of interior prayer, and of the exercise of the presence of God in order to fill ourselves with God, is given by De La Salle in *Explanation* when he describes how our mind always takes on something of the quality of those things to which it applies itself:

Because the mind, being ordinarily attentive for the greater part of the day to things that are of themselves exterior and material, goes thereby, in some manner, out of itself and takes on, at least to some degree, the characteristics of the objects to which it is attentive. Therefore, when we wish to apply our mind to interior prayer, we must begin by withdrawing it entirely from attention to exterior and material things and by being attentive only to spiritual and interior things.

It is for this reason that we must begin by being attentive to the presence of God. The acts of the first part serve to maintain and occupy the mind with the presence of God while these acts continue.²⁰

Knowing that in no book other than Scripture does the presence of God shine forth with such intensity, De La Salle concludes with a sentence that we have previously quoted:

The first thing to be done in interior prayer is to become filled interiorly with the thought of God's presence, which must always

19. *Recueil de divers entretiens* (the quotation does not appear in the English edition of *Collection*); Lett, *Explication, Édition critique*, p. 37. We have already had occasion to consider the scriptural aspect of spiritual reading, to which De La Salle here alludes. In *Explanation*, p. 56, he is equally insistent: "It is worth observing, when speaking of applying ourselves to God's presence, that we should dwell on it for a considerable time, because this contributes more than anything else to procuring for us the spirit of interior prayer and the inner attention we should have for it. We must insure that our mind remains filled with the thought of God's presence as long as possible, and we should not go on to any other subject until we cannot pay attention any longer."

20. *Explanation*, p. 22.

be done through a sentiment of faith, based on a passage taken from Holy Scripture.²¹

This is De La Salle's understanding of the First Part, which is the preparation for interior prayer. The importance placed on the presence of God and on the use of Sacred Scripture will also give shape to all the rest of interior prayer, and thus it is that these are the most characteristic traits of Lasallian interior prayer.

The Second Part of Interior Prayer

Our study of the preparation for interior prayer according to the mind of Saint John Baptist de La Salle has already introduced us to the essence of interior prayer itself, because, as we have observed, the First Part actually goes considerably beyond the limits of a simple disposition of the soul for meditation.

We will now examine how the Second Part of interior prayer continues and confirms the same thrust that is clearly established in the First Part. There is a symmetrical structure in the First and Second Parts of Lasallian interior prayer. Both begin by “penetrating oneself with a sentiment of faith”—in the First Part, with regard to the presence of God, and in the Second Part, with regard to the subject of interior prayer. Then follow the various acts that are proper to each part; they may vary according to circumstances.

Let us first consider the characteristics of the *themes* for interior prayer that De La Salle proposes and the way each can be used. He lists the general areas that provide themes for meditation: mysteries, virtues, maxims of the holy Gospel.²² The fact that they are derived from Scripture is immediately evident, both in the schematic text of *Collection* as well as in *Explanation*. In the latter De La Salle clarifies what he means by each of these terms:

By the mysteries of Our Lord's life we mean the principal actions that the Son of God accomplished for our salvation, such as his Incarnation, Nativity, Circumcision, Passion, and Death. We may also meditate on the mysteries of the Most Blessed Virgin, such as her Immaculate Conception and her Nativity, and the like.²³

21. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

22. *Collection*, p. 9.

23. *Explanation*, p. 83.

We are already familiar with the nature of the maxims:

We call maxims sentences or passages from Scripture that teach us some of the truths necessary for salvation, or *interior words* that make us understand what we should do or avoid, what we should esteem or despise, what we should seek or flee from, what we should love or hate, and the like. The New Testament is full of such passages.²⁴

Their total and direct dependence on Sacred Scripture is immediately evident; however, this is not quite so apparent in what concerns the term *virtues*.

We call virtues the holy actions, sentiments, dispositions, and affections contrary to vices and sins.²⁵

Even here De La Salle does not lose the instinct that leads him to relate the concept of virtue to Jesus Christ, who is presented to us in the Gospels as the source and model of every virtue: "By his example and by his words, Our Lord taught us the practice of virtue."²⁶

The concern of Saint John Baptist de La Salle that the subject of interior prayer be always founded on Scripture is eloquently summarized in the short text of the *Collection* in which he speaks about the way we ought to approach our chosen topic:

If the subject is a mystery, we begin by permeating ourselves well with the spirit of this mystery, paying attention to what is said of it in the Gospel or what the Church proposes to us concerning it, either by a simple view of faith or by some reflections on the mystery or its subject. We then maintain ourselves in sentiments of interior respect while considering the mystery.

If the subject is a virtue or a maxim, we interiorly permeate ourselves with its necessity or utility, either through a sentiment of faith, by some passage of Holy Scripture where the virtue or the maxim is expressed, or by some reflections on the virtue or the maxim that will serve to convince us to practice it. We draw these reflections chiefly from Holy Scripture, particularly the New Testament, thus basing them on faith. We then make nine acts.²⁷

24. *Ibid.*, p. 134; emphasis added.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

26. *Ibid.*; the 1995 English edition mistakenly has "works," not "words."

27. *Collection*, p. 9.

It might be said that the persistent insistence on Scripture within these paragraphs is a veritable obsession, and indeed so it is. De La Salle intends to have his followers avoid wasting time in smug monologues of rationalizations or in sentimental, illusory, and sterile meanderings. In order to avoid these two extremes, he knows a surer way: instead of rationalistic monologue, an open dialogue in faith; instead of sentimental meanderings, the objective presence of revealed truth. De La Salle knows how to hammer home the essentials, and he will come back over and over again, as often as necessary, to make his point. This is why in *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* there is a whole parade of sentences with a recurring refrain.

Regarding the mystery:

We may make an act of faith in the mystery we have chosen as the subject of our prayer. . . .

To convince ourselves more firmly of this truth, we may call to mind a passage of Holy Scripture which teaches it to us or refers to it, such as. . . .²⁸

Regarding the virtue:

. . . to make some reflections on the virtue itself, based on what Holy Scripture says of this virtue, especially in the New Testament.²⁹ We can make an act of faith on the virtue by believing firmly that Our Lord taught us this virtue and practiced it. To convince ourselves the more firmly of this truth, we must call to mind a passage of the New Testament.³⁰

Regarding the maxim:

We make an act of faith in the maxim by representing to ourselves Our Lord when he taught it and by assuring him that we firmly believe that it was he himself who taught it to us. To convince ourselves more fully of this truth, we should call to mind the passage of the New Testament where this maxim is found.³¹

This is the way in which De La Salle views any topic that is to be the subject of interior prayer, as well as the basic attitude by which it

28. *Explanation*, pp. 85–86.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 118

30. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

should be approached. Then comes the oft-repeated phrase—“Having thus based our prayer on faith, we proceed to make nine acts”³²—in order to show us how this attitude of faith will also determine all subsequent acts.

Even so, De La Salle explicitly continues to urge the use of Sacred Scripture within the acts. Diverse as they may be, scriptural passages continue to flow profusely through them. All of these acts correspond to attitudes that are fundamentally scriptural; therefore, these passages will incorporate themselves very naturally into the acts.

“Only God speaks properly to God,” says Bouyer, echoing the well-known phrase of Pascal—“Only God speaks well about God”—and reminding us of the passage of Saint Paul in Romans 8:26. If we want such ineffable “groaning of the Holy Spirit” to be expressed, how can it be done better than by using the very words that the Spirit has given us?³³

Aware of this, De La Salle always gives preference to the words of Sacred Scripture. We come across instances, such as the model in the First Part for the act of contrition, in which the weight of Scripture is so intense that he must also remark at the end, “as David says in Psalm 51:19.”³⁴

In the act of invocation of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, he formulates the general principle that in interior prayer all personal effort should be left aside, as far as possible, so that the Spirit of God may pray in us:

So, it would seem to be appropriate for us to implore Our Lord to give us his Spirit, so that we may make interior prayer solely under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In order to be filled by his divine Spirit, we need to abandon our own mind and our own thoughts during interior prayer and entertain within ourselves only those thoughts with which the Holy Spirit may be pleased to inspire us during this time. Thus may be fulfilled in us what Saint Paul says, that it is the Spirit of God that prays in us, for we cannot conceive even a single good as coming from ourselves.³⁵

Following these words and being faithful to the principles established, he suggests a model, which is impregnated with Scripture, for the act of invocation of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. His closing words—

32. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

33. Cf. Bouyer, *Introduction à la vie spirituelle*, p. 43.

34. *Explanation*, p. 73.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

“only with those thoughts which your divine Spirit will be pleased to inspire in me”³⁶—show us very clearly how De La Salle makes Sacred Scripture the objective norm for recognizing the words of the Holy Spirit, and that is why he continually quotes it.³⁷

As a conclusion to this section, there remains only to give due credit to the insight of Brother Imier-de-Jésus for highlighting the passage of Scripture and for the spiritual bouquet (mostly scriptural also) that he incorporates at the beginning and the end, respectively, of each meditation in the edition of 1882. Of course these are not the work of De La Salle, but they are perfectly within his spirit.³⁸ Both can be very helpful in assuring that in interior prayer it is really the Holy Spirit who speaks in us and that this dialogue in faith extends throughout the day.

Lasallian Interior Prayer Gravitates Toward Simple Attention

We have tried to discover the importance of Scripture and faith in the method of interior prayer proposed by Saint John Baptist de La Salle. From the facts we have gathered, we can draw the valid conclusion

36. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

37. In *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, there are many commentaries that have a profound theological and exegetical content. We cannot resist the temptation to include here the beautiful spiritual commentary on Matthew 18:20: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Here is a portion of that commentary: “Jesus Christ is in the midst of the Brothers in our exercises to give them completeness and perfection, for Jesus Christ is in our regard like the sun, which not only gives plants the power to produce but also gives to their fruit goodness and perfection which are greater or less insofar as they have been more or less exposed to the rays of the sun. In the same way, we perform our exercises and actions appropriate to our state with greater or lesser perfection insofar as we are in greater or lesser contact, conformity, and union with Jesus Christ.” (*Explanation*, pp. 29–30)

38. “The text of Sacred Scripture and the Spiritual Bouquet have been kept at the beginning and at the end of each meditation, just as they are found for the first time in the edition of 1882, because we believe that we thus conform to certain indications of our holy Founder. In *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, before the act of faith of the Second Part, he gives us a passage of Sacred Scripture. And even though he does not use the term “Spiritual Bouquet,” he suggests its use in the *Collection* and also gives us a few examples in *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*.” (Preface, 1922 edition, pp. v–vi)

that faith and Scripture are predominant elements of the method, that they define and give it form to such an extent that without them it would be inconceivable.

We will now investigate further the reverberations that these characteristics must have on the other aspects of the method. Up to this point, we have tried to define the internal components of the Lasallian method, and we have a fairly good idea of that which could be called its soul. Perhaps, also, we may be somewhat aware of its external structure.

A very different image would be perceived by anyone who approaches the method of interior prayer the other way around. There is no denying the possible disappointment felt on our first contact with De La Salle's method. What is there to this interminable series of twenty-one acts divided into three parts? Certainly they are ordered logically, and each is minutely well conceived, but the question immediately arises: Where within this structure can the soul really breathe, and is there space here to rise freely to God?

Unfortunately this sad image of the Lasallian method is all too common. The reason is simple. It is far easier to present a synoptic table of acts and then to point out their convergence and divergence relative to the Sulpician or the Ignatian method than to sound out the spirituality and to discover the intrinsic value of this Lasallian method.

The very outline of the *Collection* encourages this approach insofar as it limits itself to a summary description of the various acts. Even though their scriptural aspect is readily apparent, nevertheless the daunting multiplicity of acts remains without an adequate explanation. Only a very intensive study of *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* can enable us to acquire a correct understanding of the Lasallian method.

The Fundamental and the Accessory

We will begin by recalling the principle that just as in all beings around us there is something that is permanent and something that can be modified without damaging the identity of the essential being, so also the Lasallian method has something essential and something that is accessory.

Lett points out that the essence of the method is "union with God through sentiments of faith,"³⁹ and this is certainly true. Nevertheless, we believe that when it comes to a precise definition, the author of

39. Lett, *Explication, Édition critique*, p. 66.

the *Édition Critique* omits an important element. From our point of view, the real essence of Lasallian interior prayer consists in *uniting ourselves to God by a sentiment of faith based on Holy Scripture*. Some may find this specification unnecessary. We do not believe that De La Salle considers it that way, given that he so often deliberately repeats this qualifier.

Therefore, fundamental to the method is this “penetrating ourselves through a sentiment of faith based on Scripture,” which is as prominent at the beginning of the First Part, with regard to the presence of God, as it is in the Second Part, with regard to the subject matter of interior prayer.

The accessory nature of the acts that follow, with respect to their number, their order, and the manner of dwelling on each one, is made clear by De La Salle himself. This affirmation is explicitly supported in the “Recommendations” found at the end of *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*.

As both the first and the second parts of the Method of Interior Prayer contain nine acts each, this great number might hinder those who wish to remain longer in the second part and find the time too short to do so. Here are some suggestions to overcome this.⁴⁰

Among the suggestions that follow, De La Salle clearly indicates how the difficulty that may be caused by the multiplicity of acts can be resolved: make only one act that implicitly contains the interior sentiment of all the rest, or reduce the First Part and the Second Part to one or two all-inclusive acts. In reality he is proposing the Golden Rule of interior prayer: preference must be given to the movement of the Holy Spirit over any human method or construct. Thus he says:

Finally, when we feel interiorly and gently drawn to some sentiment which we had not proposed to ourselves beforehand . . . we should follow this attraction and other similar ones inspired by God, faith, and the perfection of our state. We should follow it for as long as God is pleased to let us dwell on it, for this is a sign that God desires this of us at the moment. We can know this is the case when we leave interior prayer with renewed zeal to do our duty, to love God, and to please God.⁴¹

40. *Explanation*, p. 149.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 151. Notice De La Salle’s realistic approach as he tries to protect his disciples from the illusions that can easily occur. For this purpose,

These words should be seriously considered by those who see in the multiplicity of acts contained in the Lasallian method a straitjacket for their freedom to go to God in interior prayer. Lasallian interior prayer is not so much in the acts as in the fundamental attitude that we have emphasized.

Three Levels of Prayer

It is commonly said that there are no sicknesses, only the sick. For our purposes we could say that there is no ideal method of interior prayer that is equally useful for all. Each soul is a world unto itself. Without espousing a radical subjectivism, we must admit that each person must search for the kind of interior prayer that best corresponds to his particular circumstances. And even among those who follow the same method there will be differences, just as there are differences even among persons who wear the same uniform.

In this method De La Salle distinguishes three levels of interior prayer, or three ways to apply oneself to the subject of interior prayer, according to the maturity of spiritual life thus far achieved: 1) “discourses and multiplied reasoning befit beginners;” 2) “few and prolonged reflections befit the proficient,” 3) “while simple attention befits the advanced.”⁴²

We will not enter into a detailed description of these three levels,⁴³ because we can already project the normal process through which the soul passes who sincerely practices the Lasallian method. Not included here, of course, are the mystical states of prayer, which are gifts freely given by God to whomever he wishes and however he wishes.

There is a progressive evolution toward the prayer of simple attention—a natural process of maturation that De La Salle describes quite clearly in the First Part but which is equally applicable to the whole of interior prayer.⁴⁴

along with the ample rule of making the movement of the Holy Spirit into the method of methods, he proposes that other rule of discernment of spirits from Saint Ignatius, which is based as much on the nature of the attraction as on its subsequent consequences.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 48–56, 95–98.

44. Cf. *Explanation*, p. 97, in which De La Salle shows the value of the observations made in the First Part regarding the remainder of interior prayer, in these words: “What is said in the First Part about the three manners of keeping oneself in the presence of God can easily be applied to a mystery.”

In his most apt comparison between the budding artist who needs a lot of study, observation, and reflection in order to appreciate the values in a work of art and the expert who simply remains rapt in his contemplation with no need for comment, De La Salle makes a concrete application to the practice of interior prayer:

What mind can suddenly turn from the consideration of material things to that of purely spiritual realities? . . . Hence, it seems more advisable to insinuate spiritual thoughts into the minds of those who are beginning to devote themselves to God and to interior prayer, by means of material things combined with and enlivened by motives of faith, . . . rather than expect the mind to apply itself directly to purely spiritual things with no connection to matter or to occupy itself with God's presence by a pure act of simple attention.

Acting thus would merely make interior prayer tedious for souls who follow the ordinary path of development and might even disgust them with the spiritual life, perhaps for always. Lacking light and familiarity with God and with interior practices of the soul, they would view as impossible what later on, through frequent application to interior prayer, might become for them not only possible but even easy and agreeable.

For this reason, when they try to learn how to apply themselves to God's presence as they first begin to engage in interior prayer, they should ordinarily make use of reasoning and frequent reflections.⁴⁵

It is evident that these considerations of a psychological nature are applicable to every effort directed toward striving for perfection and to every method suggested for attaining that end. In this matter it is in the interest of the beginner to indicate the special motive that impels a person to accelerate his pace toward this progressive simplification of Lasallian interior prayer.

Demands of a Method Based on Faith

If every proven method of interior prayer ought to lead souls to the very gates of contemplation, we believe that the method of Saint John Baptist de La Salle stands among the best in this respect. The reason is an intrinsic one, inherent in the essence of the method. It resides

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

precisely in the exceptional importance that is placed on Sacred Scripture and faith.

Of course, in their initial attempts beginners cannot do away with reasoning and compositions based on sentiments of faith. However, they must try to keep this stage as short as possible and move on to the second level of interior prayer, in which the soul reverently considers some passage of Scripture by few reflections rather than by intensive reasoning. The thinking behind this, as De La Salle points out, is that “reasoning destroys faith, or at least introduces obstacles which diminish it, and keeps it [the reflection on a passage] from being as lively as it might be, and prevents it from being firmly fixed in our mind and our heart.”⁴⁶

Similarly, efforts should be made as soon as possible to use fewer words, in order to make room for interior silence:

Using many words when praying in this way tends to unsettle the mind and disturb the depths of the soul, rather than procure for us true awareness of God in an interior manner. Instead, such a multiplicity of words of the mind and heart shrivels the soul, is only passing, and often leaves it devoid of God and of spiritual and interior matters.⁴⁷

For the kind of reflection that is done with few words, passages of Sacred Scripture (passages of faith) have a proven efficacy.⁴⁸

We have not yet arrived at simple attention. De La Salle refers to the above manner of dwelling on a passage by way of a few sustained reflections as “attention to some passage of faith, joined with some reflection.”⁴⁹ It becomes, in fact, a kind of intermediate stage, which in a way resembles simple attention but in which there is still the need for the support of a reflection from time to time. During these intervals we should “remain for as long a time as we can attentive to the passage.”⁵⁰ Only when we can no longer sustain attention without fatigue is it time to “turn our mind to another reflection,

46. *Explanation*, p. 49. With good reason does the Spanish edition of 1950 (on p. 30) call attention to a certain affinity between these words and those of Saint John of the Cross in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, book 2, chap. 3, where he speaks of the complete despoiling the soul must undergo in order to approach faith in utter simplicity and adopt it as its light and guide.

47. *Explanation*, p. 65.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

which, because it is new and capable of touching the heart, makes the truth which we are seeking to impress on our minds and hearts take on a fresh meaning.”⁵¹

This way of making interior prayer creates direct communication with God because “this reflection is not encumbered with reasoning.”

The grasp that the mind has of the passage and the attention it pays to it not only do not hinder but do not even distract our attention from the passage, which, being of faith, causes the mind to be imbued with this truth. The understanding the mind has of this truth becomes so clear that it cannot help adoring it in God and outside of God as coming forth from the mouth of God, as it were, according to our human way of expressing ourselves.⁵²

The habit of occupying ourselves in this way during the time of interior prayer—because of the tendency of this method of faith to go directly to God, supported entirely and exclusively by his word—brings about a situation in which these reflections become less and less numerous. This is why De La Salle affirms that in this way, regardless of how few are the inclinations a soul might have toward simple attention, that point is reached almost without our being aware of it.⁵³

51. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 49. Speaking about this topic in the explanation of the Second Part, De La Salle again insists on the benefits of this style of interior prayer precisely because it is based on faith and Scripture: “This short reflection, based on faith and inspired by a passage from Holy Scripture, gives the soul a certain facility in applying itself to the mystery in an interior manner and in imbuing itself with it, so that it imprints itself in the mind and heart, which are thus filled with it and shaped by it. Mind and heart will then share in the spirit and the grace particular to the mystery, and by this means they will gently and tenderly be disposed and inclined to practice the virtues illustrated in the mystery.” (*Explanation*, p. 96)

53. Cf. *Explanation*, p. 50. “From the very beginning, De La Salle gives interior prayer an orientation toward an inner spiritual possession of truth through *faith*. The *most intense and simple attention possible* (pp. 49, 97) to the passage, as well as to reflection on it, is favored by the Founder through a study of Sacred Scripture, particularly the New Testament (cf. ms. of 1734, *Recueil de divers entretiens*, pp. 41–47). *Of itself*, the knowledge of inspired doctrine tends to assure and shorten the road to the stages of interior prayer by rooting the mind and the heart in faith and in divine truth (pp. 55, 67). In *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* of 1711, the purpose of faith is to assure the continuity of spiritual progress, gradually reducing the human factor in the workings of the powers of the soul as its inferiority increases and it

Conversation between persons who know and love each other deeply normally tends toward comfortable silence. There comes a time when words are useless and superfluous to express what the heart contains. There is no real prayer that does not tend toward this same silence, and Lasallian interior prayer contains a special thrust in this direction. However, as Bouyer says:

While we are on this earth, we cannot be forever lost in this silence, which belongs to a most perfect dialogue with the ineffable word of God. Our silence here below, if it wishes to remain filled with a spiritual content, will necessarily have to return sooner or later to concrete words.⁵⁴

That is why, at any level of Lasallian interior prayer, the revealed word will ever be present and will always give it renewed vigor. This is how we can recognize the spirit, the demands, and the dynamism of Lasallian interior prayer: interior prayer based substantially on Scripture and faith. Note the frequent recurrence of the expressions “based on and supported by faith,”⁵⁵ “in an interior manner based on faith,”⁵⁶ “by a simple interior view of lively and respectful faith,”⁵⁷ “inspired by a passage from Holy Scripture,”⁵⁸ or the expression “the first thing to be done in prayer,”⁵⁹ in reference to faith or the use of Scripture.

