
The Memoir on the Beginnings: Text & Context

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This text, which is put forward here for personal study or possibly even as material for use in a workshop, offers a translation of and a commentary and supplementary material about the important document entitled *The Memoir on the Beginnings*. The first three biographers of John Baptist de La Salle make use of the *Memoir*, an autobiographical document from the time of the origins, to explain how De La Salle was led to found the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.³

The present study of the *Memoir*⁴ will unfold according to the following plan:

1. an overall introduction;
2. some brief comments about the first three biographers of De La Salle;
3. a few observations by twentieth-century Lasallian scholars about the biographer Blain;
4. a presentation of the text of the *Memoir* [broken down into thirteen fragments that are lettered from "a" to "m"], inclusive of an historical commentary covering the fourteen years from 1679-1680 to 1693-1694;
5. a brief consideration of two unanswered questions about the *Memoir*; and
6. a concluding remark about the principal biographer Jean-Baptiste Blain.

The commentary is intended to provide the reader with a sequence of events contemporary with those described in the *Memoir* and, hopefully with the references to supplementary materials provided in the endnotes, should furnish the reader with some insight into the text and some understanding of the background against which important decisions were being taken.

Introduction

The Memoir on the Beginnings, as here presented, consists of a compilation of remarks of De La Salle's about the origins of his Institute, as reported by his third biographer [Jean-Baptiste Blain], since we no longer possess the original text. As many of the same events are found recorded also in the works of the first two biographers [Brother Bernard (aka Jean d'Auge) and Dom François-Elie Maillefer], it appears that all three were working from a common source. "It provides us with one of De La Salle's few personal reflections on his role and the role of Providence in the founding of the Christian Schools. In this *Memoir*, the God he is coming to know is 'gentle' and 'wise,' leading him where he would not choose to go as he passes 'from one commitment to another.'"⁵ The first biographer [Brother Bernard], explaining "the way the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools began," notes that "our servant of God himself gave a summary in a manuscript, written in his own hand, that had remained unknown for more than twenty years."⁶ Brother Bernard goes on to explain that "it was undoubtedly under obedience that he was ordered to write it; moreover, only his confessor could have directed him to write

something so contrary to his sense of humility. We shall draw what we say of the first fourteen years of his Institute from this source, which covers only this period....”⁷

The original handwritten document kept hidden for more than twenty years, according to Bernard, was “discovered” while De La Salle was in the south of France [between 1712 and 1714].⁸ Internal evidence suggests that the *Memoir* was written in or around 1694, prior to De La Salle making vows on June 6, 1694, with the twelve Brothers he had chosen.⁹ The original copy of the *Memoir*, “written in his own hand,” appears to have been lost, probably in 1792 in the sacking of the Mother House of the Institute at Melun during the French Revolution.

The principal fragments¹⁰ that remain of the original text [those given first in each of the sections that comprise the fourth part of this document] are, as already noted, those of Jean-Baptiste Blain. After each of Blain’s text fragments, there follows in each section – in parallel columns and as far as it is possible to judge – text fragments from the biographies by Maillefer and Bernard. As Bernard’s work is incomplete, there are no citations for some of the later events mentioned by Maillefer and Blain.

The First Three Biographers of De La Salle: Bernard, Maillefer, & Blain

“Shortly after John Baptist de La Salle’s death, a certain *Brother Bernard* was commissioned by his superiors to write in an orderly fashion the Life of Monsieur De La Salle. To assist him in his task, the superiors handed over to him a large number of testimonials and, especially, a fairly lengthy manuscript written by Monsieur De La Salle in his own hand. Thinking that these documents were insufficient, Bernard sought to supplement their information by applying for help to Jean-Louis de La Salle [De La Salle’s brother], Monsieur Jean-François [Dom François-Elie Maillefer, son of De La Salle’s sister Marie de La Salle], the community of the Sisters of the Child Jesus of Providence [Rheims], and the superior of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice. When Bernard had finished his work, he sent it to Jean-Louis for corrections. Because Jean-Louis took a long time to return the manuscript, Bernard grew impatient and resolved to begin this work all over again. However, this second attempt has not come down to us.”¹¹

Brother Bernard’s title is particularly valuable: “*The Admirable Guidance of Divine Providence in the Person of the Servant of God, John Baptist de La Salle*. Indeed, De La Salle’s faith in Divine Providence illuminates the entire course of his life. Convinced that it was God’s will that the Christian Schools should come into existence, he responded to this divine call.”¹²

De La Salle’s nephew, the Benedictine *François-Elie Maillefer*, never met his uncle; but as a monk and scholar, he seems to have been shown Bernard’s manuscript, probably by Jean-Louis de La Salle, who had made numerous corrections and additions to what he had received. François-Elie wrote his own version of the life in 1723 and reluctantly handed it over to a Brother Thomas. Unknown to him, François-Elie’s manuscript was later handed over to *Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain*, who as chaplain at Saint-Yon, knew De La Salle personally [from 1715 to 1719]. Blain made use of the same sources as Bernard, but plagiarised Maillefer’s work in his own two-volume biography of De La Salle, which was published at Rouen in 1733.

François-Elie, having seen Blain's published work and realizing how his work had been "stolen," wrote a second version in 1740 out of his 1723 original. He pointed out numerous errors he considered he had detected in Blain's work; and from the family viewpoint, corrected some of Blain's work which he felt "reflected" poorly on the family. Through an extraordinary series of events, both the 1723 and 1740 versions exist. So comparisons can be made.¹³

The reader of Bernard, Maillefer (1723) and (1740), and Blain soon comes across the most common incidents referred to in similar, or often identical words in the original French, from what was the account written "in his own hand" by John Baptist de La Salle. But, as the document which follows clearly indicates, Blain frequently offers the reader a text in the *first person* with the very words De La Salle *could* have spoken, whereas, for the same incident, Maillefer and Bernard provide a narrative in the *third person*.

This is why I offer the following comments on Blain's writings from a few different Lasallian scholars. I have tried to set out for the reader's comparison and evaluation what Maillefer and Bernard have written about the same incidents as those narrated by Blain.

A Few Lasallian Scholars Evaluate Blain's Biography

An Observation by Institute Historian Georges Rigault

"Unable to set limits for himself, the Canon scarcely knows how to write. He is more of a preacher rather than an historian. He both wearies and annoys us by his prolixity and his waffling. His inflated style pushes him to exaggeration in certain episodes. He himself recognizes that he is not very exact in his dating. But, taking into account what has just been said, it has to be said that he attains the end he proposed: he certainly highlights the greatness and holiness of John Baptist de La Salle. He gives us, moreover, with regard to the first years of the Institute, besides the kind of conflicts the Founder had to endure, a volume of information impossible to find elsewhere."¹⁴

An Observation by Jesuit Scholar and Editor André Rayez

"An old style biographer, too often a rambling panegyrist, sometimes a clumsy apologist, the worthy Canon embroiders his memories, embellishes those of others, floods us with his difficulties and lambastes with panache those who oppose his hero, whether they are Sulpicians, bishops, cardinals, especially Jansenists and Quietists. May the good man forgive me! Close as it is to the death of the saint, this life, however, by a contemporary and a witness, who has moreover questioned those who knew him, remains a precious source in spite of everything."¹⁵

An Observation by Brother Maurice-Auguste Hermans

"So clumsy in its form that it is read with difficulty only by the most heroic, Canon Blain's book remains nevertheless indispensable because of so much it brings to the dossier of our saint. An apologist rather than an historian, his work needs to be sieved through a healthy criticism, but coming as it does from an especially authorized witness, it has, for that reason, from the

beginning, some very favorable presumptions, even if it does not always have solid guarantees.”¹⁶

A Final Observation

In fairness to Blain, I would note that the reader needs to remember that the important opportunities Blain had for regular conversations with De La Salle at Saint Yon from 1715 to 1719 probably gave him access to more detailed information than that found in the “summary written in [De La Salle’s] own hand.” It seems reasonable to assume that Blain may have had the opportunity to question De La Salle in greater detail about the events he described in this document [the *Memoir*].

Text Fragments & Historical Commentary

As noted in the introductory paragraphs of the materials here presented, letters have been assigned to the following thirteen different fragments of the *Memoir* [“a” to “m”]. Immediately following the presentation of each fragment [according to Blain, Maillefer, and Bernard when it exists], commentary and relevant biographical information – about what else was happening in De La Salle’s life around the same time – will be provided.

Events of Spring 1679

Text A: First Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“In vain, he told Nyel, would you have come so far to open Christian and Gratuitous Schools in Rheims if your steps took you to the house of the brother of your benefactress. If you go there, you declare your intentions, and if you do so, you will cause the entire project to fail. Will not your stay in that house lead everyone to guess why you have come?”

“Your social rank, your state in life, and your type of work are entirely different from those of your host. People will ask what brings you to him and what can be the reason for your coming. They will talk about it and try to find out. The curious will investigate; the idle will gossip. Sooner or later, they will discover the truth or at least get an inkling of it. No matter how reserved you are, they will worm something out of you. They will follow you around and thus learn where you go. Once they find out your business here, they will block you at every turn. The past vouches for the future. Just recently, a well-known Canon and theological preacher, respected and revered in the city, founded a society of women teachers for the schools, which was almost ruined before it really got started.

