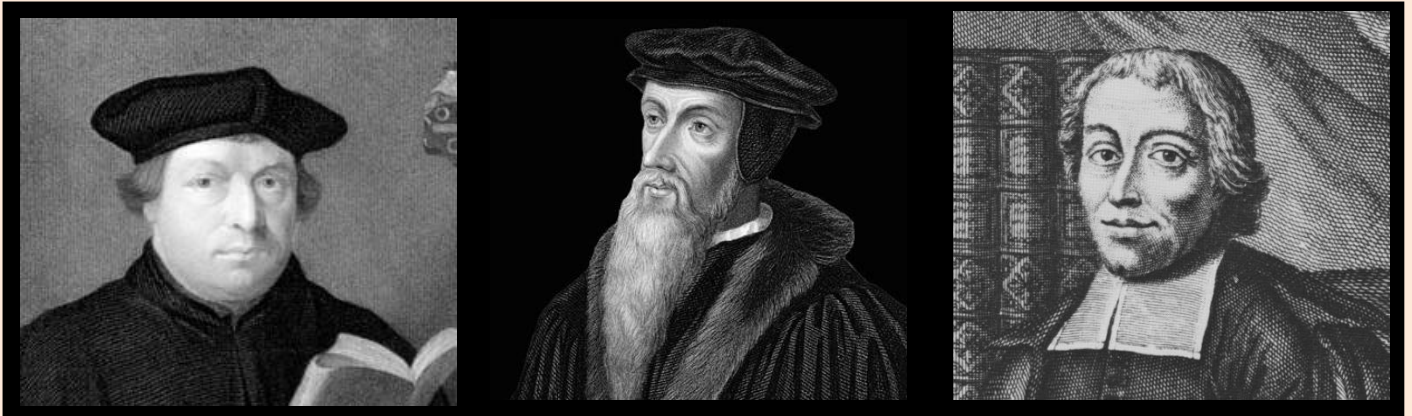


DIGITAL JOURNAL OF LASALLIAN RESEARCH

Opening Perspectives Collection
N°1, April 2018



**JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
AND THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS:
A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH
FRANCE 1525-1725**

Richard M. Tristano

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Richard M. Tristano
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

Aux Frères français au cœur de la mission lasallienne

et

à Frère Paul Grass, FSC avec profonde gratitude

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was generously supported by a sabbatical from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota and by a Lasallian Research grant. That grant funded a collaboration with Brother Diego A. Muñoz León, FSC, Coordinating Secretary of the Service of Lasallian Research and Resources, Rome, Italy. He kindly opened the Lasallian archives and library in Rome to me. I thank Br. Hilaire Raharilalao, FSC, Archivist, Mrs. Anna Cascone, Librarian, and Br. Edorta Zabaleta, FSC, Library Assistant for all their kind assistance in guiding me through their excellent resources. I gratefully acknowledge the support of Brother William Mann, FSC, President of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota and Dr. Tim Gossen, Vice President for Mission, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. I also thank Brother Alain Houry, FSC, Archivist at Les Archives Lasalliennes de France à Lyon, and Dr. Karin Maag, Director of the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, and its staff, who generously shared their time assisting me during my visit. This study could not have been completed without the indispensable resources of the Fitzgerald Library, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, especially the assistance of Lauren Leighton, Interim Interlibrary Loan Librarian. I thank Dr. Ken Stenstrup, who read earlier versions of portions of this study and Dr. Mary Catherine Fox for her unfailing moral support. Dr. Dorothy Diehl generously reviewed many of my translations and saved me from many, many errors. I owe a debt of gratitude to Bishop John M. Quinn, Bishop of Winona, who spent many hours with me discussing the Council of Trent, and who generously invited me to participate in two conversations with John W. O'Malley, S.J. In those conversations and in Father O'Malley's reading of my introduction I received many valuable ideas and advice that enhanced this study. I thank the Lasallian readers who read earlier versions of this manuscript and offered me their sage advice. Of course, I am responsible for the content of this study. All translations are my own, unless otherwise identified.

Finally, I dedicate this study to the French Brothers of the Christian Schools, whose work I admire and from which I profited greatly, and to Brother Paul Grass, FSC. From the moment I proposed a half-baked germ of an idea one evening in a parking lot at Saint Mary's University, to the completion of its very last word, Brother Paul has supported this research with the greatest of kindness, patience, and most of all through his deep knowledge of the Lasallian charism. He has answered countless questions, shared research, sent me files, offered me encouragement and insightful advice. I can only hope that the work has met his expectations in some way.

The idea for this study came in the wake of receiving the Distinguished Lasallian Educator Award at Saint Mary's University in 2014. I hope that this study repays, in some way, this honor.

Finally, I am not trained in early modern French history, that is obvious. But I enjoyed revisiting Febvre, Bloch, Braudel, and Duby, to whom I was introduced in graduate school and whose work I have always admired. I have tried to make this study as "French" as I possibly could. At the very moment I was drafting this document, my learned colleague, Dr. Erich Lippman, sent me a copy of Winks and Adams' "Preface, The Value of History." They begin this quite extraordinary appreciation of the discipline of history with these sentences. "History is a series of arguments to be debated, not a body of data to be recorded or a set of facts to be memorized. Thus controversy in historical interpretation – over what an event actually means, over what really happened at an occurrence called 'an event,' over how best to generalize about the event – is at the heart of its value."¹ I have not tried to be provocative, but a helpful participant in a series of arguments. I have tried to connect my training and interest as a historian to the life and thought of John Baptist de La Salle, and to purposely provide the new conclusions that Lucien Febvre advocated nearly a century ago. I have gotten to know the Founder better, and that is no easy task. I admire him more than when I began this study, and perceive him more as a human being – flawed, eccentric, sometimes disturbingly willful – than as a saint. It would be my fondest wish that anyone who reads what follows would come to feel the same.

¹ Robin W. Winks; R. J. Q Adams, *Europe 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), viii-xiii.

PREFACE

In my view, De La Salle has to be approached, first of all as, a man of his times, with all that critical historical scholarship can tell us about those times, where he fits in and how he was influenced by them. I think on this we both agree. However, for me the question arises as to the extent to which he was influenced by these forces but also how he resisted or transcended his historical situation.

