

## Some Spiritual Currents Which Could Have Influenced De La Salle

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### 1. The difficulties and limitations of this undertaking

**"Some currents":** It would be rash to try to draw a complete picture; spiritual authors in France in the seventeenth century were legion in number. There are not only the authors we know nowadays. Consider the whole movement of thought carried by oral teaching in seminaries, preaching in churches, ecclesiastical conferences and spiritual direction. Moreover, treatises that we know today were only manuscripts in De La Salle's time; and it is hard to know if he knew them. Other works that he did know have been on the *Index*<sup>2</sup> almost three centuries. He could have read them before their condemnation, but the influence of such works is often very difficult to access for us.

**"Spiritual currents" and not "schools of spirituality":** A school of spirituality can appear within the movement of a current. It can also create its own. Generally speaking, the school is more easily perceptible just when the current is weakening, is being diluted, or has already disappeared. The word "school" suggests something more closed, more static, than a movement. This distinction is handy for an analysis, but is not really close to the reality. We used to speak more about schools until a few decades ago. Now we are happier to talk about directions and currents. This may be less exact, but it is closer to reality.

**"Which could have influenced":** There is no point in deciding some matters that have no solution. To be able to maintain that currents have influenced De La Salle, we would need to be much more advanced in the study of the sources of Lasallian spiritual thought. It is easier to recognize some sources for *The Duties of a Christian*<sup>3</sup> or for *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*.<sup>4</sup> Locating sources of the more strictly called spiritual writings is more difficult to list.

**The search for possible influences is sometimes a prominent aspect of the "history(ies) of spirituality":** There is a tendency in such works to distinguish the smallest relationships, to wish to make even the most tenuous links admit a connection or family link. While this is important, it is not the major concern. There is the danger of almost forgetting to present the particular features of the "spiritual" author under study.

**As a spiritual author, De La Salle is not well-known:** His spiritual works – *Meditations*,<sup>5</sup> *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*,<sup>6</sup> *Collection of Various Short Treatises*,<sup>7</sup> and *Common Rules*<sup>8</sup> – are known only by the Brothers.<sup>9</sup> *Religious Instructions and Exercises of Piety for the Christian Schools*<sup>10</sup> are not even known by the majority of the Brothers. Volume One of *The Duties of a Christian* also deserves to be better known by the Brothers. The publication of his complete works in *Cahiers lasalliens*<sup>11</sup> took place only fifteen years ago.<sup>12</sup>

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These are the extensive outline notes distributed by Brother Maurice-Auguste both in 1981 and in 1985 during his presentations at the Centro Internazionale Lasalliano (Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Rome, Italy). The notes were prepared and edited for publication by William Mann, FSC, D.Min.

**Through his written works, De La Salle belongs to the eighteenth century:** With the exception of two or three small pedagogical works, he published nothing before 1703. *Meditations* and *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer* come even much later in 1729, 1730, or 1739. It is true that by his formation, De La Salle comes within the last third of the seventeenth century, whereas the great spiritual movement in France falls within the first two-thirds of the century. Modern authors ignore practically the whole of the eighteenth century, giving their attention to the study of the seventeenth century, with less emphasis on the last thirty years of that century.

As is the case with very many spiritual writers, De La Salle is not simply a member of a school. He is open and welcoming to the writings of the great ancient and modern spiritual writers. He is indebted also to the “descendants” of these writers and to authors of less importance. At a time when feelings were easily aroused between partisans and opponents of “rigorism,” quietism, or simply of devotion, De La Salle succeeded in avoiding these struggles. As a consequence, he attracts less attention from researchers. Led by Providence to become interested in the formation of schoolmasters, he worked on rules, treatises and methods especially for them. Through doing this, he is obviously touched by the main spiritual currents of the seventeenth century; but he remains a difficult author to classify in one current rather than in another.

## 2. An introduction<sup>13</sup>

**Some general background works:** A few authors who merit attention are Louis Cognet on post-reformation spirituality,<sup>14</sup> Jean-Robert Armogathe on the subject of Quietism,<sup>15</sup> J. Le Brun on the history of spirituality in France,<sup>16</sup> and Henri Bremond’s *History of Religious Thought in France*.<sup>17</sup> Following Bremond’s work, there has sometimes been a reduction of the significance of non-Bérullian currents in seventeenth-century France. More modern authors have written against this tendency, and a more balanced viewpoint is now current.

**Some works centered on John Baptist de La Salle:** Two articles by Jesuit André Rayez that merit attention are “Lasallian Studies in the Mid-Twentieth Century”<sup>18</sup> and “The Spirituality of Self-Abandonment: Saint John Baptist de La Salle.”<sup>19</sup> The first of these two articles is indispensable for anyone wishing to study De La Salle as a “spiritual” writer. Not long dead, André Rayez deserves to be known as the person who drew attention to the work already done, and especially to the work yet to be done for a better study of Lasallian texts. In the years 1946-1956, he made the Superiors of the Institute aware of this; and it is partly due to him that researchers and the authors of scholarly publications have come to know De La Salle.

