
The Influence of Father Barré in the Foundation of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus of Reims

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Father Nicolas Barré was careful to keep his life private, and so he is hardly known by our contemporaries. He was a religious in the Order of Minims who lived for a time in the same building as the famous Father Mersenne in the monastery of Place Royale in Paris. Whereas the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* accords him a half column, M. D. Poinset gives him no more than five lines in his *France religieuse du XVII^e siècle*. This latter author was so taken up with the royal aura surrounding the names of Mme de Maintenon and Saint-Cyr, for whom Father Barré served as a pedagogical advisor, that he forgets to mention the originality that distinguishes the disciples of Barré from all the other women educators of the "great century of souls." It was precisely to care for the souls not of noble girls but of the children of common people that Father Barré founded two teaching congregations of religious women: the Sisters of Providence of Rouen and the Ladies of Saint-Maur whose motherhouse is in Paris. Other congregations followed suit taking his congregations as their models.

The initial enterprise took place at the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV. The Ursulines, the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame, followers of Saint Pierre Fourier, and countless other cloistered religious women were opening their doors to young girls desiring an education. To be sure, a charitable free education was not refused to families who could not pay, but the daughters of artisans and the poor did not feel at ease among rich classmates accustomed to showing off. In most cases these poorer girls preferred to remain uneducated or else they took advantage of charity schools in certain parishes opened by the parish priests.

While the rich of society in the age of Louis XIV had access to excellent opportunities for education, on the other end of the spectrum orphans, unwanted children and the sick were attracted to the Daughters of Charity of Mlle Le Gras and Vincent de Paul as their teachers. But between these extremes Father Barré saw an open space for non-cloistered religious women who would devote themselves specifically to the education of the daughters of artisans and the poor. That is why he established gratuitous schools for the working class first in Rouen and then in Paris. Their success was such that the new women teachers attracted the attention not only of the royal court but also of anyone at that time who cared about the education of the working class. The "Barré Sisters," as they were sometimes called, were called upon by those in charge of finances to open schools for the daughters of the "newly converted" in Montauban, Uzès, Montpellier, Castres, Bordeaux They soon had schools in Toulouse, Nîmes and Marseille, and have spread out today even to the Far East.

Less known and restricted only to the dioceses of Reims and Châlons, the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, founded by Canon Roland, are still very much alive as a congregation. They have remained as a diocesan congregation and have weathered over the course of three centuries such destructive periods as the Revolution and, in the Champagne region, the horrific invasions of 1870, 1914 and 1940 that seriously threatened the existence of their schools and the survival of their Institute.

Their founder Canon Nicolas Roland, who was for a time the spiritual director of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, came right after the time of Father Barré. We are not mentioning here the enterprising Charles Démia whose work around Lyon paralleled that of Father Barré and grew independently at the very same time that the congregation of the Sisters of Providence was beginning in Rouen (around 1666). If there were any Barré-Démia influences, they did not exist in the beginning since both chronology and geography made contacts difficult between the two founders. On the other hand, Canon Roland could easily profit from the experience of his two predecessors. Later his friend and relative Saint John Baptist de La Salle, founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, would borrow several ideas, add his own distinctive mark and create for boys the gratuitous education for the working class that Father Barré and Canon Roland had inaugurated for girls.

Needless to say, the influence exerted by Father Barré on Nicolas Roland merits careful study when we take into account the sources and origins of congregations specifically geared to the education of the working class.

Historians of pedagogy have all noted the importance of this influence, especially the biographers of Saint John-Baptist de la Salle, Father Barré and Canon Roland. But it happens too often that biographers, overly concerned with their subjects, either do not look closely enough at the facts or they avoid reading the manuscript documents themselves. For example, it is tempting for historians of Father Barré to want to show as much as possible the influence their hero had by emphasizing all the similarities that can lead a reader to this conclusion: that the schools in Reims formed by Nicolas Roland are just an extension of the schools established in Rouen by Father Barré. Did not the first two sisters who directed the school of the Holy Child Jesus in Reims come from Rouen? Were they not followers of Father Barré? Following this line of thought, it appears at first glance that a very close relationship must necessarily link the project of the Canon with that of the Minim. Consequently, it is easy to forget to mention any differences and contradictions.

Of course, modern historians aim to avoid these easy pitfalls by relying on manuscript sources. Since the first-hand publications written by Hanneuse (1888) and De Grèzes (1892), important research has been prompted by the process of beatification of the two founders.⁴ This research has clarified some characteristics of their personalities. It has also highlighted the importance of the manuscripts left by Canon Roland, which still need a systematic study and whose meticulous comparison with the writings of Father Barré shed new light on the influence exerted by the Minim.

The object of the present study is precisely to attempt to bring out the major thrust of this influence and to understand its exact importance. Without a doubt, the chronology of events

which brought Canon Roland and Father Barré together is not negligible; and this will be made clear. Yet we believe it will be more useful to concentrate on how each of the two founders put into practice what they believed, how their ideas coincided, how they differed, and how they proved to be different from each other.

Father Barré

Who was Father Barré? Born into a middle-class family in Amiens on 21 October 1621, Nicolas Barré was a former student of the Jesuits and then entered an extremely strict religious order, the Minims, in January of 1641. After a year of novitiate in the monastery in Paris, he made his profession and shortly thereafter received an obedience to go to the house of studies in the Place Royale.⁵ Like all his confreres, he added to the vows taken by all religious orders the special vow of perpetual abstinence. Intellectually brilliant, Nicolas Barré rapidly went through the curriculum of theological studies and became a professor even before getting ordained. His incessant mortifications, his prolonged vigils before the Blessed Sacrament and his fervor in teaching wore out his naturally robust constitution in less than fifteen years. In 1657 his superiors obliged him to go for a rest in the area where he was born since they believed the air there was healthier than in Paris. In fact, Father Barré's health did get better. In 1659 he took up once again his apostolic activities in Rouen. He added to his teaching duties the duties of confessor and preacher.

His success in spiritual direction was so great that his superiors relieved him of some of his courses to permit him to devote most of his time to spiritual direction and preaching. Father Barré's influence grew day by day. He organized religious conferences. Crowds were enthralled by his words and began to fill the Church of the Minims. Several public sinners were converted. Distinguished persons, members of the Parliament of Normandy, Messrs. de Grainville, de Touvans, and de l'Espinay entreated Father Barré to be their regular confessor.⁶

In 1662, on the occasion of a mission preached in the Rouen suburb of Sotteville, Father Barré organized a school which produced considerable fruit for about a year.⁷ The principal, Françoise Duval, encouraged by this successful experiment, then opened several schools in the city of Rouen.⁸ Father Barré would "come there from time to time and give conferences" and set up for the (women) teachers some rules for living.⁹

During this time near the monastery of the Minims on the Rue de l'Hôpital, the Oratorian Fathers were organizing a pious association called the "Family of the Holy Child Jesus." From 25 March 1661, its members were promising to "belong to the Word Incarnate as its domestic servants."¹⁰ Marguerite Lestocq and her sister Catherine soon joined this association (25 March 1664). Since several members of the Parliament of Rouen regularly went to meetings of the "Family of the Holy Child Jesus," the friends of Father Barré would take the opportunity to make known the work of the schools that the active Françoise Duval had undertaken at Father Barré's prompting. This made the recruitment of (women) teachers easier. Marguerite Lestocq took over one class and along with her an array of fervent Christian women embraced a holy zeal for the new project. "Without being in community," living somewhat like nuns, "in total abandon to divine Providence," they followed obediently the advice of Father Barré.¹¹

To tell the truth, the success of the schools was due in large part to the effective protection of M. de La Haye, a priest of Saint Amand, who defended them against the attacks of mercenary teachers frustrated with their livelihood because of the gratuity of the new schools. Having several inhabitants of Reims as their friends, M. de La Haye and Mme de Grainville wished to see the project in Rouen spread out to Reims. But, as Marguerite Lestocq put it, “God, having made the said priest pass from this life to the other, was not able to accomplish his goal. Immediately on learning of his death, the Very Reverend Father Barré set out to accomplish their goal by sending ... our sister Françoise ... to Reims.”¹²

According to the claims of Marguerite Lestocq in 1670, the (women) teachers in Rouen are still not united in a religious community. Françoise Duval, along with one of her assistants, Anne Le Coeur, accedes to the wishes of Father Barré and goes to Reims to establish schools for working class girls. Canon Roland greets them there on 27 December in the orphanage where he was director.