Lasallian interior prayer is prayer that notwithstanding its apparent structure, has room for wide interior freedom and gravitates on its own toward an “interior prayer based on faith,” toward the reality of simple attention.⁶⁰

submits to the interior guidance of the Holy Spirit through divine action and presence.” (Cf. *Collection*, pp. 9–11, and Lett, *Explication, Édition critique*, p. 196, no. 6.)

54. Bouyer, *Introduction à la Vie spirituelle*, p. 46.

55. *Explication*, p. 49.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 96; *Collection*, p. 9.

59. *Collection*, p. 7.

60. Frédien-Charles, speaking of the *Method*, says very correctly: “If in this method logic maintains its rights, these are not absolute to such a degree that they cannot give way to personal needs. According to the progress attained, these needs may surpass human effort and render the support of methods useless or hampering. De La Salle is correct in advising such souls to lay them aside. The road that he indicates to them is that of a praying faith in which grace maintains its sovereign freedom of action.” (*L'Oraison d'après Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, p. 110)

If, together with the flexibility that De La Salle manifests in *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, we find a certain insistence on the various acts, it is due not to the spirit of the method but rather to circumstantial, historical factors. De La Salle is writing during a period when Quietism is in full effervescence, and he tends to shield his followers from this latent danger by obviating unwholesome passivity by means of the progression of acts.

The serious concern that brings him to caution against this Quietism is the same as that which inclines him to avoid limiting the action of the Holy Spirit in any soul. It is expressed in these words that reflect the suspicions of the day with regard to any innovation in the matter of prayer:

In a humble attitude toward yourself and in a spirit of regular observance of the Rule, always follow the method and ordinary manner of interior prayer, unless God should favor you with special attraction, which must be carefully examined and should not be followed without the advice and order of your Director.⁶¹

Along with this note of cautious concern, we also find this practical openness applied in a letter addressed to a Sister:

Your present state of prayer, as you describe it to me, is not the dangerous form of idleness that you think it. Provided you hold on to the thought of God and make progress toward him, why should you be upset? He has no need of all your efforts. Idleness is to be avoided, but at the same time you must not hamper yourself with a great number of acts in prayer. All you need and all God wants of you is that you remain in his presence.

If you cannot pray, tell God that you cannot and then remain at peace. He will not ask you to do the impossible. Or, say to him as the Apostles did, "Lord, teach me to pray." Then remain humbly before him as one who is incapable of doing anything, and that will be your prayer.⁶²

Another factor that must be taken into account is that De La Salle is writing for everyone, especially for beginners. As we have already said, with these we cannot insist immediately on levels of prayer that for the moment are inaccessible.⁶³ Progression through the levels of

61. *Collection*, p. 55.

62. *Letters*, 111.10–11.

prayer continues normally in conjunction with the degree of spiritual life that has been attained at any given point in time. The road to be traveled is difficult. It requires the help of many graces, and the pace at which we cover the distance may seem agonizingly slow.

When speaking of the means of simplifying the acts of interior prayer, De La Salle does not hesitate to point out, realistically, that this is the fruit of a long preparation by recollection and mortification.⁶⁴

Originality of the Lasallian Method of Interior Prayer

We will not try to identify all the factors that may have influenced De La Salle in the composition of his method. This has already been done by other authors.⁶⁵ Mention is made of many eminent names: Tronson, Olier, Bernières, Jean-François de Reims, Noël Courbon, Laurent de la Résurrection, Benoît de Canfield, and so on, plus Cassian and the Fathers of the Desert.

But what is certain, according to Lett, is that ultimately *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* cannot be reduced to any of its sources, nor is it even the sum of all of them. Its author never pretends

63. "A simple glance at the schematic of the Lasallian method would seem to indicate its weak point: too many acts. A problem? It is difficult to accuse a teacher, in fact, a master teacher like the founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, of having made a mistake here. No, De La Salle tried his method for a long time with his religious, wishing to design an exact and detailed outline that would make their conversing with God easier. The Brothers were teachers in schools for ordinary people, and a less precise method would have been of little use to them. They could easily have lost through inertia the hour reserved for interior prayer. Saint John Baptist de La Salle lived among them, guiding them step by step, so that the time of interior prayer would seem too short to them." (Cardinal Lercaro, *Métodos de oración mental*, p. 153)

64. "This manner of proceeding is easy for those who are truly interior, who remain as much as possible in the presence of God, who are always recollected in the eyes and in the mind, who are exact about silence, who do not bother with what does not concern them, and who are faithful to obedience" (*Explanation*, p. 150). He demands yet more radical detachment when he speaks of mystical states properly so called (p. 51).

65. Cf. Blain, Book Four, *The Mind and Heart*, p. 354; Mallefer, in *Two Early Biographies*, p. 134; Rayez, "Lasallian Studies in the Mid-twentieth Century," pp. 117–22; Lett, *Explication, Édition critique*, pp. 56–63; Frédién-Charles, *L'Oraison d'après Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, pp. xiii–xvi; Lercaro, *Métodos*, p. 151; Pourrat, *La spiritualité chrétienne*, vol. 4, pp. 390–94; *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. 1, col. 1451.

that he owes anything to anyone, and neither does he intend to create a method that is completely different than any already in existence. This is his personal work, not because of its content but because of its concept, the planning that governs its realization, and its general simplicity.⁶⁶

We feel that it would be worthwhile to indicate two aspects of Lasallian interior prayer that are among the most original: 1) the importance given to the presence of God in the First Part, which according to Pourrat⁶⁷ finds no parallel in any other method; perhaps his greatest inspiration here is the Capuchin, Jean-François de Reims, former porter of the monastery at Rehel; 2) the radical predominance given to faith and Sacred Scripture throughout interior prayer; it seems that here De La Salle is especially indebted to the Carmelite school; however, this contribution has been completely assimilated by the author and is here vested with its own originality.⁶⁸

66. *Explication, Édition critique*, pp. 61–63. “De La Salle never strives for total originality. When he achieves it, this is due to his exceptional capacity for synthesis, his power of assimilation, which is always alive, and his feel for practicality. This adaptability brings him to the heights of asceticism and of mysticism. At this point he is the peer of his masters. From here on, he is the disciple of none of them. For his new religious family he creates a spirituality with its own trademark, with special forms and formulas, and with traits that are very different than those that preceded it.” (Rigault, *Histoire générale*, vol. 1, p. 466)

67. Pourrat, *La spiritualité chrétienne*, vol. 4, p. 390; cf. Lercaro, *Métodos*, pp. 152f.

68. “Without any doubt, what De La Salle makes his own in a very personal way is a part of the spiritual tradition of the Carmelites: first, a method reduced to faith, an elemental, basic, complete, and sure method; then, a method adapted for a truly interior prayer, a method illustrated by the First Part of interior prayer, which is designed to recollect the soul through its concentration on God and which, for this reason, is called “recollection” by De La Salle. This very recollection, when it gradually introduces the soul “to this state and attitude” of simple attention, evokes the fourth degree of the method of interior prayer of the Carmelite authors: recollection and contemplation. It is a method that tends toward “interior silence,” to “vivid attention,” to the “simple view of a lively and affectionate faith;” a method, finally, that teaches [beginners] how to prolong moments of recollection. De La Salle, like Saint John of the Cross, introduces even into the interior prayer of beginners this privileged moment in which the whole soul, which has pondered a topic through reflections, stops in silence to enjoy it spiritually. Therefore, as one, the two authors lead the soul to simple and affectionate attention.” (Lett, *Explication, Édition critique*, p. 59); cf. C. Gabriel, “San Juan Bautista de La Salle, autor místico de la escuela de San Juan de la Cruz,” *Rev. de Espir.*, 9 (1950), pp. 467–477.

Integration Within Lasallian Spirituality

To complete this study on interior prayer, there remains only to show the perfect harmony with which the different elements of Lasallian spirituality are integrated.

Logical with himself, De La Salle makes the cornerstone of his Institute the spirit of faith, based on Sacred Scripture. He wants his followers to have a style of interior prayer consistent with this spirit and capable of nourishing it. Therefore he also bases their prayer life on faith coming directly from Scripture.⁶⁹ Were we to ask why this unusual insistence on the use of Scripture, De La Salle would answer that it is because of its particular efficacy:

Especially because, being the words of God as faith makes them known to us, they possess their own divine unction. Of themselves they lead us to God, make us delight in God, and help us to keep God before our minds and preserve within ourselves a delight in God.⁷⁰

The divine word helps us avoid the danger of confusing interior life with introspection. Faith will free us from the tendency of getting wrapped up in ourselves, so that we can be occupied with the God who sanctifies us rather than with the status of our sanctification.⁷¹

However, this interior prayer, impregnated with the word of God, proceeds in the final analysis from what is required by the apostolic mission of the Brother. The followers of Saint John Baptist de La Salle are principally committed to communicating “the spirit of Christianity” to their students and to instructing and educating them according to the “maxims of the Gospel.”⁷² The basis for their function as teachers is found in Sacred Scripture, assimilated in a personal way through recollection and interior prayer and then communicated as a lifestyle.

69. “The appropriate use that he therefore proposes, in *Explanation*, of passages of Scripture to calm and redirect the discursive faculties by means of the systematic acquisition of the ‘attitude of simple attention or the simple view of faith’ introduces a truly scriptural atmosphere into the *Method of Interior Prayer*. In this way the Founder succeeds in deriving the spirit of the Institute (the spirit of faith) from a style of interior prayer whose principal sources are Sacred Scripture and Tradition, represented by the Fathers and spiritual authors.” (Lett, *Explication*, *Édition critique*, pp. 190f)

70. *Explanation*, p. 66.

71. Cf. Guelluy, *À l'écoute de Dieu*, pp. 24–26.

72. *Meditations*, 37.2, 116.2, 194.3.

Like the angels on Jacob's ladder, the Brothers must first ascend to God and then adapt to the capacity of their students what they have learned from God in interior prayer:

It is your duty to go up to God every day by prayer to learn from him all that you must teach your children, and then come down to them by accommodating yourself to their level in order to instruct them about what God has communicated to you for them in your prayer as well as in the Holy Scriptures, which contain the truths of religion and the maxims of the holy Gospel.⁷³

In conclusion, allow us to recall these words of De La Salle concerning interior prayer, which close the circuit of God's coming to us and our going to God. They refer in an eminent way to Sacred Scripture:

We learn to speak to God only by listening to him; for to know how to speak to God and to converse with him can only come from God, who has his own language, which is special to him and which he shares only with his friends and confidants, to whom he gives the happiness of frequently conversing with him.⁷⁴

73. *Ibid.*, 198.1; cf. 126.3, 159.1, 191.2.

74. *Ibid.*, 64.2.

Chapter Nine

Sacred Scripture and the Ministry of the School

Having studied the scripturally based spirituality of the Brother, we must now consider its application to his field of apostolic action, the newly conceived Christian School. The topic is not totally new. When we spoke of the “spirit of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools,” with its double aspect of “spirit of faith” and “spirit of zeal,” we already intimated that the apostolic action of the Brother is the logical extension of his own spiritual richness.

Serious studies on how Saint John Baptist de La Salle educated the children of artisans already exist.¹ Generally, they do not specifically address Christian education as it is related to Sacred Scripture, but we have only to peruse his writings to sense its importance in the eyes of the Founder.

We have some studies that more directly touch upon the theme of Scripture as it is related to ministry, although in each case there is always some notable limitation;² therefore, we must include here a few pages that will present a general synthesis of the entire theme as a complement to already existing studies.

1. Especially noteworthy: Gallego, *La Teología de la Educación en San Juan Bautista de La Salle*; Sauvage, *Catéchèse et Laïcité*; Alcalde, *El Maestro en la Pedagogía de San Juan Bautista de La Salle*, on the implications for the ministry of one's personal perfection: Frère Alphonse, *À l'École de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*; Viola, *Perfección y Apostolado en la Espiritualidad Lasaliana*.

2. In Sauvage, *Les Citations*, pp. xl–xlvii, there is an interesting outline on “The doctrine of the ministry of the Brother in the light of the New Testament

Objective of This Ministry

Sacred Scripture unfolds the history of salvation. It objectivizes the “event” *par excellence* of God’s bursting onto the scene of human history with his salvific design. It is a “happening” that transcends history, reaching back into all of time, and projects itself into the future by means of the Church. Because it concerns something that is happening, this message of God in the Bible must be lived and also preached as a way of life.³

When De La Salle recommends the frequent reading of Scripture to his followers as an essential element in the biblical foundation of their spirituality, he is really within the best of traditions. And as he puts together a program for their personal sanctification, at the same time and with equal originality he adapts it to the realities and the authenticity of the apostolate of the Brothers.⁴

In the catechetical program of the school, not only is Sacred Scripture to be the instrument used by the catechist to transmit a message to the students, but *it must be the message itself*—and more so, because Scripture is written for “little ones” and not for the minds of scholars.⁵

This main objective of the Christian School is defined and emphasized by De La Salle in many ways. The Brothers are destined to collaborate in the salvific plan of God⁶ and to participate in the apostolic ministry⁷ by means of preaching the Gospel and announcing the Gospel to their students.⁸ God has destined the Brothers for the ministry of announcing his word,⁹ “to teach the truths of the Gospel to the poor,”¹⁰ and with the Apostle, they will find their greatest happiness in proclaiming “the Gospel free of charge . . . to those who hear it.”¹¹

quotations from *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*.” As we can see, the field of investigation is narrowed down to the sixteen meditations indicated. On the other hand, Marcato extends the base of this study in “*Le massime del Vangelo*” with a focus on the “object” of ministry.

3. Karl Rahner, “*Schrift und Tradition*,” *Wort und Wahrheit*.

4. Cf. Sauvage, *Les citations*, p. 665.

5. Cf. Charlier, *La lectura cristiana de la Biblia*, p. 416.

6. *Meditations*, 193, 56.1.

7. *Ibid.*, 159.2.

8. *Ibid.*, 84.1, 116.2.

9. *Meditations*, 193.1.

10. *Ibid.*, 132.2.

11. *Ibid.*, 207.2, 194.1, quoting 1 Cor. 9:18.

The Brothers are to teach and educate their students according to the truths and the maxims of the Gospel.¹² They must put forth every effort to “impress them firmly on the minds of these children”¹³ and to “impress them deeply on the hearts of your pupils,”¹⁴ and this is to be considered as “the most important,”¹⁵ as their “main care”¹⁶ and that to which they are obliged by their state¹⁷ and for which, first of all, God will ask them to render an account.¹⁸

This ministry is not to remain on a theoretical plane. If the word of God is life, it must necessarily manifest itself in action.¹⁹ Therefore, the duty of the Brothers is not only “to teach your disciples every day to know God, to explain to them the truths which are of the Gospel,” but also “to train them in their practice,”²⁰ and nothing should be more important than “helping your students find their happiness in these practices.”²¹

For this purpose, the Brothers ought to teach their students the “speculative truths” of religion as well as the “practical maxims” of the Gospel. Given the inability of children to learn and to practice them by themselves, the Brothers should become their visible guardian angels to help them achieve two things: 1) to understand these maxims, just as they are given to us in the Gospel, and 2) to direct the children’s steps along the way as they try to practice them.

And so that “these holy maxims will make a strong impression on their minds and hearts,” the Brothers should encourage their students “to appreciate and practice these maxims” with means that “are easy and accommodated to their age.”²²

According to De La Salle, one of the miracles that God reserves for and asks from the Brothers in their employment is that of “touching the hearts of the wayward children entrusted to your care, by making them docile and faithful to the maxims of the holy Gospel and to their practices.”²³

12. Ibid., 27.1, 37.2, 44.2, 84.1, 87.1, 116.2, 117.3, 140.1, 159.1, 159.2; Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 10; *Collection*, p. 32.

13. *Meditations*, 198.1.

14. Ibid., 44.2.

15. Ibid., 198.1.

16. Ibid., 194.3, 198.1; Rule of 1705, chap. 7, art. 3.

17. *Meditations*, 138.3.

18. Ibid., 61.2.

19. Ibid., 196.3, quoting John 6:64.

20. Ibid., 100.2.

21. Ibid., 194.3.

22. Ibid., 197.2, 91.3, 116.2, 196.2.

23. Ibid., 180.3. When De La Salle concludes Part I of *Les Devoirs d'un*

De La Salle finds another opportunity to stress the close relationship that exists between Scripture and the ministry of the Brother when he proposes that the purpose of their work²⁴ is to make their students *true* Christians: “Your work does not consist in making your disciples to be Christian but in helping them to be true Christians.”²⁵

To be a true Christian, according to the doctrine explained in *Meditations* and in *The Duties of a Christian to God*, means to be animated by the “spirit of Jesus Christ” and by the “spirit of Christianity,” that is to say, to live in conformity with the “maxims of the holy Gospel.”

To be a Christian, it is sufficient to be baptized, . . . but it is not enough to belong to the true religion. We must be Catholic, believe in God and in Jesus Christ and in all that he has taught us, either personally or by his Church, and make a public profession of what we believe. Even this is not enough. To be a good Christian, it is also necessary to be animated by the *Spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ* and live a life like unto his, permeated by the *maxims contained in the holy Gospel and in the entire New Testament*.²⁶

It will not be necessary to repeat all that has been said about the scriptural content of the expressions “Christian spirit” or “spirit of Christianity.” However, in the light of our previous clarifications, we can understand perfectly what De La Salle means when he says to his Brothers, “Your vocation has not been instituted except to procure [for those whom you instruct] the spirit of religion and of Christianity.”²⁷ If God sends children to you, it is “so that you may give them the spirit of Christianity and educate them according to the maxims of the Gospel.”²⁸

Chrétien envers Dieu, he writes these sentences, which make the practice of the Gospel maxims the result toward which both prayer and the study of the doctrine contained in this book must tend: “The principal effect that these prayers ought to produce is that of moving us to practice the maxims of the holy Gospel. This is also the greatest benefit we can attain from the knowledge of the holy mysteries and the doctrine of the Church.” (*Devoirs*, I, p. 494)

24. Concerning the meaning that De La Salle attributes to the various terms—state, profession, employment, function, ministry—cf. Gallego, *Teología de la Educación*, pp. 163ff.

25. *Meditations*, 171.3; cf. 150.2; in 116.3, he uses the expression “true disciples of Jesus Christ.”

26. *Devoirs*, I, pp. iv, 99, 187–192; *Meditations*, 171.3, 160.3; emphasis added.

27. *Meditations*, 186.2.

All of these converging expressions that recur so frequently make it clear that when De La Salle mentions the Gospel as the main object of the apostolic ministry of the Brother, he is not making a simple, generalized reference to the revealed message, but rather he has expressly in mind the Word of God become text of Sacred Scripture, become the voice of ministerial proclamation, become flesh in Jesus Christ. The message of the Gospel is a Person. As far as De La Salle is concerned, these are equivalents: “proclaim Jesus Christ and his holy maxims without growing weary;”²⁹ “make Jesus Christ known to those whom you have to instruct; teach them the rules of the Christian life;”³⁰ “form Jesus Christ in the hearts of the children,” and “bring them up in the spirit of Christianity.”³¹

Presence of Scripture in the Christian School

The program we have just culled from the writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle requires the continuous presence of Scripture in the education of students. We cannot develop here in detail the scriptural content of the program that is to be taught to the students. The presence of Sacred Scripture in *The Duties of a Christian to God* of itself would be a suitable topic for an in-depth study. The *Meditations*, although they are not religion texts properly so called, very often pause to indicate some of the concrete truths that the Brothers are to teach their students. The essentials of this program De La Salle summarizes in the teaching of the mysteries (Dogma) and the teaching and practice of Christian virtues (Moral).

Besides the ordinary time that the Brothers normally dedicate to explanations of the doctrine of the Savior and of the mysteries of our holy religion, the Founder also prescribes at least two sessions each week for a review of the “principal mysteries.”³² In this way he assures

28. *Ibid.*, 37.2; cf. 6.2, 27.2, 62.1, 69.3, 80.2, 115.3, 119.2, 126.3, 131.3, 170.1, 194.2, 195.2, 208.1, Rule of 1705, p. 26, all with regard to the “spirit of Christianity;” *Meditations*, 132.1, and Rule of 1705, chap. 2, art. 9–10, and *Collection*, p. 30, regarding the “spirit of Christianity;” *Meditations*, 157.3, regarding the “Spirit of God.”

29. *Meditations*, 78.2.

30. *Ibid.*, 87.2.

31. *Ibid.*, 80.2, quoting Gal. 4:19.

32. One half-hour before an all-day holiday and another half-hour on Sundays and feast days; cf. Rule of 1705, chap. 30, art. 8; chap. 31, art. 1.

that the essential pillars of Christianity will hold firm, become operative, and preside over the development of faith in the students.

The morality that De La Salle espouses is specifically evangelical in its source, the maxims of the Gospel, and in its spirit. Baptismal morality, which is based on our new life in Christ, the morality of the kingdom of God, and eschatological morality—none of these can be reduced to the mere observance of a code, because they actually involve our whole existence. Finally, there is scriptural morality, which includes its own methodology:

In reading the Gospel you must study the manner and the means that [Jesus Christ] used to lead his disciples to practice the truths of the Gospel.³³

It also has its own style, which quite often is careful to keep to the very expressions used in the inspired passages.³⁴

Perhaps one of the most telling signs of the importance of Sacred Scripture in the Christian Schools is its inclusion in all the activities not directly associated with prayer and the teaching of religion. *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* gives us some typical examples of how De La Salle takes advantage of even the most ordinary activities of the school day to impress the revealed word, little by little, on the minds and hearts of students.