In addition to the publications mentioned by Rayez in the two aforementioned articles (mainly: Brothers Emile Herment, Emiliano Lett, Bernard Emonnet, and William J. Battersby), we should add a 1952 collection of texts attributed to De La Salle. These texts were chosen and grouped under the direction of Brother Nicet-Joseph.<sup>20</sup>

Also noteworthy are a few other works, by Brothers Maurice-Auguste Hermans and José Arturo Gareis,<sup>21</sup> Brother Clement-Marcel Martinais,<sup>22</sup> Brother Alphonse-Daniel Guilhem,<sup>23</sup> Brothers Maurice-Auguste Hermans and Michel Sauvage’s article entitled “Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools,”<sup>24</sup> and Brothers Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos’ book entitled

*Announcing the Gospel to the Poor: The Spiritual Experience and Spiritual Teaching of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.*<sup>25</sup>

***Some works which treat as their main concern or only incidentally one or another aspect of Lasallian spirituality:*** It is worth noting the writings of Luis Varela's *Sacred Scripture in the Spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle*,<sup>26</sup> Juan Viola Galindo,<sup>27</sup> Luis Diumenge Pujol,<sup>28</sup> Ignacio Mengs Calle,<sup>29</sup> Antonio Temprado Ordiaz,<sup>30</sup> Michel Sauvage's *Catechesis and the Laity*,<sup>31</sup> Yves Poutet,<sup>32</sup> Jean Pungier,<sup>33</sup> and Robert Laube's *Pentecostal Spirituality: The Lasallian Theology of Apostolic Life*.<sup>34</sup>

### **3. The background**

***The Catholic Reformation:*** In France, the application of the reforms proposed by the Council of Trent<sup>35</sup> was, at first, opposed by very strong currents of Gallicanism and anti-Romanism. The bishops themselves were slow to move and to accept, one after another, the paths traced out by the Council as regards reform. Clerical reform also took place *very* slowly. There gradually appeared retreats for those preparing for ordination, and then some real seminaries where there was worked out a priestly spirituality, giving greater value to the dignity of the priestly state.

The reformation of religious orders and congregations took place right through the seventeenth century. Some spiritual leaders, such as Abbé Armand-Jean le Bouthillier de Rancé (1626-1700), exercised a very great influence, even outside France, among clerics and lay people. There was a new contribution, that of religious men and women who came from abroad. Consider, for example, the influence exercised by the Carmelite men and women coming from Spain.

A large number of works then appeared in favor of the poor and the instruction of the people and of evangelization in the country districts. Frequently enough, the founders or initiators originated a spiritual movement from which more or less widespread groups profited. Consider, for example, the influence of Saint Vincent de Paul.

***The rediscovery of Holy Scripture:*** Spiritual authors recommended the New Testament, translations of which into French became more widespread. The reading of the Old Testament was often limited to Psalms, Proverbs, and other Wisdom literature. The disciples of Pierre de Bérulle put emphasis on Saint Paul and Saint John. The main spiritual authors show a very advanced acquaintance with Scripture. Very many are more concerned with adaptation (accommodation) than with exegesis. They offer and recommend as a priority a spiritual reading of the Bible. For spiritual authors, the Bible is not first of all an historical or moral book. Before everything else, it is the place where the soul meets the God who has revealed himself through human history and through the personal history of each individual. The devotion to the Incarnate Word, "rediscovered" by Bérulle, resulted from a very extensive familiarity with the Gospels. The spiritual experience of the mystics placed special attention on the *Canticle of Canticles*.

***The rediscovery of hermit (eremitic) and desert spirituality:*** As at every period of great spiritual vitality, the eremitical life came to experience during the seventeenth century a renewal and a certain expansion. Religious, priests and laity, of their own will, took on the practices of what was sometimes a very advanced if not absolute solitude, either for a short time or for a lifetime.

The fashion favored not only the Carthusians but also hermit congregations that have now disappeared, such as the Congregation of Saint John the Baptist. The “deserts” of the Carmels, the hermitage at Caen with Jean de Bernières-Louvigny (1602-1659), and the solitaries of Port-Royal had a real spiritual influence. Besides the *Vitae Patrum* (Desert Fathers), the *Institutions* and the *Conferences* of Saint John Cassian (360-435) were translated, edited and re-edited. *Conferences IX* and *X* (on prayer) were especially widely known, commented on, and discussed.

***The Christian life:*** With regard to forms of prayer, there tended to be a restoration of liturgical prayer; but there was a proliferation of local neo-Gallican liturgies. There were at the same time translations of the *Missal* into French and condemnations of its popularization and use. As regards private prayer, there was a whole proliferation of litanies and other pious practices, an unprecedented growth in the printing and reprinting of meditation books, retreat exercises, and methods of prayer.