“So close to destruction was it that only the authority of Archbishop Le Tellier was able to save it. He had to throw all his influence into the balance, and even this was scarcely enough to offset the ill will of the city officials, still less to win them over and get them to agree. Do you think they will approve a second institution for boys? No doubt the poor people of the city need this foundation, but the interests of God and of the poor so often must take second place to politics. To make the latter give way to the former, the archbishop will have to exert all his influence

again. Will he be willing to do this, to make use of it a second time, perhaps at the risk of failure?”¹⁷

... “Come, he said with a gracious air, stay with me. My home is a residence where parish priests from the country and other priests who are my friends often stay. It is just the place for you to reside, so as to veil your project from public scrutiny. You look somewhat like a parish priest from the country, and people will think that you are one of them. Furthermore, I certainly have the right to offer the hospitality of my home to whomsoever I please. What the world may think about it is of no concern to me; the least of my worries is what people will say. In my house, quiet and unrecognized and without being a burden to anyone, you can easily spend a week or so. This will give you time for further consideration, for refining your plans and deciding on the best way of implementing them successfully. Once this time has elapsed, you can leave for Notre Dame de Liesse, where your piety is calling you, and when you come back, you can attempt to open the schools.”¹⁸

... “The best and perhaps the only way to get these Christian and Gratuitous Schools off to a good start, he said to them, is to safeguard them from all opposition by placing them under the protection of a pastor zealous enough to assume responsibility for them, discreet enough to avoid publicity, and generous enough to support them. Since as pastor he has a right to provide for the religious instruction of his parishioners and since his position as pastor authorizes him to appoint teachers to instruct them in Christian doctrine, nobody would venture to interfere with him or with the schools.”¹⁹

<p><i>From Maillefer:</i></p> <p>“Monsieur Nyel, therefore, went to Rheims, knowing well the intentions of Madame Maillefer and armed with letters from her addressed to the superior of the Sisters of the Child Jesus ... De La Salle, who had followed the wishes of Monsieur Roland in taking charge of these Sisters, was at the door of the convent when Monsieur Nyel arrived. After the usual greetings, Monsieur Nyel told the superior the reason for his visit. She, in turn, spoke to De La Salle and asked his advice. At first he pointed out the many difficulties involved. He knew from experience the considerable trouble in starting the school for girls. However, as he had a compassionate heart for all who spoke to him, he listened to Monsieur Nyel and also asked what steps he planned to take. De La Salle thought over the proposals and approved of them. In spite of his own reasons for predicting failure, he took upon himself</p>	<p><i>From Bernard:</i></p> <p>“By chance, or rather by Divine Providence, it happened that at the precise moment he [Monsieur Nyel] entered the orphanage, Monsieur De La Salle was also at the door. Because neither knew the other, they did not exchange greetings. Monsieur Nyel went into the parlor, while Monsieur De La Salle walked into the house to discuss some business matters. Nyel remained in the parlor, explaining to the superioress at some length why he had come. After some discussion the superioress asked our holy priest to join them at Monsieur Nyel’s request, for he had learned from her of the priest’s reputation for his prudence, his great gift of wisdom, and his uprightness of life. This good man was overjoyed to find a person such as our servant of God who would advise him in his project. Monsieur De La Salle, having joined them, learned from the superioress of Nyel’s purpose and</p>
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the task of overcoming the initial difficulties. First of all, the project would have to become known in the homes of influential persons in the city to gain their confidence. Meanwhile, Nyel would need a place to stay while waiting to open the first school. Because public opinion was against starting a new venture of any sort, it was necessary to take all the steps necessary to keep their plans secret from those who might oppose them. Confidentiality was most important. Although Monsieur Nyel had been directed by Madame Maillefer to stay with her brother, which he agreed to do, the consequences of this were pointed out to him. They feared that his project would be discovered and would soon become public knowledge. To avoid this eventuality, Nyel gratefully accepted De La Salle's invitation to stay at his house for the time being."²⁰

that she had advised him to stay at the house of the brother of the lady who had sent him to Rheims. The servant of God saw at once that the project would come to naught if that course of action were followed. He explained to Monsieur Nyel that by staying at that particular place, it would soon become known throughout the city why he had come. The authorities of the city had put many obstacles in the way of the foundation of a girls' school which had been established only at the insistence of the archbishop. As soon as they became aware that a school for boys was about to be set up by people unknown to them, the authorities would immediately look into the matter and probably send them away for fear that they would begin this new work without their approval. Joining hospitality to wisdom, Monsieur De La Salle invited Monsieur Nyel to his own home, where he would remain unnoticed because Monsieur De La Salle had the custom of often inviting clergymen or rural pastors to stay with him. Monsieur Nyel could easily be mistaken for one of them, because he dressed in black, with a rabat, and wore his hair short. In any case, there was no reason to be disturbed by what others might say, for he would be in seclusion and at peace for a week, if he so desired. During this time, measures would be taken to assure the success of this undertaking. As for himself, Monsieur De La Salle mentioned that he had made plans to go the shrine of Notre Dame de Liesse, but that upon his return the project could begin."²¹

Context A: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information (Spring 1679)

- Recall that prior to this time John Baptist de La Salle was, from 1672 to 1676, responsible as executor of his father's will and had to provide annual accounts for collecting and spending money. On February 2, 1672, he allowed his sister Rose-Marie to enter a convent in Rheims. These annual accounts down to the smallest details show how carefully he took care of his siblings.

- Recall also that when Canon Nicolas Roland died in April 1678, John Baptist de La Salle, a priest for only eighteen days, was charged to obtain *Letters Patent* for the Sisters of the Child Jesus, looking after some 1,000 poor/orphan girls in four locations around Rheims. The Magistrates opposed this because the city would be responsible for supporting the work if it runs into difficulties. De La Salle, through his contacts with the Magistrates [through his late father] and Archbishop Le Tellier’s influence [through contact with the court of King Louis XIV at Versailles], finally succeeded in getting *Letters Patent* in February 1679.

De La Salle visited the new convent frequently to discuss the administration, the development of the *Rule* of the women, and other matters bequeathed him by Canon Roland. He regularly met with Mademoiselle Françoise Duval, member of a non-cloistered community in Rouen, working with poor girls. She and her two companions were consecrated members of a community – but not nuns – who had been sent from Rouen by Father Nicolas Barré at Roland’s request to establish a non-cloistered community in honor of the Child Jesus in Rheims. They would later be free to return to their own Rouen community.

Madame Maillefer in Rouen, distantly related to De La Salle through his grandfather, had founded a school for poor boys near Rouen with the help of Adrien Nyel, a layman who for the past twenty-two years had been in charge of the poor in the Rouen Hospital. She sent Nyel, with the assurance of financial support, to found a school for poor boys in her native city of Rheims.

- On March 5, 1679, Nyel, accompanied by a fourteen-year-old pupil teacher, Christophe, came to Rheims to ask the advice and help of Mademoiselle Françoise Duval whom he knew from Rouen. He and Christophe were due to stay with the Maillefer family. It so happened that he met De La Salle at the convent door. Françoise introduced them and...
- Meanwhile, on March 20, 1679, De La Salle was responsible for arranging for his sister, Marie de La Salle, to be married to Jean Maillefer in the presence of her siblings and relatives.

Shortly after the Return from a Pilgrimage to Liesse in 1679

Text B: Second Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“The pastor of Saint Symphorien, said De La Salle of the first of the four pastors proposed, would be the man we are looking for if only he were well thought of by his superiors, but unfortunately they do not like him, and so we had better not consider him further. The second man does not have much judgment. The third is the nephew and toady of the diocesan official, owes him everything he has become, and is devoted to him. It would take only a word from his uncle and benefactor, and he would send all of the schoolmasters away. We cannot pick him either. This third man, however, was the candidate favored by Abbot Bretagne, and the one he would have preferred if the arguments advanced by De La Salle could have been contradicted. The choice finally fell on Monsieur Dorigny, the pastor of Saint Maurice.”²²

“All we are asking you [i.e. Father Dorigny], added De La Salle, is to present yourself as the founder of this school and to lend it your name. Your parishioners are mostly poor people; it is your duty to provide instruction for them, since they cannot secure it for themselves. You will give it to them through Monsieur Nyel and his companion whom we are proposing to you as teachers in your school. Take them in. If questions are asked, let it be understood that you are employing them to instruct the children of your parish.”²³

<p><i>From Maillefer:</i></p> <p>“De La Salle ... wished to seek counsel ... He first spoke to Dom Claude Bretagne, then prior of the abbey of Saint Rémi ... [De La Salle] thought he should not act hastily but should seek the advice of those more experienced with this kind of undertaking ... After much thought they agreed with De La Salle that the best thing to do was to put the school under the protection of one of the city’s pastors ... [Monsieur Dorigny] agreed to the proposal so readily that there could be no doubt of its success....”²⁴</p>	<p><i>From Bernard:</i></p> <p>“De La Salle ... consulted ... the Benedictine Father Bretagne ... and with several other respected churchmen on measures to take in order to succeed ... put the teachers ... under the protection of one of the parish pastors willing to take them in ... Four names were proposed, all worthy men ... The first was not well liked by his superiors; the second should not be considered, for he was lacking in zeal; the third was the nephew of a city official to whom he owed his position and who would only have to tell the priest to dismiss the teachers and it would be done ... the others agreed with De La Salle in all three cases. They saw no reason to select anyone other than the pastor of Saint Maurice....”²⁵</p>
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Context B: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information (1679)

- The text fragment seems to refer to the period shortly after Adrien Nyel’s return from his pilgrimage of the Shrine of Notre Dame de Liesse.
- On March 20, 1679, De La Salle consults with various people about the most suitable parish for opening a school.
- In April 1679, discussions end with his choice of Father Dorigny, parish priest of Saint Maurice.
- Probably on April 15, 1679, the first school at the parish of Saint Maurice is opened.
- In May 1679, various property transactions are conducted by De La Salle on behalf of providing a financial foundation for the Sisters of the Child Jesus.
- In July 1679, Madame de Croyères – already a benefactress in helping to establish the Sisters of the Child Jesus and known to De La Salle personally because of his

responsibility as executor of Roland’s will – contacts De La Salle directly after Nyel has spoken with her about a new school so that De La Salle – not Nyel – will be responsible for the financial arrangements.