In the chapter dedicated to the teaching of penmanship, when speaking of the models that the students are to imitate, De La Salle distinguishes two kinds: the alphabet and famous quotations. Each of the latter are to be five lines long, and he refers to them as examples of continuous lines of text. Concerning these he writes:

33. *Meditations*, 196.2.

34. See the beautiful outlines by Sauvage in *Les Citations*, pp. xliii–xlvi, and in *Catéchèse et Laïcat*, pp. 657–659. Commenting on *Meditations*, 196.2, he says, “It is interesting to note that all the attitudes recommended here are strictly Christian, taught in the Gospel, revealed by God, and in no way required by a purely natural ethic: love of poverty, suffering of injuries, meekness and humility, upright intention, Christian evaluation of temporal riches. This is the ‘ethic’ that the holy Founder wants his disciples to inculcate in the students confided to their care.” (*Les Citations*, p. 19) A typical case of his preference for the literal expressions of Scripture can be found in *Les Exercices de piété qui se font pendant le jour dans les Écoles Chrétiennes* (Cahiers Lasalliens 18, p. 29), where, after giving the Ten Commandments in their usual form, he includes “The same Commandments of God as expressed in Sacred Scripture: 1) I am the Lord thy God. . . .”

All lined models will consist of sentences from Holy Scripture, of Christian maxims taken from the works of the Fathers, or from spiritual books. For this purpose, there will be in each school two collections: one of sentences from Holy Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, and the other, of maxims of piety taken from some good books. Teachers will give no models that are not taken from one of these two collections.

Immediately following, he indicates that preference should be given to Sacred Scripture and gives the reason why:

They will make special use of those taken from Holy Scripture, which, as it is the word of God, should make a greater impression and more easily touch the heart.³⁵

There are few moments quite as effective for impressing the mind with a truth as that of writing. The quiet required by an exercise of penmanship and the repetition of the same sentence both create ideal conditions, not only for memorization but also for a soul to be completely absorbed in the meaning of the sentence while it is occupied with the techniques of the exercise. De La Salle's thinking is that the "impression" becomes that much stronger when to psychological resources we add the unique and special power of the word of God.

The books to be used for reading should also be filled with passages from Scripture. In the chapter on the Second Reader given to the students for their use, this example is used to indicate the proper syllabication of the words: "Stephen, filled with faith and the Ho-ly Spir-it, worked great mir-a-cles."³⁶

In one of the wall displays of orthographic signs, the use of the parenthesis is exemplified as follows: "Give (Jesus Christ tells you), and it will be given to you."³⁷

Once the students are proficient in French, they use the Psalter in order to learn to read Latin.³⁸

In the chapter on "rewards," special importance is placed on quotations or maxims, printed on small cards. Doubtless the majority of them are from Scripture. Judging from the words of *The Conduct*, they are very popular with the students. After describing various kinds

35. *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, p. 74.

36. Acts 6:8; this example does not appear in the English edition of *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*.

37. This example does not appear in the English edition of *The Conduct*.

38. *The Conduct*, p. 69.

of rewards, such as books, holy pictures, small statues, and the like, De La Salle adds:

Engraved texts will most commonly be given to the students as rewards, because ordinarily they are more useful and often more appreciated. All of these quotations should be religious in character.³⁹

Each week, as a reward to be given out in class, there will be a holy card and a maxim, one more attractive and the other less so. The maxim, or the better one if there are two, will go to the student who has best answered and recited the catechism.⁴⁰

Each month, as a reward to be given out in class, there will be a book and a large, artistically presented quotation, or a large and beautiful picture, or anything else that might interest the students and that they would very much like to have.⁴¹

De La Salle is well aware of the influence exerted by these maxims when they are beautifully presented. The student will lovingly keep anything that he knows is the result and reward of his own efforts. He will read it often, and in the case of the beautifully framed maxims, he will display them on the walls of his own home. This is an ingenious extension of the apostolate to the entire family of the student. In all these and many other ways, De La Salle tries to inculcate the word of God so that it might become the norm and principle of life for the students.

For the moment, we will not take up the presence of Sacred Scripture in *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, because it deserves special consideration. We will come back to it later on.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 133; the portion of the citation beginning with “because” does not appear in the English edition; cf. Cahiers lasalliens 24, p. 144.

40. *Conduite*, Cahiers lasalliens 24, p. 145; the citation does not appear in the English edition.

41. *Ibid.*; the citation does not appear in the English edition.

Ministry of the School in Light of Scripture

It is interesting to see how Saint John Baptist de La Salle takes from Scripture the principles on which he establishes his doctrine on the ministry of the school, but what is quite surprising is that he also maintains the scriptural terminology. He does it to such a degree that it is perfectly possible to draw up a theology of education simply by keeping to the scriptural passages he employs. In what follows we present a schematic view of the principal elements that constitute the apostolic ministry as De La Salle conceives it, based on the clear light of Sacred Scripture.⁴²

Origin of the Mission of the Educator

In the fulfillment of their mission to provide a Christian education for children, the Brothers “have been appointed by God to succeed the holy Apostles in teaching the doctrine of Jesus Christ.”⁴³

Keeping in mind the due proportion between your work and [theirs], you can say that you are doing the same thing and that you are fulfilling the same ministry in your profession.⁴⁴

God is so good that having created us, *he wills that all of us come to the knowledge of the truth.* This is what God does *by diffusing the fragrance of his teaching throughout the whole world. Just as he commanded light to shine out of darkness, so he himself kindles a light in the hearts* of those destined to announce his word to children.⁴⁵

Among the diverse ministries and institutions by which the Holy Spirit manifests himself in the Church for the common good,⁴⁶ God has also *established* the Brothers in the ministry of announcing the Gospel.⁴⁷

42. We will not make an exegetical analysis of the use of these passages. Having previously made a basic exegetical evaluation of De La Salle, we consider this sufficient within our context.

43. *Meditations*, 145.3, 102.1, 138.3, 159.2.

44. *Ibid.*, 199.1.

45. *Ibid.*, 193.1, citing 1 Tim. 2:4, 2 Cor. 2:14 and 4:6; emphasis added.

46. 1 Cor. 12:5–9, 28.

47. *Meditations*, 201.1.

De La Salle insists again and again in different ways on this divine origin of the apostolic ministry of the Brother, always with references taken from Sacred Scripture—“Since God . . . *has made you* his ministers in order to reconcile [the children] to him.”⁴⁸ “You have been *chosen* by God to announce [the Gospel].”⁴⁹ “It is God who has *called you*,”⁵⁰ “*destined you*,”⁵¹ who has “*entrusted to you*”⁵² and “has *given you* the ministry you exercise.”⁵³

It is for this reason that the Brothers should consider themselves, according to the words of Saint Paul, as “ministers of God and the dispensers of his mysteries,”⁵⁴ as “ministers of Jesus Christ,”⁵⁵ as “ministers of the Church.”⁵⁶

In their humble employment, the Brothers are “cooperators with God in his work,”⁵⁷ “ambassadors of Jesus Christ,”⁵⁸ “workers of God in the harvest of souls,”⁵⁹ “persons to whom the deposit of faith has been confided,”⁶⁰ in order to be communicated to the students, and of which they are the faithful stewards⁶¹ and shepherds of the flock,⁶² and like Saint John the Precursor, they are angels sent by God to prepare his way.⁶³

48. *Ibid.*, 193.3, citing 2 Cor. 5:18; emphasis added, as in what follows.

49. *Ibid.*, 198.2, citing 1 Thess. 2:4; cf. *Meditations*, 87.2, 146.2.

50. *Ibid.*, 140.2; cf. 175.3, 193.2, 206.1.

51. *Ibid.*, 157.1.

52. *Ibid.*, 155.3.

53. *Ibid.*, 205.1, alluding to 1 Cor. 3:5.

54. *Ibid.*, 3.2, citing 1 Cor. 4:1; 140.2, 193.1, 205.1; cf. 56.1, alluding to 1 Cor. 3:5; 201.1, alluding to 2 Cor. 6:4.

55. *Meditations*, 166.3; 201.2, alluding to 1 Cor. 4:1; 195.2, alluding to 2 Cor. 5:20; 93.3, probably alluding to 2 Cor. 6:4.

56. Col. 1:25; *Meditations*, 201.2.

57. 1 Cor. 3:9; *Meditations*, 205.1, 56.1, 185.3, 196.2.

58. 2 Cor. 5:20; *Meditations*, 195.2, 201.2.

59. Matt. 9:37–38; *Meditations*, 67.3.

60. *Meditations*, 61.2, reminiscent of 1 Tim. 6:20.

61. *Ibid.*, 61.2; Luke 16:1; cf. 205.1, alluding to Matt. 25:14–30.

62. *Ibid.*, 33.1; John 10:11; cf. 196.1, quoting Luke 15:4–5.

63. *Ibid.*, 2.1; Mal. 3:1.

The Work of the Brothers

As with the Apostles, God sends the Brothers “to work in his vineyard;”⁶⁴ “the souls of the children whom you teach are the field that he cultivates through you.”⁶⁵ In this way the Brothers realize “God’s work”⁶⁶ in contradistinction to “human work;”⁶⁷ they “write the letter which [Christ] has dictated not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh which are the hearts of children.”⁶⁸

Another image that De La Salle frequently presents is borrowed from Saint Paul. It is that of the ministry as the work of “building up the Church.” With it he fundamentally establishes the sense of being a part of the Church and continuing the work of the Apostles. All this is characteristic of the Brothers as well:

You should be working in your ministry for the building of the Church on the foundation which has been laid by the holy Apostles by the instruction you are giving to the children whom God has entrusted to your care.⁶⁹

The Brothers should work unceasingly in order to build them into this edifice⁷⁰ and thus to make them “the sanctuary where God dwells by the Holy Spirit.”⁷¹ According to the grace of Jesus Christ, which God has given to them, “they are like good architects who . . . lay the foundation” for the building of the Church when they instruct children.⁷²

To build up with them the body of Christ . . . you must work to inspire them with the same sentiments and to put them in the same dispositions in which Saint Paul tried to place the Ephesians.⁷³

64. *Meditations*, 201.1; Matt. 20:3.

65. *Ibid.*, 205.1; 1 Cor. 3:9.

66. 1 Cor. 3:9; *Meditations*, 59.3, 67.3, 196.1, 201.1; cf 207.2, quoting 1 Cor. 9:1.

67. *Meditations*, 57.2.

68. *Ibid.*, 201.2; 2 Cor. 3:3.

69. *Ibid.*, 200.1; Eph. 2:20.

70. *Ibid.*, 201.2, 200.1, 205.3; Eph. 2:22.

71. *Ibid.*, 205.3; Eph. 2:22.

72. *Ibid.*, 193.2, 199.1; 1 Cor. 3:9.

73. *Ibid.*, 198.3, 205.3; Eph. 4:12.

It is for the Church (which is the body of Jesus Christ) that you work.⁷⁴

You are likewise responsible, as far as you are able, to make her holy and to purify her by the word of life, so that she may be able to appear before [Jesus Christ] full of glory without stain, without wrinkle, and without any defect, but completely pure and completely beautiful. . . . This is how you will show Jesus Christ that you have truly fulfilled your ministry and that you have worked effectively to build up and sustain the Church, as Jesus Christ has engaged you to do.⁷⁵

The relationships established here between the “building of the Church” and the “body of Christ” have imperceptibly introduced us to a series of Pauline images used copiously by De La Salle. He alludes to the various functions of spiritual paternity that are proper to the Brothers within the context of the Mystical Body of Christ.

God, having placed the Brothers in their state, has granted them the distinguished honor and destiny “to produce children for Jesus Christ, and even to produce and engender Jesus Christ himself in their hearts.”⁷⁶ The title of “children of God”⁷⁷ and of “living images of Jesus Christ,”⁷⁸ which the students possess, will always be the basis for the special tenderness that the Brothers are to feel for them and the zeal and affection that they ought to put into their teaching, especially when dealing with the poor, because “Jesus Christ will look upon the good you do to the poor as done to himself.”⁷⁹

The Brothers ought not rest content with having brought forth children for God; this spiritual paternity demands that they also follow up on their subsequent growth and development. Like Christ, they must see that they not only have life but “have it to the full.”⁸⁰ They must “reconcile them to him”⁸¹ and “clothe them with Jesus Christ himself and with his Spirit.”⁸² They must lead them to the “liberty of

74. *Ibid.*, 205.3, 201.2; Col. 1:24.

75. *Meditations*, 205.3, 198.2; Eph. 5:26–27.

76. *Ibid.*, 157.1; Gal. 4:19.

77. *Ibid.*, 133.2.

78. *Ibid.*, 80.3, quoting 1 Cor. 6:15; 96.3, quoting 1 Cor. 12:27; 134.2, alluding to Acts 14, 3–13; 80.3, possibly alluding to Matt. 25:40.

79. *Meditations*, 150.1; Matt. 45:40.

80. *Ibid.*, 201.3, 196.3; John 19:10.

81. *Ibid.*, 193.3; 2 Cor. 5:8.

82. *Ibid.*, 189.1; Rom. 13:14.

the children of God;⁸³ they must “give children the spirit of wisdom, the insight to know him, and enlighten the eyes of their hearts.”⁸⁴

And their greatest concern should be “that all of them come to the age of the perfect man and the fullness of Jesus Christ, so that they are no longer like children tossed here and there, no longer turned around by every wind of doctrine. . . . Rather, in all things they are growing up in Jesus Christ, who is their head, through whom the whole body of the Church holds its structure and its union, so that they may always be so united with the Church and in her that by the hidden power which Jesus Christ furnishes to all his members, they will share in the promises of God in Jesus Christ,⁸⁵ become “holy and perfect,”⁸⁶ and find themselves “in condition to appear one day before Jesus.”⁸⁷ This is the best way to contribute to the spreading of God’s “glory over all the earth.”⁸⁸

Necessity of This Ministry

Like Christ, like the Apostles, the Brothers also must live compelled by the necessity of imparting the word of God “every day;”⁸⁹ they must imitate the zeal that inspired the Apostles:

So they chose seven deacons to distribute the alms to the faithful, . . . so greatly did these holy Apostles fear to find any obstacles able to distract them from preaching the word of God.⁹⁰

This urgency has its motivation in the necessity of faith, since “without faith it is impossible to please God,”⁹¹ and we cannot believe without the ministry of preaching, according to the famous rationale of Saint Paul.⁹² To all this is added the state of the children themselves, including the inexperience and the instincts proper to their age, which make it difficult for them on their own to conceive and to

83. *Ibid.*, 203.2; Gal. 4:31.

84. *Meditations*, 206.1; Eph. 1:17–18.

85. *Ibid.*, 205.3, alluding to Eph. 4:12–16.

86. *Ibid.*, 198.3, quoting the context of Eph. 4:12.

87. *Ibid.*, 201.2; Eph. 5:27.

88. *Ibid.*, 46.3; Isa. 6:3.

89. *Ibid.*, 200.1; Acts 5:42.

90. *Ibid.*, 200.1; Acts 6:1–4.

91. *Ibid.*, 199.1; Heb. 11:6.

92. Rom. 10:14–17; *Meditations*, 193.1, 61.2.

appreciate the things of God,⁹³ and their limited prudence of judgment and self-control where unwholesome inclinations are concerned.⁹⁴

The Educator as Minister of God

In the midst of their demanding work, the Brothers must remain firmly persuaded that the word confided to them is not theirs but comes from God and that he is the First Cause of all apostolic action.

Like Saint John the Baptist, they must consider that of themselves they are incapable of saying anything of their own that might produce supernatural good in souls, since they are “a mere voice, only a sound, which becomes nothing once it has echoed through the air.”⁹⁵

They are only the voice of the One who really disposes hearts to accept Jesus Christ and his holy teaching. The one who disposes them, says Saint Paul, can only be God, who imparts to humans the gift of speaking of him.⁹⁶

If it is not God who makes you speak and who uses your voice to reveal himself and his sacred mysteries, you are nothing but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.⁹⁷

Be convinced of what Saint Paul says, that you plant and water the seed, but it is God through Jesus Christ who makes it grow and brings your work to fulfillment.⁹⁸

For this reason, De La Salle continues,

all your care for the children entrusted to you would be useless if Jesus Christ himself did not give the quality, the power, and the efficacy that are needed to make your care useful. As the branch of the vine cannot bear fruit of itself (Our Lord says) unless it remains attached to the stem, so neither can you bear fruit if you do not remain in me.⁹⁹

93. *Meditations*, 197.1, referring to the “natural man” in 1 Cor. 2:14.

94. *Meditations*, 203.2, quoting Prov. 22:15: “Folly is bound up in the heart of a boy, but the rod of discipline drives it far away.”

95. *Ibid.*, 3.1, quoting John 1:19–23; cf. 168.2.

96. *Ibid.*, 3.1; 1 Cor. 3:5–7.

97. *Ibid.*; 1 Cor. 13:1.

98. *Ibid.*, 196.1, quoting 1 Cor. 3:6.

For it was not through the human will that in times past prophecy was uttered; it was rather by the movement of the Holy Spirit that these men of God spoke. It is also by the movement of the Spirit of God that all those who today proclaim his kingdom continue to speak.¹⁰⁰

Notice the clarity with which De La Salle places modern apostles into the prolongation of the events narrated by Sacred Scripture, linking them with the same “history of salvation” that continues down through the ages. In his activities the apostle must seek to be continually attuned to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit if he really wants his words to be life for his students.¹⁰¹

If God uses some men to speak to others and to prepare their hearts to accept Christian truth with docility, “the Lord directs the steps,” according to the Wise Man,¹⁰² and gives their hearts the docility that is necessary to appreciate the holy truths that God makes known to them.¹⁰³ “For it belongs to God alone to give true wisdom.”¹⁰⁴ “He is the one who enlightens everyone coming into the world.”¹⁰⁵ Therefore, those who arrogate these effects to themselves, robbing God of his glory, those who do not go to God continually by prayer, should be considered as persons unworthy of the ministry and “as thieves who have broken into his house.”¹⁰⁶

Respect for the Divine Message

Since the Brothers are simply instrumental causes within divine action and God’s word, they must make a special effort to avoid anything that might degrade God’s message or cast a shadow over its true nature.

This is why Saint Peter says, if any speak, let it always be clear that God is speaking by their mouth; if any fulfill a ministry, let them do so as acting only by the power God communicates to

99. *Ibid.*, 195.3; John 15:1.

100. *Meditations*, 3.2, quoting 2 Pet. 1:21.

101. *Ibid.*, 196.3, alluding to 2 Cor. 3:16; cf. 194.3, 195.3, 196.1.

102. Prov. 16:9.

103. *Meditations*, 3.1.

104. *Ibid.*, 157.2, probably a reminiscence of Prov. 2:6.

105. *Ibid.*, 195.3; John 1:9.

106. *Ibid.*, 62.1; Luke 19:45–46.

them, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁷

Like the Apostle, De La Salle repeatedly reminds his followers about their concern for the children confided to them: “Exhort them, then, as if God were exhorting them through you.”¹⁰⁸ The greatest happiness for a Brother ought to come when his students transcend him and receive doctrine as coming from the One who is their real Teacher:

What a joy it will be to see that they have received the word of God in your catechism lessons, not as the word of men but as the word of God, which is powerfully at work in them.¹⁰⁹

So that the Gospel be not diminished, it must be announced “not with discourses that use human wisdom but with that which the Spirit of God inspires in his ministers;”¹¹⁰ “not with learned words, for fear that the cross of Jesus Christ would be destroyed, since God turned the wisdom of the world into folly.”¹¹¹

Since, then, God in his mercy has given you such a ministry, do not falsify his word but gain glory before him by unveiling his truth to those whom you are charged to instruct.¹¹²

This duty is all the more demanding for the Brothers in that they have the delicate task of balancing fidelity to the word of God without altering it while still necessarily adapting it to the varying capabilities of children.¹¹³

107 Ibid., 3.2; 1 Pet. 4:11.

108. *Meditations*, 193.3; 201.2; 2 Cor. 5:20.

109. Ibid., 207.3; 1 Thess. 2:13.

110. Ibid., 189.1; 1 Cor. 2:13.

111. Ibid., 199.3; 1 Cor. 1:17.

112. Ibid., 193.1; 2 Cor. 4:1–2.

113. Ibid., 193.3, 197.1, 198.1.

Responsibility

When all of you appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, each will give his own account to God of what he has done as a *minister of God* and as a *dispenser of his mysteries* for children.¹¹⁴

As “faithful stewards,” the Brothers must always be ready to give a responsible answer to the call of the Lord: “Give an accounting of your management.”¹¹⁵ Because they are responsible for children, they must watch over them, “for they are keeping watch over [their] souls and will give an account.”¹¹⁶ The good of their children is so intimately related to their own good that they must give their account according to the law of the talion: “He will require from you soul for soul.”¹¹⁷ The basis for this rigorous account is the fact that God loves souls and “his Church so much that he gave himself up” for them.¹¹⁸

The Recompense of the Brother

De La Salle deals with this matter from two different but well-defined perspectives, which can be found in *Meditations for Sundays and Principal Feast of the Year* and in *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. In the former, he invariably refers to the more difficult aspects of the Brother’s life, that is, to the redemptive sufferings that every good apostle accepts in imitation of his Master:

The only thanks you should expect for instructing children, especially the poor, is injury, insult, calumny, persecution, and even death. This is the recompense of the saints and of apostolic men, as it was for Our Lord Jesus Christ. Do not expect anything else, if you have God in view in the ministry he entrusted to you.¹¹⁹

Consider yourself highly blessed, following the teaching given by Our Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples, when people hate you and

114. *Ibid.*, 205.1; emphasis added; 1 Cor. 4:1.

115. *Meditations*, 205.1, 61.1–2; Luke 16:1–2.

116. Heb. 13:17; outstanding is the insistence of De La Salle on this passage: *Meditations*, 203.3, 140.2, 136.3, 205.2, 206.2.