With regard to Eucharistic devotion, there were veneration of the real presence by adoration, benedictions, hymns, and an emphasis on the sacrificial aspect of the Mass. There was, from the beginning of the century, a movement toward more frequent communion; but the writers also emphasized the practical obstacles against anything more frequent than weekly communion. Some “rigorist” authors demanded of the communicant complete renunciation of sin, thereby distancing Christians a long way from communion.

Concerning Marian devotions, Bérulle and his followers professed a Marian devotion linked to their devotion to the Incarnate Word. Jesuits and Dominicans propagated a solid devotion. Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716) is an outstanding example of Marian devotion in the provincial countryside. Traditional devotional practices were maintained: pilgrimages, the celebration of feasts, ceremonies, and consecrations. Some Jansenist authors occasionally criticized the (very real) abuses, as well as writings that lacked theological rigor.

#### 4. Some currents

***Currents coming from abroad:*** The Italian influence was felt especially through authors such as Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622), Saint Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510), and the Pseudo-Bonaventure’s *Meditations on the Life of Christ*.<sup>36</sup> For the northern influence (from the Rhineland and Flanders) besides the *Devotio Moderna*,<sup>37</sup> think of works such as the *Imitation of Christ*. The influence of the English Capuchins was felt especially through Benet of Canfield and his *Rule of Perfection*, which was very frequently cited. In this regard, note the birth of a so-called abstract spirituality: the soul must enter into contact with God without any intermediary, even without that of Christ’s humanity.

Also think of the influence of the Carmelites, especially Saint Teresa of Avila in Spain (1515-1582). The introduction of the Carmelites into France aroused quite a movement of curiosity, then of interest, opinions, and devotion. The writings of Saint Teresa of Avila were translated right from the beginning of the seventeenth century. Translations multiplied during the second half of the century. What was of special interest was the Teresa of the *Foundations* and of the autobiography. The influence of Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591), also from Spain, was more restricted. His ideas reached only the movements and milieu called more strictly spiritual.

***Saint Francis de Sales:*** His *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1600-1609) stressed that devotion is not an isolated current in the Christian life. It commits the whole person, and this devotion is enshrined in prayer. It is characterized by love and understood as the constant intention to carry out the good will of God. In *His Treatise on the Love of God* (1616), it is suggested that each person can and should try to develop a contemplative style of prayer. The extent of such contemplation is to be conformity to the Divine Will.

The prayer of simplicity described and encouraged by the saint was to have a great influence on French spirituality. The Visitation sisters remained close to their Founder, but his works were more widely read; and practically all of the great currents of the century in spirituality flowed in one way or another from him. The importance of spiritual direction followed from the influence of Francis de Sales. The spiritual director became an important person in the French society of the seventeenth century. This was the case with priests, religious men and women, and even laity. In worldly circles, spiritual direction became quite fashionable.

***Bérullianism:*** Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629) introduced the Carmelites into France and founded the French Oratory. In opposition to an abstract spirituality, this current judged that we can approach God only through Jesus Christ. Hence, devotion to the Incarnate Word was judged essential. This devotion presumes on the contemplation of Christ's mysteries: union, compliance, conformity to all its "states": Christ in Mary, the Child Jesus, the suffering Christ, the penitential Christ. De La Salle knew only followers who were a long way removed from Bérulle. Such disciples are not always faithful echoes of the master's thought.

Some Oratorians easily fell into a more intellectual kind of spirituality. The spirituality of Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657), parish priest of Saint-Sulpice and then Founder of the Seminary and of the Society of Saint-Sulpice, was close enough to that of Bérulle. The priest needs to enter into the mysteries of Jesus and take on his thoughts, his affections (conformity to his will), and his intentions. De La Salle knew some immediate disciples of Olier. From Louis Tronson (1622-1700), he would have heard conferences given to seminarians. Such conferences were narrowly concentrated on vocation and priestly formation.

***Jansenism:*** In spirituality, as in doctrine, there is no *single* Jansenism, but several successive and sometimes simultaneous Jansenisms. There were, above all, *some* Jansenists that were somewhat or greatly different from one another. Of special note was Port-Royal, a Cistercian abbey or even two abbeys, one in the town and the other in the country known as Port-Royal-des-Champs. This center of Christian and religious life, fervent and even austere, became the strong center of Jansenist resistance.

The Jansenists wished to live the Gospel strictly and truthfully. They even refused to avail themselves of the concessions usually accepted in the Church. This concern for truth, the Jansenists believed, should be found in the whole of the Christian life, especially in the reception of the sacraments. A confession without a conversion is a lie, and so the absolution should be refused until the conversion is regarded as sufficient. Communion supposes the absence of any affection for sin. Before communion, all affection for sin should be destroyed in oneself. The human person is born guilty because of original sin. The divine mercy does not do away with the demands of a just chastisement.

The movement toward God in prayer is completely the work of grace, and such grace is an absolutely free gift of God. The spiritual life is demanded by Baptism. There is continuity, therefore, between the lay life and the monastic life, but both must be insistent in their refusal of the world. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, Jansenism in Port-Royal was seen as obstinately attached to antiquity (to group traditions) and as fiercely independent in regard to authority (that of the king, but that also of ecclesiastical superiors).