- On August 16, 1679, De La Salle denounces an older fellow Canon [Cesar Thuret] for scandal; and the proceedings of a Church court are launched. Thuret will eventually be remanded to a seminary for a year, downgraded, and dismissed from his position as Canon.
- Possibly in September or October 1679, the second school at the parish of Saint Jacques is opened.
- Possibly at Christmas 1679, the five teachers move into a house near the De La Salle family home; and meals are sent from there.

Rheims 1680 to 1682

Text C: Third Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“I had thought, he wrote in a memoir which he composed later on to inform the Brothers about the means Divine Providence had used to establish their Institute, that the care [*conduite*] which I took of the schools and the teachers would only be external, something which would not involve me any further than to provide for their subsistence and see to it that they carried out their duties [*emploi*] with piety and assiduity.”²⁶

<p><i>From Maillefer:</i></p> <p>“When De La Salle saw this matter through to completion, he thought he had accomplished all that God expected of him. He went about his other duties, leaving the future of the school to Divine Providence.”²⁷</p>	<p><i>From Bernard:</i></p> <p>“Monsieur Nyel, having begun the school, came from time to time to visit his charitable benefactor, who remained well disposed toward him and who, under no obligation but what charity suggested, continued to render him whatever services he could....”²⁸</p>
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“For fear that the reader may think that we are simply imagining these dispositions of his, let us listen to what he himself had to say. It was, he declares in a memoir mentioned previously, by these two events, namely, by my meeting with Monsieur Nyel and by the proposal made to me by this woman [Madame de Croyères], that I began to take an interest in [*prendre soin = take care of*] the schools for boys. Prior to this, I had never given them a thought. The suggestion, of course, had been made to me before. Several of Monsieur Roland’s friends had tried to motivate me to become involved, but the proposal had never made any impression on my mind, and I had never considered carrying it out.”²⁹

From Maillefer:

“ ... But God, who guided De La Salle’s steps, opened a new path for him on which he began to walk almost in spite of himself ... Monsieur Nyel ... soon learned that a pious woman of the city, the widow of Monsieur Lévêque de Carrières, had plans of founding a free school in her parish of Saint Jacques. This was all Nyel needed. He sought her out and told her how, with the assistance of De La Salle, a school had just been opened in the parish of Saint Maurice ... She was acquainted with De La Salle and ... wished to confer with him ... De La Salle was not completely opposed, but the entire project appeared too premature for him ... he felt naturally reluctant to become involved ... Madame Lévêque asked De La Salle to visit her ... De La Salle could not refuse his help in bringing about this good work.”³⁰

From Bernard:

“The school of Saint Maurice had hardly begun before this good and enterprising man [Nyel] learned that a wealthy and childless widow of Saint Jacques parish had been thinking of founding a new school there. Monsieur Nyel took the liberty of calling upon her to explain what he was about, what he had been doing in Rouen, and what he had come to do in Rheims. Then he told her of hearing of her wish to open a school, and he offered to undertake this project if she so desired. Fearing that she might refuse his offer, he added that he had the honor of knowing Monsieur De La Salle, a Canon of Notre Dame cathedral ... This lady was aware of Monsieur De La Salle’s reputation and was well informed of his qualities and integrity. She expressed an earnest wish to speak with him and assured Monsieur Nyel that indeed it was true that she had in mind the founding of a new school ... [Monsieur Nyel] promptly sought out Monsieur De La Salle to report all that had transpired between him and Madame l’Evêque (de Croyères) and tell him of her wish to meet with him. Our virtuous Canon was taken aback by this request ... Our zealous Canon ... agreed with her request ... Thus it was that God made use of these two people, namely Monsieur Nyel and Madame l’Evêque, to lead Monsieur De La Salle to take charge of the two schools about which he had given no thought whatsoever ... as he himself stated in his own account ... He had not the slightest inclination to found any schools because he was committed to his canonry, responsible for the Sisters of the orphanage, and charged with the care of his own family....”³¹

“Indeed, if I had ever thought that the care [*soin*] I was taking of the schoolmasters out of pure charity would ever have made it my duty to live with them, I would have dropped the whole project. For since, naturally speaking, I considered the men whom I was obliged to employ in the schools at the beginning as being inferior to my valet, the mere thought that I would have to live with them would have been insupportable to me. In fact, I experienced a great deal of unpleasantness when I first had them come to my house. This lasted for two years. It was undoubtedly for this reason that God, who guides [*conduit*] all things with wisdom and serenity, whose way it is not to force the inclinations of persons, willed to commit me entirely to the development of the schools. God did this in an imperceptible way and *over a long period of time*, so that one commitment led to another in a way that I did not foresee in the beginning.”³²

<p><i>From Maillefer:</i></p> <p>“ ... He saw no other solution than to bring the teachers into his own house, where he could be with them and still attend to his own affairs. He was aware of the obstacles he would have to overcome, on the part of either his family, who did not always approve of what he did, or his three brothers who were still with him, who might not care for his manner of living. For some time, he was troubled over what course to follow.”³³</p>	<p><i>From Bernard:</i></p> <p>“ ... God attracts people imperceptibly without their being aware of all they will undertake and hope to accomplish in the work destined for them ... Listen to what he [De La Salle] himself says: God, who directs all things with wisdom and gentleness and who does not compel our wills, wishing to have me to take care of the schools, led me imperceptibly and <i>in a short time</i> from one commitment to another in a way I did not at all foresee at first ... On the other hand, he felt a great repugnance for bringing the teachers into his own home, with the result that he experienced extreme difficulty in reaching a decision ... He had formerly entertained only distinguished guests known for their social graces or noble background either in the Church or in the world. Furthermore, there were his three brothers to consider, for whose upbringing and education he was responsible. He could foresee that their closer association with the teachers would not at all please his relatives or his friends, who would consider this step as totally unacceptable and a cause for them of great annoyance. Such indeed was the case....”³⁴</p>
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Context C: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information (1680-1682)

- In January 1680, seven teachers and Nyel are living together in a house rented by De La Salle for eighteen months.

- At Easter 1680, Madame de Croyères arranges with De La Salle a permanent foundation to provide for the running expenses of the Saint Jacques school.
- De La Salle defends and receives his doctorate around this time.
- From April 14 to 20, 1680, the teachers meet in De La Salle's house for morning and evening prayer.
- On June 24, 1680, De La Salle begins bringing the teachers to meals in his own home.
- Possibly in October 1680, Nyel (himself) arranges a third school at the parish of Saint Symphorien.
- During the winter of 1680-1681, De La Salle falls from his horse into a snowdrift and almost dies.
- Possibly at Christmas 1680, De La Salle goes to Paris for the solemn profession of his brother, Jacques-Joseph, as a member of the Augustinians.
- At the same time, he consults with Father Barré who advises him that he must live with his teachers if he is to have any authority over them. Barré as a Minim had lived with his own community but had not lived with his small group of "Brothers" who eventually disappear from history.
- On March 21, 1681, Sister Rose-Marie de La Salle [the sister of De La Salle] dies "in the monastery of Saint-Etienne-aux-Dames."³⁵ She had entered the Canonesses of Saint Augustine, a community founded by Saint Pierre Fourier, when she was sixteen years old. It seems that she died quite suddenly as the victim of badly prepared medicine.
- On June 24, 1681, the lease on the teachers' house has ended; and De La Salle brings Nyel and all the teachers to live with him and his younger siblings in the family house. The family is indignant, especially his brother-in-law Jean Maillefer, who will continue to criticise him for a long time and demand that the younger family members leave the house. Jean-Louis refuses³⁶; but Pierre goes to live with the Maillefers, and Jean-Remy is placed in a boarding school.
- In January or February of 1682, some teachers leave and some are "sent away" as "having little talent." "Better" young men present themselves, including Henri l'Heureux and Nicolas Vuyart.
- During March or April of 1682, De La Salle makes a long retreat, considering whether to live with the teachers in another house that is not so close to his family.