Luke Salm, FSC to the Author

While preparing this study, I came across a review by Jonathan Berkey of a book written by Aziz al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allah and His People*.¹ The author of the review summed up the book's thesis as, "Islam as we know it was not the sudden product of Muhammed ibn 'Abd Allah in the seventh century of the Common Era, but had its roots in a much deeper process of historical change. It was the "end product of the translation of Romanity to the "East," a Roman identity that had at its foundation both a "salvific" monotheism and the pretensions of an "oecumenical empire." This is a stunning idea; an altogether new and historical explanation for the foundation and nature of Islam as a world religion. It is not that al-Azmeh eliminates the role of the divine, for apparently a great deal of the book is dedicated to the development of the concept of Allah and monotheism. But that he re-conceptualizes the accepted narrative of the origins of Islam, from one that was charismatic and the product of specific moments of divine intervention, to one that was historical, the effect of gradual cultural change. Berkey refers to a "canonical" narrative as having developed centuries after the Prophet's death, and he understands al-Azmeh's work as fitting into a new field of historical inquiry, namely, late antiquity. In the latter, Berkey is identifying al-Azmeh's ability to explain Islam contextually. That context was late antique Rome, a Christian empire. Al-Azmeh is tracing the cultural influence of Rome on Arabian culture in two forms: monotheism, whether Christian or Muslim, and empire, an *oecumene*. This was revelatory. It offers a historical and cultural explanation for a new religion that has an identity we all recognize in modern Islam, the oneness of God and the world-inclusiveness of the Umma, the Islamic community, which were in essence the same basic components of the Roman Empire. Islam was the effect of the late Roman Empire on Arabian culture (my conclusion not Azmeh's).

I do not argue anything approaching the grandeur of Azmeh's claim, but I ask the reader to consider the benefits of going beyond the traditional interpretation of the life and thought of John Baptist de La Salle by exploring the Reformation as a new hermeneutical framework, just as al-Azmeh does with the Roman Empire. The Reformation itself is, of course, not a new historical field, but can be used as a new analytical tool to provide a reconsidered view of De La Salle's life. This is not a refutation but an invitation, a request to consider a new perspective in the hope that it can expand and enrich Lasallian studies. This is history not theology; history is really a series of debates and not an orthodoxy. I ask the reader to approach the following pages in the spirit of

¹ (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014) in *American Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (April, 2016): 522-24.

debate. We can find pleasure and mutual appreciation in acknowledging the existence and merit of alternative and well-argued explanations, which co-exist and enrich each other as part of the human condition, and seriously consider the impact of deep historical change. I would add that the scope of this inquiry is limited; it is not a full-scale academic intellectual biography but a selective exploration of De La Salle's life and thought.

Finally, I have contended for many years that there is a tension between the Lasallian charism – rooted in primary education and specifically rejecting the Latinity of the seventeenth-century university – and the contemporary university. To the question of Brother Luke Salm, who asked “Is the Lasallian University an oxymoron?” I reply that one way to reduce this tension and to demonstrate the compatibility between Lasallian charism and academy is to subject the Founder's life to a process of academic and historical rigor.² And so, I also invite the reader to accept the scholarly paraphernalia of citations and historiography as a sign of respect, because De La Salle's life and thought can endure this sort of academic scrutiny and still ring true. Brother Luke concluded his address with these words: “Let the discussion begin!” This was a call to “academize” the Lasallian charism. It is my fondest desire that this is the sort of conversation he hoped to stimulate.

² Luke Salm, “Is the Lasallian University an Oxymoron?” *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 2, no. 2 (2011), <http://axis.smumn.edu/index.php/axis/article/view/34/56> (accessed 24 June 2016).

I

CONTEXTUALIZING DE LA SALLE: SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is a presupposition of this study that the French Reformation, broadly defined, provides an essential and useful context for interpreting the life and work of John Baptist de La Salle. The inspiration for this assumption is found first of all in the most famous of all essays on the French Reformation, that of Lucien Febvre's "Mal Posée" article published in 1929. This incredibly fertile essay provides the theoretical foundation for so many of the study's guideposts. Its first insight is that there cannot be one starting point for such a complex movement as the Reformation within the rich intellectual tradition of French civilization. The second is that abuses in the church and Martin Luther's responses to them are insufficient to explain such a profound revolution in religious sentiment. The third is that incorporating theology into history and history into theology clarifies the significance of the Reformation and lead to new conclusions."¹ Febvre argues, therefore, for a much more inclusive and holistic approach to a French Reformation placed into a larger context. Like his student, Fernand Braudel, who shifted emphasis from King Philip II to the broader context of the Mediterranean, Febvre adjusted his focus from the Reformation to the wider sixteenth century. These precepts can apply to the life and thought of John Baptist de La Salle as well, although on a somewhat reduced scale. The history of the Christian Schools has many starting points, faced many challenges, indeed crises, and succeeded for many reasons. Therefore, his life and thought lend themselves to being studied from social, cultural, as well as historical perspectives. De La Salle has been treated fully and well by theologians in his role as founder and saint, in his spirituality and theology, while his pedagogical innovations have been widely recognized. Integrating that research with history, especially one with a broader context of early modern France, can supply additional insight and explanation for the success and failures of the Christian Schools while producing the new kind of conclusions that Febvre sought. A case in point is William Bouwsma's portrait of John Calvin, which is the second model for this study. Bouwsma sees Calvin as a man of his own turbulent times, a person torn between two impulses, the philosophical Calvin, the rationalist attracted to order, and the humanist Calvin, who valued experience and practice over theory.² De La Salle's times were just as unsettled and there were similar tensions in his life and thoughts as if he were split into opposing versions of himself: a stalwart supporter of the king and obedient son of the hierarchical Church, and a subversive spirit who challenged many of the traditions and structures of the time. This is the paradoxical De La Salle. In sum, Febvre argues for a greatly expanded context necessary to explain the origins of the French Reformation, while Bouwsma alerts us that thinkers are not always consistent, especially during periods of intense transition. Therefore, this study will often shift its focus from John Baptist de La Salle to the broader context of seventeenth-century France for the purpose of arriving at new conclusions about the Founder's life and thought.

¹ Lucien Febvre, "The Origins of the French Reformation: A Badly-Put Question," in *A New Kind of History and Other Essays*, ed. Peter Burke, trans. K. Folca (New York: Harper, 1973): 80.

² William Bouwsma, *John Calvin, a Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4. Bouwsma cites Febvre as the model for his book, specifically the relationship between the man and his times, though his reference is to Febvre's *Problème de l'incroyance au XVI^e siècle*.

The pursuit of broader contexts and new conclusions must be compatible with the Lasallian tradition. Fortunately, there already exists a third model for this research, the quite extraordinary four-volume study of *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* by Brother Léon Lauraire's, FSC, which is divided into contextual, pedagogical, comparative, and diachronic approaches. It is no accident that Brother Léon begins with the contextual approach. He asks: "Does the school change society or does society change the school?" and concludes that "It is this complex intertwining of schools and society that guides the present study."³ Brother Léon's approach is therefore congenial to Febvre's (and Bouwsma's), given that he expands context and interweaves theology with history. Indeed, at the very heart of Brother Léon's study is the conviction that a text is indispensably linked to something outside itself and which must be explored in order to fully understand its meaning. This is context. As he continues to discuss the next two volumes, he states that the second one will follow a textual approach, because "... it is indispensable to situate the texts of the *Conduite* in the entirety of the writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, and sometimes use those writings to explain it."⁴ Other Lasallian texts are, therefore, another form of context, whose consideration is indispensable to derive meaning. The third volume is perhaps the most Febvrian in its comparative approach, for it focuses, like Febvre, on an extended period of time. He observes that "... [D]e La Salle and the first Brothers did not arrive on a school scene that had no background. In fact, there was a powerful movement of founding schools that characterized the second half of the seventeenth century."⁵ This is the context of early modern French education, linked to the Reformation's quest to clarify belief. Ultimately Brother Léon creates still another context, which he calls a "diachronic approach" that traces the *Conduite* from its first edition in 1720 to the edition of 1903, the context of a single text traced over time. Inspired by Brother Léon's work, this study will attempt to relate the life and thought of John Baptist de La Salle to the society and culture of his time, to compare the Lasallian narrative to others outside the Catholic tradition, and to project the context of the Lasallian movement diachronically into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the epilogue, just as Brother Léon pursues the *Conduite* into the twentieth century.