**Quietism:** A kind of “pre-Quietism” was latent throughout the seventeenth century. The prayer of quiet was in fashion and was discussed, even among the non-initiated. The “quietist” crisis came to a head toward the end of the century. There were arguments about ideas: Was contemplation accessible to everyone? Is contemplation a passive state completely apart from any act of the will? Is pure love, i.e., totally disinterested love, possible? Is prayer of petition permissible? etc.

These quarrels about ideas revolved around conflicts between different persons. On one hand, there was François Fénelon (1651-1715) defending contemplation and mysticism. On the other side, there was Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704) wishing to relegate all mystical phenomena into extraordinary manifestations. Louis Antoine de Noailles (1651-1729),<sup>38</sup> Paul Godet des Marais (1647-1709),<sup>39</sup> and Louis Tronson<sup>40</sup> attempted to adjudicate in the conflict. Fénelon laid the matter before Rome; and after a great deal of hesitation, Pope Innocent XII condemned twenty-three propositions of a hastily-written work of Fénelon.<sup>41</sup> Quietism, however, was not dead. It had an influence in certain foreign countries (England, Germany, the Low Countries).

A friend of De La Salle, the prior of Villiers-le-Bel, Charles de La Grange, opposed to Fénelon, wished at the same time to safeguard contemplative prayer. He intervened in favor of De La Salle after the happenings at La Grand-Maison (December 1702). “There is no Quietism there,” he wrote.<sup>42</sup>

## 5. Some observations helping to situate De La Salle

**He was known as “Roman priest”:** We cannot verify Blain’s<sup>43</sup> statement that he had read “J. B. de La Salle, Roman priest” below a formula of vows of the Founder. It is always possible that there was a formula bearing such a signature, apart from those we know. In any case, the expression is consistent with an explicit and known attitude: his preference for the Roman missal, his submission to the Holy See at moments of division and then of the condemnations of Jansenists, an intention that was very soon known (from 1694?) to “establish a foundation in Rome.”<sup>44</sup> He frequently refers to the authority of the Council of Trent. There are 72 explicit references. They refer especially to dogmatic statements, and frequently these are cited from the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*.

**His attraction toward a solitary life:** From his first years in community at Rheims, and until the last years of his life at Saint Yon, De La Salle took care to have some solitude in the house or near the community house. He was persevering in seeking solitude among the Carmelites, at the Chartreuse, at Parménie . . .<sup>45</sup>

The Brothers are seen as people withdrawn from the world, living in solitude and silence.<sup>46</sup> When Blain was living in Paris, he had heard the house of the Brothers referred to as “la petite Trappe” (a miniature Trappist monastery!).<sup>47</sup> This was probably said of the house at Vaugirard, not of the one in the Rue Princesse. The novitiate of the Brothers made you think of La Trappe, where solitude and silence reigned supreme.<sup>48</sup> The ninth conference of Saint Cassian is referred to explicitly in *The Duties of a Christian*.<sup>49</sup>

It is to the solitary Jean de Bernières-Louvigny that De La Salle is indebted for the “Litany of the Passion.”<sup>50</sup> It is the same solitary who encourages a prayer of “simple attention to some divine truth in the presence of God.”<sup>51</sup>

When the first Brothers were choosing their religious names, they gave a prominent place to the names of the ancient solitaries: Anthony, Arsenius, Dorotheus, Hilarion, Jerome, Macarius, Pacholius, Theodore, and . . . Paul the Simple.

***Frequent reference to Holy Scripture:*** Concerning this topic, refer to the works already cited: Varela, Campos, and Sauvage. In addition, De La Salle prescribes to the Brothers consistent reference to Scripture, especially the New Testament. He prescribes its daily reading, even when traveling, and extra reading for feast days and holidays, during retreats, and during Holy Week. As regards spiritual reading, he recommends it “especially if it is Holy Scripture . . .”<sup>52</sup> Psalms, Proverbs, Prophets, and Wisdom are very often cited in *The Duties of a Christian* and the *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*.<sup>53</sup> The number of citations from the Old Testament is especially noteworthy in *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*.

***The Imitation of Christ.*** The reading of the *Imitation*<sup>54</sup> is often linked to that of the New Testament. The Brothers had both for their personal use. They were to read or hear read some passages from the *Imitation* every day, and this was so even while they were traveling (before prayer, toward the end of their prayer, at meals), and even more so on special days (Communion days, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday). They were to have examined themselves on their fidelity to this reading and to its memorization or meditation.<sup>55</sup> The book of the *Imitation* might also be given as a reward to the pupils.<sup>56</sup> In addition, the author of the *Imitation* is referred to explicitly a number of times in the *Collection of Various Short Treatises*,<sup>57</sup> in the *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*,<sup>58</sup> and in the *Meditations* for feast days.<sup>59</sup>

***Devotional practices:*** The proliferation of litanies was in no way spared the disciples of De La Salle! In a manuscript of the *Exercises of Piety* dating from 1738, which is preserved in the Archives,<sup>60</sup> the daily provision is: Litanies of the Holy Name of Jesus, the Passion, Saint Joseph, the Most Blessed Virgin; and the copyist has added the Litany of Divine Providence.