From this point on, the split is made. Anne Le Coeur and Françoise Duval depend no more on Father Barré but on Canon Roland. Does that mean that they ceased all correspondence with their former spiritual director? Certainly not. Nothing necessitated such a break; rather, we are led to believe the contrary, according to an unpublished letter of Father Barré discovered among the manuscripts preserved by the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus.¹³

The account book of the Sisters of Providence confirms this hypothesis. On 24 March 1675, Mlle Daubin received 10 *livres* for her travel expenses “to Reims according to the reimbursement receipt and order of M. Roland Theologian.” On 11 April 1681, M. Lespinay paid the economer of Rouen 16 *livres* 10 *sols* as reimbursement for a sum of money which had been advanced to Mlle Duval. In the same account book, we can see several mentions of the name of M. Nyel who would come in 1679 knocking at the door of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus to communicate some news about their friends in Rouen. This was before opening a gratuitous school for boys in Reims like those he had been directing for several years in Rouen. But by that date Canon Roland had already died.¹⁴

Canon Roland

Since he was twenty-one years younger than Father Barré, Nicolas Roland could not help being profoundly influenced by him. A Canon and theologian in Reims since 1665, Roland had received the famous *Remontrances* (reproaches) from Charles Démia of Lyon who encouraged the major authorities of the kingdom to open gratuitous schools for the children of the poor.¹⁵

The matter was quickly resolved. The year was 1668 and, according to the *Mémoires sur la vie de Monsieur Nicolas Roland*, it was in that year “in the twenty-seventh year of age,” that he “resolved to find a solution.” Because youth were not being trained and educated properly, he would “work with all his might to establish gratuitous schools for the instruction of young girls. With this goal in mind, he traveled to Rouen to preach on the Lenten season.”¹⁶ This new commitment then preceded his first documented meeting with Father Barré. It was Charles Démia and his friends from the seminary of Saint Nicolas de Chardonnet who served as an instrument of Providence to make known to Nicolas Roland the exact nature of his specific

vocation.¹⁷ During the course of Lent in 1670, “he saw especially M. de Saint-Amand practicing all the most austere virtues. He had spent six months after his ordination with him. He also saw Father Barré of the order of Minims who had begun schools for the gratuitous instruction of young boys and young girls in the city of Rouen.... M. Roland formed a close and holy friendship with Father Barré and renewed the esteem and veneration he had always had for the virtue of M. de Saint-Amand. They both recognized the spirit that animated M. Roland, and they helped him with their advice to carry out the devout resolve he had formed to establish gratuitous schools in the city of Reims.”¹⁸

After returning to Reims, Canon Roland obtained from the City Executive the responsibility for the spiritual care of an orphanage founded by a lady named Varlet, but her overly passionate enthusiasm forced him to take on the physical wellbeing of the orphans as well. He provided clothes, beds and meals; he let go negligent personnel and replaced them with people zealous for the Christian education of the young orphans.

His project was not limited just to charity for the care of orphans. That charity simply served as a pretext for the establishment of the schools, a devout undertaking toward which he directed all his energy. For that purpose, he made several trips to Paris and Rouen to see for himself the great good done by the Daughters of Providence whom the Minim Father Barré had set up successfully in these large cities. He inquired about those Daughters who already were experienced in the work in which he desired to employ them.¹⁹

It is important to cite the text of this old manuscript which details the relationships that existed around 1670 between Canon Roland and Father Barré. It is perfectly clear and requires no critical interpretation. To consider that the foundation of schools in Champagne was initially Father Barré’s idea, we would have to explain why, as he was residing in Paris, he made multiple trips to Rouen and connected with the priests responsible for the spiritual direction of the Sisters of Providence while he would not even take one trip to Reims where he had sent two of his best (women) teachers. In his opinion, one might surmise, Canon Roland was up to the task.

But what was this task and how much did Anne Le Coeur and Françoise Duval contribute to accomplish it? It was only in November of 1670 that Canon Roland obtained from the City Council the authorization to buy a place to house the orphanage of Mme Varlet so it could accept a greater number of children. On the following 22 December, the temporary residence in Reims for the religious of the abbey of Landèves became the property of the Canon.²⁰ Five days later Françoise Duval and Anne Le Coeur arrived from Rouen.²¹ For now we are speaking only of instructing little orphans. Day students were not admitted. For four years (1670-1674) the orphanage was the only school for the working class, but the number of (women) teachers grew: Marie Valet, Marguerite Muiron (1671), Barbe Muiron, Marie and Agathe Blondel, Elisabeth Duval (Françoise’s own sister), Anne Pezé, Geneviève Chevret (1673-1674). In 1675, Canon Roland opened the first school for the working class near his orphanage; and shortly thereafter he obtained from the City Council authorization to pursue his initiative and open three new schools.²²

Contribution of the Sisters from Rouen

With Françoise Duval and Anne Le Coeur, the followers of Father Barré, now gone from Rouen for five years, we can look at how their pedagogical and religious experience was able to enrich the community of (women) school teachers that was beginning in Reims during this probationary time. In other words, what type of life had they been leading in Rouen under the direction of Father Barré?

The *Mémoire* of Marguerite Lestocq provides us valuable information concerning these questions.²³ It is certain that Françoise Duval left Rouen before Father Barré proposed a common life to his (women) teachers:

We were four or five sisters in total abandon to divine providence *without being in community*.... Spiritual exercises were decided on. We taught the younger classes from eight o'clock to eleven. Then we took the children to Holy Mass, numbering 130 or more. From noon until two o'clock we had the older girls. We had them for reading and catechism and then we had the younger ones until five o'clock. After that we went to the homes to instruct the good people, teaching them the principal mysteries and especially how to go to confession and communion.... We taught catechism on Sundays and feasts.... That is more or less how the schools of Rouen began.

Then the priest of Saint-Amand died, and Father Barré sent Françoise Duval to Reims. Marguerite Lestocq continues:

Sometime after, I have to say quite simply, our Very Reverend Father Barré told us that he was seriously thinking of forming a community!... We answered heartily: "Yes, that is what we want and we abandon ourselves completely and selflessly to divine providence." No sooner said than done. We entered into community under obedience to a superior who was for the time being Mme du Buc, a very virtuous woman.... Recollection and silence were exactly observed.... This is the living account I, Marguerite Lestocq, make and am obliged to give, *being the first* to have the honor to enter into community although I am most unworthy.

The distinction is clearly made. Marguerite Lestocq is "the first to have the honor to enter into community" while "Sister Françoise is the first to begin the schools."²⁴

Neither Anne Le Coeur nor Françoise Duval brought to these circumstances in Reims on 27 December 1670 any experience of having lived a regulated life for several years in a religious community with firmly established constitutions. In Rouen they had no vow, no promise to bind them together. The oldest text we have on constitutions drafted by Father Barré goes back to 15 August 1677. It is a manuscript carefully preserved in the archives of the Sisters of Providence in which Father Barré wrote several articles in his own hand.²⁵ Article 15, the last article, determines the date of composition: "Finished on the octave of the feast the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in the year 1677 after the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Although they had no experience in the religious life, Françoise Duval and Anne Le Coeur did however bring more than their complete availability to Canon Roland's projected goals. They had experience in the apostolate of teaching catechism to children and adults. They knew how to manage a class. As the first followers of Father Barré, they had contracted his spirit and gladly recalled the advice he had lavished on them during his spiritual conferences.²⁶ The help of these women was therefore invaluable to the Canon of Reims. Doubtlessly we can compare their role in this developing community to that of the Ladies of Saint-Maur. Father Barré had lent these Ladies to Mme de Maintenon to help her take charge of the general management of the royal establishment of Saint-Cyr. Surrounded by companions without experience, they provided not responsibility or initiative in all things but rather a practical skill that was indispensable.

Death of the Founders and Durability of Their Works

From then on things start moving fast. Canon Roland died in Reims on 27 April 1678 without getting either the bishop's approval or the letters patent required for the normal functioning of the new congregation. But he did leave to his friend Canon De La Salle, the executor of his will, the task of getting approval for the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus. In less than one year the Sisters received the letters patent from the king and in 1683 Bishop Le Tellier approved their constitutions.

During this time Father Barré was supervising the philosophy classes in the monastery at Place Royale in Paris.²⁷ His superiors had called him back there in 1675, but they authorized him to continue his special apostolate with the (women) school teachers. That is how the sisters from Rouen remained reliant on his supportive advice and, thus, through him several parish schools for the working class in Paris were able to be founded. From time to time, the Rouen community provided Paris with experienced (women) teachers. In 1678, that community rented a small building on Rue Saint-Maur (today 8 Rue de l'Abbé-Grégoire) to set up a novitiate to meet the needs of the area. Marie Hayer, who entered the Sisters of Providence of Rouen in October 1676, was placed in charge. A new institute was formed. It was called the "Sisters of Charitable Instruction of the Holy Child Jesus," but it was popularly known by the name of the street where its main house was located. Thus the sisters in Paris became the "Ladies of Saint-Maur." Just like the Sisters of Providence, they followed all the rules formulated by Father Barré in his constitutions of 1677. After years of experience and the opening of multiple establishments by the two congregations, it was time to publish the statutes that numerous bishops had approved. The publications were simultaneously done in 1685 by two publishing houses: in Paris by Le Cointe and in Rouen by Besongne. The following year Father Barré died on 31 May 1686.

Like every living organization, both Father Barré's congregation and Canon Roland's have evolved since the 17th century. They remain perfectly adapted to the needs of our times. Therefore, it is not our task here to compare the present state of their rules and constitutions, but rather to establish a systematic parallel between the statutes observed by the Sisters of Providence or the Ladies of Saint-Maur and the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus during the time Father Barré was alive. For that first congregation of sisters, the basic document is the manuscript of 1677 supplemented by the *Statuts et Reglemens* of 1685. For the second congregation, we can rely on the handwritten *Constitutions* of 1683 clarified this time by another manuscript entitled *Usage*.