117. *Meditations*, 186.3; Deut. 19:21. See the exegesis of this passage in Gallego, *La Teología de la Educación*, p. 260.

118. *Meditations*, 205.3; Eph. 5:25.

119. *Ibid.*, 155.3, 166.3, alluding to 1 Cor. 4:9–13, and 175.3.

ject you from their midst, when they treat you injuriously and hold your name in horror because of the Son of Man, for it was in this way that they treated the prophets and the preachers of the holy Gospel.¹²⁰

As he reflects on the Precursor's martyrdom, which was the price he paid for his zeal, De La Salle asks the Brothers:

Is this the reward you hope for in your work? Do you desire to suffer much in it, to be greatly persecuted for it, and in the end to die in it, after having worked with all the energies of your soul for the destruction of sin?¹²¹

In *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, on the other hand, De La Salle insists rather on the more encouraging aspects of the reward that the Brother can expect, first in this life and then in the next: hundred-fold in this life,¹²² multiplication of talents that have been turned to profit,¹²³ expansion of the ministry,¹²⁴ consolation and glory in Christ because of a fruitful apostolate.¹²⁵

However, the most substantial reward that the Brother will receive in the next life will be in proportion to the number of students he has instructed and won for God:

The work of each one, that is, of those who have labored on the building of the Church, says the Apostle, will be made known on the day of the Lord, because fire will be the test of the work of each one. . . . The one whose work will survive, says the Apostle, that is, the one whose disciples will have acquired a strong piety through the teacher's effort and concern, will be rewarded in proportion to his work.¹²⁶

The Brothers can say to their students what Saint Paul says to the Corinthians: "You will be our glory in the time to come on the day of Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . because the lessons you have given them

120. *Meditations*, 168.3, citing Luke 6:22–23; 95.3, citing Matt. 5:11–12.

121. *Ibid.*, 162.3, alluding to Matt. 14:3–11.

122. *Ibid.*, 207.1, quoting Mark 10:29–30.

123. *Ibid.*, quoting Matt. 25:14–30.

124. *Ibid.*, quoting Luke 19:12–27, on governing ten cities.

125. *Ibid.*, 207.2, quoting 2 Cor. 9:2, 10:15–17; 1 Thess. 1:2–5, 2:13–19, 3:13.

126. *Ibid.*, 208.1, quoting 1 Cor. 3:13–14.

and the profit they have made from them will be unveiled before the whole world.”¹²⁷ You “will shine like stars throughout all eternity . . . in the midst of those whom [you] have instructed.”¹²⁸

Virtues of a Teacher

This would be the proper place to present the multitude of scriptural references on which De La Salle bases his doctrine on the virtues that should grace those who have been set apart by God to be ministers of the word. However, we cannot even attempt to undertake it.

Suffice it to indicate *Meditations*, 196, 203, and 204 as the ones in which De La Salle proposes that the Brother study the person of Jesus Christ, of Saint Paul, and of the Prophets in order to learn their personal virtues and the methodology necessary for the transmission of revelation, for the correction of faults, and the like. In *Meditations*, 201, 202, 110, 119, 140, and 162, he places special emphasis on the zeal that should animate the apostle.

In this brief overview we believe it becomes very clear that for De La Salle, the ministry of the Brothers is the prolongation of the mission of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. He has affectionately gathered from the Epistles of Saint Paul whatever in words or deeds might give a clearer view of the ministry of the word of God, so that he can present to the Brothers a doctrine of ministry that is both solid and authentic. Here we also have a magnificent theology of education, fundamentally scriptural in its content and expression. Without the pretentiousness of a treatise, he couches in the humble garb of a few meditations this legacy that he leaves to them.

As always, he is entirely consistent throughout. Just as we have seen that Sacred Scripture is the foundation of all his spirituality, so also does Scripture dominate its apostolic thrust. In other words, if the Brothers have an eminently scriptural mission, De La Salle can hardly do otherwise than to propose to them a personal spirituality consistent with their ministry.

127. *Ibid.*, quoting 2 Cor. 1:14.

128. *Ibid.*, 208.2, quoting Dan. 12:3.

Sacred Scripture in *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*

We will dedicate a very special mention of this Lasallian textbook as a fitting conclusion to this study. Because this book deals with a theme that ordinarily concerns only the sphere of social and interpersonal relationships, De La Salle infuses it with a flood of spiritual considerations drawn from Scripture. For this reason it becomes one of the most powerful demonstrations of the practice of a true Lasallian spirit in schools.

It is possible that he knows and uses *Civilité Française*, by Antoine Courtin (Paris, 1671) and *Traité de la Civilité* (anonymous, Lyons, 1685) for the composition of this work. However significant such contributions may have been, especially from the former, De La Salle does not limit himself to reflecting on, modifying, and expanding the material to suit his purpose, but he also infuses into it a completely new spirit by introducing an unmistakably evangelical flavor.

A comparison of the complete titles of the two works is significant: Courtin, *Nouveau traité de la civilité qui se pratique en France parmi les honnêtes gens*; De La Salle, *Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité chrétienne*. In the very title of his text De La Salle already makes a clear distinction between Christian courtesy and purely secular propriety.¹²⁹

We reproduce here the preface, written by De La Salle himself. From it we can see, as on an x-ray film, the deeper intentions that motivate him in the composition of his book:

It is surprising that most Christians look upon decorum and politeness as merely human and worldly qualities and do not think of raising their minds to any higher views by considering them as virtues that have reference to God, to their neighbor, and to themselves. This illustrates very well how little true Christianity is found in the world and how few among those who live in the world are guided by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Still, it is this Spirit alone which should inspire all our actions, making them holy and agreeable to God. This is an obligation Saint Paul points out to us when he tells us in the person of the early Christians that since we should live by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we must also act in all things by that same Spirit.

129. Cf. Albert-Valentin, *Civilité, Édition critique*, pp. 105, 114–130.

According to the same Apostle, since all our actions should be holy, there are none which should not be done through purely Christian motives. Thus, all our external actions, which are the only ones that can be guided by the rules of decorum, should always, through faith, possess and display the characteristics of virtue.

This is something to which mothers and fathers ought to pay attention while educating their children. It is likewise something about which teachers, entrusted with the instruction of these children, should be especially concerned.

Parents and teachers should never fail, while teaching children the rules of decorum, to remind them that they should observe these only through purely Christian motives, which concern the glory of God and one's salvation. Parents and teachers should avoid telling the children in their care that if they fail to act in a certain way, people will blame them, will not have any respect for them, or will ridicule them. Such remarks can only inspire children with the spirit of the world and turn them away from the spirit of the Gospel.¹³⁰

As these words show, for De La Salle the rules of decorum and civility must involve the whole person and all human activities. In a person raised to a supernatural level and having become a disciple of Jesus Christ by Baptism, there is no longer any possibility of separating and still less of juxtaposing the natural and the supernatural, the merely human and the Christian. Everything is to be governed by the superior principle that informs the life of every Christian: the "spirit of Jesus Christ," the "spirit of Christianity." For a Christian, urbanity must be an evident manifestation of virtue.

Here again, in his effort to give the rules of politeness a supernatural orientation, he shows us the intimate relationship between the "spirit of Jesus Christ," which he stresses in his preface, and the "maxims of the Gospel." It is evident that whenever he can support or confirm the practice of courtesy by relating it to a passage of Scripture, he does not let the opportunity slip by.

Our own body must be treated with respect,

since you should consider your own body as a living temple where God wishes to be adored in spirit and in truth, and as a living tabernacle which Jesus Christ has chosen as his dwelling place.¹³¹

130. *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, p. 3.

131. *Ibid.*, p. 36; cf. 2 Cor. 6:16, Isa. 4:24.

Our clothes “must be clean, however poor they may be, because they are the adornment of a servant of God and a member of Jesus Christ.”¹³²

Nothing is more contrary to decorum than to have your table at home always set, for this suggests that you have nothing more at heart or more in your dreams than filling your belly and making it your god, as Saint Paul says.¹³³

The rules require Christians to be extremely circumspect in their words, as Saint James advises in his epistle.¹³⁴

De La Salle finds in the behavior of the Most Blessed Virgin and of Jesus the best rules of decorum when visiting others in their homes:

Even the Most Blessed Virgin, although she lived a very retired life, paid a visit to her cousin Elizabeth, and it would seem that the holy Gospel relates this in some detail precisely so that this example may serve as a model for us. Jesus Christ also paid visits several times out of simple charity, since he was certainly not obliged to do so.

Christian decorum is inspired by charity when during a visit you contribute to the salvation of a neighbor in whatever way possible, or render to him some temporal service, pay him your respects if you are of lower rank than he is, or maintain with him a truly Christian union. It was always for one or the other of these reasons and with some such motive in mind that Our Lord Jesus Christ acted in all the visits he made. He did so to convert some soul to God, as when he visited Zaccheus; to raise the dead to life, as when he went to Saint Martha’s after the death of Lazarus and when he accepted the invitation of the chief of the synagogue; and to cure the sick, as when he went to Saint Peter’s house and to the Centurion’s. He performed all these miracles only to win hearts to God or as a token of friendship and goodwill, as in the last visit he made to Saints Martha and Mary Magdalene.¹³⁵

132. *Civilité, Édition critique*, p. 292, not included in the English edition.

133. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

134. *Ibid.*, p. 109; James 3.

135. *Christian Decorum and Civility*, pp. 97–98. The visit to Saint Elizabeth is analyzed on two other occasions, in order to draw conclusions concerning the proper behavior to observe when visiting others; cf. pp. 97–100.

Quotations from the Wise Man are particularly abundant, as is to be expected. The following series of examples is taken from the article on "How To Eat Politely:"

The Wise Man gives us a number of important suggestions about the manner in which we should behave at table if we are to eat with propriety and with decorum.

1) He tells us that we should not give in to intemperance as soon as we are seated, scrutinizing the food with avidity as though we would like to devour everything in sight without leaving anything for the other. (Sir. 31:12-15)

2) He adds that we should not be the first to reach for the food, leaving this honor and mark of pre-eminence to the most distinguished person in the gathering. (Sir. 31:16)

3) He forbids us to eat hurriedly. It is impolite to eat with avidity, for this is the way a glutton would act. (Sir. 31:19)

4) He insists that we partake of what is served like a temperate person, eating only with restraint and moderation. This still lets us take whatever we need. (Sir. 31:19)

He exhorts us to defer very much to others at table and not to reach into the dish at the same time as someone else does. This is something which is also required by decorum. (Sir. 31:17)

He urges us to be the first, through moderation, to finish eating. This is how a sober person acts, one who professes to follow the rules of temperance in eating. The reason that the Wise Man gives for this is that we must not give way to excess in eating, lest we fall into various other faults. (Sir. 31:20)

He adds, to persuade us to follow these rules of refinement and sobriety, that whoever eats little will enjoy healthful slumber, while insomnia, colic, and indigestion are the lot of the intemperate. (Sir. 31,23-24)

Politeness prescribes no other rules for us regarding the manner of eating than these given by the Wise Man so that we can behave courteously in this action which requires of us so many and such multiple precautions if we wish to do it well.¹³⁶

The use of scriptural quotations in *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* reaches its peak in chapter 7, "Meetings and Conversations." In the introduction and in article one, the passages tumble

136. *Christian Decorum and Civility*, pp. 69-70. There follows a parallel between this scriptural synthesis on eating and the requirements of urbanity, in order to prove the point he is making.

over one another and materially intertwine to such an extent that there are twenty-three of them in only a few pages of text.¹³⁷

However, De La Salle is not arbitrarily trying to force rules of politeness out of Sacred Scripture. Well does he know that such rules will vary with times and places. He is merely indicating the current practices of his day:

Although, as Our Lord tells us in the Gospel, to eat with unwashed hands is not something which defiles a person, it is still a point of courtesy for you always to wash your hands before eating. This is a practice which has always been in use. And if Our Lord criticized the Jews, it was only because they were so scrupulously attached to this detail that they thought they would commit a serious fault if they failed to wash their hands before eating.¹³⁸

In the practices of decorum and civility, we must give due consideration to the times in which we are living, because there are many practices which were in use in past centuries or even in rather recent years which are not now accepted, and whoever follows these will be considered eccentric and far from being regarded as a polite and courteous person.

It is also necessary to conduct ourselves in matters of decorum according to what is acceptable in the country where we live or where we happen to be, for each nation has its own particular customs of decorum and civility, and it happens often that what is considered improper in one country is regarded as polite and courteous in another.¹³⁹

What De La Salle is really looking for in his incessant scrutiny of Scripture is the evangelical and Christian spirit that ought to animate politeness everywhere. This is why we find expressions such as the following constantly flowing from his pen:

It is, however, no less an offense against decorum than against the laws of the Gospel.¹⁴⁰

This is required both by decency and by the law of God.¹⁴¹

137. *Ibid.*, pp. 109–118.

138. *Ibid.*, p. 59, alluding to Matt. 15:20.

139. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

140. *Ibid.*, p. 57, referring to meals; p. 92, speaking of singing

The Gospel urges us to endure this.¹⁴²

The rules of the Gospel require.¹⁴³

As Jesus Christ advises you in the Gospel.¹⁴⁴

Our Lord very expressly condemns it in the Gospel.¹⁴⁵

As Saint Paul advises.¹⁴⁶

For every Christian wishing to act according to the laws of the Gospel should. . . .¹⁴⁷

Those whose moods are constantly changing show that they are “persons who have little virtue and who do not strive to keep their passions in check. This is a way of acting which is wholly human and natural and shows little of the spirit of Christianity.”¹⁴⁸

Those who dress sumptuously “become contemptible to all people with good sense, and, what is far worse, you publicly renounce the promises you made in Baptism and abandon the spirit of Christianity.”¹⁴⁹

All of these expressions and judgments are sincere attempts to make the Gospel the only norm of Christian behavior. The practices of courtesy are its exterior manifestation and the results of the virtues that the maxims of the Gospel develop in souls. Not every rule of politeness will have a corresponding scriptural passage, but as a whole, decorum should be observed according to the spirit of Christianity, if it is to maintain its real value and transcendence.

141. *Ibid.*, p. 46, concerning clothing.

142. *Ibid.*, p. 18, concerning insults.

143. *Ibid.*, p. 97, concerning visits.

144., *Ibid.* p. 113.

145. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

146. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

147. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

148. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

149. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Conclusion

The church is a field in which every variety of flower can and has flourished. What makes the work of Saint John Baptist de La Salle unique and of special value is his clarity about what is essential. Others may offer a more developed and complex body of doctrine, which may even be more elegantly expressed. But De La Salle, possibly influenced by his constant involvement with children, achieves an astonishingly unified and clear synthesis by which the essential content of the message of God becomes available to his Brothers and to their students.

Given this objective, all the rest is accidental from his point of view. This accounts for his schematic presentations, his substantive brevity, his relative unconcern with elegance of style, and his constant appeal to the sources of Revelation. Recall here that sentence in which he perfectly sums up his basic principle: "How fortunate one is to draw truth from its source! This is the way to possess it well and to practice it perfectly."¹

It is like modern architecture, seeking to be functional and true to itself, where the internal structure can be deduced from its exterior appearance and whose principal ornament lies in the lines of force that support the building in all their truth and simplicity. Such also is the Lasallian edifice. It is magnificently elemental, and by that very fact it is also most contemporary.

From the investigations we have undertaken, our conclusions offer some aspects of the Founder that are totally new and others that although they are already partially known or vaguely conjectured, still call for clearer definition and a closer scientific examination.

We present here, in an appendix, a complete table for the first time of the scriptural quotations used in *Meditations*. This not only served as an indispensable foundation for our work; it also represents a significant contribution toward the presently non-existent critical

1. *Meditations*, 178.1.

edition of this Lasallian work, as well as toward future studies on the source of the spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

Our examination of this table and of each of the scriptural quotations it contains has enabled us to demonstrate statistically (when circumstances called for it) the preferences of our author, the amazing scriptural density of his work, and the degree of identification that exists between his words and the word of God. In large portions of his writings, the scriptural elements cannot be deleted without materially destroying the text.

The formulation of Lasallian doctrine from elements scattered throughout his writings bears witness to his profound concept of Sacred Scripture as a written manifestation of the eternal Word of God: a Word eternally alive, always unfolding its potential in the Church and for the Church as the history of salvation, which is prolonged in a Christian people on pilgrimage toward the promised land.

In the process we have also become aware of the relevancy of De La Salle's vision of Tradition, when he shows its intimate relationship with Scripture, its constant presence, and the active role that the laity exercises in it.

Our investigation of the French versions of Scripture that are kept in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris* has made it possible for us to identify the editions of the New Testament that are used in *Meditations for the Sundays and Principal Feasts of the Year* as being those of Charles Huré (Paris, 1702) and Denis Amelote (Paris, 1683). With these we were able to make a more precise examination of De La Salle's reading and use of Sacred Scripture. At the same time, this discovery furnished interesting data for determining the date of the composition of these meditations, and it enabled us to establish benchmarks for further conclusions concerning the authenticity of some of them. And finally, using this discovery, we have been able to make some slight clarifications concerning the study that Michel Sauvage made of the editions of the New Testament by Amelote. This may give rise to still further investigations.

The profound study of the factors that define how De La Salle uses Scripture brought us, step by step, to a discovery of his knowledge and deep understanding of the revealed word, how he interiorizes it and how he uses it, not as a literary artifice but to foster truly Christian living. De La Salle quotes Scripture because his entire life rests on faith, and this faith is supported principally by Sacred Scripture as interpreted by the Church. From this it follows that Scripture is consubstantial with the work of his Christian Schools.

The exegetical section of this study presents evidence of his unflinching love for the true doctrine of the Church, his preference for the strict sense of the Scriptures as the firmest base for his spiritual teachings, the respect he always evidences in his use of the other scriptural senses, and, finally, the keen insights he occasionally achieves thanks to his identification with the spirit of Sacred Scripture. Perhaps the ideas contained in this study will contribute to the dispelling of some of the prejudices that have evolved concerning the merit of Lasallian exegesis.

In our analysis of the terms “maxim” and “spirit,” with all of their many variations, we have at the same time weighed previous studies and, more importantly, have better established the intimate relationship between these terms and Sacred Scripture. In this way we have been imperceptibly lead into the “spirit” of the spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

Aware of the role of the word of God in every spirituality, De La Salle offers the “spirit of faith” as the spirit that characterizes the Brothers of the Christian Schools, because it is the purest flower that can sprout from a total commitment to that word, which is the Revelation of God to man. Thus upon Scripture in its most intimate and divine aspect, seen through the prism of faith, will Lasallian spirituality be founded. As a consequence, De La Salle will give his followers a method of interior prayer that is equally scriptural in its essence and in its expression. This will be nourished constantly by the flowing springs of the *lectio divina*. Sacred Scripture will be their first and principal rule.

The detailed analysis of each of these elements has demonstrated their truly scriptural roots:

1) The *spirit of faith* is scriptural not only by its very nature but also because Sacred Scripture is the confluence of all the means that assure the acquisition and the development of faith.

2) *Reading of the word of God*, just as it is revealed and because it is revealed, ought to be done frequently and through “sentiments of faith, respect, and veneration,” using the practical means of always having the New Testament available. We have also studied the scope of such reading, including the entire Bible, and we have seen the richness contained in the dynamics of such reading as well as the manner of reading the Sacred Books profitably.

3) *Interior prayer* is always expressly based on Scripture, and it continues by and through it. It is a contemplation of the Word by faith. Therefore, regardless of its external form and the multiplicity of

its acts, its method ultimately gravitates toward an interior prayer of simple attention.

The ministerial work of the Brother, which radiates the interior life he pursues in view of his mission, will be the prolongation of the action of Jesus Christ and his Apostles in the Church. Its purpose is to impress the maxims of the Gospel, understood with their intended meaning, on the hearts and minds of children. For this reason, the Brothers must personally make them their own through personal study and interior prayer and transmit them as “ambassadors of Jesus Christ,” taking great care not to alter his message in any way.

Scripture will not only be a presence in the Christian School as one more aspect of classes in religion but will constitute the very message of the catechist. Like a perfume, its presence will pervade the entire school day: reading exercises, penmanship, the rules of politeness, and so forth, and will go beyond the school itself into the families by way of the objects given as rewards.

We have ample evidence of the importance of De La Salle's contribution to our times through his emphasis on the function of Sacred Scripture, both in catechesis itself as well as in the formation of the catechist and his spirituality.

If Scripture is already in its own right an incarnation of the Word of God, Lasallian spirituality focuses all its power on the complete incarnation of that Divine Word in the mind and in the heart. While it is true that this is the common goal of every authentic spirituality, nevertheless we believe that the Lasallian approach stands out because of the clarity and practicality with which it envisions this objective, both in its substance and in the means it employs to achieve it.

The historical period that preceded De La Salle was an era of scriptural renewal, and therefore it resembles our own in its lively and scholarly interest in the Scriptures. He was certainly its debtor, but few knew how to assimilate this renewal and give practical expression to its consequences as he did.

Without a deep and effective love for Sacred Scripture, Lasallian spirituality is incomprehensible and utopian. Neither the spirit of faith, nor interior prayer, nor the authentic Lasallian apostolate can be conceived without the continual use of Scripture. However, we must note that it is not because of this that Lasallian spirituality might possibly fall into biblicism, by turning Scripture into an absolute. The relationship of all Scripture to Jesus Christ, who is the personal Word of the Father, and the interpretation of that relationship by way of Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church obviate such a deviation.

We must recognize that Lasallian spirituality has not exhausted all of its possibilities with the death of the Founder. De La Salle clearly places Scripture at the foundation of his spirituality, but he does not carry this principle to its ultimate consequences for all times and all situations. He is constrained mainly by the circumstances of history: restrictions due to the status of the reading of the Bible in the vernacular, the limited education of many of the first Brothers, the tenuous possibility of maintaining their status as lay religious, Jansenism, Quietism, and so on. Today, external circumstances place the Brothers in optimal conditions to develop Lasallian spirituality to its ultimate potential. To achieve this, it is necessary to return to the sources of Lasallian spirituality, not as an archeological project but in order to assimilate vitally and in all their purity those principles that must govern its maturation.