But there is still more. On page sixteen Brother Léon speaks about "fitting": how the Christian School fit into society, into the Tridentine tradition, and into the French educational system. How does the life and thought of De La Salle fit into the ancien régime, royal absolutism, and the religious divisions of the time? Finally, Brother Léon refers to that key passage in the preface of the *Conduct* where De La Salle refers to the process for writing the text based on the direct participation of the Brothers, who reflected about their concrete experiences in the classroom. He calls this an inductive process, which considered the real situation "... the conditions, constraints and means of delivering this education, the possibilities for the future, and the choice of a specific purpose for the school...", in order to determine the appropriate "modalities" of instruction that were implemented.⁶ How did this inductive process reflect De La Salle's mental world, the

³ Léon Lauraire, FSC, *The Conduct of Schools, A Contextual Approach*, *Cahiers Lasalliens* 61, (Rome: Maison Saint Jean-Baptiste De La Salle, 2008):12. Any resemblance between Brother Léon's book title and that of this study is not at all coincidental.

⁴ Lauraire, *Conduct, Contextual Approach*, 12.

⁵ Lauraire, *Conduct, Contextual Approach*, 13.

⁶ Lauraire, *Conduct, Contextual Approach*, 7-8.

complex web of his ideas and attitudes? In sum, Brother Léon sets his entire four-volume project upon the foundation of a long series of contexts that enhance the meaning of this central text.⁷

5

Meanwhile, Febvre's suggestion to incorporate history with theology is directly applicable to the Founder's most important biographer, Jean-Baptiste Blain, whose hagiographical tendencies often impede his reference to historical context. The consequence of this fusion is clarified by Febvre's great colleague, Marc Bloch, who wrote in his consideration of causation, "Is not man himself the greatest variable in nature?"⁸ If hagiography is rooted in the theological assumption that God plays a pivotal role in the life of the saint, that role must surely be constant because the nature of God is absolute. Not so the nature of man, for Bloch reminds us that humans are capable of responding in any number of ways to any quantity of factors that existence provides. Applied to Saint John Baptist de La Salle, while the presence of God is immutable, the response of the human to that presence, within an array of political, social, cultural, economic, and psychological factors inevitably produces a more complex – even at times paradoxical – picture of the man. This is another example of a shift of perspective from the theological to the historical; from Providence guiding De La Salle to the Founder, buffeted by more human and mutable influences, forced to take on a more active role than usually portrayed.

On a more theoretical level, Michael Stanford suggests that context is the whole environment within which an action takes place and that there are three kinds of context: social, physical, and cultural.⁹ The first, social, asks how the actions of people affected De La Salle and how his actions affected others. For example, De La Salle was influenced by his bourgeois upbringing, by the men of humble background who first joined him as teachers, and by the agendas of king and bishops. He encountered embedded social institutions when he suffered violent resistance at the hand of the Writing Masters and the Masters of the Little Schools; clericalism, when he confronted the hostility of the pastor of Saint Sulpice parish, Father de La Chétardie, and an aristocratic and aggressive paternalism, when faced with the legal challenges of Julien Clément. Examples of these kinds of social contexts are legion.

At first, the physical context might seem irrelevant to the Lasallian experience, but the devastating winter and famine of 1709-10 greatly tested the Brothers. Of course, the best example is the great famine of 1683-4, during which De La Salle gave away his fortune to feed the poor. Would there have been an Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools without these physical, climatic events?

The cultural context is the most intricate of all because cultures are always complex. The culture of France during the reign of Louis XIV was beset by a dazzling set of new and old ideas: conciliarism, Gallicanism, the Council of Trent, absolutism, Calvinism, Jansenism, and a resurgent misogyny, to name a few. All of these contexts affected the life and thought of De La Salle and impacted the failures and successes of the Lasallian enterprise in ways that are often too complex to fully comprehend. For Blain and perhaps for the Founder himself, they were often explained by

⁷ Brother Henri Bédel's series on the history of the Institute certainly deserves mention as another model. His context is an institutional one. *An Introduction to the History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, 5 vols., trans. Allen Geppert, FSC (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1996-2008).

⁸ Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Vintage, 1953), 197.

⁹ Michael Stanford, *A Companion to the Study of History*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994), 22-33.

Providence and there certainly was much that was providential in the life of the Founder and the first Brothers. But Providence, a deeply held cultural belief of the time and one which by definition is largely beyond the comprehension of humans, can also function as an obstruction to historical investigation. If it was God's will, then what relevance do human and historical actions and motivations have? Here again we encounter the shift from theology to history.

Context includes not only the "what" but especially the "why," so the historian is most interested in what the action means, and that can vary depending on context. This often entails discerning intention, one of the most difficult tasks within the historical method. A simple example can demonstrate this point. Brian Strayer has noted the "feminist paradox" in the actions of the nuns of Port Royal, a term first developed by Daniella Kostroun. By the 1660s there were several formularies in place, mandates to swear in writing an acknowledgment that the five propositions in Jansen's *Augustinus* had been declared heretical by the Church. The nuns of Port Royal were by this time under threat of closure if they did not sign. They eventually did sign but only by adding to the formulary the statement "Considering our ignorance of those matters that are above our profession and our sex, the most we can do is give witness to the purity of our faith." Thus, the nuns while technically complying with the command to acknowledge heresy were actually claiming their inability to comprehend the theological issues in question and so were not actually acknowledging anything. They used the misogyny of the time, that women were naturally weak and therefore incapable of reasoning about arcane theological issues, as an excuse to not take a stand that the formulary demanded, while demonstrating their ability to in fact construct a complex legalistic argument. In this way they successfully fended off the demands of male authority in the guise of pope, king, and clergy.¹⁰ Ultimately, they gave a new and subversive meaning to the formulary; their intention was quite the opposite of what the authorities envisioned; they created a new context.

When De La Salle left Paris for the south awaiting the verdict of the court in the Clément affair, was he motivated by a fear of arrest, or did he simply wish to continue his interrupted visit to the schools in the south, or was he placing his future in the hands of God? The answer to this question gives meaning to the Clément affair. Was God testing De La Salle and the Brothers – out of which the Institute was strengthened – or was the affair about the ethical failing of people in whom De La Salle had placed his trust, or was it an act of paternal power by an influential physician-courtier?¹¹ In confronting the complexities of intentionality, one strategy that the historian may employ is the exploration of *mentalité*, the collective mentality of most people at the time. These are usually so engrained in the culture that they are the unmentioned, un-criticized assumptions of the age. The challenge for the historian is to ferret them out of the surviving record and to evaluate their meaning. So, was the Clément affair more about the cultural assumptions of class, family, hierarchy, and parental authority circa 1700? What can be gained by shifting focus from De La Salle to Clément as *père*; how does this provide new context leading to different conclusions?