- On May 14, 1682, Christophe, “who was probably the young companion of Nyel since Rouen” dies “in the house of Monsieur De La Salle.”³⁷
- On June 24, 1682, two new houses are rented in another location with his brother Jean-Louis, Faubert (a poor priest to whom he will later resign his canonry), two seminarians (possibly), and eight teachers.
- “By moving out of the family house in this way, De La Salle simply anticipated a decision which the sale of the house at the end of July 1682 would have made necessary.”³⁸ “The house where [De La Salle] lived on Rue Sainte Marguerite was in fact part of the common inheritance of Louis de La Salle’s children. John Baptist ... found himself being taken to court in January 1681 by his sister Marie and her husband Jean Maillefer. They did this in order to secure the sale of the property held in common and to ensure they received their share.”³⁹ The sale of the house [occurred] at the end of July 1682.⁴⁰
- Brother Bernard, the first biographer, states that this is where they live a structured life and call themselves “Brothers”; but his account [and that of Maillefer] is not reliable about dates. [This event, at the earliest, is during 1684.]
- This might be a good place to note that there are some variations in the way the different biographers cite the *Memoir*. For instance, “according to Bernard, it was in an imperceptible manner and *over a short period of time* that God ‘led De La Salle to take care of the schools’ ... while Blain says it was done ‘in an imperceptible manner *over a long period of time*.’”⁴¹

Rheims 1682

Text D: Fourth Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“True, they said to one another as they discussed the harassing doubts that obsessed them, we hope to find a sure haven from such poverty in the generosity of our father, as long as he lives. But when he dies, what then? As long as we put our trust in his charity, we shall find in his good heart and his wealth a bulwark against beggary. But he may die tomorrow; and once he is gone what will become of the schools he is supporting? What will become of us teachers whom he provides for and whose father he is? Where can we go? What can we do when Monsieur De La Salle is no longer with us?”⁴²

... “Men of little faith, he said, by your lack of trust you set limits to a goodness that has no limits in itself. If that goodness is indeed infinite, universal, and continual – as you do not doubt – it will always take care of you and never fail you. You seek assurance, but does not the Gospel provide it? The words of Jesus Christ are your insurance contract; there is no compact more reliable, because God has signed it with blood and has affixed to it the seal of infallible truth. Why then do you grow distrustful? If the positive promises of God cannot calm your uneasiness and your concern for the future, what is the point of looking for an investment that will produce a comparable income?”

“Consider the lilies of the field, for it is Jesus Christ himself who urges you to reflect on them and on the wild flowers of the countryside and to see how richly God has adorned them and made them beautiful. They lack nothing, yet Solomon himself in all his glory was less splendidly attired. Open your eyes and see the birds that fly through the air or the little animals which creep upon the ground; not a single one of them lacks what is needed. God provides for their necessities. Possessing neither cellars nor barns, they find everywhere the food that Providence has prepared for them. They do not sow or reap, yet they find their sustenance. The heavenly Father takes care of them. If his generous and kindly concern [*ses soins = his cares*] extends to even the least insects which men trample underfoot and even to the grass that dries out and serves as fuel for the fire, how can you believe, you men of little faith, that he to whom you consecrate your labor will abandon you in your old age and leave you to finish in misery a life spent in his service?

“Therefore, stir up your trust in the Lord’s infinite goodness and honor God by leaving in the divine hands the care of your persons. Be not troubled about the present or disquieted about the future, but be concerned only about the moment you must now live. Do not let anticipation of tomorrow be a burden on the day that is passing. What you lack in the evening, the morrow will bring you, if you know how to hope in God. God will work miracles rather than let you suffer want. In addition to the words of Jesus Christ, I offer you as proof the universal experience of the saints. Providence performs miracles daily, and they cease only for those who have no trust.”⁴³

From Maillefer:

“There still remained one weakness which could be seized upon by the devil: their too great solicitude for the future ... they worried occasionally about their future ... should De La Salle ever fail them ... De La Salle strove to bring them to [the thought of Divine Providence] ... Men of little faith, he said, do you insist on setting restrictions on God’s Providence? Do you not know there are no limits to his goodness? If God takes care of the grass and lilies of the field, as he himself says, and the birds and other animals even if they have neither resources, income, cellars, nor granaries, how much more will he provide for you who are devoted entirely to his service? Therefore, do not be troubled about the future, for God knows your needs and will not fail you, if you remain faithful in your service to him.”⁴⁴

From Bernard:

“Monsieur De La Salle noticed that several teachers ... were tempted to leave because, as they said, they were not sure about what the future might hold for them in this form of life. The holy priest attempted to persuade them to remain and reassured them that they should abandon themselves to God, who would never fail them in their need.”⁴⁵

Context D: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information (1682)

- This is De La Salle's discourse on Divine Providence, a beautiful exposition of the sixth chapter of the *Gospel of Matthew*, known as the "Sermon on the Mount." The beautiful discourse in itself is theologically correct in every way.⁴⁶
- This was the beginning of the school year, but there is no exact date. This is possibly October 1682. The teachers are unsettled and anxious about their future.⁴⁷ Possibly, it was over a period of time. De La Salle moves into a room at the top of the house to devote more time to personal prayer and discernment. This could be the time when De La Salle, in an attempt to discern his future, has himself locked for successive nights by the sacristan into the Church of Saint Remy.
- It appears that around September/October 1682 Jean-Louis, De La Salle's brother, "goes to Guise to help Nyel" (although this is questioned by some biographers). [In his funeral notice, something is said about Jean-Louis' once having "taught class."]⁴⁸ Around November 1682, this younger sibling, who had chosen to stay with De La Salle and the first schoolmasters, "enters the Seminary of Saint Sulpice. He will finish on March 15, 1686."⁴⁹
- De La Salle, possibly in November 1682, consults Father Barré again – but we don't know how. Blain writes, "after much prayer and many consultations around the end of 1682, he saw clearly that God was calling him to take care of the schools."
- De La Salle speaks to his adviser about resigning his canonry, "a transaction that lasted nine or ten months."
- In December 1682, De La Salle resigns as spiritual director to the Sisters of the Child Jesus and to some individual Sisters. [Some letters from this period are available.]

The School Masters Give Their Reply

Text E: Fifth Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

"Tired of simply thinking these thoughts, one day the schoolmasters summoned up their courage to the point of expressing their grievance and gave De La Salle one of those blunt, direct replies that the heart feels is unanswerable: You speak with inspiration amidst your ease, for you lack nothing. You have a rich canonry and an equally fine inheritance; 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.

“Although neither courteous nor gracious, this reply contained enough truth to penetrate an upright heart. De La Salle had not expected such a remark. Because unforeseen, it proved all the more effective. His self-love did not deceive him. The reproach of the schoolmasters was indeed ungracious, but he paid no attention to their manner and only weighed its veracity. His probity forced him to admit that they had been right in speaking to him thus. The Holy Spirit joined his voice to theirs and called to him even more clearly and vehemently in the depths of his heart.”⁵⁰

<p><i>From Maillefer:</i></p> <p>“It is easy for you to speak to us, they replied, you have everything, you are secure, you have your money, you still have your canonry. All these things will save you from the wretchedness into which we shall fall if the schools should fail.”⁵¹</p>	<p><i>From Bernard:</i></p> <p>“They in turn pointed out to him that it was easy enough for him to speak like this, for if the schools failed he could fall back upon his canonry and patrimony which would more than cover his needs.”⁵²</p>
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Context E: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information

- It is important to keep in mind that De La Salle, as a Canon, is entitled to a house in which he can live or which he can rent out. He also receives a salary from a foundation established by the cathedral Chapter. He has his personal inheritance according to the will of his father. He was, and was regarded as, wealthy.
- His duties as a Canon included being present for the daily prayers and ceremonies on five occasions each day. The official *Register* of the Rheims cathedral shows that he was extremely faithful to these duties. He could register his absences for other duties as a priest or at the beginning of his appointment, as a student at school.

Rheims 1682: “Toward the End of the Year”

Text F: Sixth Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“Father Barré was the instrument that the Holy Spirit employed to second by his counsels the sacred inspirations given the Canon [about “resigning his canonry”] ... [Barré] believed that the best and surest reliance was to abandon oneself to the care of our heavenly Father and that the Christian Schools would be compromised if they were endowed.

“Foxes have holes, he said in this connection, quoting Our Lord, the birds of the sky have their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head. This is how Father Barré commented on these words: Who are these foxes mentioned in the sacred text? They are the children of the world who attach themselves to the goods of this earth. Who are the birds of the sky? The religious who find a refuge in their cells. But for schoolmasters and mistresses whose vocation is to instruct the poor after the example of Jesus Christ, there is no other portion on this earth than that which fell to the Son of Man. Divine Providence

must be the only foundation of which Christian Schools are established. Any other does not suit them. This one is solid, and the schools themselves will remain stable so long as they have nothing else on which to rely.”⁵³

... “De La Salle, however, did not like to rush into things ... He brought his reflections and considerations to the foot of the crucifix, asking God for his light and offering himself to God for the fulfillment of his designs. The more he pondered the divine will, the more it seemed necessary to make himself poor so as to become like his disciples.

“The following are the reasons which convinced him and which he kept repeating to himself:

“1) I have been reduced to silence. As long as I am not poor myself, I have no right to speak the language of perfection, as I once did on the subject of poverty. I cannot speak of abandonment to Providence, so long as I am comfortably insured against penury, nor about perfect confidence in God, if my sound investments leave me no reason for worry.”⁵⁴

<p><i>From Maillefer:</i></p> <p>“De La Salle saw the force of this argument and stated that they were right in bringing it up to him. From this moment he realized that the best way to convince them of his perfect disinterestedness was to give away all he possessed and become exactly like them.”⁵⁵</p>	<p><i>From Bernard:</i></p> <p>“At first this surprised their holy Superior, who did not know how to answer them but realized that there was some truth in what they were saying ... Because his canonry, in the Brothers’ eyes, was the first thing that made it easy for him to speak of Providence, he decided to abandon that office ... He did not want to abandon the canonry until it was clear that God was calling him elsewhere....”⁵⁶</p>
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“2) If I remain what I am and the schoolmasters remain who they are, their temptation will persist, because its source will continue to be there. I will not be able to remedy it, because they will always find in my wealth an obvious and even plausible argument to justify their doubts about the present and their concerns for the future.

“3) Sooner or later, such a temptation, so justifiable in appearance, will not fail to produce the effect that the devil hopes it will achieve. The teachers, whether in a group or one by one, will forsake me, leaving my house empty for the second time and the schools without anyone capable of conducting them.