Goal and Spirit of the Two Institutes

We are looking at congregations of women teachers that have an apparently identical goal. In Rouen, the “crucial work” of the sisters was to “run schools for poor and destitute children and to welcome adults whom God draws there without differentiating any longer between the rich and the poor.”²⁸ In Reims, education under Canon Roland was set up “to instruct poor girls from the city.... If some girls or pious women from the outside wish to make a retreat in the house, they will be welcomed with the permission of the Superior.”²⁹

Retreat work and evangelization of adults then were integral to the apostolic activities that characterized the Sisters of Providence, as well as the Ladies of Saint-Maur or the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus. The means designated by the two founders permitting the (women) teachers to show their zeal are expressed in similar terms:

The means they use are to operate gratuitously little schools for young children of their sex who learn under their direction by an easy method how to read, write and above all know, love and serve God.³⁰

Their duty will be to teach persons of their sex catechism, the maxims of Christianity, and how to read and write.³¹

This common aim of the two congregations led the founders to reject religious enclosure as a hindrance to the fundamental activity of their work. “They will live in community without ... observing religious enclosure,”³² according to the wishes of Father Barré; and “they believe it would be entirely opposed to their institute and constitutions to introduce religious enclosure,” for Canon Roland thought that enclosure would make them “unfit to attend to the task for which they are established.”³³

Taking our analysis farther, we can see a slight difference. The sisters of Father Barré had as their first goal the education of day students, and they went out to the homes to catechize adults. On the other hand, the sisters of Canon Roland existed from the beginning to care for a group of orphans, girls and boys, whom they subsequently were committed to educate together with other children they admitted as day students. This is how the *Statuts* of 1677 put it:

Operating schools ... by refusing only those boys who will never be admitted however young they may be or for whatever situation they may be in.³⁴

The *Constitutions* of Reims say the contrary:

The community of the daughters of the Holy Child Jesus, being established to care for little orphans, will be composed of sisters who will be charged with running schools and caring for orphans.³⁵

Without a doubt, Father Barré did not exclude orphanages from the potential apostolates that might interest the Sisters of Providence; the future would sufficiently corroborate this. But he did

not link his institute to the existence of an orphanage. In Reims, the circumstances showed otherwise.

Because of the specific goal of the congregation he founded, Father Barré endeavored to breathe into it a spirit capable of lighting the fire of zeal in the sisters. He begins by attributing to God all the credit for his work:

The institute of (women) teachers of the charitable schools has at its origin the heart of God himself who so loved the world that he gave his only son to instruct men.³⁶ Some pious persons, disturbed by a deplorable evil, believed that the most efficacious way to stop it from progressing was to educate several women as charitable teachers.³⁷

From these two sentences, Canon Roland and the bishop who gave the approbation seem to have drawn this article of the *Constitutions*:

The son of God . . . inspired some virtuous persons in our days to seek the means to have poor girls educated.³⁸

Without repeating themselves and in a very different style, the *Constitutions* of Reims and the *Statuts* of Rouen designate *charity* as the distinctive mark of the sister teachers of the charitable schools:

By honoring and imitating our Lord Jesus Christ, who submitted in love to do the will of his Father in all things, they (the sisters) will do all things for the pure love of God. And since the virtue of charity is preferable to all other virtues as the way to perfection, it too will be the way for the (women) school teachers, and it will be the soul of their obedience, their poverty, their patience, their modesty and of all that pertains to their perfection.³⁹

The entire life of the Son of God on earth was a continual exercise of the most pure and ardent charity which filled him. Thus, this community [of Reims] will consider it as the spirit which must always animate it. And because this virtue united our Lord very intimately to God his Father and gave him a perfect love for him, it gave him at the same time an ardent desire for the salvation of men and made him work tirelessly to save them, even giving his life for them

This community intends specifically to imitate these two effects of the charity of Jesus Christ: to have a great love for God and an ardent charity for one's neighbor. And the community must take care above all things to love God with a sincere and true love and to show its neighbor a truly Christian charity by contributing to their salvation as far as it is permitted according to the rules of the Church.⁴⁰

The inspiration of Saint Augustine (first chapter of his *Rule*) is clear in the text of Reims, but this does not preclude the same text's very clear preference for the apostolate of teaching in schools: "To practice charity toward one's neighbor [the sisters] will apply themselves to teaching persons of their sex catechism, the maxims of Christianity, reading and writing."⁴¹ The link

between the teaching apostolate and personal sanctification is perhaps even more apparent in the *Statuts* of Father Barré:

The women [sisters], by adoring this divine action [of Jesus Christ] and by conforming to it, will apply themselves at length to reading and writing and will learn perfectly the principles of the faith and of religion. They will also observe the practice of charity, gentleness, modesty, humility and other virtues necessary for persons who tend to the salvation of their neighbor because they must carry this out in a manner worthy of God.⁴²

Later the same rule adds:

The spirit of this institute consists principally in working efficaciously and without ceasing for their own sanctification and for the complete perfection of their interior life by the acquisition of all virtues. Thus, they hope to be drawn by God and instructed by his holy spirit and his grace to educate their neighbor by enlightening their minds, stimulating their passion and changing their ways.⁴³

The book of customary practices peculiar to the sisters of Reims says only:

To practice charity toward God the sisters are motivated by divine virtue and intend preferably in all things to fulfill with fidelity and exactitude the obligations of Christianity enjoined on them by baptism. This they do by observing the commandments of God, the rules of the Church common to all the faithful and the maxims of the gospel as they pertain to their state in life.⁴⁴

With these texts in front of us, it is difficult to affirm that Canon Roland simply endeavored to implant in Reims an institute which was existing and prospering in Normandy (Rouen). We must then recognize that his personality profoundly affected his work.

Administration

In the beginning the administrative organization of the Sisters of Providence was not in keeping with the fundamental wishes of Father Barré. Since he desired to found his congregation on confidence in Providence alone, he did not wish to get any financial help. In practice, the members of the Bureau of the General Hospital obliged him to let them have financial responsibility for the schools in Rouen. For this reason a sister superior was assigned in Rouen for temporal matters. She was delegated by the Bureau to guarantee room and board for the sisters. There was also a sister superior who oversaw the rule and spiritual development of the community.⁴⁵ Along with the superior overseeing the rule and spiritual development of the community, the *Statuts et reglemens* provide for the existence of an ecclesiastical (male) superior.⁴⁶ The first article of chapter seven lays out the duties of the sister superior with regard to other persons who participate with her in the administration and government of her congregation: “The sister superior will show in all things the same obedience to the (male) superior or director as the [other] sisters will show him and she will do nothing of consequence without his opinion which will be provided to her by the (male) administrators.”

In Reims, Canon Roland saw the matter differently. The sister superior of the community took care of the temporal affairs as well as the spiritual ones. However, for unusual expenses she had to seek permission from the ecclesiastical superior who represented the bishop for the congregation. While the sisters of Rouen all made the same promises the day they entered religion, the sisters of Reims, according to the *Constitutions* of 1683, counted among their ranks four beggar sisters: “Among the number of sisters there will be four who will be obliged by their contract to go begging through the city.”⁴⁷

Schedule of Activities

As we look at these administrative differences we can note many similarities in schedules and practices. In Reims as in Rouen, the rejection of religious enclosure did not preclude the use of the title *sister*: “The community of the daughters of the Holy Child Jesus . . . will be composed of sisters.”⁴⁸ The civil name was kept in religious life. This is shown by a letter Father Barré wrote to our “very dear sister Le Teinturier.”⁴⁹ It is also shown by an article of the *Constitutions*: “The sisters will retain their family name and add to it the title of sister.”⁵⁰

When we investigate schedules that show the activities assigned each day to the (women) teachers, we notice that in general the directives of Canon Roland are not too far from those of Father Barré. A soul that has experienced the life of a teacher in the congregation of the Sisters of Providence, as was the case with Anne Le Coeur and Françoise Duval, should not have at first glance too much difficulty adapting to the life of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus.

The daily schedule for both congregations was set up in minute detail. There was no room for anything unscheduled. Does not the devil find work for idle hands? Certainly, our modern concept of freedom does find its place in that situation; but for Canon Roland as for Father Barré, it was at the moment of consecration to God that the religious soul exercises its freedom. Once a sister has chosen the path of obedience it was no longer up to her to choose; or to put it more exactly, her will was in constant agreement with that of her superiors and her rule. First and foremost, it was important that this will of the superiors be made known explicitly at every moment of the day. Informing the sisters of this will was the essential objective of the articles that are so disparaged by certain minds today and that constitute the chapter entitled “daily schedule.”

In Reims as in Rouen: rising at five o’clock, half an hour to get dressed, two hours of spiritual exercises during the morning, two hours of apostolate with the children from eight to ten o’clock, examination of conscience (particular examen) immediately before dinner which lasts about half an hour from eleven to eleven thirty, recreation which is light conversation among the sisters, one hour of teaching with the older girls followed by two and a half hours dedicated to the younger girls, study of religion and exercises of piety for two and a half hours after class, then finally supper followed by a period of recreation and retiring at nine o’clock in the evening.

In the course of a sixteen-hour day, four and a half hours are given to the contemplative life, five and a half hours to teaching both secular and religious subjects, an hour and a quarter to meals (with breakfast being taken in the two congregations at seven thirty and lasting not more than a quarter hour), and more than an hour is given to community recreation. The rest of the time, less

than four hours, is taken up by normal activities impossible to avoid. For example, between the first and second classes of the afternoon there is a half hour break which would be difficult to call “free time.” After the evening class, the schedule leaves yet another half hour unscheduled; but it is inevitably used by the sisters to get their things together and go from school to the community house.

Of course, the schedule is adjusted for holidays. Dinner is moved ahead by one hour. The *Constitutions* of Reims put it at ten o’clock exactly; the *Statuts* of Rouen have it “after High Mass.”⁵¹ As a result, the recreation period prescribed by the rule was lengthened. On Sunday and feast day afternoons, the sisters taught religion to adults for an hour before going to the parish Church for vespers. On days of fasting, the main meal was put back half an hour (11:30 instead of 11:00) and recreation time was reduced by the same amount of time. This was considered a type of community mortification which occurred in Reims as well as in Rouen.