Let us listen to De La Salle. From a distance of three centuries, he speaks to us with words that are relevant to our times. The present scriptural resurgence, which is more robust than that which De La Salle experienced, amplifies his words and gives us greater access to their deeper meanings than was possible even for those who knew him personally. We could go even further and say that for some of the aspects of his spirituality, De La Salle himself did not perceive the rich possibilities that our present circumstances now provide. For him everything was only germinating, and it was very difficult to discern the future. Today, the seed planted by De La Salle in Holy Mother the Church is a robust plant with all of its potential driving many ministries. If Lasallian spirituality was several centuries ahead of the then current revival of Scripture, the scriptural spirituality of our day fulfills a special revelatory function, and Lasallian spirituality can more fully become aware of itself. From the perspective of the twentieth century, De La Salle might possibly see realized, in fact, many of the things that for him were merely a strong presentiment.

Conscious of the limitations of our work, we would consider ourselves fortunate if these pages could in some way contribute to the clarification of the initiative realized by Saint John Baptist de La Salle in his lifetime and stimulate in his followers the love and study of the word of God that is the indispensable and irreplaceable nourishment of the spirituality that is uniquely and in a special manner their own.

Appendix

Table 1. Scriptural quotations in *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, in order of meditation number

The first column indicates the number and the point of the meditation (all meditations contain three points). The second column gives the scriptural reference. An equal sign (=) following the reference indicates that the quotation can also refer to other parallel quotations. The third column specifies the modality in which the quotation is used, abbreviated as follows:

- E = explicit quotation
- I = implicit quotation
- Ea = explicit allusion
- Ia = implicit allusion
- R = reminiscence

In chapter two we explained the precise meaning that we give to the terms used in this classification. The *x* sign that appears after certain citations indicates that these were not identified in previous editions of *Meditations* (1922 edition, in the case of *Meditations for the Sundays and Principal Feasts of the Year*, and Sauvage, *Les citations néotestamentaires*, in the case of *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*). Needless to say, we suggest nothing concerning those works that have preceded ours when we classify the non-recognized biblical usages whose identification falls beyond the scope of those earlier works—for example, the reminiscences.

When previous editions of *Meditations* attribute what we consider to be an erroneous reference to a quotation, we indicate such a reference within parentheses to the right of our citation.

An *a* and a *b* after a scriptural reference indicates that the passage is used again in the same meditation.

Meditations for the Sundays of the Year (1–77)

1.1	Luke 21:27	E		3.2	1 Pet. 4:11	E	
	Mal. 3:2	E			2 Pet. 1:12	E	x (2 Pet. 1:13)
	Rom. 2:6	I			2 Pet. 1:19–21	E	
	Luke 12:2–3	Ia	x		Prov. 16:9	E	x (Sir. 37:19)
	Matt. 25:13	I			1 Cor. 4:1	E	
1.2	Job 15:15 ¹	I	x (Job 25:5)	3.3	Luke 1:76–77	E	
	John 8:46	I			2 Cor. 5:4	I	
	Mark 13:24–25	I	x		2 Cor. 5:5 ³	I	x (Eph. 1:14)
	Matt. 12:36	E			Ps. 37:39	E	
	Ps. 75:3	E			James 1:17	E	
1.3	Job 9:28	E		4.1	Luke 3:3	E	
	Job 31:14	E			Ps. 6:7	E	
	Job 31:23	E			Joel 2:12	E	
	Matt. 5:26	I			Ps. 51:4	E	
2.1	Mal. 3:1	E		4.2	Luke 3:3	E	
	2 Cor. 4:16	E			Acts 3:19	E	x (Acts 2:38)
	2 Cor. 4:18	E			Ezek. 18:21–22 ⁴	E	x
2.2	Matt. 11:7	E					(Ezek. 33:14–16)
	Matt. 11:8	E			Ezek. 33:16	E	
	Matt. 3:4a	E			Acts 2:38	E	x (Acts 3:19)
	Luke 7:33	E			John 3:1–10	Ea	
	Matt. 3:4b	E		4.3	Ezek. 18:21–22 ⁵	E	x
	Matt. 11:11	E					(Ezek. 33:15–16)
2.3	Luke 3:7a	E			2 Pet. 3:14	E	x
	Luke 3:9	E			Acts 2:38	E	
	Luke 3:7b	E			2 Pet. 3:14	E	x
	Luke 3:8a	E			Rev. 2:4	E	
	Luke 3:9	E			Rev. 2:5	E	
	Luke 3:8b	E		5.1	Luke 2:34	E	
	Luke 3:11	Ea			Sir. 3:22	E	
	Luke 3:13–14	E		5.2	Matt. 12:36	E	
3.1	John 1:19–23	E			Luke 18:1	E	
	1 Cor. 3:5–7 ²	Ea	x (2 Cor. 1:21)		Matt. 7:13	E	
	1 Cor. 13:1	E			Luke 13:5	E	

1. We give this as the most probable text.

2. This reference, which we indicate as the most probable, better reflects the idea of instrumentality.

3. The edition of 1922 gives only part of the quotation and attributes it to Eph. 1:14, but it follows upon the previous passage of 2 Cor.

4. The 1922 edition attributes it to Ezekiel. The reference we give is more literally the same; however, the last part—"and they will not be imputed to him"—is from Ezek. 33:16.

5. De La Salle goes back to the previously cited passage.

	Matt. 5:44–45 ⁶	E	14.3	Luke 8:14	E
5.3	1 Cor. 12:31	E		Acts 9:6	I
	Luke 9:23	E x (Matt. 16:24)	15.1	Luke 18:31	E
	Matt. 5:3	E	15.3	Matt. 24:15	I
	Matt. 19:23–24	E	16.3	Gen. 3:19	I
	Matt. 5:11	E	17.1	Matt. 4:1	E
6.1	John 6:38	Ea x		Sir. 2:1	E
6.3	Matt. 2:19–22	Ea x	17.2	Job 7:1	E
7.1	Luke 2:42–46	E	17.3	Tob. 12:13	E
	Luke 2:51	E		Rev. 3:19	Ia x
	Luke 10:16	Ia x	18.1	Matt. 17:1–2	E
7.2	Matt. 12:25	E x (Mark 3:25)		Luke 9:29	E
7.3	Luke 9:23	E	18.2	Matt. 17:4	Ea
8.1	John 2:2–5	E		Matt. 17:8	Ea
	Prov. 21:28	E	18.3	Luke 9:36	E
8.2	John 2:6–7 ⁷	E		Luke 9:31	Ea
8.3	John 2:4	E	19.1	Luke 11:14	E
9.1	Luke 7:2–3	E x	20.1	John 6:5–15	Ea
	Matt. 8:8–10	E	20.2	1 Cor. 10:13	I
9.2	Matt. 8:8–9	Ea	20.3	Ps. 40:2–4	E
9.3	Matt. 8:13	E	21.1	John 8:46	E
10.1	Matt. 8:23–27	E		John 7:16	Ia x
10.2	Rom. 13:1	E		Luke 10:16	E
	Exod. 29:46	E	21.2	John 8:47	E
10.3	1 Cor. 10:13	Ia x	21.3	1 John 2:3	E
	Phil. 2:13	E		1 John 2:4	E
	Eph. 6:7	E		1 John 2:5	E
11.1	Matt. 13:27	E	22.1	John 18:36	E
	Matt. 23:27	E		Luke 17:21	E
11.2	Matt. 13:25	E		John 6:38	E
	Matt. 13:39	Ia	22.2	Col. 3:16	E
12.1	Matt. 13:31–32	E		Rom. 6:6	E
	Matt. 13:32	E		Gal. 2:20	I
	Ps. 34:9	I	22.3	Eph. 6:14–17	E
12.2	Wis. 7:11	E		Col. 3:15	E
	1 Cor. 13:4–7	R x	23.1	John 6:2	E
13.1	Matt. 20:6	E		John 6:14	E
13.3	Matt. 20:7	E		John 11:53	E
14.1	Luke 8:11–12	E		John 11:47	E
14.2	Luke 8:13	E		Luke 22:2	E

6. The 1922 edition softens the wording, perhaps to avoid Jansenistic rigor.

7. The 1922 edition sometimes modifies the quotations of *Meditations for Sundays* to adjust them to the expressions of the Gospel that precedes each of these meditations. These Gospels come from a version different than that used in the original edition. Thus the term *cruches* is substituted for *urnes*.

23.2	John 10:32	E	26.2	John 6:51	I x (John 6:41)
	John 11:48	E	27.1	Matt. 26:38 = ¹⁰	Ea
	Luke 23:22	E		Luke 22:44	E
	Wis. 2:20	E		Luke 22:43	E
	John 19:11	E	27.2	John 18:12	Ia x
23.3	John 11:48	E		Mark 15:17 = ¹¹	Ia x
	Matt. 24:2 = ⁸	E		Mark 15:19 =	Ia x
24.1	John 8:59	E		John 19:3	Ia x
	John 11:54	E		Matt. 27:26 = ¹²	Ia x
	John 11:53	E		John 19:17	Ia x
	John 18:4b	E		Matt. 27:34	Ia x
	John 18:12–13	Ea x		Matt. 27:48 = ¹³	Ia x
	John 18:4a	E x		Matt. 27:38 = ¹⁴	Ia x
	Matt. 26:45 = ⁹	E		John 19:34	Ia x
	John 4:34	E	27.3	Matt. 26:48–50 = ¹⁵	Ia x
24.2	John 7:30	E		Matt. 26:69–75 = ¹⁶	Ia x
	John 13:1	E			Ia x
	John 13:27	E		Matt. 26:56 = ¹⁷	Ia x
24.3	Luke 22:42	E		Matt. 26:47 = ¹⁸	Ia x
	John 6:38	E		John 18:3	Ia x
25.1	Heb. 10:4–5	E		Matt. 26:67–68 = ¹⁹	Ia x
	Heb. 10:7	E		Matt. 27:39–40 = ²⁰	Ia x
	Heb. 10:10	E		Luke 23:11	Ia x
25.2	Luke 12:49	E		Matt. 27:26 = ²¹	Ia x
	Luke 12:50	E		Luke 23:18–23 = ²²	Ia x
25.3	Luke 22:15	E		Matt. 27:39–43 = ²³	Ia x
	John 19:28	E			Ia x
	John 19:30	E			Ia x
	Col. 1:24	E		Heb. 6:6	E
26.1	2 Pet. 1:4	I x			

8. Cf. Luke 21:6 and Mark 13:2.

9. Cf. Mark 14:41.

10. Cf. Mark 14:34.

11. Cf. Matt. 27:29–30.

12. Cf. Mark 15:15.

13. Cf. Mark 15:36, John 19:29.

14. Cf. Mark 15:27, Luke 23:23, John 19:18.

15. Cf. Mark 14:44–46, Luke 22:47–48, John 18:4.

16. Cf. Mark 14:66–72, Luke 22:54–60, John 18:17–27.

17. Cf. Mark 14:50.

18. Cf. Mark 14:43.

19. Cf. Mark 14:65, Luke 22:63–65.

20. Cf. Mark 15:29–30.

21. Cf. Mark 15:15, Luke 23:23, 25, John 19:16.

22. Cf. Matt. 27:21–23, Mark 15:11–14, John 18:40.

28.1	1 Pet. 1:18–19	E	33.1	John 10:11–13	E
28.2	1 Pet. 2:21	E		John 10:14	E
	1 Pet. 2:24	E	33.2	John 10:14	E
	1 Pet. 4:41	E	33.3	John 10:16	E
	1 Pet. 4:1–2	E	34.1	John 16:20	E
28.3	Gal. 6:14	E		John 16:22	E x
	John 20:27	E		John 16:16	E x
29.1	Wis. 118:24	E	34.2	John 16:20	E
	Rom. 6:4	E		John 16:22	E
	Rom. 6:9	E	35.1	John 16:6	E
	1 Cor. 15:22	E	35.2	John 16:7	E
	1 Cor. 15:55	E	35.3	John 16:7	E
29.2	Rom. 6:4–5	E	36.1	John 16:24	E
	Rom. 6:8	E	36.3	Job 7:1	E
	Rom. 6:11	E		1 Pet. 5:8	E
	Rom. 6:12	E		Matt. 17:21	E
	Gal. 5:24	E		Mark 9:25 = ²⁵	Ea x
29.3	Col. 3:13	E	37.1	Luke 11:5–6	E
	Col. 3:5	E x		Heb. 13:17	R x
	(Eph. 4:22–24)		37.2	Luke 11:8–9	I
	Col. 3:9–10	E x	37.3	Wis. 68:6	I
	(Eph. 4:22–24)		38.1	Luke 11:10	E
30.1	Col. 3:1	Ia	38.2	Matt. 21:22	E
	Luke 24:13–32	Ea		John 14:6	I x
30.3	Luke 24:15	E		Matt. 15:28	E
	Luke 24:32	E	38.3	Prov. 3:34	E
	Luke 24:29	E		Luke 18:14	E
	Luke 24:30–31	E	39.1	John 17:6	E x
	Luke 24:32	E		John 17:9	E x
31.1	Luke 24:36	E		John 17:18	E x
	Jer. 6:14	E		John 17:15	E
31.2	Rom. 8:35	E		1 Thess. 5:22	E
31.3	Rom. 8:36a ²⁴	E x		Wis. 9:9	R x
	Rom. 8:36b	E	39.2	John 17:17	E
	Rom. 8:37–39	E		John 17:19	E
32.1	John 20:9	E	39.3	John 17:22	Ea
	Mark 16:14	Ia x		1 Cor. 1:10	E x (Eph. 4:3)
	Luke 16:8	E		Acts 4:32	E
32.2	John 20:24–29	Ea	40.1	Mark 16:19	E x (Rom. 8:24)
	1 Pet. 2:9	I x		Col. 3:1–2	R x
32.3	John 20:28	E	40.2	Matt. 18:28	I

23. Cf. Mark 15:29–32, Luke 23:35–37.

24. The 1922 edition makes modifications that alter the literal meaning of the quotation.

25. Cf. Luke 9:42.

(40.2) Col. 2:3	E		45.2 Gal. 5:17	E
Acts 7:56	E		Rom. 8:13	E
40.3 Col. 1:18–20 ²⁶	I x (Eph. 4:15)		Rom. 8:11	E x
1 Tim. 2:5	I		Gal. 5:24	E
41.1 John 16:1	E		Col. 3:5	E
John 15:19	E x (John 17:14)		45.3 Gal. 5:25	E
41.2 John 16:1	E		1 Cor. 7:32	Ia x
Gal. 5:14	Ia x		46.1 Phil. 2:10	I
41.3 John 16:3	E		Isa. 6:3	I
42.1 John 14:15–16	E		46.2 Col. 1:13	Ia x
John 14:17	E		2 Cor. 10:5	R x
1 John 2:16	I x		John 20:29	I
42.2 John 14:16–17	E		46.3 Eph. 4:30	Ia x
42.3 Luke 11:13	E		Isa. 6:3	Ia x
John 14:16	E		47.2 Isa. 45. 15	I
Ps. 104:30	E		48.1 John 6:31–32	E
43.1 Acts 1:14	I		John 6:51	E
Acts 2:1–4	Ia		Gal. 2:20	I
Jer. 31:33–34	Ia x		48.2 John 6:41	E
Acts 2:2	I		John 6:33	E
Gen. 2:7	E		John 6:35	E
43.2 Acts 2:2	E		Matt. 6:11	E
Acts 2:4	E		1 Kings 19:8	E
Acts 2:5–6	E		48.3 John 6:48–51	E
Acts 5:41	E		Ps. 34:9	I
43.3 Acts 2:3–4	E		49.1 John 6:55	E
Acts 2:12	E x (Acts 2:6)		49.2 John 6:56	E
Acts 2:41	Ea x		Song 6:3	E
Acts 2:33	E		Rom. 8:35	E
44.1 John 3:19	E		Rom. 8:39	E
John 16:13	E		49.3 John 6:57	E
44.2 Matt. 5:3	E		50.1 Luke 14:18–29	E
Matt. 5:44	E		2 Pet. 1:4	I x
Matt. 5:11	E		50.2 Luke 12:23	E
Matt. 5:44	Ea x (Matt. 5:12)		Luke 18:8	E
44.3 John 3:19	E		50.3 Luke 19:26	E
John 3:19–20	E		51.2 1 Cor. 11:28	E
45.1 John 10:10	E		52.1 John 6:70–71	E
Rom. 8:2	E		52.3 Sir. 4:10	I
Rom. 8:21	I		54.1 Acts 2:42	Ia
Gal. 5:1	I		Luke 11:3	E
Eph. 4:30	I x		56.1 1 Cor. 3:5	I

26. This is the most probable reference. Note that this idea has just been used in the preceding point. The references in the 1922 edition to Eph. 4:15 and Eph. 19:22 do not exclude such a possibility.

1 Cor. 3:9	I	63.3	Heb. 6:6	I	
Luke 15:4	E		1 Pet. 5:5	I	
Matt. 18:14	E	64.1	Mark 7:32	E	
56.3	1 Cor. 3:5	R	Mark 7:33–34	E	
57.1	Luke 5:5	E	64.2	1 Cor. 2:14	E
	Matt. 6:23	I	Acts 2:4	Ia x	
57.2	Luke 5:6	E	Acts 2:41	Ia x	
	1 Cor. 3:9	Ia x	Acts 2:8	Ia x	
57.3	Luke 5:5	E	64.3	Mark 7:33	E
58.1	Matt. 5:20	E	Mark 7:35	E	
	Rom. 8:27	I	Mark 7:34	E	
58.2	Matt. 5:23	E	65.1	Luke 10:30	E
	Luke 6:27–28	E x	Luke 10:33–35	E	
	(Matt. 5:43–44)		1 Cor. 13:3	E	
58.3	Ps. 115:6	I	1 Cor. 13:4	E	
59.1	Mark 8:9	E	1 Cor. 13:7	E	
	Mark 8:2	E	65.2	1 Cor. 13:4	E
	1 Cor. 9:27	E	Prov. 15:1	E	
59.3	Mark 8:2	E	Matt. 5:4	E	
	Neh. 9:21	I	Matt. 11:29	E	
	1 Cor. 3:9 ²⁷	Ia x	65.3	1 Cor. 13:4	E
60.1	Matt. 7:15	E	Luke 10:30	E	
	Eph. 4:22–23	I x (Eph. 4:23)	Luke 10:33–35	E	
	Eph. 4:17	I x	1 Cor. 13:5	E	
60.2	Matt. 7:16	E	66.1	Luke 17:12–13	E
	Eph. 4:24	E	Lev. 13:45–46	Ia	
60.3	Matt. 7:15	E	Mark 9:29 ²⁹	E x (Matt. 17:20)	
	Matt. 7:17	E	Wis. 8:21	E	
61.1	Luke 16:1–2	E	66.2	Luke 17:14	E
61.2	1 Tim. 6:20	R x	Lev. 14:2–7	Ea x	
	Rom. 10:17	E	66.3	Lev. 14:10–20	Ea x
62.1	Luke 19:45–46	E	Mark 9:29	E x	
	1 Cor. 3:9 ²⁸	Ia x	Rom. 12:1	E	
62.2	1 Cor. 6:19–20	E	Rom. 8:13	E	
	Rom. 12:1	E	Lev. 6:1ff	Ea x	
	Rom. 8:26	E	2 Cor. 4:10	E	
62.3	Rom. 8:27	Ia	67.1	Matt. 6:33	E
63.1	Sir. 10:15	E	67.2	Matt. 6:31–32	E
63.2	Luke 18:13–14	E	Matt. 6:26	E	
	Ps. 51:5	E	Matt. 6:28–29	E	

27. A quotation frequently used by De La Salle. Its literal use has been emphasized by Sauvage in *Les Citations*, p. 16.

28. See the previous note concerning 1 Cor. 3:9 in *Meditations*, 59.3.

29. The 1922 edition refers to Matt. 17:20, but only in the Gospel of Mark is there an express mention of an unclean spirit.

67.3	Matt. 6:32	E		72.3	1 Pet. 5:8	E	
	Matt. 6:26	E		73.1	John 4:46–48	E	
	Matt. 6:30	E			Gal. 6:2	E	
	Matt. 6:33	E		73.2	Matt. 11:30	I	
	1 Cor. 9:9	E			Matt. 11:28	I	
	Matt. 9:37–38	Ia	x	73.3	Acts 14:22	E	
	1 Cor. 3:9	Ia	x		Luke 13:24	I	x
	Ps. 55:23	E		74.1	Matt. 18:32–33	E	
68.1	Luke 7:12	E		74.2	1 Cor. 13:7	E	
	Matt. 13:21	⁼³⁰ I	x	74.3	Gal. 6:2	E	
68.2	Luke 7:12	E			Matt. 6:14	E	
	Gen. 2:7	R	x		Matt. 7:2	⁼³¹ E	
	Luke 7:12	Ea	x	75.1	Matt. 22:16	E	
68.3	Luke 7:14–15	E		75.2	Matt. 10:41 ³²	Ia	x
69.1	Luke 14:1	E			Gal. 1:10	E	
	Titus 2:7	E			John 15:19	E	
	Acts 1:1	E			Gal. 1:10	E	
	Titus 2:8	E		75.3	Col. 1:10	E	x (1 Thess. 4:1)
69.2	Luke 17:2	E			1 Thess. 4:1	E	x
69.3	Sir. 19:26	E			1 Thess. 4:3	E	
70.1	Matt. 22:35–37	E			1 Thess. 4:7	E	
70.2	Matt. 22:37	E			1 Thess. 4:8	E	x
70.3	Matt. 22:37	E		76.1	Matt. 9:24	E	
	Sir. 43:37	E			Num. 9:5	Ea	
71.1	Matt. 9:2	Ea		77.1	Matt. 24:15–16	E	
	Ps. 51:12	E	x (Ps. 50:10)		Gen. 28:17	E	
71.2	Matt. 9:6	E			2 Chron. 7:16	E	
71.3	Matt. 9:6	E			Ps. 93:5	E	x (Ps. 42:5)
72.1	Matt. 22:14	E		77.2	Luke 19:46	E	
	2 Pet. 1:10	E			Matt. 24:15	E	
72.2	John 15:4	Ia		77.3	1 Kings 19:18	E	
	Eph. 6:5–7	E			Gen. 18:32	Ea	
	Eph. 4:12	E			Matt. 24:16	E	
	Eph. 4:15–16	E			Ps. 51:13	E	

30. See also Mark 4:17.

31. Cf. Mark 4:24 and Luke 6:37.

32. An obvious parallel with Saint Matthew: he who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive the reward of a prophet.