“4) This desertion will make a good deal of noise in the city. It will frighten off any who might have entertained the idea of becoming schoolmasters. Their vocation will wither; even before they enter, they will be seized by the same misgivings as those who have just left.

“5) Without a dependable staff of teachers, the schools will fail. In this case, the heirs of the foundations will claim the funds contributed for their maintenance.

“6) Thus, little by little, the Institute of Christian and Gratuitous Schools will be buried beneath its ruins, and it will be useless ever to think of reviving it.

“7) Even supposing that all these results do not follow, must I – can I, even act – as the Superior of these schoolmasters without giving up my canonry? How can I combine my assiduous presence in the house, so as to be at their head during the exercises of piety and to keep watch over them, with attendance in the choir for the canonical Office? Are these two positions compatible? If not, I must give up one or the other.

“8) True, a Canon’s prebend [paid office for a Canon’s service], is not in itself an obstacle to good works, and sedulous attendance at the Office to chant God’s praises does not prevent him from rendering other services to the Church or from devoting himself to the salvation of souls. He can divide his time between these two noble functions and prove that a Canon does not have to be idle outside the choir. He does not need to seek in this title a plausible pretext to leave the choir, only to enter upon a rest that lasts all day, to grow stout in sweet indolence, and to do no work in the Lord’s vineyard. But can I at the same time be a good Canon and a faithful Superior of a Community which requires my presence constantly? If I fulfill the function of Superior properly, I will have to omit all the duties of a Canon, since if I must always be in the house, I can never be in the choir. If these two duties cannot be reconciled, I must choose between them. Five or six hours a day spent in reciting the Divine Office would make too great an inroad on the assiduous presence which I owe to the house I direct.

“9) Now, in the choice I must make, what should be my determining consideration? What should tip the balance? The greater glory of God, the fuller service of the Church, my own higher perfection, and the salvation of souls. These are the ends I must propose to myself and the aims that must govern my choice. If I consider only these exalted motives, I must resign my canonry and devote myself to the care of the schools and to the training of the schoolmasters who direct them.

“10) Finally, since I no longer feel any attraction to the vocation of a Canon, it would seem that it has already left me, even before I have given it up. This calling is no longer for me. While I entered it through the right gate, indeed, it seems to me that God is opening another door before me today so that I may leave it. The same voice that called me to it seems to be calling me elsewhere. I hear this in the depths of my conscience; this voice speaks when I consult my conscience. True, since the hand of God put me in the state in which I now am, his hand must take me out of it. But is he not showing me clearly enough today another state that deserves the preference and toward which he is leading me by the hand?”⁵⁷

... “after much reflection in God’s presence, after much prayer and consultation, it seemed evident to him, toward the end of the year 1682, as he himself writes, that God was calling him to take charge of the schools, and since he had to be the first at all the exercises of the community, he could not assist at the [Divine] Office as assiduously as his director required him to.”⁵⁸

<p><i>From Maillefer:</i></p> <p>“Barré’s [advice] ... you ought to resign your canonry and renounce everything that would be able to distract you from procuring the glory of God. After ten months of trial, he finally brought his confessor around to agreeing with him through the instrumentality of a virtuous and influential person ... In July of that same year, 1683, he left for Paris with the intention of seeing the archbishop of Rheims and obtaining the authorization to resign his canonry.”⁵⁹</p>	<p><i>From Bernard:</i></p> <p>“Because his canonry, in the Brothers’ eyes, was the first thing that made it easy for him to speak of Providence, he decided to abandon that office ... he could not give himself completely to the schools and to the Brothers’ direction, if he continued five or six hours of his time every day reciting the Office in choir ... He considered resigning his canonry because he did not see himself called to the life of a Canon....”⁶⁰</p>
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Context F: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information

- Here we see De La Salle in his discernment about possibly resigning his canonry.⁶¹ It is important to recall that De La Salle, now thirty-one years old, has been a Canon of Rheims for over half his life (from just before his sixteenth birthday).⁶²
- As you look at the succession of considerations (#1 to #10) that led to the conclusion in #10, what do you notice about them? What is significant about the various situations they invoke?
- The De La Salle family expected that John Baptist would resign his canonry in favor of one of his brothers, either Jean-Jacques or Jean-Louis. Can you suggest why he did *not* do this?
- De La Salle writes down all the arguments he needed to consider before he finally takes his decision in #10. What do you notice about the considerations De La Salle writes here? How many of these are “personal considerations”? How many considerations are really about his reputation or that of his family? Are there really some “pragmatic considerations,” as distinct from “spiritually motivated” considerations?
- In what kind of “God” has De La Salle come to believe? How does this compare with the “God” of the Jansenists?

1682 or Early 1683

Text G: Seventh Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“Since you have made up your mind, he was told, do it in favor of your Community. Piety and a sort of equity seem to make this a duty for you. Nobody can find fault with such a determination. Your work is still just beginning; if it is to subsist, it needs your money as much as your

direction. As a father you have a duty to provide for your children’s subsistence and to give them the preference over strangers. Wisdom dictates this, and your kindheartedness can only agree. The worldly wise, who might be inclined to criticize you for laying aside your wealth, will have to admit that you are right to consolidate your good works. The example of Monsieur Roland whose advice you sought while he yet lived and whose memory you continue to venerate, should guide you in this. He endowed his schools for girls. Why not do the same for your schools for boys?”⁶³

... “My God, I do not know whether I should endow the schools or not. It is not up to me to establish communities; I do not even know how they should be established. You alone know this, and it is for you to do it in whatever way you please. I do not dare to establish or endow, because I do not know what you want. So I will not contribute in any way to endowing the schools. If you endow the schools, they will be well endowed; if you do not, they will be without endowment. I beseech you to make your holy will known to me.”⁶⁴

... “After discussing with his director the resolution he had taken of divesting himself of his wealth and after asking for his approval he added, I will not do it, if you do not want me to. I will do it in whatever measure you desire. If you tell me to keep something – even only five sous – I will do so.”⁶⁵

<p><i>From Maillefer:</i></p> <p>“The first thing that came to mind was to use his patrimony to found new schools, so that his Brothers would have no concern for the future ... But as he never took decisive steps without counsel, he wrote to Father Barré ... of whom we have already spoken ... The saintly religious answered at once that this thought was not inspired by the spirit of God. The schools were founded on the sole support of Divine Providence, and it would be wrong to provide any other foundation ... Not only should you give away everything you own, but you ought to resign your canonry and renounce everything that would be able to distract you from procuring the glory of God ... After thinking over the way in which he would carry out his project, he spoke to his confessor who thought the idea to be rash ... [His confessor] pointed out that he could work out his salvation in the class into which he had been born ... and that without leaving his canonry he could continue to direct the Brothers of the Christian Schools</p>	<p><i>From Bernard:</i></p> <p>“To assure more stability for the schools, he thought that the best course of action from a worldly point of view was to endow them through foundations, although in the eyes of God reliance on Providence was more fitting. Monsieur De La Salle was dissuaded from the first course of action by the advice of Father Barré, whom he often saw on his trips from Rheims to Paris. Barré’s recommendation was clear: the schools should not be endowed because ... the foxes have their dens, the birds their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head ... In this perplexity he [De La Salle] ... abandoned himself to God with this short, simple but fervent prayer: My God, I do not know whether to endow the schools or not. It is not up to me but to you to establish and maintain a community of teachers. You alone are aware of how to bring this about in the manner most pleasing to you. I dare not endow the schools, for I do not know your will, nor shall I take any steps to found our houses. If you support them, they shall be</p>
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<p>in an edifying manner as he had been doing already ... In his perplexity he once again sought the advice of Father Barré who repeated his counsel of a year before that, having founded the schools solely on Divine Providence, he now ought to give away all he owned to the poor, with absolutely nothing held back for the Community of the Brothers.”⁶⁶</p>	<p>well supported; but if you do not, they shall remain without support. I pray thee, my God, to manifest your will in this regard.”⁶⁷</p>
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Context G: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information (1682 or 1683)

- The date is 1682, or possibly early 1683 during the severe winter. De La Salle is wrestling with the question of whether he should use his personal wealth to endow the schools.
- In 1683, Jean Faubert succeeds De La Salle as Canon.⁶⁸
- Recall that it was during winter 1683/1684 that De La Salle “began to distribute his fortune to the poor of Rheims” by “providing food during the famine which raged during these years ... especially during the winter.” In autumn/winter 1684/1685, there was a “raging famine throughout the kingdom. Rheims becomes an immense refugee camp.”⁶⁹
- All three biographers cite Father Barré’s advice as “if you endow the schools, they are your schools; if you wish God to found the schools, give your money to the poor and let God found the schools.”