¹⁰ Brian E. Strayer, *Suffering Saints: Jansensists and Convulsionnaires in France, 1640-1799*, (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 96-7. See Daniella Kostroun, "A Formula for Disobedience: Jansenism, Gender and the Feminist Paradox," *Journal of Modern History* 75 (2003): 483-522.

¹¹ The ultimate strengthening of the Institute is argued by Jean-Louis Schneider, FSC. "John Baptist de La Salle 1711-1714 or 'The Temptation of Parménie.'" J. Watson, FSC trans. (2006). Accessed 18 December 2015 at <http://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Jean-Baptiste-de-la-Salle-ou-la-temptation-de-Parm%C3%A9nie-Fran%C3%A7ais.pdf>. For another perspective see Leo Burkhard, FSC and Luke Salm, FSC. *Encounters, De La Salle at Parménie*. Romeoville, IL: Christian Brothers National Office, 1983.

Does contextualizing De La Salle diminish him? On the contrary, it enhances who he was and what he did. It makes him part of a much larger whole, it socializes and enculturates him. For example, if De La Salle's decision to invite the school masters into his ancestral house in 1681 is contextualized, the enormity of this action can be better understood. The magnitude of De La Salle's rupture with middle-class values was a critical turning point in how he understood God's will and his own role in the world.

Returning to Febvre's essay, still another model can be discerned. At the very end of his essay, Febvre refers to "social discipline", a term that has become central to the historiography of the Reformation. It is a term usually associated with the German Reformation, in particular with the work of Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling. Is it possible that they picked up this term from reading Febvre? If so, "social discipline" becomes (chronologically at least) a French term initially associated with the French Reformation. This considerably eases adapting Reinhard's and Schilling's work on confessionalization to the French Reformation and to De La Salle's life and thought. Confessionalization, therefore, is the fourth model for this study.

In broad terms, confessionalization refers to the state of affairs around 1530, the date of the Augsburg Confession, when the situation in Germany had already hardened into confessions or separate bodies of belief and practice – Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed – which identified themselves not only in terms of specific doctrines but also by opposing other confessions. Reinhard and Schilling connected these developments to the building of the state, and to the cooperation between church and state, expressed, for example, in the motto *cuius regio eius religio*. This resulted in the enhancement of the central authority of the state, which used clergy as its own agents, while the church used state power to enhance its own authority. In social terms, both church and state were dedicated to social disciplining, to the regulation of behavior in order to insure domestic tranquility in the wake of war, peasants' revolts, and social unrest.¹² One context for social disciplining was education, and catechisms were one of the principal methods to influence beliefs and behavior. In seventeenth-century France, education was firmly in the hand of the church, and church and state were closely allied under the royal rubric of "one king, one law, one faith." Philip Benjamin has noted some reservations about what he calls "strong" confessionalization, arguing in particular that in France a "weaker" model is more fitting. For example, instead of increasingly confessional hardening – as was the case in Germany – in France the Edict of Nantes promoted fewer barriers between the confessions with the goal of gradual reconciliation. However, this trend reversed itself over the course of the seventeenth century culminating in the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715). As the Counter Reformation's offensive against Protestantism gathered steam, intolerance deepened, and Louis revoked the Edict in 1685.¹³ This ignited the Camisard Revolt among the Huguenot peasantry drawing De La Salle and the Brothers to the very different culture of southern France. The war, peasants' revolt, and the social unrest associated with the German Reformation was every bit as disruptive in the French Reformation, so that by the end of Louis' reign the perceived need for social discipline grew just as the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was being established.

¹² Karen E. Carter, *Creating Catholics: Catechism and Primary Education in Early Modern France* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 14.

¹³ Philip Benedict, "Confessionalization in France? Critical Reflections and New Evidence," Raymond Mentzer ed. *Society and Culture in the Huguenot World, 1559-1685* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 44-53.

One of the unanticipated consequences of confessionalization theory has been enhanced recognition of the similarities between Catholics and Protestants and the possibilities of cross-fertilization and cooperation between the confessions.¹⁴ They shared equal hostility to each other: common confessional dispositions, demonizing the other and building group cohesion within and barricades without the confession. Emphasizing a new moral vision, a sacralized world, a reordered society, authoritarian, disciplined, with strict adherence to Christian ethical norms, all this was enforced by both Protestant and Catholic church and state alike.¹⁵ In fact, Wietse de Boer has suggested some unexpected similarities between Calvin and Charles Borromeo, and that "...Calvinism and Catholicism pursued like-minded efforts to impose social order and loyalty, but followed divergent paths to do so."¹⁶ This raises interesting possibilities for a comparative study of Calvin and De La Salle. Did they pursue like-minded efforts through divergent paths?

John W. O'Malley's description of Reinhard's and Schilling's work provides a valuable summary of the five facets of confessionalization: the symbiosis of church and state; parallel confessions; religious intolerance; corporate order; and modernization, all of which can relate to the concept of social discipline.¹⁷ Returning to Febvre's use of that term, he contends that it was the noblest and liveliest minds of the sixteenth century that struggled to fashion a faith that was adapted to their needs. He warns against turning them into either church zealots or standard-bearers of a sort of spiritual nationalism shutting out "that drama, which for thousands of consciences tormented with scruples and divided between contradictory obligations, set the need for social discipline against the free aspirations of individual conscience."¹⁸ This is a dialectic between the freedom of the individual and disciplining societal forces that define the "psychological facts" of the sixteenth century. These psychological facts play a profound role in De La Salle's life and thought, caused him much anguish as he too responded to need. The intolerance of these societal forces often surprises and angers the modern reader, but the emphasis on corporate order reminds that same reader of something that is in fact modern, indeed contemporary: the rise of the centralized state with all its coercive power. The Reformation, a time of profound change in the church and society, intensified social disciplining forces and state power in the second half of seventeenth-century as Louis XIV attacked both Huguenots and Jansenists. Eventually, these tensions exploded during the French Revolution and led to the creation of compulsory public education. De La Salle and the Brothers had no choice but to endure and adapt to these profound changes. It is illusory to separate in absolute terms De La Salle the priest from De La Salle the Frenchman. They were the products of the complexities of their time.

¹⁴ Gregory Hanlon, *Confession and Community in Seventeenth-Century France: Catholic and Protestant Coexistence in Aquitaine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 2.

¹⁵ James R. Farr, "Confessionalization and Social Discipline in France, 1530-1685," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 94 (2003): 276-93.

¹⁶ Wietse de Boer, "Calvin and Borromeo: A Comparative Approach to Social Discipline," in *Early Modern Catholicism, Essays in Honor of John W. O'Malley, S.J.* eds. Kathleen Comerford and Hilmar Pabel. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 84-96.