Concerning Eucharistic devotion, De La Salle is consistent with the best non-Jansenist authors of his day. And concerning Marian devotion, the same can be said with regard to pilgrimages and the celebration of feasts even when these are not holidays.

***The Carmelites and Saint Teresa:*** De La Salle had read the life and studied the works of Teresa of Avila.<sup>61</sup> The Carmelite influence appears certain in the teaching of De La Salle on prayer, especially in the *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*. You can find as well the names of

two Carmelites (Jean de Saint-Samson and Laurent de la Résurrection) from whom De La Salle would have borrowed.

From the Discalced Carmelite Modeste de Saint Amable, the *Common Rules* of 1726 provides that in the Novitiate<sup>62</sup> there would be public reading of the *Perfect Inferior*.<sup>63</sup> Some patristic references which De La Salle inserted into his *Meditations* on obedience also come from this work.

***Saint Francis de Sales:*** There are three explicit references to the writings of Saint Francis de Sales in De La Salle: where he makes his own the rule on frequent communion<sup>64</sup> and where he cites a letter<sup>65</sup> of the Saint about “sleeping alone.”<sup>66</sup> And while there are few discernible borrowings from Saint Francis de Sales, there certainly are direct and indirect influences as regards prayer, the presence of God, mortification, sanctification of the duties of one’s state of life, and politeness.

***As regards Jansenism:*** There is no doubt that from the doctrinal point of view, De La Salle is clear of all Jansenism. The “stern Christian” that he appears to be is very much in the line of a certain kind of austere clergy of his time. There were some personal contacts between De La Salle and some priests and religious whom we would classify as Jansenists. Prayers of Jansenist authors have some emphases that are very close to those found in Lasallian prayers.

***As regards Quietism:*** Less than three years after the condemnation of Quietism in December 1702, De La Salle was replaced, by order of Cardinal Noailles, as superior of the society by the Grand-Vicaire Edmond Pirot. These two people had played a fairly important part in the “Quietist argument.” They could have been, then, very sensitive to an accusation of Quietism uttered against De La Salle. The letter of Prior Charles de La Grange seems clearly to show that such an accusation had been made. It would not have been only the complaints of the two novices about their mistreatment that would have provoked the intervention of the Archbishop of Paris in the affairs of La Grand-Maison.

The spirituality of abandonment lived and recommended by De La Salle did not go as far as Quietism. As regards indifference, the Founder avoids the Quietist position or even anything approaching it (even the position of the school of Francis de Sales).

***Jesuit spiritual writers:*** It certainly seems true that De La Salle and the first Brothers had been readers of Jesuit writers, and it was through them that they were influenced in the realm of spirituality. In the seventeenth century, the spiritual writers of the Company of Jesus were moreover in the main lines of the writers of the time as much as, if not more than, in the line of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. It was frequently through the Jesuits that De La Salle and his Brothers came into contact with such diverse influences as the Carmelites and Capuchins. Their anti-Jansenist quality would have been some reassurance for any readers anxious to maintain their fidelity and orthodoxy as regards Rome.

***Alphonsus Rodriguez (1538-1616):*** Our Lasallian texts send us back on a number of occasions to the treatises of the last section of his work entitled *Practice of Christian Perfection*, especially sections concerning the religious life: as regards “the vows,” on the eve of the Trinity; “of the observance of rules, of obedience, of the manifestation of conscience, of fraternal correction,” during the annual retreat; “of obedience, of rules, of giving account and of other virtues,” during



the novitiate.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, in writing the Preface for the first printed edition of the *Common Rules*, the Brothers are aware of these readings.<sup>68</sup>

*Julien Hayneufve (1588-1663)*: De La Salle borrowed from his *Abrégé des Méditations* (edited in 1685) the “Considerations” the Brothers need to make from time to time and especially during their annual retreat on their state and employment.<sup>69</sup>

De La Salle also adapted a catalogue of Jesuit *Instructions to Provincials* to put together our collection of topics on which the Brothers should converse during recreation.<sup>70</sup> On the same topic, De La Salle also adapted for our use from the Jesuit *Rules of Modesty*.<sup>71</sup>

*Jean Crasset (1618-1692)*: It was Rayez who drew our attention to the importance and the meaning of the “instructions” for retreat in Crasset’s *Le chrétien en solitude*, which follow the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* in the first edition.<sup>72</sup>

*Jean Busée, (1547-1611)*: The author, whose real name was Jan Buys, died at Mayence in 1611 leaving a Latin work entitled *Enchiridion piarum Meditationum*. From 1654, an arrangement in French was published. There were 74 successive translations and editions. The “instructions” already referred to go back to this work . . . advising meditations on mortification, modesty, patience, interior prayer, etc.<sup>73</sup>