Assembly of 1684 (or Possibly 1686)

Text H: Eighth Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“Do not forget, my dear Brothers, he told them, the sad times we have just come through. You have seen with your own eyes all the calamities that famine brings down upon the poor and all the ravages it can occasion to the fortunes of the rich. This whole city was like one vast hospice where the poor in their destitution gathered and spent the last days of a life which hunger would soon close. During all this time, when the wealthiest were not always sure of finding bread at any price – bread that had become as rare as it was expensive – what did you lack? Thanks be to God, although we have had neither money nor income, during these two terrible years we have lacked nothing. We owe no one anything in any of our houses, while some of our well-established neighbors have been ruined, despite their resources, since they have been obliged to sell their property and to borrow to keep alive.”⁷⁰

<p><i>From Maillefer:</i></p> <p>“The following year, food was still scarce, and he often reminded them of what he had said. Thanks be to God, my dearest Brothers, that although we have had neither money nor income during these two terrible years of famine just past, we have lacked nothing. We owe no one anything in any of our houses, while we have seen some other well-established communities ruined despite their resources, because they have been obliged to sell all they owned and to borrow to keep alive.”⁷¹</p>	<p><i>From Bernard:</i></p> <p>“ ... He urged them to be grateful to God for Divine Providence. Thanks be to God, my Brothers, for although we have been without funds or income, we owe nothing to anyone, despite two years of high costs. Some other religious houses have been ruined, even though they were well endowed, and have been obliged to borrow or to sell their property in order to survive.”⁷²</p>
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Context H: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information (1684 or 1686)

- Are we speaking here of an Assembly in 1684 (or was it possibly in 1686)?
- This section appears to be addressed to the teachers during the Assembly of 1684 (or possibly 1686) where they were asked what they wished to be known as in the future and what kind of regulations they would choose to live under as members of a community. They chose to be called Brothers, not schoolmasters.
- It is not possible to determine exactly whether this Assembly was in 1684 or in 1686. The references to the fact that even better-off families had to sell possessions to survive suggests the severe winter of 1683-1684, but most historians prefer to place the Assembly in 1686.

Probably during the Same Assembly

Text I: Ninth Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“Your heart will recognize your own work in the legislation that will be laid down, and the details it prescribes will seem agreeable to you because you yourselves will have been the lawgivers. Now that you have reached the point where I wished to lead you and I can testify to your fervor and pious dispositions, I wish to undertake measures with you to stabilize your state of life, to strengthen you in your vocation, to consolidate your union with one another, and to begin building the edifice of which you are the foundation stones.

“He then reminded them of the ideas and suggestions that they themselves had often put forward, namely, of binding themselves to their vocation by vows. It was up to them, he said, to consider whether the time had come to impose on themselves such blessed chains which, while restraining their liberty, would bind them to God. He asked them whether, after remaining up to the present unattached to their vocation and free to come or go, they now felt that they should join themselves to it by some type of vow. He concluded by saying that on this point, as on all the

rest, he wanted them to feel entirely free to declare how they felt and even freer to do whatever they wished. All he planned to do was to listen to them and to follow whatever the majority might decide. What he did recommend to them was to pray much and by a fervent retreat to place themselves in a position to know God’s will.”⁷³

<p><i>From Maillefer:</i></p> <p>“Now seeing himself at the head of a number of Brothers in several towns, De La Salle formed a new plan of action. It seemed appropriate to organize all into a sort of small congregation with a uniform manner of life. He tried out his idea first before setting it down on paper, because he did not want to impose anything by authority alone ... He advised them for the present to take the vow of obedience alone and for one year only, putting off for another time the fulfilment of their good intentions after they had sufficient time to test themselves more thoroughly. They agreed, then, that they should take the vow of obedience for a single year....”⁷⁴</p>	<p><i>From Bernard:</i></p> <p>“ ... The man of God was hesitant about their making a perpetual vow of obedience so soon, and still more so, a perpetual vow of chastity. He advised less haste ... the Brothers restrained the ardor of their first fervor and pronounced only the vow of obedience, and this for a single year....”⁷⁵</p>
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Context I: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information

- The text fragment probably concerns the same Assembly discussed previously. It was then that a daily schedule was worked out and certain “rules” were established.
- The text is important in indicating De La Salle’s insistence that the “Brothers” would be their own legislators. The biographer Blain sees this consulting of the members as an example of De La Salle’s “humility,” overlooking the fact that De La Salle may well have seen his task as that of helping the Brothers to establish themselves and then leaving them to pursue his life as a priest.
- As can be seen in the eleventh (text k) and twelfth (text l) fragments, De La Salle is always conscious of his “outsider” position as an ordained priest. The text is important in that the Brothers may seem to be seeking the “security” of being vowed⁷⁶ – and therefore “religious” – and thereby guaranteed support by the Church generally if circumstances go against them. A vow of obedience for one year seems to be what was eventually accepted. It is not known whether or not this vow was renewed by all prior to the definitive vows of June 6, 1694. Certainly, some of the original members seem to have left him in the crisis of 1691.
- Around this same time (1684-1687), other noteworthy events also occur. “John Baptist asks his brother Jean-Louis to speak with Monsieur Compagnon [pastor of the parish of Saint Sulpice] since he “was going to Paris to continue his studies. The

matter concerned the possible opening of a Brothers' school in Paris.” This appears to be in October 1685.⁷⁷ This follows a year after the death on May 31, 1686, of Father Barré.

Around the same time (October 1685), “Adrien Nyel returns to Rouen.”⁷⁸ He will die on May 31, 1687.⁷⁹ This follows a year after the death on May 31, 1686, of Father Barré “in Paris at the age of sixty-five.”⁸⁰

In October 1687, Brother Henri l’Heureux begins his study of theology in Rheims. “He had not studied before but was very talented. John Baptist comes to this decision due to pressures from outside the Institute to replace him as superior.”⁸¹ [Brother Henri will die in November 1690.]

Possibly at Vaugirard in the Early 1690s

Text J: Tenth Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“The famine which raged in 1693 and 1694 brought in other young men who had nothing to eat and who were looking for some way to survive. These ... did not remain for very long ... Others, led by the Spirit of God, were impressed by the good example they found. These soon gave proof of a strong vocation ... At most, one or two out of a dozen finally remained. Yet this little company of choice souls eventually reached the number of thirty-five who persevered with unconquerable courage ...

“What made God’s action appear most obvious was that among this number, only two were really poor lads. The others came from comfortable homes and could have lived at ease by remaining there ... This abundant grace ... was the reward won by the generous sacrifices De La Salle had made of his canonry and his family wealth. Ever since I gave up everything, he himself often said, I have never met a single candidate tempted to leave us on the grounds that our Community was not endowed....”⁸²

Context J: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information

- The text could be appropriate for many different situations faced by De La Salle and the first Brothers. [The fact that it comes just before what is regarded as the Founding Assembly of 1694 suggests that it is best placed in reference to the extreme poverty experienced at Vaugirard around 1693-1694, attested to by witnesses outside the Community of the Brothers.]
- During the Great Famine of 1693-1694, approximately 1.3 million of 20 million people die in France. It was a time of “terrible cold and famine in France ... The price of wheat tripled. Stealing was rampant.”⁸³ It’s perhaps too easy to disassociate – due to the three centuries that have elapsed between their time and ours – the extreme distress of the families of the artisans and the poor from the vow of association for the educational service of the poor that De La Salle and his first Brothers made in 1694.

- Lest one think of the anxiousness of the first schoolmasters in 1682 only in merely abstract terms, the events of the early 1690s [even though these events occur a number of years later] help us understand their fears and concerns. In November 1690, De La Salle “becomes ill.” His grandmother visits, and he “goes down to the parlor to see her ... This is the last time they saw each other [she dies in October 1691].” In February/March 1691, De La Salle is seriously ill, and he “receives the Sacrament of the Sick and Viaticum. Helvetius recommends it before beginning his treatment.” This shows how quickly things could turn bad for the schoolmasters and how truly precarious was the situation in which they found themselves.⁸⁴

If this was not bad enough, it was around the same time [February 1690] that “four teachers of the Little Schools [of Paris] seize the school on the Rue du Bac.” The Choirmaster Claude Joly ordered the closing of this school. However, the decision of the Parliament, in this situation, would favor De La Salle.⁸⁵

- Worthy of mention here is the fact the De La Salle’s brother Jean-Louis “receives his doctorate in theology” on October 19, 1693, from “the Sorbonne. He thus successfully completes ten years of studies.”⁸⁶ [Periodic references are made to Jean-Louis in this historical commentary since – even despite some conflicts with his brother in later years – his life remains inextricably linked with that of the fledgling Institute. On January 3, 1719 [not long before the Founder’s death], Jean-Louis writes to his brother proposing “names for the ‘Society of Management’ of the goods of the Institute in Rheims,” of which he is one.⁸⁷
- Finally, De La Salle, in the *Memoir*, makes no mention of what is now known as the “heroic vow” of November 21, 1691. At a time in Paris (Vaugirard) when half the Brothers in Rheims had left the Institute, De La Salle, with Brothers Gabriel Drolin and Nicolas Vuyart – imitating what Jean-Jacques Olier and two companions had done on this same day in Vaugirard fifty years previously – vowed to stay together, that is to associate themselves and, “if necessary, live on bread alone in order to found the Society of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.” This vow was fulfilled by the vows for life pronounced by De La Salle and twelve chosen Brothers on June 6, 1694. This historical moment in 1691 was not known about until 1727, eight years after De La Salle’s death, when Brother Gabriel Drolin returned from Rome. It was at this time that the Brothers were asked by Brother Timothy, Superior General, to supply letters and other kinds of information to help the first biographers of De La Salle.
- Recalling that Bernard’s biography mentions that “it was undoubtedly under obedience that he was ordered to write it [the *Memoir*]; moreover, only his confessor could have directed him to write something so contrary to his sense of humility. We shall draw what we say of the first fourteen years of his Institute from this source which covers only this period...” It is highly likely that the *Memoir* was written at the request of De La Salle’s spiritual director in Paris for many years, Father Bauyn, a Sulpician from a noble family whom he would have known in his student years (1670-1672).