¹⁷ John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That, Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 110-117.

¹⁸ Febvre, "The Origins of the French Reformation," 88.

Mary Laven has laid out an agenda for the study of the Counter-Reformation that focuses on three key issues: agency, identity, and change.¹⁹ For our study, the agent, the who, is quite simple: John Baptist de La Salle. But the question of identity, Catholic identity, is quite complex. In France, there was an intellectual battle between three confessions: Catholicism, Reformed Protestantism, and Jansenism, each hostile to the other, but which also shared essential ideas. They often stood in tension with the royal notion of “one king, one law, one faith,” a formula of corporate conformity and religious intolerance that the state attempted to impose on every subject. What this means for De La Salle and the Brothers is that the Christian schools are a product of early modernity, a period of remarkable change imbued with an essential conflict between the identity of the individual – whose God-given personality is developed through education – and education’s disciplining function – which promoted a corporate identity of conformity to social norms and submission to church and state authority. It is no accident, therefore, that both Huguenots and Jansenists argued for the supremacy of conscience while the official organs of church and state saw them as threats to the social fabric. Here we can begin to see how the facets of social disciplining might apply to the Christian schools. For certainly under the Sun King there was a symbiotic and vehement policy of religious intolerance by church and state waged against both Huguenots and Jansenists, perceived as parallel confessions and threats to the corporate order of the absolutist state. But this dynamic of change applies to Lasallian history as well. It is one of its great ironies that the Christian Schools eventually had such a deep impact on French public education that they became virtually identified with French primary education. Yet earlier in the seventeenth century, these same schools were perceived by many as threats to the social order because they educated the poor; undermined the existing educational system of charity schools and *petites écoles* by providing gratuitous education to all; created an autonomous, parallel structure within the parish; operated outside of the authority of any one bishop; and replaced clerics with lay religious instructors. We can say that the legacy of De La Salle and the Christian Schools comprises both an important opportunity for the individual’s spiritual and material liberation, and one of the most effective enforcements of the unparalleled discipline imposed by the modern centralized state. The Christian Schools embodied a paradox of liberation and discipline.

These forces had if anything even greater impact on De La Salle, whose life is imbued with a series of tensions that render his identity more complex, even contradictory, than his early biographers suggest in their more single-toned identification of De La Salle as servant of God. For despite his profound association with the poor, the Founder never ceased to be the product of privilege and a first-rate education. He had the self-confidence and intellectual skills combined with heroic acts of will that could bring him into conflict with social norms. Despite his orthodoxy, there were values he shared with John Calvin and Jansenistic affinities scattered throughout his thought. Despite his loyalty to the institutional church and obedience to superiors, there was subversion in creating a new kind of religious society of lay, consecrated teachers that evoked considerable suspicion as a dangerous innovation, especially when at one point the priest placed himself under the authority of a lay person in an institution without any legal standing. Despite the parochial nature of a religious institute dedicated to serving the poorest in society within the parish structure and the tradition of the *petites écoles*, the Christian schools were imbued with a broader sense of

¹⁹ Mary Laven, “Introduction,” *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, eds. Alexandra Bamji, Geert H. Janssen, and Mary Laven (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013): 6

missionary zeal to “create Catholics” through catechetical instruction.²⁰ And despite a determination to remain detached from politics, in the context of a French culture where politics and religion were never disconnected from each other, De La Salle’s vision for the Christian Schools became part of the great French political debate over converting the Huguenots. 10

Finally, there are important chronological considerations, the issue of chronology being essential to any historical inquiry. The period from ca.1525 to ca.1725, which broadly defines the early modern period, is an appropriate time frame in which to contextualize the life and thought of John Baptist de La Salle. Fifteen twenty-five is an approximate date for the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Luther’s posting of the 95 Theses (1517); The Day of the Placards in Paris (1534); the election of Pope Paul III (1534); the Foundation of the Society of Jesus (1540) are all key events that define the Reformation and which occurred around that date. Meanwhile, 1725, the approximate date of the death of Louis XIV in 1715, who at least in light of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes was, perhaps, the last Reformation figure of note. The end-date has a more obvious Lasallian resonance with the death of De La Salle in 1719, but also with the Bull of Approbation, issued by Pope Benedict XIII approving the Institute on 26 January 1725 and the registration of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools by letter patent on 2 March 1725, which rendered it a legal entity in France.

As Lucien Febvre reminded us, the Reformation was distributed throughout the framework of nations and their reformed churches differed very much from one country to another.²¹ The story of the life and thought of John Baptist de La Salle is the story of France. Febvre reminded us too that the French Reformation produced one of the giants of reform, John Calvin. And so, it is onto both the French Reformation, still another context, and to John Calvin, still another inspired individual, in the next two chapters.

A Note on the Work of Brother Yves Poutet, FSC

I noted above the importance and influence of Brother Léon Lauraire’s work on the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*, and Brother Henri Bédel’s excellent series on the history of the Institute.²² There is one work, however, which stands alone, Yves Poutet’s *Le XVIIe [i.e. Dix-septième] siècle et les origines lasalliennes, recherches sur la genèse de l’œuvre scolaire et religieuse de Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (1651-1719)*.²³ This was his *thèse de doctorat* and is a magisterial work of more than 1100 pages. It is the only secondary source written by a Brother that I know to be regularly cited by secular scholars and in a broader context. While Poutet does not seem to reference Febvre, he clearly is familiar with French historiography. A glance at the table of contents reveals a carefully crafted analysis of De La Salle’s life and thought, beginning with the influence of his family, the social context, and on through his life as a priest. The fifth chapter of the fourth section of volume one, “The Great Rupture of 1681-1688” is particularly important. Poutet’s work is not a model for this study because it is inimitable. As the title suggests, he is

²⁰ Louis Chatellier, *The Religion of the Poor, Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500-c.1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²¹ Febvre, “The Origins of the French Reformation,” 80-1.

²² See note 7.

²³ (Rennes: Impr. réunies, 1970).

interested mainly in the pedagogical and religious significance of the Founder. If I have here and there expressed my disagreement with Brother Yves, it is because his work has truly formed Lasallian studies around those two areas and I was searching for something significant to say.