We should however recognize that despite this general consistency not all the details are identical. In Rouen, while the rising time was set at five o’clock on ordinary days, it was put back to six o’clock when there were no classes.⁵² In Reims, the sisters rose “at five o’clock at all times.”⁵³ In Rouen, spiritual exercises took place without a break from 5:30 to 7:30. In Reims, there was a half hour break between the end of mental prayer and breakfast since the sisters attended Mass after the last class of the morning. In Rouen the noontime recreation was shorter than in Reims since the sisters had to open their classes to the “older girls” half an hour earlier, at noon instead of half past noon. In Rouen, supper was taken at 6:45 whereas it was set at 6:00 for the sisters of Canon Roland in Reims. This resulted once again in lengthening recreation time after the meal for the sisters of Reims. In Rouen, from 5:00 to 5:30 in the evening the sisters divided their time between the study of catechism and practice in penmanship. In Reims, on the other hand, it was after supper from 7:30 to 8:00 that the sisters worked at improving their knowledge of religion.⁵⁴

In Father Barré’s arrangement for Sundays and holidays, catechism for adults immediately preceded vespers. Canon Roland was more permissive on this point; he left half an hour of free time between religious instruction and vespers at the parish. Actually, this only appears permissive since the sisters of Reims, being responsible for an orphanage, were obliged to give an hour of class to the young children before meeting the adults. Making them teach for two hours without a break before vespers would have been excessive. Besides, vespers were not at the same time in Reims (at 3:30) as in Rouen (at 2:00).

By simply examining these schedules we can see that Canon Roland did not indiscriminately adopt the practices and administrative rules that Françoise Duval and Anne Le Coeur had partially experienced in Rouen. Although he was fully aware of what Father Barré liked, Canon Roland refused however to follow blindly those customs from Normandy (Rouen). Why?

Let us not say “Other places, other customs.” The Paris of the Ladies of Saint-Maur, the Bordeaux of the Ladies of the Faith, or Castres, Nîmes or Montauban for that matter, did not resemble the Rouen of the Sisters of Providence any more than they did the Reims of Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus. Yet around 1685 Paris, Rouen, Nîmes, Castres, etc. were faithfully

following the *Statuts et reglemens* of 1685, which statutes reproduced without change most of the points recorded in the manuscript of 1677.

Nor should we say that a boarding school specifically requires significant modifications in schedule. That is only partially true. The sisters of Father Barré opened several boarding schools, even during the lifetime of their founder, and yet they did not believe they had to modify their *Statuts*. We must then recognize that Canon Roland was more than just a slavish imitator. His biographers are doubtlessly correct in reminding us that in his numerous travels he looked to gain knowledge from all the people who had experience with teaching and religious communities.⁵⁵ Feeling called by God to found a new congregation, he took counsel from Father Barré, but Father Barré's humility certainly prevented him from overly interfering in the affairs of the new institute at the expense of Providence. In fact, is it not telling that Canon Roland as a last resort confided the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus to the protection of his guide Canon De La Salle rather than joining them in one way or another with the congregation that his advisor would still be directing for eight more years (1678-1686)?

Spiritual Directives

Broadly speaking, all religious institutes follow similar directives codified today by canon law: vocal prayer, mental (interior) prayer, attendance at Mass, examination of conscience, spiritual reading and study of religion. Such is the essential program for each day. Occasionally and with variable frequency, it is important to go to confession and receive communion. When a sister has committed a serious exterior fault, the superior can forbid her to approach the altar at Mass until her next confession. And finally, each sister must take care to make a retreat once a year.

Outside of these very general practices, which we cannot consider as characteristic of the congregation founded by Father Barré, what similarities, what differences or what incongruities can we see by comparing the rules peculiar to the sisters of Reims and of Rouen?

With regard to the annual retreat, the *Statuts et reglemens* specify “each year a retreat of ten days” and for the sisters newly admitted to the institute they add “The sisters entering the house will make the said retreat as soon as they enter.”⁵⁶ The *Constitutions* of Reims give greater latitude, indicating not each year, since the annual retreat is ten days,⁵⁷ but at the end of the novitiate: “The sister about to be received in association will prepare herself for the sacrifice of herself to God by a retreat of eight or ten days.”⁵⁸

Confession must in no way interfere with classes; and so Father Barré was careful to state: “Since they can go to confession on feast days, Sundays and on holidays, that should suffice.”⁵⁹ No need to make them concerned about going to confession often, so he thought. The harmful views of Jansenism in the air at the time led to far ranging and excessive severities. In 1677, Barré the Minim was even more explicit when he wrote: “Ordinary confession will be made at most twice a week.”⁶⁰ Quite similar to our modern canon law, the text of Canon Roland – at least the one Bishop Le Tellier passed on to us – stipulates minimal frequency: “The sisters will go to confession at least once a week, on Saturday.”⁶¹ This confession according to rule will be done after class, before five o'clock in winter and until seven o'clock in summer.

We can clearly sense that the two founders intended not to break with the custom that had prevailed almost everywhere in the seventeenth century, i.e. not receiving communion without going to confession first. By intending to recommend twice weekly confession for the school teachers, they did not believe they should prevent them from going to confession twice a week, and routinely at that.

It is true, however, that Canon Roland did not consistently stipulate two communions per week in the rule. Doubtlessly his eucharistic zeal was tempered by Bishop Le Tellier when he restrained himself in making some additions to the weekly schedule: “General communion will be taken in the house every Sunday, on feast days and on the 25th of each month; other than that each sister will be able to receive communion on the day she has made her vows, on the feast of her patron saint or of the saint whose name she bears and on the anniversary of her baptism.”⁶² What follows was signed by the archbishop and bears his personal style; thus, it would be mistaken to attribute it to Canon Roland with any certitude: “we forbid communion to be taken more often without the express permission of the superior.” Note, however, that this prohibition does not seem at all firm and absolute. It is, on the contrary, a modest suggestion that favors more frequent communions. The sister superior, in fact, can grant the permission “to those she judges more worthy without it being required to have recourse to an ecclesiastical superior.”⁶³

Father Barré appeared more liberal. He said that the sisters “would receive communion ordinarily every Sunday and on the feast days observed in each diocese and on every Thursday of the year.”⁶⁴ Thus, in certain weeks, the sisters could be brought to communion three times. However, one small qualification was introduced so that Thursdays would not be favored over other days of the week: “However, if a Church feast day falls on a Wednesday or Friday, they [men and women teachers] will not receive communion on Thursday. This ruling will also be observed if there are two or more feast days in one week.” During the annual retreat the sisters “will receive communion one day out of two,” which brings the number of communions to four in one week.⁶⁵ We can easily see why in these situations Father Barré insisted on the proper dispositions for holy communion. Not wanting to be accused of any permissiveness, he required an appropriate prayer of thanksgiving: “Prayers of thanksgiving after communion will last about a half hour.”⁶⁶ He conceded that these rulings are only recommendations: “The superior in conjunction with advice taken from the confessor or the spiritual director is authorized to exercise prudence with regard to both the days and the persons [receiving communion].”⁶⁷ The length of the prayers of thanksgiving was not indicated for the sisters of Reims.

To help the sisters progress in the spiritual life, the ruling in Rouen provided for each sister to take a turn in participating in one whole day of recollection. On that day, she would be relieved of all outside activity. The ruling even provided for the sisters charged with religious instruction of adults to have two days of retreat per month instead of one:

There will always be one of the sisters on retreat. Each one will have one entire day each month to draw divine blessings on them and on their work so that mental (interior) prayer may never be overlooked as being the support of this institute. This will depend on the number of sisters permitting it.⁶⁸ The superior will remember to give two days of retreat each month, in a row or separated, to the sisters who are charged with teaching adults.⁶⁹

Canon Roland did not have anything against the benefit of such a monthly period of recollection, but he did not think it possible to free the sisters in Reims from all school activity once a month. Consequently, on the twenty-fifth of each month he asked the sisters and the students to collectively rededicate themselves to the Child Jesus. His instructions on this matter are so unique that a mere summary would do them a disservice. We need to cite them in their entirety from the *Constitutions*:

Since the Community is consecrated to the Holy Child Jesus, the Sisters will have a deep and distinct veneration and a most particular devotion to the Holy Child Jesus. They will bring to him with confidence all their needs and especially pray to fulfill their duties in schools with the little orphans who as children constantly represent the Child Jesus to them. The twenty-fifth of each month will be a great feast day for the whole house. Rising will be at midnight to honor the birth of the Holy Child Jesus, and the exercises of piety introduced into the Community by holy custom will continue. After vespers, which will be said at two o'clock in the afternoon, there will be a sermon on the mystery of the Child Jesus and a priest will be asked to come and sing High Mass at which all the Sisters will receive communion.⁷⁰

When Father Le Goix, Superior of the Community of the Holy Child Jesus from 1690 to 1710, decided to put into writing the practices most dear to the sisters as a legacy of their founder, he dedicated an entire chapter to “the devotion toward the Holy Child Jesus.” Though his successors may have modified some of his text, it is certain that the particular details of the directives formulated in the *Constitutions* of 1683 can be considered as authentic in themselves. Thus, the mention of “The twenty-fifth of each month” and “Rising will be at midnight” is made explicit in the schedule mentioned in the *Usage*:

On the twenty-fourth of each month ... the exercises customarily done in the Community after returning from school will be moved forward to enable the Sisters to retire precisely at eight o'clock in the evening. The Superior will put one Sister in charge of waking up the entire Community at a quarter past eleven, and she will also toll the bell for mental (interior) prayer at half past eleven. All the Sisters will proceed to the chapel where, once assembled, the Superior will give the signal and the Sister responsible for the weekly prayers will intone the *Veni Sancte* [Come Holy Spirit] which will be continued by the Community. She will recite the verse and then begin mental (interior) prayer by reading the subject of meditation just as on ordinary days. The subject of meditation on these days will always be the Mysteries of the Childhood of the Son of God and meditation will continue until midnight.