*Jean-Baptiste Saint-Jure (1588-1657)*: The Brothers read from two works of this author: *L’homme spirituel où la vie spirituelle est traitée par ses principes*, and also *De la connaissance et de l’amour du Fils de Dieu Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ*. They were recalling one or other of these works when they were engaged in writing the Preface to our *Rules and Constitutions*.<sup>74</sup>

*Étienne Binet (1569-1639)*: Out of interest, we should note here one or other of the readings foreseen for holidays when rain made the usual walk out of the question.<sup>75</sup> His work entitled *De la consolation des malades*<sup>76</sup> was designed to offer the bedridden sick person strong and wise advice to prevent him from requiring forms of piety beyond his strength.<sup>77</sup>

The same article of our *Common Rules*, concerning rainy holidays, anticipates the reading of the work entitled *The Flower of Examples*, which cannot be the exact title. Perhaps the correct title of the work would be *The Flower of the Psalms of David*, which is a work addressed to Christians living in the world to show them how they could sanctify themselves in all kinds of situations.<sup>78</sup>

These two works, cited in the *Common Rules* beside *Travel in the Holy Land*, *The Martyrs of Japan*, and others which could offer the Brothers edifying recreation, help us to understand the kind of recreation envisaged for the Brothers, and perhaps also of the personal reading they could do or could hear read (as the third book!) during their meals.

## **6. A conclusion without reaching a conclusion**

These few notes are intended to help us take account of the main spiritual directions offered to De La Salle and the first Brothers. They do not pretend, in any way, to give a satisfactory

explanation for the choices made within the community; but they do shed some kind of enlightenment on the choices made.

When we are speaking about the *Common Rules* in another conference, we will return somewhat on the restricted relationship that unites, in De La Salle's thinking, the devotion to Scripture, the familiar connection with the New Testament, and the spirit of faith that must be the very spirit of the Institute.<sup>79</sup>

## Notes

1. Maurice-Auguste Hermans, FSC (1911-1987) was a Doctor of Canon Law, former Assistant Superior General and Procurator General of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He served as the first international director of the office of Lasallian Studies in the Generalate in Rome (1956-1987), and is recognized as the architect of the monumental series *Cahiers lasalliens*, through which has been disseminated the writings of John Baptist de La Salle and much of the twentieth century scholarship about his life, spirituality, and pedagogy. For a presentation of his important role in the evolution of Lasallian studies, see "50 Years, and More, of Lasallian Studies: Chronicle and Perspectives" by Brother Alain Houry in *Digital Review of Lasallian Research* 1 (2010): 2-25.

2. "The Index" was a list of publications prohibited by the Catholic Church. A first list was promulgated in 1559, and the final version appeared in 1948. It was abolished in 1966 by Pope Paul VI.

3. John Baptist de La Salle, *The Duties of a Christian to God*, translated by Richard Arnandez and edited by Alexis Doval (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002).

4. John Baptist de La Salle, *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, translated by Richard Arnandez and edited by Gregory Wright (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1990).

5. *Meditations by John Baptist de La Salle*, translated by Richard Arnandez and Augustine Loes and edited by Augustine Loes and Francis Huether (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1994).

6. John Baptist de La Salle, *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, translated by Richard Arnandez and edited by Donald Mouton (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1995).

7. John Baptist de La Salle, *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, translated by William Battersby and edited by Daniel Burke (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1993).

8. John Baptist de La Salle, *Rule and Foundational Documents*, translated and edited by Augustine Loes and Ronald Isetti (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1995).

9. The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (FSC) is the religious community of teachers founded around 1680 by John Baptist de La Salle, and the members of this community are called Brothers.

10. John Baptist de La Salle, *Religious Instructions and Exercises of Piety for the Christian Schools*, translated by Richard Arandez and edited by Eugene Lappin (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002).

11. *Cahiers lasalliens* (CL) is a series of studies published since 1959 at the Generalate in Rome on the life and writings of John Baptist de La Salle and about the time of the origins of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. All of the volumes are in French, and only a very few have so far been translated into English (Nos. 50, 61, 62, and 63).

12. The complete works of De La Salle were published in *Cahiers lasalliens* between 1962 and 1965.

13. Most of the sources recommended by the author exist only in the French language. Only references to the English language texts he suggests in his notes will be provided in this text. In addition, however, reference will be made to authors and topics he referenced; and endnotes will be provided for the French references.

14. *La spiritualité moderne*, Vol. 1 L'essor: 1500-1650 (Paris, 1966). The author died prematurely in 1970 without being able to finish the rest of this study. One could make up for this, in part, by making use of other of his works: *Crépuscule des mystiques* (Desclée, 1958), *Le Jansenisme* (Paris, 1961). For Cognet, see also other useful articles published in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*. [The only English-language text we presently have is Louis Cognet's *Post-Reformation Spirituality*, trans. by Hepburne Scott (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1960).]

15. *Le Quiétisme* (Paris, 1973).