Meditations for the Principal Feasts of the Year (78–192)

78.1	Matt. 4:18–20 = ³³ E	x		Heb. 12:2	E
	(Matt. 4:19–20)			Col. 1:24	E
	John 1:35–40 = ³⁴ Ea	x		84.3 James 2:20	I
			(John 1:40)	85.1 Luke 2:1	I
	Ps. 95:8	E		Luke 2:3–5 ³⁹	I
78.2	Matt. 4:19	E		Matt. 25:44–45	Ia x
	John 1:41	I		Isa. 53:3	I x
	Mark 16:15	I		85.2 Luke 2:6–7	I x (Luke 2:7)
78.3	Acts 4:19	I		1 Sam. 3:10	E
79.2	James 4:6	I		Ps. 85:9	E
	Matt. 11:29	E		85.3 1 Cor. 15:47–48	Ea
	Luke 1:48–49	E		2 Pet. 1:4	I x
	1 Cor. 14:20	E		86.1 Luke 2:7	Ia
80.2	Gal. 4:19	I	x	86.2 Ps. 22:17	E
80.3	1 Cor. 6:15	I		Luke 2:16	Ia
	Matt. 25:40 ³⁵	Ia	x	Luke 2:9–11	I
81.1	Matt. 4:22 = ³⁶ I			86.3 Luke 2:16–17	E
	Matt. 19:21 = ³⁷ Ia			Luke 2:20	E
81.2	2 Cor. 3:14–15	E		87.1 Acts 6:5	E
82.1	Song 4:7	I		Acts 6:9–10	E
	2 Pet. 1:4	R	x	Acts 7:1–50	Ea x
82.2	Exod. 25:10 ³⁸	Ia		Acts 7:51	E
83.1	Col. 3:5	E		Acts 7:53	E
	Rom. 8:21	I	x	Luke 6:37 = ⁴⁰ Ea	
83.2	Wis. 10:10 =	I	x	Acts 7:60	E
83.3	1 Cor. 4:15	E		Acts 7:55	E
	Luke 1:28	I	x	1 Cor. 4:1	I x (Rom. 15:16)
84.1	John 11:16	I	x	87.2 Acts 7:52	I
	John 20:25	I		Acts 7:51	E
	Matt. 5:3	E		Rom. 10:16	E
	Matt. 5:44	Ea		Isa. 53:1	E
	Luke 9:23	E		Rom. 11:22	E x (Col. 1:22–23)
84.2	John 20:26–27	Ia	x	87.3 Acts 7:58	I
	John 20:28	I		Matt. 5:12	E

33. The 1922 edition skips verse 18; the same quotation is in Mark 1:16–18.

34. The 1922 edition refers only to part of the quotation.

35. Probable allusion to Christ's words, "Whatever you do to one of these."

36. Cf. Luke 5:11.

37. Cf. Mark 10:21 and Luke 18:22.

38. Cf. Prov. 9:10, 30:3.

39. The 1922 edition introduces after this citation a literal quotation from Luke 2:7 that does not appear in the original edition.

40. Cf. Luke 17:4, Matt. 6:14–15, Mark 11:26, and so on.

(87.3) John 15:20 ⁴¹	Ia x		Col. 3:17	E
Acts 7:55	I x		2 Cor. 5:15	Ea x
88.1 John 13:23 = ⁴²	E		1 Cor. 15:10	E
John 13:23	Ia x		Col. 1:10	E
John 19:26–27	Ia x		91.1 Eph. 6:7	E
88.2 Matt. 4:22 = ⁴³	Ia		Rom. 13:4	Ia x
Matt. 17:1–2 = ⁴⁴	Ia		Rom. 13:1	Ia x
John 19:26	Ia x		Luke 10:16	E
Gal. 3:13	I x		91.2 Matt. 23:8b	E
Matt. 26:56 = ⁴⁵	I		Matt. 23:8a	E
John 19:35	Ia x		Luke 22:26 ⁴⁹	E x (Matt. 23:11)
John 20:4	I x		Exod. 2:13	Ea
88.3 John 19:26–27	Ia		Eph. 4:2	E x (Gal. 15:1)
89.1 Wis. 4:11	I x		Gal. 6:2	E
89.2 Matt. 2:16	Ia x		Col. 3:14–15 = ⁵⁰	Ea x
89.3 Matt. 2:16	Ia x		John 17:11	Ea
Heb. 6:6	E		John 17:21–23	Ea
1 Cor. 15:31	I		91.3 Prov. 10:31	E
90.1 Matt. 22:38	E		92.1 Luke 16:10	E
Matt. 22:40	E		92.2 Phil. 4:5	E
Ps. 145:3 ⁴⁶	Ea x	(Ps. 8:1)	Rom. 1:14	E
Ps. 139 ⁴⁷	Ea x		92.3 Eph. 4:22	E
90.2 Ps. 73:28	E		Eph. 4:24	E
1 Cor. 8:6 ⁴⁸	E x	(Acts 17:28)	Eph. 4:23	E
90.3 1 Cor. 10:31	E		93.1 Lev. 12:3	E
Gal. 1:10	E		Heb. 10:5–7	Ia x
1 Cor. 10:31	E		Matt. 5:17	I

41. De La Salle probably is alluding to “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”

42. Cf. John 19:26.

43. Cf. Mark 1:20.

44. Cf. Mark 9:2, Luke 9:28–29.

45. Cf. Mark 14:50.

46. The quotation is not exact; however, we give our reference as the most probable one.

47. The 1922 edition makes reference to verse 11 of this psalm, which does contain “delights,” but the meaning of the verse does not correspond to De La Salle’s intent. Perhaps it is a general allusion to the entire psalm.

48. Not a literal quotation; our reference seems to be more probable.

49. The 1922 edition refers to Matt. 23:11, which contrasts “greater” and “servant.” Saint Luke is closer to the *Meditations* in the use of the words “greater” and “lesser.”

50. This quotation seems to be a synthetic allusion from the many in Saint Paul on mutual support: Col. 3:14–15, 2 Cor. 13:11, Rom. 12:18, and Eph. 4:2–3, already cited.

	Col. 2:11	E		102.3	Rom. 12:1	I
	Rom. 2:28–29	E		103.1	Luke 7:20	E
	Gal. 5:24	E			Luke 7:22	E
	Col. 2:13–14	I			Jth. 9:16	I x
93.2	Heb. 9:11	E			Matt. 4:4	R x
	Heb. 9:14–15	E		103.2	Ps. 116:15 ⁵⁴	I x
93.3	Luke 1:31	E		103.3	Ps. 116:15	I x
	2 Cor. 6:4	Ia x		104.1	Luke 2:22	Ea
95.1	James 1:17	E		104.2	Luke 2:22–24	Ea
95.2	Gal. 5:16	I x		104.3	Luke 2:32	E
	Gal. 5:17	E x (Gal. 5:17a)		105.3	1 Pet. 4:18	I
	Gal. 5:25	E			Ps. 75:3	E
95.3	1 Cor. 4:12–13	E			1 Cor. 11:31	I
	Matt. 5:11–12 ⁼⁵¹	E		106.1	Acts 11:26	I
96.1	Mal. 4:2	Ia x			Matt. 18:17	E
	2 Cor. 5:7 ⁵²	E x (Rom. 3:22)		106.2	Matt. 16:19	Ea
	Isa. 49:8	Ia x			John 21:15–17	Ea
	1 Sam. 3:3–15	Ea x		106.3	1 Cor. 4:1	E
	Acts 9:4–5	Ea x		107.1	Acts 1:14–26	Ea x
96.2	Matt. 2:2	E		107.2	Acts 1:21–26	Ea x
	Matt. 2:4–5	E		107.3	Acts 1:21–22	E
	Matt. 2:8	E		109.2	Job 1:6–2:10	Ea x
96.3	Matt. 2:9	E			Ps. 37:39 ⁼⁵⁵	R x
	Matt. 2:11a	E		110.1	Matt. 1:19	E
	Matt. 2:11b	E		110.2	Matt. 1:20–24	Ea x
	1 Cor. 12:27	I			Matt. 2:13–14	Ea
97.1	Matt. 19:21	E			Matt. 2:19–21	Ea x
97.2	Gal. 5:24	R x		110.3	Matt. 2:14	Ea
97.3	Gen. 41:38	R x			Matt. 2:22	E
98.1	Sir. 6:18–20 ⁵³	Ia x			Luke 2:48	E
98.2	2 Cor. 2:15	I		112.1	Luke 1:38	E
98.3	1 Tim. 4:8	E		112.2	Phil. 2:6–7	E
99.1	Acts 9:2–5	E			Matt. 1:21	E
99.2	Acts 9:5–6	E			Heb. 10:8–9	E
	Acts 9:6	E			Matt. 3:15	I x
99.3	Acts 9:6–21	Ea			Isa. 53:4–5	E
100.2	Eph. 4:17–18	R x			Rom. 6:6	R x
100.3	2 Tim. 3:12	E		112.3	John 10:10	E

51. This quotation may also refer to Luke 6:22–23.

52. Difficult to identify. The 1922 edition gives Rom. 3:22, which is not exact. We present ours as more probable.

53. Probable allusion.

54. The remainder of the passage, which appears in the third point, confirms the probability of this reference.

55. Clearly a biblical expression; the possible references are numerous.

(112.3)	Col. 1:20	E	128.2	Matt. 19:21 = ⁶⁰	R x
	Col. 1:21–22	E		Gal. 5:24 ⁶¹	Ia x
	Col. 1:12 ⁵⁶	E x (Eph. 2:19)	132.2	Luke 10:1	Ea x
	Eph. 2:4–7	E	134.1	Acts 4:36–37	E
	Gal. 4:4 ⁵⁷	E x		Acts 13:2	Ea x
	Eph. 1:7–8 ⁵⁸	Ea x	134.2	Acts 11:24	E
	Eph. 1:4	E x (Eph. 2:13)		Acts 11:28–30 ⁶²	Ea
113.1	Luke 14:11	I x		Acts 14:3–13	Ea
113.2	1 John 4:16	E	134.3	Acts 13:2–3	E
	Acts 4:32	E		Acts 11:22–26	E
116.1	1 Pet. 5:13	E	135.1	Luke 1:77 ⁶³	Ia x
	1 Cor. 4:15	I x	136.3	John 15:20	Ia x
116.3	Acts 2:44–45	E x (Acts 4:35)	137.3	Exod. 21:23	I x
	Acts 4:32	E	138.1	Luke 1:39–44	Ea x
	Acts 2:42	E		Luke 1:17	Ia x
117.3	Luke 17:5	E		Matt. 11:11	E
118.3	Mark 10:29–30	Ia x		John 3:5	R x
119.1	James 1:5–7	Ea	138.2	Luke 1:80	Ia
119.3	John 1:43–46	Ea		Mark 1:6	I
	John 6:5	Ea		Mark 1:4	Ia x
	John 12:20–21	Ea	138.3	Luke 3:2–3	E
120.3	2 Tim. 3:12 ⁵⁹	Ia x		Luke 3:10–14	Ea
121.3	Gal. 6:14	I	139.1	Matt. 16:15–19	Ea x
122.1	Isa. 11:2	Ia x		Matt. 19:27	I x
122.3	1 Cor. 4:15	I	139.2	Matt. 17:1 = ⁶⁴	Ea x
123.2	Ps. 77:11	E		Luke 24:12 = ⁶⁵	Ea x
124.1	Matt. 20:21–23	E		Matt. 16:16	E
124.2	Acts 4:3	Ia	139.3	Acts 2:5–7	I
	Acts 5:40	Ia x		Acts 2:41	I
124.3	Acts 1:9	Ia		Acts 4:4	Ia
	Prov. 3:12	Ia x		Acts 5:15	Ia
125.1	Rev. 12:7–9	Ia x	140.1	Acts 22:3	Ia x

56. The 1922 edition gives Eph. 2:19, but it is clear that De La Salle continues to use Colossians, as in the preceding quotations.

57. Probable quotation; cf. 1 John 4:9, John 3:16, Rom. 8:3.

58. Although Eph. 2:8 (in the 1922 edition) is possible, we think our reference is more probable.

59. Probable allusion; it could also be 1 Cor. 4:9–13.

60. Cf. also Mark 10:21, Luke 18:22.

61. Probable allusion; its Pauline inspiration is without doubt.

62. The 1922 edition aptly corrects the original edition by interchanging Jerusalem for Antioch.

63. Probable allusion.

64. Cf. also Mark 9:2 and 14:33, Luke 9:28, Matt. 26:37.

65. Cf. John 20:3–8.

	Acts 7:58	Ia	x		Matt. 26:37 = ⁶⁸	Ia	
	Acts 9:1–2	Ia	x (Acts 9:2)		John 18:2–12	Ia	x
	Acts 26:11	Ia	x		1 Pet. 4:13	E	
	1 Tim. 1:13	E		145.2	Gal. 2:9	E	
140.2	Gal. 1:11	Ia		145.3	Acts 12:2–3	I	
	1 Cor. 15:10	E			Acts 5:41	I	
	Gal. 2:8	Ea		146.1	Gen. 25:8	E	
	Acts 14:11–13	I		146.2	1 Sam. 1:20 ⁶⁹	Ea	x (1 Sam. 1:11)
140.3	2 Cor. 11:23–27	I		147.1	John 11:18–23	Ea	x
	1 Cor. 4:11–13	E	x		Luke 10:38	E	
	2 Cor. 12:10 ⁶⁶	E	x (Acts 21:13)	147.2	Luke 10:39–40	E	
141.1	Luke 1:39–40	Ea			John 11:20	E	
141.2	1 Tim. 4:10	I	x	147.3	John 11:21–27	E	
	Luke 1:44	E			Matt. 16:16–17	Ea	
141.3	Luke 1:41	E		149.1	Acts 12:3	I	x
	Luke 1:42	Ea	x		Acts 12:4	I	
	Luke 1:43	E			Ps. 27:1 ⁷⁰	Ia	x
142.1	1 Tim. 6:10	E			John 19:11	Ia	x
	Matt. 5:3	E			Acts 12:6	Ia	x
	Matt. 19:21	E			Ps. 2:4	R	x
143.3	John 18:36	I	x	149.2	Acts 12:5–11	I	
144.2	Luke 8:2–3	E			John 21:15–17 ⁷¹	Ia	x
	John 12:3	E		149.3	Acts 12:12. 17	I	
	John 19:25	Ea			Acts 14:22	R	x
144.3	Song 8:6	I			Gal. 6:14	E	
	Matt. 27:61	E	x (Luke 23:6)	150.1	Matt. 25:4	Ia	x
	Mark 16:1–2	E	x (Luke 24:1–2)	150.3	Matt. 24:14	R	x
	John 20:1–2	E		151.1	Matt. 19:27 = ⁷²	R	x
	John 20:11–12	E			John 19:27	E	
	Luke 24:6	E	x (John 20:12)	151.2	Ps. 132:13	E	
	Mark 16:9	E			Ps. 65:5	E	x (Ps. 65:4)
	John 20:17–18	E		152.1	1 John 3:5	Ia	x
145.1	Mark 4:11	Ia	x		2 Cor. 5:21a ⁷³	Ia	x
	Matt. 17:1–2 = ⁶⁷	Ia			Isa. 53:6	Ia	x

66. The 1922 edition refers this to Acts 21:13. The context used in the first quotation of this point makes our reference more probable.

67. Cf. Mark 9:2–3 and Luke 9:28–36.

68. Cf. Mark 14:33.

69. The 1922 edition refers to verse 11 of this same chapter. The text of verse 20 is far more probable.

70. Probable allusion.

71. The focus here is on Saint Peter; thus this allusion to the flock of Christ is a probability.

72. Cf. Mark 10:28 and Luke 18:28.

73. Only partially recognized by the 1922 edition.

(152.1)	2 Cor. 5:21b ⁷⁴	Ia	x	159.2	Mark 16:15	I	
	Ps. 22:7	E			Eph. 4:18	R	x
	Ps. 24:7	Ia	x	159.3	Acts 5:39	R	x
	Rom. 8:29	R	x		Eph. 4:22–24	E	
	Eph. 4:15	Ia	x	161.1	Lam. 2:19	R	x
	1 Cor. 6:15	Ia	x		Lam. 2:19	R	x
	Rom. 8:35–37	E		162.1	Luke 1:76	I	x (Matt. 3:3)
	Eph. 5:2	I	x		Luke 1:39–45	Ia	x
152.2	Heb. 10:5–7	Ia	x	162.2	Luke 1:80	Ia	x
	Matt. 17:1–2	E	x (Matt. 17:1)		Matt. 3:4	E	x (Mark 1:6)
	Mark 9:2–3	E	x		Matt. 11:11	E	
	Luke 9:29	E			Matt. 3:1. 5–6	I	x
	2 Pet. 1:16–18	E			Matt. 14:5	Ia	x
	Matt. 17:3 = ⁷⁵	Ea	x	162.3	Matt. 14:3–11	I	
152.3	Luke 9:29. 31	E			Luke 3:19	I	x
	Matt. 17:5	E	x (Luke 9:34–35)		Mark 6:20–21	I	
	2 Pet. 1:17	Ia	x	163.1	1 Tim. 2:4	Ia	x
	Mark 9:7	E			Luke 1:30	I	x
	2 Pet. 1:18	Ea	x	163.2	Heb. 9:12.14	I	x
	Rom. 8:29	R	x	163.3	Luke 1:49	E	
	Luke 9:23	E			Ps. 35:10	E	
153.1	Gen. 25:8	E			Luke 1:28	R	x
153.3	Matt. 6:31	E		164.1	Num. 24:17	I	
	Matt. 6:33	E			John 1:9–10	E	x (John 1:9)
155.3	1 Cor. 4:15	I	x		John 1:5a	I	
	1 Cor. 4:9–13	Ia	x		John 1:5b	Ia	x
156.2	1 Cor. 6:19	I	x	165.1	Gal. 6:14	E	
	2 Pet. 1:4	R	x		Heb. 12:2	E	x (Heb. 2:2)
156.3	Luke 1:28	Ia	x		1 Cor. 1:23b	E	
157.1	1 Cor. 6:15 =	Ia	x		1 Cor. 1:23a	E	
	Gal. 4:19	I	x		1 Cor. 2:2 ⁷⁷	I	x
157.2	Prov. 2:6 = ⁷⁶	R	x		1 Cor. 1:17 ⁷⁸	I	x
159.1	John 1:43–51	I	x		1 Cor. 1:24	I	
	Heb. 4:12a	I			1 Cor. 2:7–8	E	
	Heb. 4:12b	I		165.2	Col. 1:22	E	
	Col. 2:3	I			Eph. 5:30 = ⁷⁹	Ia	x

74. The first part of this passage, cited at the beginning of this same point, makes it the probable quotation.

75. Cf. Mark 9:4 and Luke 9:30.

76. An idea that is clearly biblical; cf. Eccles. 1:1, Rom. 8:6–7, 1 Cor. 1:19–20, 1:30, 2:7, James 1:5, 3:17.

77. Perhaps to avoid repetition, this passage is mangled in the 1922 edition.

78. The corrections attempted by the 1922 edition completely alter this passage.

79. Cf. also 1 Cor. 6:15.

165.3	Matt. 20:22 = ⁸⁰ I	170.3	1 Cor. 12:4–11 E
	Gal. 6:17 E		1 Cor. 12:28 E x
166.1	Matt. 5:3 E	171.3	Exod. 32:9–14 Ea
166.2	Matt. 11:5 = ⁸¹ E	172.1	Ps. 91:11 ⁸⁶ Ia
166.3	1 Cor. 4:1 I	172.2	Ps. 91:12 E
	1 Cor. 4:12–13 E		Ps. 91:13 E
	2 Cor. 4:8 E x	173.1	Matt. 25:40 Ia x
167.1	Luke 5:27–28 E x (Matt. 9:9)		Matt. 11:5 = ⁸⁷ E
	Luke 5:29 E x (Matt. 9:10)	173.3	Gal. 2:19 E
	Matt. 9:10 = ⁸² E	174.1	John 5:35 I
	Heb. 4:12 R x	174.3	Matt. 6:24 E
	Luke 14:33 Ia x	175.1	Acts 17:34 I
167.2	Matt. 19:27–29 R x		Acts 17:23 I
167.3	Matt. 5:11–12 E		Acts 17:24 I x
168.2	John 1:23 Ia x		Acts 17:26–28 I x
168.3	Heb. 4:12 E		(Acts 17:27–28)
	Luke 6:22–23 E x	175.2	James 2:17 E
	(Matt. 5:11–12)		James 2:19 E
169.1	Rev. 12:7 Ia x		James 2:24 E
	1 Tim. 1:17 E x (Rom. 16:27)	175.3	John 13:16 E
169.2	Eph. 6:16 Ia x		John 15:20 E
	Rev. 4:11 I	176.3	Matt. 5:11 Ea x
	Rev. 12:10 I	177.2	Prov. 3:12 ⁸⁸ E x (Heb. 12:6)
169.3	2 Kings 19:35 E	177.3	Rev. 3:20 E
	Jude v. 9 E		Sir. 24:29 E
	Rom. 16:5 = ⁸³ Ea		Ps. 17:15 E
170.1	Col. 2:3 I x	178.1	Luke 1:2 Ea
	Ezek. 2:8, 3:4 ⁸⁴ Ea x (Rev. 10:9)		Luke 1:3 I
170.2	1 Cor. 8:1–3 ⁸⁵ E x (1 John 4:7)		John 3:35 R x

80. Cf. Mark 10:32.

81. Cf. Luke 7:22.

82. Cf. Matt. 9:10 and Mark 2:15.

83. Cf. 1 Cor. 16:19, Col. 4:15, Philem. v 2.

84. The use of the words "Prophet" and "fill" point to Ezekiel as the probable reference.

85. The 1922 edition correctly indicates verses 1 and 2, but it attributes to 1 John 4:7 the text referring to verse 3.

86. Probable allusion; in this point the 1922 edition gives a reference to Matt. 18:10, which we omit for want of a justification.