At midnight the Sisters assigned by the Superior will begin to sing three times *Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis* [The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.]. At this time all the Sisters will prostrate themselves face down to adore the Word made flesh. Then those chosen to sing will begin the litany in honor of the Child Jesus, and all the Sisters will respond in an unhurried and modest fashion. During this time, they will approach the altar two by two where an image of the Child Jesus will be placed. After staying some time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, they will approach the image of the Holy Child and show a gesture of respect to honor in their heart him whom

the image represents and who deigned to lower himself to the status of a child for love of them and of all persons At the end of the litany, they will all chant together *Puer natus est* [A child is born] followed by the verse and response. The Superior will then begin mental (interior) prayer. Then the sister responsible for the weekly prayers will begin the prayers honoring the Child Jesus, which consist of three *Pater* [Our Fathers] and twelve *Ave* [Hail Marys] and at each *Pater* and *Ave* all will bow profoundly saying *Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis*. This will finish by saying *Gloria Patri* [Glory be to the Father] continued by all the Sisters in alternating choruses, at the end of which the subject of meditation for the day on the childhood of Our Lord will be read. Afterwards, the Sisters will leave two by two and retire each one to her cell and go directly to bed. On that day, rising will be just at six o'clock.⁷¹

Other directives are more of an interior nature. They are mainly aimed, however, at clarifying a few requirements of the *Constitutions* and can be considered as a faithful rendering of Nicolas Roland's thinking:

On the twenty-fourth of each month all the Sisters will prepare to honor the birth of the Holy Child Jesus by renewing in themselves a sense of anticipation for it. They will be careful that throughout the house there be only edifying talk that bears on piously imitating and honoring in a dignified manner, not only on that day but all during their life, the mysteries of the childhood of Jesus to which they have consecrated themselves. And to obtain this grace ... they will observe abstinence and fasting in the house.... The Superior must see to it that on that day there not be any visitors and that the Sisters not go to the parlors unless it is absolutely necessary.⁷²

Outside of this day of recollection on the twenty-fifth day of each month, Canon Roland required the Sisters to recite each day the litany of the Holy Child Jesus. In Rouen the Sisters of Father Barré recited them only one day a week, on Thursdays.

The influence of Father Barré does not seem to explain completely a similar devotion of the Sisters in Reims to the Holy Child Jesus, especially in the details of how it was to be done. De Grèzes attempts a hypothesis when he writes about the foundation in Reims:

We do not wish to leave this foundation, which Father Barré contributed to so actively, without mentioning a practice that was introduced from its beginnings by the Daughters of the pious Minim. We cannot doubt that they learned it from him who wanted to place all their charitable schools under the patronage of the Holy Child Jesus. The twenty-fifth day of each month was consecrated to honoring this divine Child with a quite unique devotion.⁷³

It is not certain that the Sisters at Reims, Anne Le Coeur and Françoise Duval, took the initiative to draw up a set of regulations for the burgeoning community. Canon Roland, Superior and Founder, alone had that spiritual responsibility. Doubtlessly, he accepted suggestions from the sisters. But should we say that they alone should be given credit for their work? It is strange that later this devotional practice disappeared in Rouen at the same time it was taking hold in Reims, during the lifetime of Father Barré, the so-called initiator of the practice.⁷⁴ In all justice, we

believe it is right to attribute the credit to Canon Roland. Without a doubt, his devotion to the Holy Child Jesus was encouraged by Father Barré; but it does not date from their first meeting and it also was subject to other influences, for example the monastery at Beaune where the founder of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Mother Marguerite of the Blessed Sacrament.⁷⁵

In addition to the devotion to the Holy Child Jesus, the *Statuts et reglemens* recommend several others:

The Sisters will have a great devotion to Saint Joseph and will take him as a model and his actions as a rule for their life: 1° Because of his duties in raising the Incarnate Word, the sisters will consider all the children they instruct as children of Our Lord. These are the children Our Lord refers to in the Gospel when he says that each time you do an act of charity for the least of my brothers, you do it to me and what you do to the least of my children I will consider it as done to me. 2° Saint Joseph was taught by the example Our Lord gave him. Thus, the simplicity and innocence of children must teach school teachers the practice of these virtues; and as Saint Joseph was a man of silence and prayer, this must also be the continual focus of the daughters of the charitable schools.⁷⁶

We must next turn to the *Statuts* printed in 1685 to find a supplement to that text:

The Brothers and the Sisters will have a great devotion to Saint John the Baptist, the holy Apostles, the doctors of the Church, the holy angels, and will undertake the Christian education of children under the protection and continual help of their own guardian angel and that of each of the children. . . . They will also have devotion to Saint Francis of Assisi because of his admirable poverty and total detachment, Saint Francis of Paola for his distinguished and miraculous charity and humility, Saint Francis Xavier because of his utter heavenly and apostolic zeal, and Saint Francis de Sales completely zealous for the salvation and sanctification of souls with the utmost tender sweetness of divine love.⁷⁷

It is true that from 1677 Father Barré took care to note the principal feasts to celebrate with particular fervor:

Their principal feasts will be the Nativity of Our Lord, the mission and sending of the Holy Spirit and the Presentation of the Virgin Mary, Jesus's most worthy mother whom they will venerate in a special way. On these feast days they will offer themselves to the Holy Trinity.⁷⁸

The *Constitutions* of the sisters of the Holy Child Jesus of Reims do not go into the same type of detail, but the *Mémoires sur la vie de Monsieur Nicolas Roland* [*Memoire on the Life of M. Nicolas Roland*] does give some clarification on his everyday practices:

After God he had a tender love for the Virgin Mary, and you could see that on her feast days he was steeped in so much joy it could not be contained. This is what made him open his heart with impassioned words to people visiting him.... He had a special veneration for his guardian angel and Saint Joseph whom he considered his guide since

he was the caretaker of Jesus and Mary. He also had a tender love for Saint John⁷⁹ as the model for good priests, Saint Nicholas, his patron saint, the holy Apostles because they are the ones who founded the Church, Saint Remigius, Saint Francis and Saint Theresa.... His devotion for the souls in purgatory was so evident that when he spoke of their suffering you would think he was feeling their pain. All his words were like a soothing balm that could relieve them.⁸⁰

Thus, aside from the common and essential devotions, some clear differences do appear between Canon Roland and Father Barré. The Doctors of the Church, Saint Francis of Paola, Saint Francis Xavier and Saint Francis de Sales appeal more to Father Barré. Saint Theresa and Saint Remigius appear preferable to Canon Roland.

Let us now go into the details of the spiritual exercises of each congregation. Regarding the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus of Reims, it would doubtlessly be possible to get some idea of the vocal prayers in use at the time of Canon Roland although the *Constitutions* of 1683 do not provide any examples. The manuscript entitled *Usages*, in fact, makes explicit all the customs followed by the sisters. Unfortunately for our purposes, this manuscript owes several of its chapters to Monsieur Le Goix, ecclesiastical superior of the sisters at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It would be risky to take what he says as the words of Canon Roland. So let us not compare the vocal prayers of Reims with those of Rouen, a comparison we do not need to do to understand the essence of the spiritual life of the Sisters of Providence and the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus.

In Rouen Father Barré planned for a half hour of meditation in the morning and less than a quarter hour in the evening before supper. In Reims, Canon Roland proposed that the sisters apply themselves to interior prayer for a scant hour each morning; then for the evening, he writes in their schedule a half hour of mental prayer before supper. If the entire duration of the exercises of piety is identical in the two congregations, it is because instead of meditation Father Barré planned for the daily recitation of the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Prime, Terce, Sext and Nones in the morning; Vespers and Compline in the evening; Matins and Lauds before retiring at night (at least in 1677, because the *Statuts* of 1685 place the recitation of Nones at the middle of the day, at the time of individual examination of conscience [particular examen]).

Spiritual reading, like meditation, lasted longer in Reims than in Rouen: a half hour instead of a quarter hour. Since spiritual reading was designed to prepare the soul to talk to God with the aid of supernatural thoughts, it is normal that this reading should carry more importance where interior prayer lasts longer.

After the noon meal in Reims as in Rouen, the sisters spent some time in silence to engage in individual examination of conscience [particular examen]. But in Reims after the meal the sisters returned to chapel reciting in two choirs the “*De profundis* (Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord) for the benefactors of the house,” a practice that was not done in Rouen.

Finally, more attention was given to religious studies in Reims than in Rouen. Following the directives of Canon Roland, the sisters were to devote an entire half hour to the study of religion

whereas Father Barré directed that for the same amount of time the sisters do two things: one “advance in Christian doctrine” and another “learn better how to write.”⁸¹

Concerning their formation as catechists, it is interesting to note that each week in Rouen the sisters got together to attend a talk on doctrine or to exchange their ideas on best practices in teaching catechism to children or, as the case may be, to adults.⁸² In Reims Canon Roland recommended that it was up to the local superior to decide whether the study of religion on any one day should be replaced by an exchange of views on methods of teaching catechism.