16. *Le grand siècle de la spiritualité française et ses lendemains* in the article "France" in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*, Vol. 5, paragraphs 917-953; or in the work *Histoire Spirituelle de la France*, pp. 227-285 (Paris, 1964). A doctoral thesis by the same author needs to be noted: *La Spiritualité de Bossuet* (Paris, 1972). This is a monumental work which, in order to situate Bossuet as a "spiritual" writer, gives a great deal of attention to the main debates on spirituality that marked the second half of the seventeenth century. For Le Brun, see also other useful articles published in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*.

17. *Histoire Littéraire du sentiment religieux en France...* (Paris, 1923-1936). Volumes 3 to 6, and then 9 and 10, of this eleven-volume dictionary are particularly useful to situate De La Salle and his work. [For a partial translation of this work, see Henri Bremond's *History of Religious Thought in France*, 3 Volumes (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1929-1937).]

18. In *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, edited by Robert Berger, 81-131 (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1999).

19. In Robert Berger, *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*, 133-167.

20. *Spiritualité lasallienne, Textes* (Paris, 1952), 456 pp. As the sub-title shows, this work is a collection of texts attributed to De La Salle. These texts are grouped according to themes. They were chosen and grouped under the direction of Brother Nicet-Joseph, who was at that time the Director of the Second Novitiate in Rome and who subsequently (1956-1966) was the Superior General of the Brothers. The groups of Second Novices of 1949-1950 and 1950-1951 worked on this. Brother Nicet-Joseph had previously edited another 142-page work that was entitled *Le Maître chrétien selon saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* (Paris, 1950), of which Rayez wrote: “The first fifty pages summarize in a very lively way the chapters that (Institute historian Georges) Rigault consecrated to the spiritual works and the characteristics of the spirituality of the saint” (*Etudes lasalliennes*, No. 20). These fifty pages have not been taken up again in *Spiritualité lasallienne*.

21. Brothers Maurice-Auguste and José Arturo, *Contribution à l'étude des sources du Recueil de différents petits traités* (Rome, 1964). This study (CL 16) had been suggested by certain hypotheses of the first article of Rayez.

22. Brother Clément-Marcel Martinais, *Par le mouvement de l'Esprit* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1952). An introduction situates the devotion of De La Salle to the Holy Spirit in the spiritual context of the seventeenth century. The author is no longer today satisfied with what he wrote formerly, but he pursued his very extensive inquiry into the ecclesiastical circles and spiritual authors known and sometimes frequented by De La Salle.

23. Brother Alphonse, *A l'école de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* (Paris, 1952). This introduction to De La Salle's spirituality deals with the work done by Brother Alphonse-Daniel Guilhem during his second novitiate.

24. Brothers Maurice-Auguste Hermans and Michel Sauvage, “Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools” in Berger, *Spirituality in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle*.

25. Brothers Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos, *Announcing the Gospel to the Poor: The Spiritual Experience and the Spiritual Teaching of St. John Baptist de La Salle*, translated by Matthew O'Connell (Romeville, IL: Christian Brothers Conference, 1981). See also Brothers Miguel Campos and Michel Sauvage, “Announcing the Gospel to the Poor: The Two Missing Chapters of the 1981 English Translation,” translated by Cyril Ory and edited by William Mann, in *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education*, 3, #1 (2012). The words “announcing the gospel to the poor” show the main line of the readings and reflections that are proposed: both in the life of the saint as well as in his written work. This same line is the thread linking everything from the beginning to the end of the work. Strictly speaking, this is not a presentation of Lasallian spirituality. It is a thematic, and hence directed, reading, but a perfectly legitimate one. Their long familiarity with Lasallian texts has directed the authors in this choice of direction and selections. There are other possible readings that would highlight other aspects of Lasallian spirituality. In its beginnings, this book was to have taken up, along with the developments sacrificed at the time of its publication, an article written directly for the French-language *Dictionary of Spirituality*. In fact, it is really a completely new work.

26. Luis Varela Martínez, *Sacred Scripture in the Spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle*, translated by Francis Vesel and edited by Donald Mouton (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000).

27. “Perfeccion y apostolado en la doctrina ascetico-peagogica de San Juan Bautista de La Salle.” (Tejares-Salamanca, 1971 thesis).

28. “El amor en la doctrina espiritual de San Juan Bautista de La Salle.” (Tejares-Salamanca, 1971 thesis).

29. “Oracion y presencia de Dios segun San Juan Bautista de La Salle.” (*Lasallianum* 13, 1970, thesis).

30. “La palabra segun La Salle: mistica y empleo de la misma en cuanto comunicacion spiritual.” (Tejares-Salamanca, 1977 thesis).

31. *Catéchèse et Laicat: Participation des laics au ministère de la Parole et mission du Frère-enseignant dans L’Eglise* (Paris, 1962, XVI-942 pp. thesis). As regards the spirituality of De La Salle, see especially pages 551-904 which obviously treat the domain of spirituality, but also contain some very important perceptions of this spirituality of a teaching Brother according to De La Salle. [Michel Sauvage, *Catechesis and the Laity*, translated by Oswald Murdoch (Sydney: De La Salle Provincialate, 1991) is only a partial English translation of this larger work.] Also, see *Les citations néotestamentaires dans les Méditations pour le Temps de La Retraite* (CL 1). Read at least pages XXXV-XLVIII on the main use made by the Founder of the major texts of Saint Paul referring to the ministry of the Word.