- My personal hypothesis is that when De La Salle, discouraged by the apparent collapse of his work, asked advice of his spiritual director Bauyn, aware as he was of what Olier and his companions had done on the same day November 21, 1641, in Vaugirard exactly fifty years previously challenged De La Salle to do the same.
- The phrase “shall not be priests” was a source of difficulty, even of puzzlement to Roman officials, so that when the Brothers eventually were given Church approval by the *Bull of Approbation* of Pope Benedict on January 26, 1726, they were effectively granted the status of “monks” who professed the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The “foundation” vow of “association” was retained but understood more in relation to “teaching the poor gratuitously.” The revised *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* [1987-2014] restores the vow of association to its position as the “foundation” vow because chastity and poverty were implied in the very nature of the Brothers’ Community because the Brothers were not to marry and all they possessed was to be “held in common.”
- De La Salle’s argument is obviously based on his own experience.

June 7, 1694

Text K: Eleventh Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“Among other things, he told them: Since Providence had now joined them in a body through the perpetual vows they had pronounced the previous day, it would be wise to seek means to make this union so strong and so permanent that neither the world nor the devil could alter it. The first such means was to place all their trust in God alone, remembering that those who rely on mortal man are leaning on a frail reed which, as Scripture says, when it breaks pierces the hand that holds it. As for himself, they should consider him only as a poor priest who lacked both the power and the prestige to uphold them and their Society. It was the height of folly to count on any man and to base their hopes on human resources. They should recall that although he had recovered from a mortal illness three years previously, he might find himself again at death’s door any day; and in that case, they would be obliged to elect someone else as superior. Hence, it was better to provide for this eventuality ahead of time rather than wait for it to happen and be forced to make a choice. Strong reasons demanded that they do this without further delay, for if they kept on putting it off until his death, this could bring about very serious consequences for their Society.”⁸⁸

From Maillefer:

“[De La Salle] added ... that it was his desire to give up the office of superior completely; it was not fitting for him to remain at their head for he was merely a poor priest in whom they could not rightly place any confidence ... The good of the Institute demanded they choose one of their own whom they would judge most capable of taking over this charge ... The results were unanimous in choosing De La Salle... He tore up the ballots and asked them to vote again.”⁸⁹

Context K: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information (1694)

- June 7, 1694 was the day after twelve Brothers, with De La Salle, had, for the first time, made vows for life. This is a clear decision that the group is to remain “lay” and always be governed by one of their own.
- On the Feast of the Holy Trinity at the end of a long retreat since Pentecost, De La Salle and a chosen twelve Brothers whom he had carefully prepared over a long period of time, pronounced three vows that bound them for the rest of their lives: a vow of *association* for the educational service of the poor, a vow of *obedience*, and a vow of lifelong *stability*. Implicit in this act of consecration was that everything they had would be held *in common* (poverty) and that they would live [without marrying] in community. Each person wrote out his common personal form of consecration by hand, naming each one of the others present. In his handwritten document, De La Salle is careful to sign himself, De La Salle, Priest. The biographers tell us that all present were not to tell anyone what they had done. It is generally assumed that De La Salle insisted on this secrecy because, strictly speaking, he should have sought permission from the archbishop of Paris in whose jurisdiction he lived. Given the circumstances of his work in Paris at that time, it is likely that such a permission would not have been accorded as his Society had no official approval either by State or Church at that time. The only “status” they had was that offered by Archbishop Le Tellier in Rheims around 1686, but De La Salle did not accept this as it would have limited him to the archdiocese of Rheims, as the Sisters of the Child Jesus were.
- De La Salle’s insistence on June 7, 1694, that he would accept, as a priest, the leadership voted by the Brothers on this one occasion, is very clear. But it is to be exceptional. His words are strangely “prophetic” of a number of attempts in which Church authorities during his lifetime attempted to impose priests as the heads of communities of Brothers, especially while he was “absent” in the South during 1712-1714. The insistence in the second article of the first chapter of the *Rule* of 1705 is

that the Brothers “cannot be priests or aspire to the ecclesiastical state, or even sing, wear a surplice, or exercise any function in Church.”⁹⁰

A Foreshadowing of the Crisis of 1714

Text L: Twelfth Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“He added that the second means of rendering their union indissoluble would be to have as their head one of themselves, one who was not a priest. The priestly character would place a vast gulf between them and such a superior. This would weaken their union, and inferiors not closely united to the one whom governs them are like a body in which the head and the members are badly joined and which consequently remains either lifeless or languishing. It was time – high time – to take away from him the government of the Institute; and if they delayed in doing so, they would come to regret it.

“The first result of neglecting this advice of his would be that if he happened to die, there would spring up as many superiors as there were schools. This diversity of leaders would infallibly cause divisions in the flock. Once the sheep were dispersed, they would lose contact among themselves and all subordination to a common shepherd. Then, not following the same line of conduct, they would cease to have the same spirit, convictions, and sentiments. These diverse groups, no longer constituting a single organism, would adopt differing ideas and modify their doctrine, their way of life, and their habit. Very soon this division would cause their ruin. These Brothers, going their separate ways, could not be replaced save by men having different talents, customs, and views. Before long, they would see hired teachers taking over the schools, which – once they ceased to be gratuitous – would cease to be Christian and would no longer prove effective in the education of poor children.

“Suppose, for the sake of argument, he continued, that the various ecclesiastical superiors of the localities where the Brothers are established should agree on giving you, after my death, only one priest as your superior (a highly improbable supposition). Would he be the right man to lead you? Would he understand the spirit of a Community? Of yours, in particular? Would he follow its rules? Would he be willing to adopt your manner of living? Could he sympathize with you or you with him? Would you be prepared to give him your confidence? Would he be prepared to live with you as one of you? Even supposing that he were a saint, a man filled with the Spirit of God, zealous for the salvation of his neighbor, full of charity and tenderness in your regard, would he be the right man for you, not having been brought up like you and with you? In addition, his dignity as a priest would always create a gap between you and him, and with his being unacquainted with your customs, traditions, principles, and practices, how could you have but one heart and one soul with him? Would he not wish to change your rules? In a word, would he be the right person to direct you? How long would it take for him to acquire the experience needed to govern you according to the spirit of your Institute? Would it not call for a miracle to find a man really apt to govern you? Can you expect such a miracle? If not, why delay in doing away with your present priest-superior and in making it a law for yourselves never to give this title to anyone clothed in this dignity?”⁹¹

Context L: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information

- De La Salle’s words of advice here about the necessity of avoiding having an ordained person imposed on them as Superior are “prophetic” of the crisis of Easter 1714 that induced “the principal Brothers” to send the *Letter of April 1, 1714*, which insisted on his return to resume the leadership as Superior.⁹²
- There is little new in the argument that continues here, but it is obviously an attempt by De La Salle to have the Brothers more deeply aware of what could happen from the interference by well-meaning clerics. The “autonomy” of the Brothers – authorized in a particular diocese by the bishop – but without clerical control was of course a “prototype” for the later development of congregations of religious Brothers in Europe following the French Revolution.
- The challenge has re-appeared at different times in the history of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It was particularly strong in the 39th General Chapter of 1966-1967 (following the Second Vatican Council) and led to an important discussion in the 40th General Chapter of 1976 when some Vietnamese Brothers (who had had all their schools closed after 1975) requested to be ordained as priests because the Communist government allowed parishes to continue. The General Chapter, however, decided to maintain the Institute’s historical status as Brothers.

Toward the End of De La Salle’s Life

Text M: Thirteenth Fragment of the Memoir from Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

“Fear nothing. God has never failed to help those who hope in him. Everything is granted to a lively faith and perfect trust, even miracles if they are needed. Jesus Christ has obliged himself to provide those who seek the kingdom of God and his justice with everything they need. Never has he refused it to those who serve him. Every page of Scripture bears witness to this truth. After all, nothing happens in this world save what God permits or ordains. Good and evil, poverty and wealth, come from his hand. It is he who distributes them with constant goodness and wisdom. If we have received so many benefits from his liberality, why should we refuse to accept from his justice the chastisement he sends us? He is the Lord, let him do what he pleases. If we conform our desires to his good pleasure, we shall find relief in our pains, put an end to our worries, and draw a treasure of merit from the depths of our poverty. Even if we have to die of hunger, if God finds us submissive, he will at least crown our virtue in heaven and admit us to the ranks of the martyrs of patience.”⁹³

Context M: Commentary and Supplementary Biographical Information

- Strangely, Blain’s biography places this discourse toward the end of De La Salle’s life. It is consistent with De La Salle’s reliance on Divine Providence but could well have been written much earlier in his life.

Two Questions That Remain to Be Considered

The first question that remains to be considered is why the *Memoir* makes no reference to the so-called “heroic vow” taken by De La Salle, Nicolas Vuyart, and Gabriel Drolin at Vaugirard on November 21, 1691.⁹⁴ My personal hypothesis is that the absence of any reference to the “heroic vow” taken in 1691 could be explained as follows. De La Salle, discouraged by the apparent collapse of his work, asked advice of his spiritual director, Bauyn, who, aware as he would have been at that time, of what Jean-Jacques Olier and his companions had done on the November 21, 1641 in Vaugirard [exactly fifty years previously], challenged De La Salle to do the same. As this decision would have been known to both Bauyn and De La Salle, there was no need to include it in this document.

A second remaining question is that it seems reasonable to ask why this document – about which Brother Bernard asserts that “it was undoubtedly under obedience that he was ordered to write it; moreover, only his confessor could have directed him to write something so contrary to his sense of humility” – remained in De La Salle’s possession to be discovered while he was in the south of France?