Each month Father Barré saw to it that a priest would be invited to give a spiritual conference to the community. This kind of monthly get together did not take place in Reims, but “on Sundays and feast days at four thirty in the afternoon the superior will assemble the community to hear a brief, pious talk given either by herself or by one of the older sisters on the obligations of their state on life.”⁸³

Frequent reading of the rules and constitutions of religious orders is noted by most of their founders as an excellent way to promote observance of the rules in a house. Canon Roland as well as Father Barré knew this, but Canon Roland said that the benefit from a weekly conference could be had simply by “reading a chapter of the Constitutions.” Father Barré wanted the reading of the rule to begin on the first Thursday of each month and then continue on the following days until all the chapters made their impression on the minds of the sisters. In addition, the Sunday conference following the first Thursday of each month had to deal with regularity [adherence to the rules of the community]. Thus, greater latitude on this point was granted to the superior of the sisters in Reims than to the superior of the Sisters of Providence.⁸⁴

Among the exercises of humility, the *culpa* [public admission of one’s faults] was defined in this way by the *Constitutions* of 1683:

The superior will assemble the community every Saturday and, when the sisters are gathered at the appointed time and place, they will kneel and accuse themselves of their faults in order to receive correction and a penance judged appropriate by the superior who, in doing this, will be more gentle than severe.”⁸⁵

The equivalent of this precept was not found in the *Statuts* of Father Barré. Was it to avoid the sisters being understood as cloistered religious at a time when innovation was frowned upon? The fact remains that at that time the *culpa* held a place of honor both in Rouen and in Reims. We should however quote this precept of Father Barré:

If any of the Sisters has noticed some violation of the said *Statuts et Reglemens*, she will be obliged to let the Superior know of it in secret, and some days afterward the Superior will correct it publicly or in private, according to her prudent judgment.⁸⁶

If you want to get a clear idea of the common aspirations held by those consecrated to God in a religious congregation, nothing could be better than to examine the formula of consecration in which they articulate their ideal on the day of their profession. Without a doubt, Father Barré did not want his first disciples to make vows. His *Statuts* prescribed that they “will live in

community without making vows or being cloistered but living under the guidance of the [male] Superior or sister Superior” whom they will obey “in the truth of pure and holy love.”⁸⁷ De Grèzes explains this absence of vows by noting how difficult it was around 1685 to found a non-cloistered religious congregation. He notes: “Thus is explained the otherwise inexplicable action of the wise founder.”⁸⁸ Then he adds these words to his remark about the vows the sisters were deprived of: “at least a promise of obedience and stability served [as vows] for them.”⁸⁹

Does any evidence still exist of this promise? Do we know what formula was used to articulate it or what its terms and conditions were? It has been impossible to find in the archives of the Sisters of Providence the text to which De Grèzes refers. However, since vows were introduced into the congregation only in 1921, we can get an idea of the commitments the sisters made in the time of Father Barré by studying the oldest formal ceremonies of habit taking and profession. When taking the habit, the emphasis was not on obedience but on detachment from worldly riches:

I solemnly intend, responds the postulant to the ecclesiastical superior questioning her, to serve God and neighbor with complete dependence on divine Providence, relying and counting on everything without ever doubting [Providence’s] paternal and loving care.

At the end of the novitiate, the sister makes this commitment:

I promise to live in obedience, poverty and chastity according to the Rules and Constitutions of this Institute.

The Ladies of Saint-Maur, in a formal ceremony printed in 1836, articulated a similar promise. Do these texts provide evidence of practices before the Revolution? It is plausible but risky to say anything for certain. We can say for certain that in the spirit of Father Barré simple vows were not disapproved of in themselves. They were just considered as inappropriate at that time. That is why the Sisters of Providence, like the Ladies of Saint-Maur, pronounce vows of religion today. Evidently, when they had to choose a formula of consecration, they recalled the traditional practices of their congregation and were inspired by the authentic spirit of Father Barré. Thus, we have good reason to pay more attention to the *Constitutions* currently in force:

Under the protection of the most holy Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, my guardian angel and my patron saints ... I make to God ... simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience according to our Constitutions.... May the Most Holy Trinity and the heavenly court come to my aid. Amen.⁹⁰

Canon Roland was more fortunate than Father Barré. He had found in Reims the valuable support and respect of his archbishop. Soon after Roland’s death (27 April 1678) Bishop Le Tellier promoted the mission of his work. When John Baptist de La Salle, the main executor of his will, began taking the required steps to obtain approbation for the new institute and letters patent from the king to assure its legal status, he found in Bishop Le Tellier a powerful and very popular intercessor at the royal court. The new congregation was approved, and the constitutions were officially announced by episcopal decree dated 12 November 1683. It was a diocesan institute with simple vows that were pronounced using the following admirable formula:

I ____, sister of the Community of the Holy Child Jesus, in the presence of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, promise and vow poverty, chastity and perpetual obedience to the Reverend Archbishop of Reims, and moreover I make an inviolable vow of stability in this community consecrated to the Holy Child Jesus and dedicated to education. Wherefore I consecrate myself from this moment on with the intent to spend all my life in the community, which I will faithfully accomplish with the grace of the Holy Child Jesus that I most humbly beseech through the merits of his Incarnation and his passion.⁹¹

The formula used in Rouen insisted on the devotions that Father Barré recommended at length in his *Statuts*: the most holy Virgin, Saint Joseph, the guardian angels. It did not invoke devotion to the Holy Child Jesus because the vows were addressed to God and so it did not seem essential to make that invocation. On the other hand, in Reims devotion to the Holy Child Jesus held a prominent place in the vow formula, and the saints, even the Most Holy Virgin, are not even mentioned since the three persons of the Trinity took precedence. For sure, Canon Roland, insofar as his spiritual directives influenced this act of consecration, is anything but a slavish imitator.

Conclusion

What conclusions can we draw from this detailed comparison of the *Statuts* of Father Barré and the Constitutions of the sisters of the Holy Child Jesus of Reims? If we are to believe De Grèzes, Canon Roland found in the schools of Rouen “a model; all he had to do was to imitate it while taking into consideration the circumstances and local difficulties.”⁹² This opinion leads the author to present a hypothesis as an almost certitude regarding the ceremonies introduced in Reims for the twenty-fifth of each month.⁹³ On the contrary, it is difficult to think that Father Barré had anything to do with it since this practice was adopted neither in Rouen, nor in Paris nor in the other cities where the sisters were established. It comes down to giving the credit to Canon Roland.

In speaking of Canon Roland’s stay in Rouen, his historian writes: “The theologian of Reims became conscious there of the thought that had been on his mind for a long time; his conversations with Father Barré only made him more enthusiastic and he returned more intent on providing for his diocese the same benefits by establishing gratuitous schools.”⁹⁴ And Hanneuse was perhaps unwittingly trying to highlight the merits of his main character who died in the odor of sanctity when he writes: “Roland found [in Rouen] a model; all he had to do was to imitate it while taking into consideration the circumstances and local difficulties.”⁹⁵ We can see that Hanneuse and De Grèzes use similar language in their accounts. In fact, because De Grèzes published his book only four years after Canon Hanneuse, it is impossible to accuse him of being biased toward Father Barré. He just repeats what Nicolas Roland’s historian had thought proper to attribute to the credit of Father Barré. He did not think it was up to him to modify anything.

Likewise, as early as 1735 Blain had given the credit to De La Salle in his *Vie de Monsieur Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*:

We are talking about establishing communities ... where men and women school teachers could be taught.... M. Roland's zeal was such that he had his eye on these grand projects, but the grace to bring them to fruition belonged to another. Monsieur De La Salle ... was to execute at least the main part of the holy projects of his spiritual father, for he never took the responsibility of establishing gratuitous schools for girls. The Minim, Reverend Father Barré, ... had already been inspired to do that, and he had succeeded in doing it by establishing the Sisters of Providence, who go wherever they are called. This establishment gave rise to many others expanding every day to different dioceses in France because Monsieur Roland was perhaps the first who was able to take advantage of the opportunity.⁹⁶

Blain was a canon in Rouen where he published his book. As the ecclesiastical superior of a teaching congregation known as the Sisters of Ernemont, he gave it a rule and constitutions. Recognizing himself in a situation like that of Canon Roland, he had no desire to overly praise the superiors who endow a new community with religious rules. His texts show one major concern, and that is to discover the genius that first set up the gratuitous Christian schools. Unquestionably, according to him, the credit goes to Father Barré and without a doubt he is perfectly right not to attribute it to Canon Roland. But, let us consider another and perhaps the most important aspect of the question, namely how much credit goes to each one in organizing the spiritual life of women religious dedicated to the gratuitous education of poor children or daughters of the working class. We must admit that the institute of Canon Roland received letters patent as early as 1679 and got a constitution approved by the bishop in 1683, while the two congregations set up by Father Barré got their quasi-definitive *Statuts* only in 1685.

Each of the two religious families has its own special characteristics that do not lend them to being lumped together. Father Barré's community was destined to spread throughout several dioceses and to extend overseas. Canon Roland's community was to stay attached to its diocese of origin. Under those conditions and with the attendant difficulties of recruitment, it is a wonder that the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus of Reims are still surviving after three centuries. Without a doubt Canon Roland was moved by grace to undertake a new and original ministry animated by a spirit and style that could not be associated with the spirituality of any other institute. If we needed to name the essential characteristic that differentiates this spirit from that of other teaching congregations, we would be inclined to sum everything up in one word: humility. Doubtlessly the Constitutions alone do not provide such a shortcut, but the *Mémoires sur la vie de Monsieur Nicolas Roland* do emphasize the principal designs he had for the Congregation of the Holy Child Jesus:

The important precept of this Community was that not all kinds of temperaments were suitable, for, as he said, an out of the ordinary lifestyle is needed to exercise their duties with edification.... Great simplicity and honesty within are needed to comply with orders given from the outside. Great humility is needed to take control of a class without getting swayed by the useless and worldly plaudits of others.⁹⁷

It is surprising to see how the historians of Canon Roland or Father Barré paid such little attention to a basic and very characteristic attitude of the spirit of freedom, initiative and healthy independence that animated the canon of Reims. When he would go to Paris, he did not go to Father Barré for spiritual direction or to resolve spiritual issues that inevitably arise with any founder of a religious order. He would go to Father César du Saint-Sacrement, a Carmelite of great virtue, who was born in Vic in the diocese of Metz in 1616 and died in Paris in 1688.