32. Yves Poutet, *Le XVII siècle et les origines lasalliennes*, 2 Vol. (Rennes, thesis). See especially Vol.1, pp. 295-622. In a number of places, the author makes an inventory of authors and works which might have influenced De La Salle. Most frequently, these comparisons show especially how individual De La Salle is even when he is borrowing things from here and there.

33. Jean Pungier, *Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle: Une spiritualité pour Enseignants et Educateurs* (1979), which is a 48-page commentary on a number of texts.

34. Robert Laube, *Pentecostal Spirituality: The Lasallian Theology of Apostolic Life* (New York: Desclee Company, 1970).

35. The Council of Trent was an Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church (1545-1563).

36. Pseudo-Bonaventure is the name given to the authors of a number of medieval devotional works that were believed at the time to be the work of Saint Bonaventure.

37. Cf. *Devotio Moderna*, edited by John H. Van Engen (Paulist Press, 1988).

38. From 1695 onward, he was the Archbishop of Paris.

39. This Bishop of Chartres studied at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, was known by De La Salle.

40. He was the director of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice while De La Salle studied there.

41. *Explication des maximes des Saints* by Fénelon; Papal Brief *Cum Alias* of 12 March 1699.

42. Cf. the article on “La Grange” in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascetic et mystique*.

43. Jean-Baptiste Blain is one of the first biographers of De La Salle. Cf. *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle: A Life in Three Books* (Lasallian Publications, 2000).

44. Leonard de Sainte-Catherine, a cleric and contemporary of De La Salle.

45. Cf. CL 10, on the word “solitude,” pp. 63-64.

46. Cf. “The Memoire on the Habit” and the Rouen “Memoire” in CL 11, pp. 349ff., pp. 128-130.

47. Cf. Blain, 1, p.226.

48. Leonard de Sainte-Catherine points out these same particular instances.

49. Cf. CL 20, p. 473.

50. “Jesus, poor and abject,” etc.; cf. *Le Chrétien intérieur*, Book 1, Ch. XIII.

51. Cf. “Letter of 16 April 1659,” in *Oeuvres Spirituelles de Monsieur de Bernières-Louvigny* (edited 1677), 272-275.

52. Cf. CL 15, p.144; see also “Considerations,” idem, pp. 209, 211.

53. For David, or the Psalmist, or the prophet-king, 56 and 27 citations respectively. For the Psalms, 52 citations.

54. *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis is a 15<sup>th</sup>-century Christian devotional book.

55. See the “Considerations” to be made during the annual retreat. In one of these, the *Imitation* has been added in a text borrowed from Hayneufve, CL 16, p. 92.

56. Cf. John Baptist de La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, trans. By F. De la Fontainerie and Richard Arnandez, and edited by William Mann. Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996; 133.

57. Cf. *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, 83, 88.

58. Cf. *Explanation of the Method of Interior Prayer*, 36.

59. CL, pp. 55, 149, 151, 163, and 264.

60. The Archives of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is located in their international headquarters in Rome, Italy.

61. Cf. CL 9, reference to the word “Terese.”

62. The novitiate is the period of discernment and training that a member of a religious community undergoes prior to taking vows.

63. *Parfait inférieur* (CL 25, p. 148). This was a very complete work which first appeared under the title of *L'idée du parfait religieux ou l'art d'obéir* (The perfect religious or the art of obeying), and then under the other title of *Le parfait inférieur ou l'art d'obéir*.

64. Cf. CL 17, pp. 240-241.

65. 14 October 1604.

66. Cf. CL 19, p.53.

67. Cf. CL 25, pp. 132, 139, 148.

68. Cf. Preface of the *Common Rules*, 3, 4, 8; CL 25, pp. 12-13.

69. Cf. CL 16, pp. 51-102; CL 15, pp. 94-118; *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, 183-231.

70. Cf. CL 16, pp. 21-24 for how De La Salle adapted; CL 15, pp. XII-XVI, 31-70; *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, 57-70.

71. Cf. CL 16, pp. 44-47.

72. Cf. CL 13; “they allow us to know on which sources the spiritual formation of the Brothers was mainly based...” (*Etudes lasalliennes*, 32); “these instructions are almost completely extracts from *Le Chrétien en solitude* of Crasset” (Id).

73. CL 13, pp. 6-8.

74. CL 25, pp.12-15; either the section on *L'homme spirituel* on pp. 4 - 7 of the Preface; or from *De la Connaissance*, 8, 9, 12.

75. Cf. *Rule and Foundational Documents*, 111.

76. Cf. CL 25, p. 111.

77. Louis Cognet.

78. Louis Cognet.

79. Cf. *Rule and Foundational Documents*, 16-19.

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