II THE FRENCH REFORMATION

The claim that the French Reformation provides an essential context for interpreting the life and work of John Baptist de La Salle raises important questions about the nature of the Reformation in general and its French experience in particular. The standard Reformation narrative is that it was caused by massive abuses in the hierarchical church, especially in the papacy and the Roman curia. These abuses were personified by Johann Tetzel and illustrated by his sale of indulgences. As Febvre suggested, this account is problematic because it is inadequate. First of all, the Reformation solidified itself with amazing rapidity. Within thirteen years of the posting of the Ninety-Five Theses, Protestant confessions were firmly established in the guise of the Marburg Colloquy (1529) and Augsburg Confession (1530). While significant issues divided Protestants, especially those related to the Eucharist, there was widespread consensus about three fundamental concepts: justification by faith alone, *Scriptura sola*, by Scripture only, and the priesthood of all believers. In fact, Luther had come upon a whole new vision of Christianity, which was de-papalized, de-sacramentalized, de-universalized, de-sacerdotalized, and de-philosophized. These negative attributes are not meant to deny the originality of Luther's theology, but to emphasize that they were all reductions within the dominant form of late medieval Latin Christianity. The role of Aristotle in scholastic theology was debunked, the special character of an ordained clergy was eliminated as the seven sacraments were reduced to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The church was localized in the form of princely territorial states within Lutheranism and in urban city-republics in the Zwinglian and Calvinist traditions. Most of all, the papacy became the focal point of Protestant vilification and as rejoinder became the most obvious characteristic of Catholic identity. The rapidity of these changes reflected deep divisions within Christendom and its revolutionary nature suggested the development of an entirely new phase in church history appropriately called *early modern*, in which medieval and modern elements coexisted for several centuries. As Febvre suggested, the Reformation was a profound revolution in religious sentiment, with a tremendous appetite for the divine. It was a broad and deeply transcendent movement in a time of transition that included the rise of capitalism, absolutism, *raison d'état*, colonial empires, and modern science. It was also paradoxical in many ways, in seeking order while destroying it.

Tradition has the Protestant Reformation beginning on 31 October 1517, when Luther posted the Ninety-Five Theses. The Catholic Reformation, always wrestling with the issue of continuity, has no such beginning. According to Hubert Jedin, the Catholic Reformation played out in four phases.¹ The first from about 1350 to 1540 coincided with the Renaissance and humanism, the age of Petrarch, Bernardino of Siena, Thomas à Kempis, Catherine of Bologna, John Fisher, Thomas More, and Erasmus. This was a time of inchoate reform despite increasing demands for it. The second period from 1540 to 1560 begins what we might call the Reformation proper. It introduces the "Three Agents," the three great forces of the Catholic reform: the papacy, the Council of Trent, and the Jesuits. The last may more properly be expanded into an array of new religious orders that

¹ This section is based on the summary of Jedin's magisterial history, *A History of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957-61) in John O' Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 51-53.

include the Capuchins and Ursulines. Phase three hovers around the reform decrees of the last session of Trent and the consolidation of the “Tridentine Reform.”² The fourth and last phase is by far the longest, from 1563 into the Enlightenment, or perhaps even into the middle of the twentieth century. This is the age of the Tridentine church. When applying Jedin’s Germanic chronology to France, two things stand out. The first is how poorly it reflects events in France; the second is how well De La Salle fits into the last phase, very near the end of it. 13

The importance of the church in French history can be seen in how it was a particular target of the French Revolution, and in the passage of the 1905 French law on the *Separation of the Churches and State* that created a legal basis for the uniquely French concept of *laïcité*. The vehemence of the anti-Christian feeling in the Revolution was inversely proportional to the power of the Church in the ancien régime. The policy of “royal religion” intertwined the roots of the French monarchy with the Catholic Church to a greater extent than any other European country. It is no exaggeration to trace this relationship back to around the year 500 and the conversion of Clovis, King of the Franks, to Catholicism. The event was but one in a series of national religious myths built around this relationship. Clovis’ conversion and his emergence as king of the Franks – becoming in effect the first king of France – is the most fundamental founding myth. As recorded by the thirteenth-century Dominican, Jacobus da Voragine, when Clovis approached Saint Remigius (Remy), the bishop of Reims, he “...went to the blessed Remy and asked to be baptized. When he arrived at the baptismal font, the sacred chrism was missing, but a dove flew down with a phial of chrism in its beak, and the bishop anointed the king with it. This phial is preserved in the church at Reims and the kings of France are anointed with this chrism to this day.”³ Thus the young De La Salle would have seen the “Holy Ampulla” (*Sainte Ampoule*), in the cathedral in which he served as canon. Blain tells the story of De La Salle’s special devotion to the patron saint of Reims. He would slip away and spend the night venerating the Blessed Sacrament before the tomb of Remigius. As a result, the Founder was always the first to appear for morning prayer. The Brothers thought that he dressed more quickly than the others, until they discovered that he had never slept.⁴ Then there was the story of how the *fleurs de lys*, one of the key symbols of the French monarchy, had been delivered by an angel to Clovis’ wife, Clotilde. Finally, there was the *oriflamme*, the French royal battle standard which was stored at the monastery of Saint Denis, the mausoleum of French kings. Occasionally, it was brought out for war with an elaborate liturgical ceremony, in which the keeper of the banner would swear on the body of Christ and that of Saint Denis to never abandon the banner even unto death. And so, at the Battle of Poitiers, Geoffroi de Charny died protecting the sacred standard.⁵

² Almost all of the chapters from the seventeenth session through the concluding twenty-fifth include chapters that contain decrees on reformation, referred to as “Decretum de Reformatione.” See *Canones et Decreta sacrosancti oecumenici et generalis Concilii Tridentini* (Milan: Apud Antonium Antonianum, 1564), https://ia801602.us.archive.org/31/items/gri_canonesetdec00coun/gri_canonesetdec00coun.pdf (accessed 21 December 2015). I use the English translation found at the *Hanover Historical Texts Project* at <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent.html>.

³ The story of the ampulla can be accessed through Jacobus da Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993): 1: 86.

⁴ Jean-Baptiste Blain, *The Mind and Heart of John Baptist de La Salle*, ed. Augustine Loes, FSC, trans. Edwin Bannon, FSC (Landover, MD: 2002), 172-3.

⁵ Geoffroi de Charny, *A Knight’s Own Book of Chivalry* Richard W. Kaeuper introduction, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 12-13.

The particularly close relations between the kings of France and popes is traced back to the donation of Pepin to Pope Stephen II. In 754 Stephen anointed Pepin as king, a sacramental tradition that continued up to the French Revolution. In return, in 756, Pepin defeated the Lombards and delivered central Italy to the pope, to become the Papal States. By the fifteenth century, the kings of France were styling themselves the “Most Christian King” (*Rex Christianissimus*). Just before the Reformation, then, Francis I (1515-1547) would have been anointed in Reims, before swearing two oaths. In the first, the Ecclesiastical Oath, he swore “...to exercise defense of each bishop and of each church committed to him... just as a king ought properly to do in his kingdom.” Then followed the Oath of the Kingdom by which he swore, “...I shall be diligent to expel from my land, and also from the jurisdiction subject to me, all heretics designated by the Church.” This was the French sacral monarchy, which assigned priestly functions to the king.⁶ In 1516, Francis and Pope Leo X agreed to the Concordat of Bologna. It gave the king wide authority to appoint bishops and abbots in his realm.