87. Cf. Luke 7:22.

88. The 1922 edition attributes the quotation to Heb. 12:6 and for this purpose changes the reference of the original, "as the Wise Man says," to "as the Apostle says." In fact the quotation is closer to the text in Hebrews. Perhaps De La Salle quotes Proverbs, through a marginal note to the Pauline letter; however, this is not sufficient justification to modify the original edition.

178.2	Col. 4:14	E		2 Cor. 4:18	E	
	Philem. v. 24	Ea x		184.1	Ps. 34:21	Ea
	Gal. 6:17	E			1 Cor. 6:15	Ia x
178.3	Luke 18:22	E x (Luke 12:33)			1 Cor. 6:19	Ia x
	Matt. 28:19 = ⁸⁹	Ia x		184.2	Tob. 12:12	R x
179.1	Matt. 19:21	Ea x		184.3	Wis. 5:5	Ia x
	Phil. 3:8	E		185.1	2 Macc. 12:46	E
179.2	Matt. 17:21	Ea x		185.2	Eph. 5:30	Ia x
180.2	Luke 14:33	E		185.3	Rom. 12:5	Ia x
	Heb. 4:12	E			2 Cor. 6:1 ⁹⁰	Ia
181.2	John 5:35	I x		186.3	Acts 20:28	I
	Matt. 5:15	I x			Heb. 13:17	E
181.3	Heb. 4:12	E			Deut. 19:21	E
182.2	Gal. 1:10	Ia x			Ezek. 22:14 = ⁹¹	R x
	John 15:19	Ia		187.1	Matt. 19:21 = ⁹²	R x
182.3	Gal. 1:10	E			Gen. 14:21	E
183.1	1 Cor. 2:9	E		188.1	Rev. 21:3	Ia x
	1 Cor. 2:7	E			1 Cor. 3:16	Ia
	1 John 3:2	E			Gen. 28:17 = ⁹³	E
	2 Pet. 1:4	I		188.2	Lev. 12:6	Ea
183.2	Heb. 10:32–34	E x			Exod. 40:2–3	Ea x
	(Heb. 10:33–34)				2 Chron. 5:10	Ea x
	Heb. 11:36–38	E		188.3	Luke 15:20	Ia x
	Heb. 11:35	E			John 10:11	Ia x
	Heb. 12:1	E			Luke 15:4–6	Ia x
	2 Cor. 4:17	E			1 Cor. 6:19 ⁹⁴	Ia x
183.3	2 Cor. 4:10–11	E x (2 Cor. 4:10)		189.1	Rom. 13:14	I x
	2 Cor. 4:14	E			1 Cor. 2:11	E
	2 Cor. 5:8	E			1 Cor. 2:10	E
	Rom. 8:29	I			1 Cor. 2:12–13 ⁹⁵	E x (1 Cor. 2:4)
	2 Cor. 5:10	I		189.2	John 14:17	E
	2 Cor. 5:4	I		190.1	1 Tim. 2:10	E

89. Cf. Matt. 26:13 and Mark 16:16.

90. The use of this expression in other meditations leads us to attribute it rather to 1 Cor. 3:9 (*Meditations*, 205.1).

91. Probable reminiscence; cf. Ezek. 24:14.

92. Note that when De La Salle recounts a similar fact, he uses the same words of Scripture; cf. Mark 10:21, Luke 18:22.

93. Expression frequently used in the Bible; cf. Gen. 28:22, 35:7, 1 Kings 8:10–11, 1 Chron. 29:2, 2 Chron. 5:14, Ezra 6:3.

94. The 1922 edition indicates an allusion to Ps. 48:10 in this same point; we do not, because it seems unjustified.

95. The 1922 edition has no verse 12 and wrongly attributes verse 13 to 1 Cor. 2:4, which is similar. Upon noting verse 12, we realized that De La Salle is quoting consecutive verses.

1 Tim. 4:8	E	2 Cor. 6:16 ⁹⁷	R x
191.2 John 16:13	E	192.1 1 Cor. 14:38	E
191.3 1 Cor. 3:16	I x	2 Tim. 3:15–17E	
Gen. 3:15	Ea	192.2 1 Cor. 2:14	R x
Isa 13:6 = ⁹⁶	E x (Ezek 12:23)	John 1:9	E
Rev. 12:6	E	2 Tim. 3:16	Ea
Luke 1:28	Ia x	Heb. 4:12	E x (Heb. 4:12b)

Meditations for the Time of Retreat (193–208)

193.1 1 Tim. 2:4	I	1 Tim. 4:8	Ia
Rom. 10:17	Ia	194.3 James 2:17	E
Rom. 10:14	E	1 Cor. 13:2	E
2 Cor. 2:14	I	195.1 2 Cor. 5:18	I
2 Cor. 4:6	I	Col. 1:24	E
2 Cor. 4:1–2	I	195.2 2 Cor. 5:20a	I
1 Cor. 4:1	I	2 Cor. 5:20b	Ia
193.2 1 Cor. 3:10	I	2 Cor. 3:3	I
Rom. 12:6–8	I	2 Cor. 4:6	I
193.3 1 Tim. 2:4	I	195.3 John 15:4	E
1 Cor. 3:9	E	John 15:8	E
Rom. 11:13–14 ⁹⁸	I	John 1:9	I
2 Cor. 5:18–20	E	196.1 1 Cor. 3:6	E
1 Cor. 1:17	I	1 Cor. 3:9	I
194.1 1 Cor. 9:18	E	Luke 15:4–5	E
194.2 1 Cor. 2:7–8	I	196.2 John 13:15	E
1 Thess. 5:22 ⁹⁹	I x	1 Cor. 3:9 ¹⁰⁰	Ia x

96. Vague quotation. Also possible: Ezek. 30:3, Joel 2:1, Zeph. 1:7 and 15. If we omit *jour* (day), the messianic prophecies are suggested: Hab. 2:3, Hag. 2:8, Zech. 9:9, Mal. 3:1.

97. Similarly in 1 Cor. 3:16, but 2 Cor. seems to be more probable because “temples of the living God” easily suggests “living temples of God.”

98. The expression “trying to save a few of them,” taken literally from Rom. 11:14, is not cited as a biblical quotation by the editions of 1882 and 1922. It should come as no surprise that the first dodges it completely, considering the word “save” as too strong when applied to the Brothers, while the second includes that word but avoids the apparently restrictive expression “a few,” perhaps looking at its Jansenistic tendencies. Cf. Rayez, *Études Lasalliennes*, p. 44; Sauvage, *Les Citations*, p. 5.

99. Clearly an implicit quotation. Compare the words used in the explicit citation in the same passage, 39.1. Both have the same characteristics.

100. The 1922 edition gives 2 Cor. 6:1 as the reference; Sauvage comes to no conclusion. Considering the explicit use of this same passage in *Meditations*, 205.1, we prefer the indicated reference.

(196.2)	Matt. 5:3	Ea		1 Cor. 3:9–10	E
	Matt. 3:11	Ea		1 Cor. 9:1	E
	Matt. 5:10	Ea		1 Cor. 4:15	E
	Matt. 5:12	E		1 Cor. 3:9–10	Ea
	Matt. 11:29	Ea		Heb. 11:6	I
	Matt. 5:20	E		Heb. 11:1	I
	Matt. 23:25	Ea	199.2	Luke 9:1–2	E
	Luke 6:24	Ea		Matt. 28:19	I
196.3	John 10:10	E		Acts 2:14–40	Ea
	John 6:64	I		Acts 17:22–31	Ea
	Luke 11:27 = ¹⁰¹ R			Acts 24:10–27	Ea
	1 Cor. 3:16 ¹⁰²	Ia x (2 Cor. 3:3)		Acts 25–26	Ea
	1 Cor. 4:7	I		2 Cor. 12:14–15 ¹⁰⁴	Ea
197.1	1 Cor. 2:14	Ia		Luke 4:43	E
197.2	James 2:17	I	199.3	1 Cor. 1:17	E
197.3	Ps. 91:12	E		1 Cor. 1:20–21	E
198.1	Eph. 1:9 ¹⁰³	I x		Eph. 3:2–3	E
	Eph. 1:5	I		Eph. 3:8	E
	Eph. 1:11	I		Eph. 2:12	E
	Gen. 28:12	Ea		Eph. 2:19	E
198.2	Col. 1:13	I		Eph. 2:20	E
	Col. 1:10	I		Eph. 2:22	E
	Col. 1:12	I		Rom. 11:13	Ia
	1 Thess. 2:4	I		2 Cor. 3:6	E
	1 Thess. 2:12	E	200.1	Eph. 2:20	I
	1 Thess. 2:8	I		Eph. 2:22	I
	1 Thess. 5:14	I		Acts 5:42	E
	Eph. 4:22	I		Acts 2:47 ¹⁰⁵	E
	Eph. 4:27	I		Acts 6:1–4	Ia
198.3	Eph. 4:12	I		Luke 19:47–48	I
	Eph. 4:30	E		Luke 21:37	Ia
	Eph. 4:22	E	200.2	Acts 2:42:46	E
	Eph. 4:25	E		Acts 19:8–10	I
	Eph. 4:32	E		Acts 19:5–6	I
	Eph. 5:2	E	200.3	James 2:14	E
199.1	Gal. 1:15–16	Ia		James 2:26	E

101. Cf. Luke 8:21.

102. Sauvage prefers 2 Cor. 3:3; we find 1 Cor. 3:16 preferable, just as it is in the 1922 edition.

103. The context of Eph. 1, used in the two following quotations, makes this undoubtedly an implicit quotation with reference to it.

104. We give the most probable reference, even though its identification remains obscure.

105. Modifications of the passage in the 1922 edition affect the literalness of this quotation.

	2 Cor. 7:11	I		Phil. 4:9	E
	2 Cor. 7:13	I		Acts 1:1	Ea
	Matt. 10:16	Ea		John 13:15	Ea
	Matt. 11:29 ¹⁰⁶	Ea	203.1	John 2:17	Ea
201.1	1 Cor. 12:28	E		Luke 19:45	E
	1 Cor. 12:5–9	E		John 2:14	Ea
	1 Cor. 3:9	Ia		John 2:15	E
	Jer. 48:10	I		Matt. 6:2–5	Ea
	2 Cor. 6:3–9	Ia		Luke 18:9–14	Ea
	Matt. 20:3	Ia		Matt. 23:3	Ea
201.2	1 Cor. 4:1	E		1 Cor. 5:5	E
	2 Cor. 3:3	E	203.2	Prov. 22:15	E
	2 Cor. 5:14	I		Titus 2:15	E
	2 Cor. 5:15	I		2 Tim. 2:26	E
	2 Cor. 5:20	I		John 8:34	E
	2 Cor. 8:24	I		Gal. 4:31	I
	Col. 1:24	Ia	203.3	Heb. 13:17	I
	Col. 1:25	I		1 Sam. 3:13–14	E
	Ps. 68:10	E	204.1	Prov. 12:1	Ea
	Eph. 2:20	I		Prov. 28:23	Ia
	Eph. 5:25	I	204.2	Titus 1:10	E
	Eph. 2:22	Ia		Titus 1:13	E
	Eph. 5:27	I		1 Tim. 5:20	E
	Eph. 2:7	I		2 Tim. 2:24–25	E
	Eph. 5:5 = ¹⁰⁷	R		2 Sam. 12:1–12	Ea
201.3	Eph. 5:1–2 ¹⁰⁸	Ia	204.3	2 Sam. 12:13–22	Ea
	John 3:16	E	205.1	1 Cor. 3:9	E
	2 Cor. 12:14	E		1 Cor. 3:5	Ia x
	Gen. 14:21	E		1 Cor. 4:1	I
	John 10:10	E		Luke 16:2	I
202.1	1 Kings 19:14	E		Matt. 25:14–30	Ia
	Gal. 5:21	I		1 Cor. 4:5	I
202.2	Matt. 5:37	I	205.2	Heb. 13:17	E
	Matt. 5:44	E	205.3	Eph. 4:11–12	Ia
	Matt. 5:38	Ea		Col. 1:24	I
	Matt. 6:1	E		Eph. 5:26–27	I
	Matt. 6:5	E		Eph. 5:25	I
	Matt. 6:6	E		Eph. 4:12–15	I
	Matt. 5:3	E		Eph. 4:16	I
202.3	Phil. 3:16–17	E		Eph. 2:22	I

106. We do not find sufficient foundation in this meditation to indicate the allusions to Col. 3:12, 1 Tim. 6:11, and Eph. 6:1–2 made by Sauvage following this quotation; cf. *Les Citations*, p. 48.

107. Cf. Gal. 5:21 and 1 Cor. 6:9–10.

108. Probable allusion.

206.1	Eph. 1:17–18	I		2 Cor. 7:4	E
206.2	Heb. 13:17	I	207.3	1 Thess. 1:2–5	I
206.3	Col. 3:17	E		Titus 2:12	Ia
	1 Thess. 2:4	E		1 Thess. 2:13	I
	Titus 2:7	Ea		1 Thess. 2:19	I
	2 Tim. 2:24–25	Ia		1 Thess. 1:2	R
207.1	Matt. 19:27. 29 ¹⁰⁹	Ia		1 Thess. 3:13	E
	Matt. 25:14–30	Ea	208.1	1 Cor. 3:4	E
	Luke 19:12–27	Ea		1 Cor. 3:8	E
	John 4:36	E		1 Cor. 3:13–14	E
207.2	1 Cor. 4:15	E		2 Cor. 1:14	E
	1 Cor. 9:1	E	208.2	Dan. 12:3	E
	2 Cor. 9:2	E		Eph. 1:18	I
	2 Cor. 10:15–17	E	208.3	Ps. 17:15 ¹¹⁰	E x
	Acts 9:15	R x		Acts 16:17	E
	1 Cor. 9:18	E		Rev. 7:13–14	Ia

109. Cf. also Mark 10:28–31 and Luke 18:28–30. The expression “even in this life” seems to come rather from Luke 18:30.

110. Sauvage, following the 1922 edition, refers the quotation to Ps. 16:11. We believe, on the other hand, that the passage, already quoted in *Meditations*, 177. 3, must refer to Ps. 17:15.

Table 2. Scriptural quotations in *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, in order of the Books of Scripture

In the first column we indicate, by order of the chapters and verses, those scriptural passages that have been used in *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*. In the second column there is a specification of the modality (see page 293) that each of these quotations assumes in a given meditation. In the third column we identify the point in the meditation where the quotation is found.

The Old Testament

Genesis			Numbers		
2:7	E	43.1	9:5	Ea	76.1
2:7	R	68.2	24:17	I	164.1
3:15	Ea	191.3	Deuteronomy		
3:19	I	16.3	19:21	E	186.3
14:21	E	187.1	1 Samuel		
14:21	E	201.3	1:20	Ea	146.2
18:32	Ea	77.3	3:3-15	Ea	96.1
25:8	E	146.1	3:10	E	85.2
25:8	E	154.1	3:13-14	E	203.3
28:12	Ea	198.1	2 Samuel		
28:17	E	77.1	12:1-12	Ea	204.2
28:17 =	E	188.1	12:18-22	Ea	204.3
41:38	R	97.1	1 Kings		
Exodus			19:8	E	48.2
2:13	Ea	91.2	19:14	E	202.1
21:23	I	137.3	19:18	E	77.3
25:10	Ia	82.2	2 Kings		
29:46	E	10.2	19:35	E	169.3
32:9-14	Ea	171.3	2 Chronicles		
40:2-3	Ea	188.2	5:10	Ea	188.2
Leviticus			7:16	E	77.1
6:1 ff	Ea	66.3	Nehemiah		
12:3	E	93.1	9:21	I	59.3
12:6	Ea	188.2			
13:45-46	Ia	66.1			
14:2-7	Ea	66.2			
14:10-20	Ea	66.3			



Tobit			77:11	E	123.2
12:12	R	184.2	85:9	E	85.2
12:13	E	17.3	91:11	Ia	172.1
			91:12	E	172.2
Judith			91:12	E	197.3
9:16	I	103.1	91:13	E	172.2
			93:5	E	77.1
2 Maccabees			95:8	E	78.1
12:46	E	185.1	104:30	E	42.3
			115:6	I	58.3
Job			116:15	I	103.2
1:6–2:10	Ea	109.2	116:15	I	103.3
7:1	E	17.2	118:24	E	29.1
7:1	E	36.3	132:13	E	151.2
9:28	E	1.3	139	Ea	90.1
15:15	I	1.2	145:3	Ea	90.1
31:14	E	1.3			
31:23	E	1.3	Proverbs		
			2:6 =	R	157.2
Psalms			3:12	Ia	124.3
2:4	R	149.1	3:12	E	177.2
6:7	E	4.1	3:34	E	38.3
17:15	E	177.3	10:31	E	91.3
17:15	E	208.3	12:1	Ea	204.1
22:7	E	152.1	15:1	E	65.2
22:17	E	86.2	16:9	E	3.2
24:7	Ia	152.1	21:28	E	8.1
27:1	Ia	149.1	22:15	E	203.2
34:9	I	12.1	28:23	Ia	204.1
34:9	I	48.3			
34:21	Ea	184.1	Song of Songs		
35:10	E	163.3	4:7	I	M.82.1
37:39	E	3.3	6:3	E	49.2
37:39 =	R	109.2	8:6	I	144.3
40:2–4	E	20.3			
51:4	E	4.1	Wisdom		
51:5	E	63.2	2:20	E	23.2
51:12	E	71.1	4:11	I	89.1
51:13	E	77.3	5:5	Ia	184.3
55:23	E	67.3	7:11	E	12.2
65:5	E	151.2	8:21	E	66.1
68:6	I	37.3	9:9	R	39.1
68:10	E	201.2	10:10 =	I	83.2
73:28	E	90.2			
75:3	E	1.2	Sirach		
75:3	E	105.3	2:1	E	17.1

(Sirach)

3:22	E	5.1
4:10	E	52.3
6:18–20	Ia	98.1
10:15	E	63.1
19:26	E	69.3
24:29	E	177.3
43:37	E	70.3

Isaiah

6:3	I	46.1
6:3	Ia	46.3
11:2	Ia	122.1
13:6 =	E	191.3
45:15	I	47.2
49:8	Ia	96.1
53:1	E	87.2
53:3	I	85.1
53:4–5	E	112.2
53:6	Ia	152.1

Jeremiah

6:14	E	31.1
31:33–34	Ia	43.1
48:10	I	201.1

Lamentations

2:19	R	161.1
2:19	R	161.1

Ezekiel

2:8–3:4	Ea	170.1
18:21–22	E	4.2
18:21–22	E	4.3
22:14 =	R	186.3
33:16	E	4.2

Daniel

12:3	E	208.2
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Joel

2:12	E	4.1
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Jonas

3:1–10	Ea	4.2
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Malachi

3:1	E	2.1
3:2	E	1.1
4:2	Ia	96.1

The New Testament

Matthew

1:19	E	110.1
1:20–24	Ea	110.2
1:21	E	112.2
2:2	E	96.2
2:4–5	E	96.2
2:8	E	96.2
2:9	E	96.3
2:11a	E	96.3
2:11b	E	96.3
2:13–14	Ea	110.2
2:14	Ea	110.3
2:16	Ia	89.2
2:16	Ia	89.3
2:19–21	Ea	110.2
2:19–22	Ea	6.3
2:22	E	110.3

3:1, 5, 6	I	162.2
3:4a	E	2.2
3:4b	E	2.2
3:4	E	162.2
3:11	Ea	196.2
3:15	I	112.2
4:1	E	17.1
4:4	R	103.1
4:18–20 =	E	78.1
4:19	E	78.2
4:22 =	I	81.1
4:22 =	Ia	88.2
5:3	E	5.3
5:3	E	44.2
5:3	E	84.1
5:3	E	142.1
5:3	E	166.1



(Matthew)

5:3	Ea	196.2	7:15	E	60.3
5:3	E	202.2	7:16	E	60.2
5:4	E	65.2	7:17	E	60.3
5:10	Ea	196.2	8:8–9	Ea	9.2
5:11	E	5.3	8:8–10	E	9.1
5:11	E	44.2	8:13	E	9.3
5:11	Ea	176.3	8:23–27	E	10.1
5:11–12 =	E	95.3	9:2	Ea	71.1
5:11–12	E	167.3	9:6	E	71.2
5:12	E	87.3	9:6	E	71.3
5:12	E	196.2	9:10 =	E	167.1
5:15	I	181.2	9:24	E	76.1
5:17	I	93.1	9:37–38	Ia	67.3
5:20	E	58.1	10:16	Ea	200.3
5:20	E	196.2	10:41	Ia	75.2
5:23	E	53.2	11:5 =	E	166.2
5:26	I	1.3	11:5 =	E	173.1
5:37	I	202.2	11:7	E	2.2
5:38	Ea	202.2	11:8	E	2.2
5:44	E	44.2	11:11	E	2.2
5:44	Ea	44.2	11:11	E	138.1
5:44	Ea	84.1	11:11	E	162.2
5:44	E	202.2	11:28	I	73.2
5:44–45	E	5.2	11:29	E	65.2
6:1	E	202.2	11:29	E	79.2
6:2–5	Ea	203.1	11:29	Ea	196.2
6:5	E	202.2	11:29	Ea	200.3
6:6	Ea	202.2	11:30	I	73.2
6:11	E	48.2	12:25	E	7.2
6:14	E	74.3	12:36	E	1.2
6:23	I	57.1	12:36	E	5.2
6:24	E	174.3	13:21 =	I	68.1
6:26	E	67.2	13:25	E	11.2
6:26	E	67.3	13:27	E	11.1
6:28–29	E	67.2	13:31–32	E	12.1
6:30	E	67.3	13:32	E	12.1
6:31	E	153.3	13:39	Ia	11.2
6:31–32	E	67.2	14:3–11	I	162.3
6:32	E	67.3	14:5	Ia	162.2
6:33	E	67.1	15:28	E	38.2
6:33	E	67.3	16:15–19	Ea	139.1
6:33	E	153.3	16:16	E	139.2
7:2 =	E	74.3	16:16–17	Ea	147.3
7:13	E	5.2	16:19	Ea	106.2
7:15	E	60.1	17:1 =	Ea	139.2
			17:1–2	E	18.1