As for Father Barré, the initiator of a ministry destined to transform popular education in all of France, he showed the greatness of his character by depriving himself in Rouen of two excellent teachers to advance the projects of Canon Roland. He proved to be an astute psychologist and a wise spiritual director by not substituting himself for God in the founding of the schools in Reims. More than ever, in that circumstance, he followed his own favorite advice:

Those who work to bring souls to perfection must act with complete disinterest. A director may well clarify but not convert, nor can he even bring a soul to a certain advanced level. The wise and holy director is careful to lead and direct according to nature; otherwise he becomes detrimental to the soul. He acts as a support to effective grace. The perfect director must always act with dependence on that superior and sovereign spirit which alone has the power to control each soul. He must listen more than speak in order to benefit from the understanding God will give him through the persons he directs as he constantly sinks into his own nothingness. He should be careful not to turn each soul away from the path that is specific and right for it, for that would set them back or lead them astray.⁹⁸

Not turning Canon Roland away from the path that was “specific and right” for him, encouraging him and advising him on certain specific points when his personal genius or his lack of experience or the absence of clarifying graces left him perplexed, that is what constitutes the greatness of Father Barré in the foundation of the institute in Reims. Instead of imposing on the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus the *Statuts* he had set up with love after concluding years of experience, he preferred to lose himself and let the grace of God act. Let us conclude with his words: “Different species of trees produce different fruits. You cannot expect to find cherries on a plum tree. The same goes for souls.” And as for religious institutes: “Each one must bear the fruit of its own kind, which is the fruit of its own grace and its charism. The skill and the wisdom of the director consists in identifying this fruit, sustaining it and bringing it to perfect ripeness. The director of an innocent soul must follow it as its servant.”⁹⁹ We believe that Father Barré knew exactly how to discern what God expected from Canon Roland and that likewise he knew how to listen to this innocent soul and follow it.

Endnotes

1. “L’influence du Père Barré dans la fondation des Sœurs du Saint-Enfant-Jésus de Reims” by Yves Poutet in *Revue d’histoire de l’Église de France*, tome 46, n°143, 1960, pages 18-53, has just recently been translated into English and is made available here with the kind agreement of the director of the journal.

2. Brother Yves Poutet (1920-2009), *Docteur ès lettres*, was a Lasallian scholar and French historian of the seventeenth-and eighteenth-centuries. He is an author of numerous books and articles, who wrote principally about the history of education and the spirituality and pedagogy of John Baptist de La Salle.

3. Brother Leonard Marsh is emeritus professor of the department of global languages, literatures, and perspectives at La Salle University in Philadelphia, PA. He earned his PhD in French literature from Boston College, and he specializes in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French literature.

4. Abbé Al. Hanneke, *Vie de Nicolas Roland, chanoine théologal de l'église métropolitaine de Reims, fondateur de la Congrégation du Saint-Enfant-Jésus de Reims, suivie de l'histoire de cette Congrégation jusqu'en 1888* (Reims : Imprimerie coopérative, 1888. fr. in-8°, iv-554 p.). The author cites his sources. Many of them do not exist anymore. The papers of Canon Hanneke, who was the ecclesiastical superior of the Sisters, were lost in a fire. However, most often good copies survive.

Henri de Grèzes (a Capuchin Franciscan), *Vie du R. P. Barré, religieux minime, fondateur de l'Institut des Ecoles charitables du Saint-Enfant-Jésus, dit de Saint-Maur, origine et progrès de cet Institut, 1662-1700* (Bar-le-Duc : Imprimerie de l'œuvre de Saint-Paul, n. d. [with approval of the Superiors, 2 April 1892], in-8° of 428 p. of which pages 384-420 constitute supporting documents). This is the first serious work on Father Barré. He is careful to produce the texts he relies on, but he admits that his research was not exhaustive. We should note that the title of the work is somewhat misleading. The Ladies of Saint-Maur were not founded in 1662 but in 1676, the date of the first school in Paris founded by Father Barré. It is the Sisters of Providence of Rouen who go back to 1662, the date of the opening of a school for the working class in Sotteville-lez-Rouen. In fact, the separation of the two congregations was made only at the end of the 17th century; and the Ladies of Saint-Maur owe their origins to the Sisters of Providence.

Among the works that offer some new documentation we should note: Canon Farcy, *L'Institut des Sœurs du Saint-Enfant Jésus, dites de la Providence de Rouen* (Rouen, 1938). The work of Father Moretti is directly geared to the cause of beatification of Father Barré. In Reims the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus have developed a method of inventory and classification of the writings relating to Canon Nicolas Roland. Harang, with regard to the spiritual life, and Cordonnier, with regard to the biography, popularize more than offer anything new.

5. The monastery in the Place Royale had an entrance from the Rue des Minimes. It was a renowned center of intellectual activity. Father Mersenne made his name there due to his knowledge and erudition. Today the Place Royale is named the Place des Vosges.

6. We are not mentioning here Mme Maillefer. It is not proven that Father Barré played any role in her conversion. According to Canon Blain, author of the first printed biography of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, Mme Maillefer was converted following a miracle and used a large part of her wealth to support schools for the working class in Rouen and then in Reims. Unfortunately, the accounting ledgers kept by the Sisters of Providence do not even mention her name. The account of Marguerite Lestocq attributes the idea of sending sisters to Reims to Mme de Grainville and not to Mme Maillefer. It is true that it was Mme Maillefer who sent Nyel to

teach class for boys in Reims. Should we conclude that she played a role with the teachers like the role Mme de Grainville played with the sisters? Lacking the documents, prudence is necessary in arriving at such conclusions.

7. De Grèzes, p. 158. Sotteville at that time was dependent on the diocese of Lisieux which directly came under the jurisdiction of Rome (from a note communicated by the Sisters of Providence of Rouen).

8. A handwritten account of Marguerite Lestocq explains that it was “our sister Françoise who began the first of the schools.” This according to the already cited text published by De Grèzes, p. 160.

9. De Grèzes on p. 158 quoting the words of Marguerite Lestocq.

10. Canon Farcy, *Le Révérend Père Barré, religieux minime, 1621-1686* (Paris, Gabalda, 1942). The rule of this “Family of the Holy Child Jesus” was also adopted by Anne Corneille (25 May 1664) and her family whose Charles Corneille was a lawyer in the Parliament.

11. *Mémoire* [report] of Marguerite Lestocq cited in Grèzes, p. 158.

12. *Mémoire*, p. 160.

13. This letter was published in the *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* (July-September 1960).

14. He died on 27 April 1678.

15. Charles Démia, *Remontrances à messieurs les prévôts des marchands, échevins et principaux magistrats de la ville de Lyon, touchant la nécessité des écoles pour l'instruction des enfants pauvres* (Lyon, 1666). According to the biographers of N. Roland and Father Barré, it was the second edition of the *Remontrances* that the priest of Saint Nicolas de Chardonnet had given to Canon Roland.

16. *Mémoires*, p. 21. These *Mémoires sur la vie de Monsieur Nicolas Roland* are still unpublished. They are preserved in the Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus of Reims.

17. All the biographers of Charles Démia cite the passage from a letter of Féret, priest of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, which demonstrates the strong impression made on Nicolas Roland by the *Remontrances*. It is interesting to note that Father Féret was the superior of the Daughters of Saint Geneviève, then of the Daughters of the Holy Family who ran schools for working-class girls.

18. *Mémoires*, manuscript, page 22.

19. *Mémoires*, manuscript, page 25.

20. Hanesse, pages 147-150.

21. Hanesse, page 51. Hanesse attributes Françoise Duval's assignment there to Mme Maillefer. "M. Roland wrote to Rouen, Mme Maillefer planned with Father Barré and he sent to her the first superior of the Community of Providence, Sister Françoise Duval." Accounts in the documents preserved for us speak of Mme de Grainville, not of Mme Maillefer. In addition, the *Mémoire* of Marguerite de Lestocq (1681) indicates that the common life had not yet begun by that time in Rouen and that Françoise Duval, first to run a school under the direction of Father Barré, was not superior of a community. See the text in De Grèzes, pp. 158 ff.