It is no wonder, then, that while German princes, Scandinavian kings, and most famously Henry VIII of England, embraced Protestantism and seized control of the church within their respective domains, it was inconceivable for the king of France to be anything but Catholic. When on 18 October 1534, the Affair of the Placards saw the placing of broadsides around Paris and even on the king’s bedroom door denouncing the Mass as superstition, Francis saw the attack on the Mass as an attack on himself and the French monarchy. Others saw it as a strike at the heart of the body social. The king’s response was to mount a spectacular procession through Paris on 21 January 1535. It was a public, physical, and corporate reaffirmation of Catholic doctrine and practice. The entire community was represented: the king, the law court, the university, the religious orders, the magistrates, and the guilds. At the heart of the procession was the *Corpus Christi* borne by the bishop of Paris and succeeded by the king himself. The deep association of the king with the body of Christ was made apparent to all. In the wake of the execution of heretics at the procession and the subsequent persecution of Protestants, Calvin fled France.⁷

For an institution like the French monarchy that increasingly saw deep parallels between the human and the divine, the secular and the sacred, Calvinism loomed as an alien ideology for theological, ecclesiological, and political reasons. The Calvinist church was a congregational one, organized on electoral principles (at least theoretically), and anti-hierarchical. While Calvin acknowledged the acceptability of monarchy, he distrusted it and preferred a mixed polity. “I will not deny that aristocracy, or a system compounded of aristocracy and democracy, far excels all others: not indeed of itself, but because it is very rare for kings so to control themselves...” And when it came to the church he claimed that it can have no human head. Ultimately, this fundamental hostility to the royal religion became even more menacing and openly anti-monarchical, formulating a resistance theory against tyrannical kings.⁸

By the fifteenth century the theory of the king’s two bodies had been clearly articulated. In the burial rite of kings, the couplet “The king is dead. Long live the king!” encapsulated the notion

⁶ Mack Holt, *The French Wars of Religion* 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press 2005), 7-8.

⁷ Holt, *French Wars*, 20-21,

⁸ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill ed., trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.20.8. On the church having no human head 4.8-10.

that while the king's natural body died, the body political, the king's other body, was eternal.⁹ By the 1560s the Corpus Christi procession had been combined with processions dedicated to Saint Geneviève and Saint Denis, both of whom had strong historical connections to the monarchy and French identity, thus linking even more strongly the king's body to Christ's.¹⁰ On the other hand, while Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper was somewhere in between the real, physical presence held by Luther and the strictly commemorative view of Zwingli, Calvin held that Christ was physically in heaven, and therefore present in the Lord's Supper only spiritually, thus marking a clear separation of the heavenly from the corporeal.¹¹ At first glance, Calvin lays down a strict separation between the "two governments."

First, before we enter into the matter itself, we must keep in mind that distinction which we previously laid down, so that we do not (as commonly happens) unwisely mingle these two, which have a completely different nature... But whoever knows how to distinguish between body and soul, between this present fleeting life and that future eternal life, will without difficulty know that Christ's spiritual Kingdom and the civil jurisdiction are things completely distinct.¹²

In fact, Calvin suggests that the civil government has the obligation to protect religion. The behavior of Nebuchadnezzar provides an example. "...how ashamed Christian princes ought to be of their slothfulness, if they are indulgent to heretics and blasphemers, and do not vindicate God's glory by lawful punishments..."¹³ Ultimately, though, the civil government is subject to the Kingdom of Christ. "And thus all have confessed that no government can be happily established unless piety is the first concern; and that those laws are preposterous which neglect God's right and provide only for men."¹⁴ In sum, then, Calvin turns the sacred monarchy of France on its head, for he both separates church from state and subjects the civil to the divine law, reversing more than one hundred years of development.

Returning to Jedin's chronology, its first phase from 1350 to 1540, was also the time that articulated the theory of the Gallican church. Out of the Avignon papacy (1309-1377) – during which all the popes were French and resided in that southern French city – came the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges in 1438. The French monarchy fully embraced conciliarism and proclaimed the liberties of the Gallican church: the superiority of the church council to the papacy, the election of prelates, the prohibition of papal benefices, and the limitation of judicial appeals to Rome. Instead of reform, the church in France was increasingly secularized. With the Concordat of Bologna giving the king the right to directly nominate candidates to bishoprics and the major

⁹ Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 19-20.

¹⁰ Kley, *Religious Origins*, 21

¹¹ "For Scripture everywhere teaches us, that as the Lord on earth took our humanity, so he has exalted it to heaven, withdrawing it from mortal condition, but not changing its nature." (41) "Secondly, they should on no account grant that the bread is transubstantiated into the body of Jesus Christ, nor the wine into his blood, but should persist in holding that the visible signs retain their true substance, in order to represent the spiritual reality of which we have spoken." (51) Calvin, *Short Treatise on the Supper of the Lord*, http://www.the-highway.com/supper1_Calvin.html. (accessed 22 December 2015).

¹² *Institutes*, 4.20.2.

¹³ Calvin, *Commentary on Daniel*, 4:1. , (accessed 31 December 2015). <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom24.pdf>.

¹⁴ *Institutes*, 4.20.9

monasteries, subject to papal veto, it is not surprising that most of these candidates were princes of the blood, members of the great sword nobility, or Italians, indicative of the deep involvement of France in Italian affairs. Nor is it unexpected that relatively few appointees were trained in theology or canon law, or were attending to episcopal duties. Of 101 bishops in 1559, only 19 resided in their diocese.¹⁵ 16

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that from 1540 to 1560 Protestantism spread widely and deeply through French society. By 1562, France was convulsed in a three-way civil war. On one side were the Huguenots who fundamentally challenged the basis of the “royal religion.” On the other was the Holy League (*Sainte Union*), which saw church and state even more closely connected, the Protestants as heretics infecting both, and criticized a monarchy that had failed to fulfill its obligation to defend the church and destroy heresy. In the middle was the royal party, greatly weakened by the premature death of Henry II in 1559, the succession of three under-aged and weak sons, and precariously held together by the determined queen-mother Catherine de’ Medici. Too weak to eliminate either faction, Catherine attempted to reach a compromise at a time when the confessions were hardening into implacable enemies. The Saint Bartholomew Day Massacre in 1572, when most of the Huguenot leadership was exterminated, led to a spiral of violence culminating in the War of the Three Henrys (1587-1589) between King Henry III, Henry of Navarre, and Henry, duke of Guise. The assassination of the Guise brothers by Henry III in 1588, and the king’s assassination a year later by a Dominican monk, brought France to yet another crisis, that of the succession of the Protestant leader Henry of Navarre as Henry IV. He converted to Catholicism because he understood it was necessary in order to govern the French sacral monarchy. He issued the Edict of Nantes in 1598, granting toleration to the Huguenots and skillfully ending the civil war, before being assassinated in 1610.

Within the context of the French Wars of Religion, more than sixty years of war with Habsburg Spain, and Gallican suspicion of papal control, the French bishops had boycotted the Council of Trent located within the confines of the Habsburg Holy Roman Empire. It was only at the very end of the council, when Charles de Guise, Cardinal of Lorraine, led a French contingent to the council in 1562, that France joined the reform. This coincided almost exactly with the outbreak of the first of eight civil wars.¹⁶ As a result, France was increasingly incapable to institute reform; indeed, the council’s canons and decrees were never officially registered by the monarchy, though the General Assembly of the Clergy eventually “received” the council’s proclamations in 1615. None of Jedin’s three agents of reform – the papacy, the Jesuits, or the Council – had the opportunity to promote reform in France until the convulsions of the religious wars subsided in the seventeenth century, arguably not until 1629, when Huguenot military power was destroyed by Richelieu and Louis XIII.