(Matthew)

17:1-2 =	Ia	88.2
17:1-2 =	Ia	145.1
17:1-2	E	152.2
17:3 =	Ea	152.2
17:4	Ea	18.2
17:5	E	152.3
17:8	Ea	18.2
17:21	E	36.3
17:21	Ea	179.2
18:14	E	56.1
18:17	E	106.1
18:28	I	40.2
18:32-33	E	74.1
19:21 =	Ia	81.1
19:21	E	97.1
19:21 =	R	128.2
19:21	E	142.1
19:21	Ea	179.1
19:21 =	R	187.1
19:23-24	E	5.3
19:27	I	139.1
19:27 =	R	151.1
19:27-29	R	167.2
19:27-29	Ia	207.1
20:3	Ia	201.1
20:6	E	13.1
20:7	E	13.3
20:21-23	E	124.1
20:22	I	165.3
21:22	E	38.2
22:14	E	72.1
22:16	E	75.1
22:35-37	E	70.1
22:37	E	70.2
22:37	E	70.3
22:38	E	90.1
22:40	E	90.1
23:3	Ea	203.1
23:8a	E	91.2
23:8b	E	91.2
23:25	Ea	196.2
23:27	E	11.1
24:2 =	E	23.3
24:14	R	150.3
24:15	I	15.3

24:15	E	77.2
24:15-16	E	77.1
24:16	E	77.3
25:13	I	1.1
25:14-30	Ia	205.1
25:14-30	Ea	207.1
25:40	Ia	80.3
25:40	Ia	150.1
25:40	Ia	173.1
25:44-45	Ia	85.1
26:37 =	Ia	145.1
26:38 =	Ea	27.1
26:45 =	E	24.1
26:47 =	Ia	27.3
26:48-50	Ia	27.3
26:56 =	Ia	27.3
26:56 =	I	88.2
27:67-68 =	Ia	27.3
26:69-75 =	Ia	27.3
27:26 =	Ia	27.2
27:26 =	Ia	27.3
27:34	Ia	27.2
27:38 =	Ia	27.2
27:39-40 =	Ia	27.3
27:39-43 =	Ia	27.3
27:48 =	Ia	27.2
27:61	E	144.3
28:19 =	Ia	178.3
28:19	I	199.2

Mark

1:4	Ia	138.2
1:6	I	138.2
4:11	Ia	145.1
6:20-21	I	162.3
7:32	E	64.1
7:33	E	64.3
7:33-34	E	64.3
7:34	E	64.3
7:35	E	64.3
8:2	E	59.1
8:2	E	59.3
8:9	E	59.1
9:2-3	E	152.2
9:7	E	152.3
9:25	Ea	36.3



(Mark)			2:20	E	86.3
9:29	E	66.1	2:22	Ea	104.1
9:29	E	66.3	2:22–24	Ea	104.2
10:29–30	Ia	118.3	2:32	E	104.3
13:24–25	I	1.2	2:34	E	5.1
15:17 =	Ia	27.2	2:42–46	E	7.1
15:19 =	Ea	27.2	2:48	E	110.3
16:1–2	E	144.3	2:51	E	7.1
16:9	E	144.3	3:2–3	E	138.3
16:14	Ia	32.1	3:3	E	4.1
16:15	I	78.2	3:3	E	4.2
16:15	I	159.2	3:7a	E	2.3
16:19	E	40.1	3:7b	E	2.3
			3:8a	E	2.3
Luke			3:8b	E	2.3
1:2	Ea	178.1	3:9	E	2.3
1:3	I	178.1	3:9	E	2.3
1:17	Ia	138.1	3:10–14	Ea	138.3
1:28	I	83.3	3:11	Ea	2.3
1:28	Ia	156.3	3:13–14	E	2.3
1:28	R	163.3	3:19	I	162.3
1:28	Ia	191.3	4:43	E	199.2
1:30	I	163.1	5:5	E	57.1
1:31	E	93.3	5:5	E	57.3
1:38	E	112.1	5:6	E	57.2
1:39–40	Ea	141.1	5:27–28	E	167.1
1:39–44	Ea	138.1	5:29	E	167.1
1:39–45	Ia	162.1	6:22–23	E	168.3
1:41	E	141.3	6:24	Ea	196.2
1:42	Ea	141.3	6:27–28	E	58.2
1:43	E	141.3	6:37 =	Ea	87.1
1:44	E	141.2	7:2–3	E	9.1
1:48–49	E	79.2	7:12	E	68.1
1:49	E	163.3	7:12	E	68.2
1:76	I	162.1	7:12	Ea	68.2
1:76–77	E	3.3	7:14–15	E	68.3
1:77	Ia	135.1	7:20	E	103.1
1:80	Ia	138.2	7:22	E	103.1
1:80	Ia	162.2	7:33	E	2.2
2:1	I	85.1	8:2–3	E	144.2
2:3–5	I	85.1	8:11–12	E	14.1
2:6–7	E	85.2	8:13	E	14.2
2:7	Ia	86.1	8:14	E	14.3
2:9–11	I	86.2	9:1–2	E	199.2
2:16	Ia	86.2	9:23	E	5.3
2:16–17	E	86.3	9:23	E	7.3

(Luke)

9:23	E	84.1	17:12–13	E	66.1
9:23	E	152.3	17:14	E	66.2
9:29	E	18.1	17:21	E	22.1
9:29	E	152.2	18:1	E	5.2
9:29. 31	E	152.3	18:8	E	50.2
9:31	Ea	18.3	18:9–14	Ea	203.1
9:36	E	18.3	18:13–14	E	63.2
10:1	Ea	132.2	18:14	E	38.3
10:16	Ia	7.1	18:22	E	178.3
10:16	E	21.1	18:41	E	15.1
10:16	E	91.1	19:12–27	Ea	207.1
10:30	E	65.1	19:26	E	50.3
10:30	E	65.3	19:45	E	203.1
10:33–35	E	65.1	19:45–46	E	62.1
10:33–35	E	65.3	19:46	E	77.2
10:38	E	147.1	19:47–48	I	200.1
10:39–40	E	147.2	21:27	E	1.1
11:3	E	54.1	21:37	Ia	200.1
11:5–6	E	37.1	22:2	E	23.1
11:8–9	I	37.2	22:15	E	25.3
11:10	E	38.1	22:26	E	91.2
11:13	E	42.3	22:42	E	24.3
11:14	E	19.1	22:43	E	27.1
11:27 =	R	196.3	22:44	E	27.1
12:2–3	Ia	1.1	23:11	Ia	27.3
12:23	E	50.2	23:18–23 =	Ia	27.3
12:49	E	25.2	23:22	E	23.2
12:50	E	25.2	24:6	E	144.3
13:5	E	5.2	24:12 =	Ea	139.2
13:24	I	73.3	24:13–32	Ea	30.1
14:1	E	69.1	24:15	E	30.3
14:11	I	113.1	24:29	E	30.3
14:18–20	E	50.1	24:30–31	E	30.3
14:33	Ia	167.1	24:32	E	30.3
14:33	E	180.2	24:36	E	31.1
15:4	E	56.1			
15:4–5	E	196.1	John		
15:4–6	Ia	188.3	1:5a	I	164.1
15:20	Ia	188.3	1:5b	Ia	164.1
16:1–2	E	61.1	1:9	E	192.2
16:2	I	205.1	1:9	I	195.3
16:8	E	32.1	1:9–10	E	164.1
16:10	E	92.1	1:19–23	E	3.1
17:2	E	69.2	1:23	Ia	168.2
17:5	E	117.3	1:35–40	Ea	78.2
			1:41	I	78.2



(John)			10:10	E	45.1
1:43–46	Ea	119.3	10:10	E	112.3
1:43–51	I	159.1	10:10	E	196.3
2:2–5	E	8.1	10:10	E	201.3
2:4	E	8.3	10:11	Ia	188.3
2:6–7	E	8.2	10:11–13	E	33.1
2:14	Ea	203.1	10:14	E	33.1
2:15	E	203.1	10:14	E	33.2
2:17	Ea	203.1	10:16	E	33.3
3:5	R	138.1	10:32	E	23.2
3:16	E	201.3	11:16	I	84.1
3:19	E	44.1	11:18–23	Ea	147.1
3:19	E	44.3	11:20	E	145.2
3:19–20	E	44.3	11:21–27	E	147.3
4:34	E	24.1	11:47	E	23.1
4:36	E	207.1	11:48	E	23.2
4:46–48	E	73.1	11:48	E	23.3
5:35	I	174.1	11:53	E	24.1
5:35	R	178.1	11:53	E	23.1
5:35	I	181.2	11:54	E	24.1
6:2	E	23.1	12:3	E	144.2
6:5	Ea	119.3	12:20–21	Ea	119.3
6:5–15	Ea	20.1	13:1	E	24.2
6:14	E	23.1	13:15	E	196.2
6:31–32	E	48.1	13:15	Ea	202.3
6:33	E	48.2	13:16	E	175.3
6:35	E	48.2	13:23 =	E	88.1
6:38	Ea	6.1	13:23	Ia	88.1
6:38	E	22.1	13:27	E	24.2
6:38	E	24.3	14:6	I	38.2
6:41	E	48.2	14:15–16	E	42.1
6:48–51	E	48.3	14:16	E	42.3
6:51	I	26.2	14:16–17	E	42.2
6:51	E	48.1	14:17	E	42.1
6:55	E	49.1	14:17	I	189.2
6:56	E	49.2	15:4	Ia	72.2
6:57	E	49.3	15:4	E	195.3
6:64	I	196.3	15:8	E	195.3
6:70–71	E	52.1	15:19	E	41.1
7:16	Ia	21.1	15:19	E	75.2
7:30	E	24.2	15:19	Ia	182.2
8:34	E	203.2	15:20	Ia	87.3
8:46	I	1.2	15:20	Ia	136.3
8:46	E	21.1	15:20	E	175.3
8:47	E	21.2	16:1	E	41.1
8:59	E	24.1	16:1	E	41.2

(John)			20:17-18	E	144.3
16:3	E	41.3	20:19	E	32.1
16:6	E	35.1	20:24-29	Ea	32.2
16:7	E	35.2	20:25	I	84.1
16:7	E	35.3	20:26-27	Ia	84.2
16:13	E	44.1	20:27	E	28.3
16:13	E	191.2	20:28	E	32.3
16:16	E	34.1	20:28	I	84.2
16:20	E	34.1	20:29	I	46.2
16:20	E	34.2	21:15-17	Ea	106.2
16:22	E	34.1	21:15-17	Ia	149.2
16:22	E	34.2			
16:24	E	36.1	Acts		
17:6	E	39.1	1:1	E	69.1
17:9	E	39.1	1:1	Ea	202.3
17:11	Ea	91.2	1:14	I	43.1
17:15	E	39.1	1:14-26	Ea	107.1
17:17	E	39.2	1:21-22	E	107.3
17:18	E	39.1	1:21-26	Ea	107.2
17:19	E	39.2	2:1-4	Ia	43.1
17:21-23	Ea	91.2	2:2	I	43.1
17:22	Ea	39.3	2:2	E	43.2
18:2-12	Ia	145.1	2:3-4	E	43.3
18:3	Ia	27.3	2:4	E	43.2
18:4a	E	24.1	2:4	Ia	64.2
18:4b	E	24.1	2:5-6	E	43.2
18:12	Ia	27.2	2:5-7	I	139.3
18:12-13	Ea	24.1	2:8	Ia	64.2
18:36	E	22.1	2:12	E	43.3
18:36	I	143.3	2:14-40	Ea	199.2
19:3	Ia	27.2	2:33	E	43.3
19:11	E	23.2	2:38	E	4.2
19:11	Ia	149.1	2:38	E	4.3
19:17	Ia	27.2	2:41	Ia	43.3
19:25	Ea	144.2	2:41	Ia	64.3
19:26	Ia	88.2	2:41	I	139.3
19:26-27	Ia	88.1	2:42	Ia	54.1
19:26-27	Ia	88.3	2:42	E	116.3
19:27	E	151.1	2:42-46	E	200.2
19:28	E	25.3	2:44-45	E	116.3
19:30	E	25.3	2:47	E	200.1
19:34	Ia	27.2	3:19	E	4.2
19:35	Ia	88.2	4:3	Ia	124.2
20:1-2	E	144.3	4:4	Ia	139.3
20:4	I	88.2	4:19	I	78.3
20:11-12	E	144.3	4:32	E	39.3



(Acts)			14:22	E	73.3
4:32	E	113.2	14:22	R	149.3
4:32	E	116.3	16:17	E	208.3
4:36–37	E	134.1	17:22–31	Ea	199.2
5:15	Ia	139.3	17:23	I	175.1
5:39	R	159.3	17:24	I	175.1
5:40	Ia	124.2	17:26–28	I	175.1
5:41	E	43.2	17:34	I	175.1
5:41	I	145.3	19:5–6	I	200.2
5:42	E	200.1	19:8–10	I	200.2
6:1–4	Ia	200.1	20:28	E	186.3
6:5	E	87.1	22:3	Ia	140.1
6:9–10	E	87.1	24:10–27	Ea	199.2
7:1–50	Ea	87.1	25:26	Ea	199.2
7:51	E	87.1	26:11	Ia	140.1
7:51	E	87.2			
7:52	E	87.2	Romans		
7:53	E	87.1	1:14	E	92.2
7:55	E	87.1	2:6	I	1.1
7:55	I	87.3	2:28–29	E	93.1
7:56	E	40.2	6:4	E	29.1
7:57	I	87.3	6:4–5	E	29.2
7:58	Ia	140.1	6:6	E	22.2
7:60	E	87.1	6:6	R	112.2
9:1–2	Ia	140.1	6:8	E	29.2
9:2–5	E	99.1	6:9	E	29.1
9:4–5	Ea	96.1	6:11	E	29.2
9:5–6	E	99.2	6:12	E	29.2
9:6	I	14.3	8:2	E	45.1
9:6	E	99.2	8:11	E	45.2
9:6–12	Ea	99.3	8:13	E	45.2
9:15	R	207.2	8:13	E	66.3
11:22–26	E	134.3	8:21	I	45.1
11:24	E	134.2	8:21	I	83.1
11:26	I	106.1	8:26	E	62.2
11:28–30	Ea	134.2	8:27	I	58.1
12:2–3	I	145.3	8:27	Ia	62.3
12:3	I	149.1	8:29	R	152.1
12:4	I	149.1	8:29	R	152.2
12:5–11	I	149.2	8:29	I	183.3
12:6	Ia	149.1	8:35	E	31.2
12:12–17	I	149.3	8:35	E	49.2
13:2	Ea	134.1	8:35–37	E	152.1
13:2–3	E	134.3	8:36a	E	31.3
14:3–13	Ea	134.2	8:36b	E	31.3
14:11–13	I	140.2	8:37–39	E	31.3

(Romans)

8:39	E	49.2	3:8	E	208.1
10:14	E	193.1	3:9	I	56.1
10:16	E	87.2	3:9	Ia	57.2
10:17	E	61.2	3:9	Ia	59.3
10:17	Ia	193.1	3:9	Ia	62.1
11:13	Ia	199.3	3:9	Ia	67.3
11:13-14	E	193.3	3:9	Ea	185.3
11:22	E	87.2	3:9	E	193.3
12:1	E	62.2	3:9	I	196.1
12:1	E	66.3	3:9	Ia	196.2
12:1	I	102.3	3:9	Ia	201.1
12:5	Ia	185.3	3:9	E	205.1
12:6-8	I	193.2	3:9-10	E	199.1
13:1	E	10.2	3:9-10	Ea	199.1
13:1	Ia	91.1	3:10	I	193.2
13:4	Ia	91.1	3:13-14	E	208.1
13:14	I	189.1	3:16	I	191.3
16:5 =	Ea	169.3	3:16	Ia	188.1
			3:16	Ia	196.3
			4:1	E	3.2
1 Corinthians			4:1	I	87.1
1:10	E	39.3	4:1	W	106.3
1:17	I	165.1	4:1	I	166.3
1:17	I	193.3	4:1	I	193.1
1:17	E	199.3	4:1	E	201.2
1:20-21	E	199.3	4:1	I	205.1
1:23a	E	165.1	4:5	I	205.1
1:23b	E	165.1	4:7	I	196.3
1:24	I	165.1	4:9-13	Ia	155.3
2:2	I	165.1	4:11-13	E	140.3
2:7	E	183.1	4:12-13	E	95.3
2:7-8	E	165.1	4:12-13	E	166.3
2:7-8	I	194.2	4:15	E	83.3
2:9	E	183.1	4:15	I	116.1
2:10	E	189.1	4:15	I	122.3
2:11	E	189.1	4:15	I	155.3
2:12-13	E	189.1	4:15	E	199.1
2:14	E	64.2	4:15	E	207.2
2:14	R	192.2	5:5	E	203.1
2:14	Ia	197.1	6:15	I	80.3
3:4	E	208.1	6:15	Ia	152.1
3:5	I	56.1	6:15 =	Ia	157.1
3:5	R	56.3	6:15	Ia	184.1
3:5	Ia	205.1	6:19	I	156.2
3:5-7	Ea	3.1	6:19	Ia	184.1
3:6	E	196.1	6:19	Ia	188.3

(1 Corinthians)

6:19–20	E	62.2
7:32	Ia	45.3
8:1–3	E	170.2
8:6	E	90.2
9:1	E	199.1
9:1	E	207.2
9:9	E	67.3
9:18	E	194.1
9:18	E	207.1
9:27	E	59.1
10:13	Ia	10.3
10:13	I	20.2
10:31	E	90.3
10:31	E	90.3
11:28	E	51.2
11:31	I	105.3
12:4–11	E	170.3
12:5–9	E	201.1
12:27	I	96.3
12:28	E	170.3
12:28	E	201.1
12:31	E	5.3
13:1	E	3.1
13:2	E	194.3
13:3	E	65.1
13:4	E	65.1
13:4	E	65.2
13:4	E	65.3
13:4–7	R	12.2
13:5	E	65.3
13:7	E	65.1
13:7	E	74.2
14:20	E	79.2
14:38	E	192.1
15:10	E	90.3
15:10	E	140.2
15:22	E	29.1
15:31	I	89.3
15:47–48	Ea	85.3
15:55	E	29.1
2 Corinthians		
1:14	E	208.1
2:14	I	193.1
2:15	I	98.2

3:3	I	195.2
3:3	E	201.2
3:6	E	199.3
3:14–15	E	81.2
4:1–2	I	193.1
4:6	I	193.1
4:6	I	195.2
4:8	E	166.3
4:10	E	66.3
4:10–11	E	183.3
4:14	E	183.3
4:16	E	2.1
4:17	E	183.2
4:18	E	2.1
4:18	E	183.3
5:4	I	3.3
5:4	I	183.3
5:5	I	3.3
5:7	E	96.1
5:8	E	183.3
5:10	I	183.3
5:14	I	201.2
5:15	Ea	90.3
5:15	I	201.2
5:18	I	195.1
5:18–20	E	193.3
5:20a	I	195.2
5:20b	Ia	195.2
5:20	I	201.2
5:21a	Ia	152.1
5:21b	Ia	152.1
6:3–9	Ia	201.1
6:4	Ia	93.3
6:16	R	191.3
7:4	E	207.2
7:11	I	200.3
7:13	I	200.3
8:24	I	201.2
9:2	E	207.2
10:5	R	46.2
10:15–17	E	207.2
11:23–27	I	140.3
12:10	E	140.3
12:14	E	201.3
12:14–15	Ea	199.2

Galatians

1:10	E	75.2
1:10	E	75.2
1:10	E	90.3
1:10	Ia	182.2
1:10	E	182.3
1:11	Ia	140.2
1:15-16	Ia	199.1
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2:9	E	145.2
2:19	E	173.3
2:20	I	22.2
2:20	I	48.1
3:13	I	88.2
4:4	E	112.3
4:19	I	80.2
4:19	I	157.1
4:31	I	203.2
5:1	I	45.1
5:14	Ia	41.2
5:16	I	95.2
5:17	E	45.2
5:17	E	95.2
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5:24	E	29.2
5:24	E	45.2
5:24	E	93.1
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5:24	Ia	128.2
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6:14	I	121.3
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1:7-8	Ea	112.3
1:9	I	198.1

1:11	I	198.1
1:17-18	I	206.1
1:18	I	208.2
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4:15-16	E	72.2
4:16	I	205.3
4:17	I	60.1
4:17-18	R	100.2
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5:2	I	152.1
5:2	E	198.3
5:5 =	R	201.2
5:25	I	201.2

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5:26–27	I	205.3
5:27	I	201.2
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5:30	Ia	185.2
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1:24	Ia	201.2
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2:3	I	170.1
2:11	E	93.1
2:13–14	I	93.1
3:1	Ia	30.1
3:1–2	R	40.1

3:1–3	E	29.3
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3:5	E	45.2
3:5	E	83.1
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3:15	E	22.2
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4:7	E	75.3
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5:5	I	63.3
5:8	E	36.3
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5:13	E	116.1

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