The most likely explanation of both questions is that the document was originally requested by De La Salle’s saintly Sulpician friend, guide and confessor, Father Jean-Jacques Bauyn [1641-1696], whom he would have known first during his years as a student [1670-1672]. We know that De La Salle renewed his contact with Bauyn after he returned to Paris in 1688; and Blain gives us a detailed account of their relationship and deep friendship, especially in the difficult years [1691-1695] at Vaugirard, “la petite Trappe” as it was called:

As the community of the Brothers at Vaugirard was not far from the country house belonging to the Minor Seminary of Saint Sulpice ... De La Salle himself sometimes went there to consult Botuin ... I am referring here to the vacation of 1695, a blessed period when the seminarians could see one saint coming to consult another.⁹⁵

It seems reasonable to think that De La Salle could have shown the requested “handwritten document” to Bauyn at one of their meetings before June 6, 1694, when De La Salle vowed to remain with the Brothers for life. It seems possible to imagine that Bauyn did not feel any need to retain it.

A Concluding Remark about Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain

While it seems that Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain, in his attempt to convince the reader of De La Salle’s extraordinary reliance on “Divine Providence,” sometimes uses the original document “written in his [i.e. De La Salle’s] own hand” as though he were a personal witness of the event, the use of the first person as De La Salle’s own words in the detail given in the ten reasons of De La Salle’s discernment about resigning his canonry, seems to have an authentic ring about it, even though sections of the eighth reason seem to be more typical of Blain than of De La Salle. I wonder whether this section may possibly derive from a conversation between Blain and De La Salle between 1715 and 1719 about this “document written in his own hand,” which we are told had been “discovered” while De La Salle was in the south of France in 1714?

Endnotes

1. This text was finalized on May 15, 2015 as a compilation of materials that might be used for a workshop. For further study of *The Memoir on the Beginnings*, see also *An Introduction to the History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Origins 1651-1726 (Lasallian Studies 5)* by Henri Bédel and translated by Allen Geppert (Rome, 1996), pages 41-45. [In the manuscript as prepared by Brother Gerard, sources were not explicitly referenced. The editors have attempted, when possible, to cite readily available sources.]
2. Gerard Rummery, FSC, holds a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Lancaster University. He served two periods on the staff of the International Lasallian Center (CIL) in Rome and was twice elected to the General Council of the De La Salle Christian Brothers (1986-1993 and 1993-2000). He remains a presenter and researcher with Lasallian Education Services in Australia.
3. The first three biographers of John Baptist de La Salle were: Brother Bernard (1721), Dom François-Elie Maillifer (1723 and 1740), and Canon Jean-Baptiste Blain (1733).
4. Sometimes the document referenced here is called the *Memorandum on the Beginnings*, and sometimes it is called the *Memoir on the Beginnings*. In some other places, it is referenced as a Manuscript. By way of explanation, the choice here of *Memoir* is because the understanding of “a memoir” as “a collection of memories that an individual writes about moments or events that took place in a subject’s life” seems more appropriate than the understanding of “a memorandum” as “a note or record made for future use.”
5. *John Baptist de La Salle: The Spirituality of Christian Education*, edited and introduced by Carl Koch, Jeffrey Calligan, and Jeffrey Gros (NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), page 109.
6. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* [Maillefer and Bernard], edited by Paul Grass and translated by William J. Quinn and Donald C. Mouton (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 284.
7. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996) pages 284-285.
8. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996) pages 284.
9. For some understanding of what is meant here by the phrase “with the twelve Brothers he had chosen,” see *De La Salle: A City Saint and the Liberation of the Poor through Education* by Alfred Calcutt (Oxford: De La Salle Publications, 1993), pages 254-255; or *The Work Is Yours: The Life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle* by Luke Salm (Romeoville, IL: Christian Brothers Publications, 1989), pages 80-81.

10. A similar compilation of these “fragments” of the *Memoir* can also be found in *John Baptist de La Salle: The Spirituality of Christian Education* (NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), pages 109-119.
11. *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 257.
12. “Introduction to Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 259.
13. “Introduction to Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 12.
14. *The Mind and Heart of St. John Baptist de la Salle* [Book Four] by Jean-Baptiste Blain and translated with notes by Edwin Bannon FSC (Oxford: De La Salle Publications, 1990), page xi. [See *History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* by Georges Rigault and translated by S. Edmund Dolan, Vol. 1 (Unpublished manuscript, n.d.), page 9.]
15. *The Mind and Heart of St. John Baptist de la Salle* [Book Four] (Oxford: De La Salle Publications, 1990), page xi. [See “Lasallian Studies in the Mid-Twentieth Century” by André Rayez in *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, edited by Robert C. Berger (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1999), pages 94-95.]
16. *The Mind and Heart of St. John Baptist de la Salle* [Book Four] (Oxford: De La Salle Publications, 1990), page xi.
17. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle: Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, A Biography in Three Books* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain and edited by Luke Salm and translated by Richard Arnandez (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), pages 68-69.
18. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), pages 69-70.
19. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 71.
20. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 34.
21. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 285-286.
22. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), pages 71-72.

23. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 73.
24. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 35, 37.
25. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 288-289.
26. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 77.
27. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 37.
28. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 289.
29. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 79.
30. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 37-38.
31. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 289-290.
32. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 80.
33. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 40.
34. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 294, 299-300.
35. *Lasallian Chronology* (*Lasalliana* #31), by José María Valladolid and translated by Francis Vesel (Rome, 1994), page 89.
36. *Lasallian Chronology* (*Lasalliana* #31), page 90.
37. *Lasallian Chronology* (*Lasalliana* #31), page 92.

38. *An Introduction to the History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Origins 1651-1726 (Lasallian Studies #5)* by Henri Bedel and translated by Allen Geppert (Rome, 1996), page 34.
39. *An Introduction to the History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Origins 1651-1726* (Rome, 1996), page 33.
40. *Lasallian Chronology (Lasalliana #31)*, page 93.
41. *An Introduction to the History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Origins 1651-1726* (Rome, 1996), page 43.
42. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle (Book One)* by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications), page 104.
43. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle (Book One)* by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), pages 105-106.
44. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 49-50.
45. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 307.
46. Cf. “The Spirituality of Self-Abandonment: Saint John Baptist de La Salle” by André Rayez in *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, edited by Robert C. Berger (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1999), pages 133-167. “[De La Salle] is still one of the best representatives of the spiritual movement of self-abandonment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,” page 134.
47. Cf. “The Gospel Journey of John Baptist de La Salle (1651-1719)” by Michel Sauvage in *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, edited by Robert C. Berger (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1999), pages 221-246.
48. *Lasallian Chronology (Lasalliana #31)*, page 94.
49. *Lasallian Chronology (Lasalliana #31)*, pages 94, 95, and 108.
50. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle (Book One)* by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 107.
51. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 50.

52. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 307.
53. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 110.
54. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 111.
55. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 50-51.
56. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 307, 308.
57. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), pages 111-113.
58. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), pages 114.
59. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 51, 52, 53.
60. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 308.
61. Cf. “Fidelity to the Movement of the Spirit: Criteria for Discernment” by Miguel Campos in *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 3, #2 (2-12).
62. Cf. “The Journey of the Lasallian Community” by Gerard Rummery in *MEL Bulletin #27: Lasallian Identity, Working Documents for a Workshop* (Rome, 2006), pages 8-20.
63. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 149.
64. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 150.
65. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 151.
66. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 51, 52, 57.

67. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 307, 315.

68. *Lasallian Chronology* (*Lasalliana* #31), page 97.

69. *An Introduction to the History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Origins 1651-1726* (*Lasallian Studies* #5), pages 98, 102.

70. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 156.

71. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 58.

72. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 315-316.

73. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book One) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 174.

74. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), pages 62, 63.

75. “Bernard’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 326.

76. Cf. “Meditation #207.1” in *Meditations* by John Baptist de La Salle and translated by Richard Arnandez and Augustine Loes (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994), page 467; and “The Origin and Spirituality of Teaching Orders in the Church” by Michel Sauvage in *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 4, #1 (2013) for advice of Father Barré to his Sisters [“When a mistress is tempted to withdraw to enter a religious house ... abandoning a state more evangelical, more dependent, harder, poorer, and more scorned in the world for another one more comfortable or more honored but which is useful to her alone,” page 15].

77. *Lasallian Chronology* (*Lasalliana* #31), page 107.

78. *Lasallian Chronology* (*Lasalliana* #31), page 107.

79. *Lasallian Chronology* (*Lasalliana* #31), page 111.

80. *Lasallian Chronology* (*Lasalliana* #31), page 108.

81. *Lasallian Chronology* (*Lasalliana* #31), page 112.

82. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book Two) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 307.
83. *Lasallian Chronology* (Rome, 1994), page 126.
84. *Lasallian Chronology* (Rome, 1994), pages 118, 119, 120-121, and 116.
85. *Lasallian Chronology* (Rome, 1994), pages 116-117.
86. *Lasallian Chronology* (*Lasalliana* #31), page 126.
87. *Lasallian Chronology* (*Lasalliana* #31), page 215.
88. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book Two) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 334.
89. “Maillefer’s Manuscript” in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), page 90.
90. *Rule and Foundational Documents by John Baptist de La Salle* and translated and edited by Augustine Loes and Ronald Isetti (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), page 14.
91. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book Two) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), pages 334-336.
92. Cf. “The Letter from the Brothers in 1714” in *An Introduction to the History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Origins 1651-1726* (*Lasallian Studies* #5) by Henri Bedel and translated by Allen Geppert (Rome, 1996), pages 171-174.
93. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book Three) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), page 571.
94. Cf. “The Vow of 1691” in *An Introduction to the History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Origins 1651-1726* (Rome, 1996), pages 87-92.
95. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle* (Book Two) by Jean-Baptiste Blain (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), pages 212-214.