22. Hanesse, page 192.

23. Marguerite Lestocq could have been mistaken on certain dates, not on the essential facts, nor on the role of the persons with whom she was living. In any case, apart from a formal document, her living account carries more weight than the best of hypotheses. This account gives the details of the order of factual events: 1st the death of the priest of Saint-Amand, 2nd Françoise Duval's departure for Reims, 3rd the structure of the community life for the (women) teachers of Rouen. The priest of Saint-Amand, M. de La Haye, died on 13 June 1670 (according to the municipal archives of Rouen); Françoise Duval left for Reims at the end of December since she arrived in that city on the 27th of the same month. See Hanesse, p. 151. We must then consider the end of December 1670 as the earliest date of the beginnings of community life for the Sisters of Providence of Rouen. Since the Archives of the Sisters of Providence preserve a dated list of the superiors of their congregation, we know that Mme de Grainville filled this position from 1669 to 1670 and that Mme du Buc succeeded her in 1671. Was Marguerite Lestocq mistaken in 1681 when she indicated categorically Mme du Buc and not Mme de Grainville as the first superior? Or else she was perhaps conscious that the first structuring of common life was done under the aegis of Father Barré and Mme du Buc herself with Marguerite Lestocq "being the first to have the honor of entering the community." It does seem that she knows better than anyone what she is speaking about and therefore we must put as a date the octave of Christmas 1670 or the first days of January 1671 as the beginning of the new religious congregation as such.

24. *Mémoire de Marguerite Lestocq* published by De Grèzes, page 16

25. It is a pity that several pages of this precious and irreplaceable manuscript have disappeared. The text of articles 14 and 15, with a few gaps, is however preserved as a photocopy in the book of Father Moretti, *Un pedagogisto santo. II Servo di Dio P. Nicola Barré* (Roma, 1929), page 51.

26. The archives of the Sisters of Providence have several notebooks described as copies of conferences made by Father Barré. Up to now, we cannot be sure of the authenticity of these texts. Perhaps we may soon have the opportunity to study this matter closely.

27. De Grèzes, page 177.

28. *Statuts et reglemens* of 1677, ms., ch 1, art 15. In citing the manuscripts, the spelling and punctuation of the original are retained. Occasionally, however, we have taken the liberty to add one or another accent. Such is ordinarily the case with the preposition à [to]

29. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), ms., page 3, chapter 1.

30. *Mémoire instructif*, page 1.

31. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), ms., page 4.

32. *Statuts et reglemens* of 1677, ms., chapter 1, art. 12. In the 1685 edition this article will be article 5.

33. *Usage*, ms., chapter 1, page 5.

34. *Statuts et reglemens* of 1677, chapter 1, page 3.

35. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), chapter 1, page 3.

36. *Statuts et reglemens* of 1677, chapter 1, art. 1.

37. *Mémoire instructif*, page 1.

38. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), page 1.

39. *Statuts et reglemens* of 1677, chapter 1, art 4.

40. *Usage*, ms., chapter 1.

41. *Usage*, ms., chapter 1.

42. *Statuts et reglemens* of 1677, chapter 1, art 4.

43. *Statuts et reglemens* of 1677, chapter 1, art 14.

44. *Usage*, ms., chapter 1.

45. The *Catalogue des Supérieures agréées par Mrs. les Administrateurs* is preserved in the archives of the sisters of Rouen. It mentions: “Madame de Grainville, in 1669; Madame du Buc in 1671.” This refers to the sisters for temporal matters.

46. Up until 1763 the institute of the gratuitous and charitable schools of the so called Holy Child Jesus had as (male) directors religious of the society of Minims “authorized by the

Archbishop.” Later the (male) superiors were named by the Archbishop of Rouen (according to a note communicated by the Sisters of Providence).

47. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), ms., page 4.

48. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), ms., page 4.

49. *Letters* of Father Barré, edition of Toulouse, 1876, p. 249.

50. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), ms., page 9.

51. *Statuts*, chapter 3, art. 10.

52. *Statuts*, chapter 2, art. 3.

53. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), page 44.

54. All these details are taken from chapter 2 of the *Statuts et reglemens* of 1677 which parallels in a way chapter 2 of the *Constitutions* of Reims.

55. Cf. Hanneuse, pages 116-17, 199.

56. *Statuts*, ms., chapter 2, art. 18.

57. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), page 16.

58. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), page 8.

59. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1685, chapter 2, art. 3.

60. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1677, ms., chapter 2, art. 21.

61. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), page 13.

62. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), page 13.

63. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), page 13.

64. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1685, chapter 2, art. 4.

65. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1685, chapter 2, art. 18.

66. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1685, chapter 2, art. 6.

67. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1685, chapter 2, art. 5.

68. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1685, chapter 2, art. 17.

69. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1685, chapter 2, art. 15.

70. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), ms., pages 14-15.

71. *Usage*, ms., chapter 10, pages 22-26.

72. *Usage*, ms., chapter 10, pages 22-26.

73. De Grèzes, pages 173-174.

74. Serious research was done at the archives of the sisters of Rouen and nothing was found pertaining to the twenty-fifth of each month, although it was an age-old tradition in the congregation to make a novena to the Holy Child Jesus ending on that date. In the brochure *Maximes du R. P. Barré et Pratiques en usage dans l'Institut des Sœurs du Saint Enfant Jésus, dites de la Providence de Rouen* [*Maxims of Rev. Fr. Barré and Practices in use in the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, also called of Providence, in Rouen*], (published in Bruges, Barbiaux-De Gheselle, rue Wallonne, 1914), there is found on page 29 *Pratiques en l'honneur du Saint Enfant Jésus* [*Practices in Honor of the Holy Child Jesus*] which evidently were not recommended in that form by Father Barré: "Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, let us have, like our Founder, a great devotion to the holy childhood of Jesus. Let us consecrate the month of January and the twenty-fifth day of each month to honor him. On these days let us recite the litany of the Holy Infancy. Let us make a special visit to the crib, or else let us venerate a statue of the child Jesus. Let us offer our communion on the twenty-fifth of each month in honor of the divine child to obtain the virtues of the Holy Infancy."

75. Hanneuse, page 252.

76. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1677, ms., pages 4-5.

77. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1685, page 7. We can add that the devotion of the sisters of Rouen to various saints is shown by the recitation each Sunday of the litany of the saints, which the sisters of Reims did not observe. Yet Father Barré specified that his followers offer "to God all day on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for the aid of the suffering souls [in Purgatory], and every day" to add to the *De profundis* an "Our Father and Hail Mary as they descend in spirit to Purgatory and imagine themselves in place of these poor but otherwise holy souls." It goes without saying that this regulation is somewhat authoritarian since it robs the sisters of freely assigning their personal merits three days out of seven. It has disappeared from the constitutions which currently govern the Sisters of Providence. No similar regulation is found in the *Usages* [*Practices*] or the *Constitutions* of [the sisters] of Reims.

78. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1677, ms., page 6.

79. Doubtlessly he is referring to Saint John the Baptist. Beuvelet, whose *Meditations* were known to his cousin Canon Roland, devoted his *Méditation pour le troisième Dimanche des Advents* [*Meditation for the Third Sunday of Advent*] to Saint John the Baptist whom he presented as a model for the clergy (edition of 1664, vol. 3, p. 6). The copy of the *Mémoires sur la vie de Monsieur Nicolas Roland*, preserved by the sisters of the Holy Child Jesus of Reims, contains an objective error since it puts Simeon instead of John, an error which Hanneffe's book reproduces on page 220. The original manuscript must have had "S. Jean" and the reader must have seen "S ieon" and then transcribed Simeon, an error easy to make.

80. *Mémoires sur la vie de Monsieur Nicolas Roland*, ms., page 47. We should add that the devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary is shown in Rouen by the daily recitation of her Office and on Saturday by adding the litany to the usual prayers. In Reims, the devotion of the sisters to Our Lady is practiced in another way.

81. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1677, ms., chapter 6, art. 30.

82. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1677, ms., chapter 2, art. 12.

83. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), ms., page 33.

84. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1677, ms., chapter 2, art. 19.

85. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), ms., page 33.

86. *Statuts et reglemens*, edition of 1677, ms., chapter 2, art. 20.

87. Article 5 cited by De Grèzes, page 234.

88. De Grèzes, page 235.

89. De Grèzes, page 236.

90. *Constitutions de la Congrégation des Sœurs du Saint-Enfant-Jésus, dites de la Providence de Rouen* (no place, no date), page 25. These are the constitutions currently in use.

91. *Constitutions* of 1683 (of Reims), pages 8-9.

92. De Grèzes, page 169.

93. Cf. note 70 and the corresponding citation.

94. Hanneffe, page 115.

95. Hanneuse, page 138. Evidently, we get the impression of reading De Grèzes (as in note 89), but there is no error; the citation is from Canon Hanneuse. To avoid such repetition we would need the skill of a Georges Rigault who, without showing it, keeps the same idea but in his own personal style: “The Congregation founded by Canon Roland . . . resembled the ministry work in Rouen of Providence and the ministry work of the Ladies of Saint-Maur by incorporating some adaptations to local requirements.” Yet he did not consider it more correct when he relied on the authority of his own analysis of the texts: “Under the name dear to Nicolas Barré, but protecting the authority of the foundation in Reims, Nicolas Roland patiently creates a new religious family. This he does at the expense of his time, his fortune, his mortifications and his prayers.” Georges Rigault, *Histoire Générale de l’Institut des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes*, vol. 1, *L’Œuvre pédagogique et religieuse de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* (Paris: Plon, 1937), page 118 and page 114. This work contains some excellent chapters synthesizing Démià, Barré and Roland.

96. Blain, *Vie de Monsieur Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* (Rouen : Machuel, 1733, in-4°), vol. 1, page 138.

97. *Mémoires sur la vie de Monsieur Nicolas Roland*, ms., page 31.

98. *Maximes* I, II, III, XIX, XXII, XXXIII, in the Toulouse edition of the *Lettres* of Father Barré: *Lettres spirituelles du R. Père Nicolas Barré* (Toulouse : Douladoure, 1876), pages 324 ff.

99. *Lettres spirituelles du R. Père Nicolas Barré* (Toulouse : Douladoure, 1876), page 334.