No historical term is more frequently applied to early modern France than absolutism. Sometimes in history, effect is mistaken for cause. Absolutism was much more the baneful effect of a half-century long religious civil war, and of a declining royal power. Despite the temporary recovery of royal authority under Henry IV and then Richelieu, attacks on royal authority rekindled during

¹⁵ Holt, *French Wars*, 12.

¹⁶ It is traditional to end the Wars of Religion with the accession of Henry IV in 1598. Nonetheless, Mack Holt makes an effective argument that they in fact continued until 1629 when the Huguenot leader, the Duke of Rohan, submitted to the king and the Peace of Alais was signed in June of that year. Holt, *French Wars*, 192.

the minority of Louis XIV and the administration of Cardinal Mazarin, a period that was called the Fronde, which saw the *parlements* and then the princes oppose the reassertion of royal authority. By the time Mazarin returned from exile in 1653, victorious over the Frondeurs, John Baptist de La Salle had been born into a France still deeply divided by the remnants of Calvinism. Huguenot leadership had been mostly coaxed back into Catholicism and its armed strength neutralized, but Protestants were still strong in numbers, sometimes the majority, especially in parts of the south. In addition to the Huguenots, the remnants of the Holy League coalesced into the *parti des dévots* led by Cardinal Bérulle and opposed to Richelieu, especially to his alliance with Protestants. The mantra of “one king, one law, one faith” taken up by Louis XIV was more desire than reality. With the publication of Archbishop Cornelius Jansen’s *Augustinus* in 1640, the new and powerful dissenting force of Jansenism was born and gathered strength throughout the rest of the century. But the greater challenge were the Calvinists, for the most part loyal to the king but still a force apart and with a legacy of rebellion. 17

When John Baptist de La Salle was born in 1651, France was governed by thirteen-year-old Louis XIV, who ruled over a France determined to make up for lost time, by enhancing royal authority, reforming both church and state, and asserting social discipline amidst nearly a century of civil war and aristocratic rebellion. Louis’ religious policy took aim first at the Jansenists and then the Calvinists. This was the broad historical context for the life and thought of John Baptist de La Salle. He wended his way through the Jansenist maze rejecting its Gallicanism and Predestinarianism but sharing its rigorism. In the war against the Camisards, militant peasant Calvinists from the Cévenne region in the south, De La Salle launched the Brothers into a mass-conversion of their children. In the France of Louis XIV, fathers ruled and society stratified. De La Salle fell victim to both. As the Founder reached adulthood, the French Reformation hit its stride and began to catch up with Protestant educational aims to create a godly people. Because the French Reformation began so late, the century-and-a-half that separated John Calvin and John Baptist de La Salle actually placed them in comparable positions within the greater Reformation.

III

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE AND JOHN CALVIN ON CHILDHOOD: A REFORMATION COMPARISON

The earliest biographies of the Founder barely mention Calvinists, and even less so John Calvin¹. The reason for this is obvious: Calvin did not fit into their plan to depict De La Salle as a servant of God. What good would there be to point out that the Founder and the most notorious French heresiarch shared some important ideas and interests? It is a question worth pondering for a number of reasons. First, the early biographers tend to disembody De La Salle from historical developments. This runs the risk of overestimating the originality of his thought and under-describing the context for that thought. Both undermine an accurate evaluation of his role in history, what is original or derivative in his thought. There have been many excellent studies of De La Salle's place within the French school of spirituality.² What if that context were broadened to the French Reformation, especially one defined in the broader and comparative terms suggested by Lucien Febvre?

It is traditional to distinguish the Protestant from the Catholic Reformation, given the deep cleavage in early modern Latin Christianity. But another approach has its rewards, as Lucien Febvre put it, "a close look at our neighbors over the dividing wall might help us to come up with new answers to a number of badly-put questions."³ Perhaps the relationship of Calvin and De La Salle to the Reformation is a better-put question. The French Reformation caused such deep divisions in French society that it led to a series of bloody civil wars, assassinations, and a confessional division so deep as to form two separate people. The Edict of Nantes referred to subjects of the "so-called reformed religion," and "Catholic subjects."⁴ The barrier between them

¹ Jean-Baptiste Blain, *The Life of John Baptist De La Salle Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, ed. Luke Salm, FSC, trans. Richard Arandez, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), In the index to the English translation of Blain there are three references to "Protestants," three to "Huguenots," three to "Calvinist," and none to Calvin.

² Raymond Deville, *The French School of Spirituality: An Introduction and Reader* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1994) and Yves Krumenacker, *The French School of Spirituality and John Baptist de La Salle*, ed. William Mann, FSC, trans. Allen Geppert, FSC. (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2015).

³ Lucien Febvre, "The Origins of the French Reformation: A Badly-Put Question," in *A New Kind of History and Other Essays*, ed. Peter Burke, trans. K. Folca (New York: Harper, 1973): 44. I am aware that here Febvre is referring to comparative history and likely to "neighbors" from other disciplines. But elsewhere (86) he suggests that there were not merely two but a "number of religions" in sixteenth-century France. A bit later (88) he refers to the need for a "methodical study of Christianity," clearly indicating that he advocates a broader inquiry that transcends not only disciplines but confessions as well.

⁴ "On this occasion, acknowledging this affair to be of the greatest importance, and worthy of very good consideration, after having considered the papers of complaints of our Catholic subjects, and having also permitted to our subjects of the so-called reformed religion to assemble themselves as deputies, for framing their complaints, and making a collection of all their Remonstrances..." "Pour cette occasion, ayant reconnu cette affaire de très grande importance et digne de très bonne considération, après avoir repris les cahiers des plaintes de nos sujets catholiques, ayant aussi permis à nos sujets de la religion prétendue réformée de s'assembler par députés pour dresser les leurs et mettre

was real enough, especially in its poisonous rhetoric, but it was not quite so impermeable as to prevent a good deal of cross-fertilization, even if it came in the form of vituperative attacks over issues of common interest. The bond for this conflict, was the Reformation, for both Protestant and Catholic Reformers wanted to transform society and church. The Protestants tended to be more innovative because they had to. They had broken with the medieval institutional church and they needed to reinvent (rediscover, they would say) a whole new Christian tradition, and more importantly, to create a whole new kind of Christian. Calvin was much more of a comprehensive and systematic thinker than De La Salle, for he was crafting a theology and ecclesiastical structure that was consciously distinct not only from Catholicism, but from the Lutheran and Anabaptist confessions as well. De La Salle was not only confined to the existing tradition, he largely restricted himself to writing to and for the Brothers about their spiritual lives, and to issues of teaching and learning. But this last was restricted still further to the experiences of the very young children that the Brothers served. On what basis, then, can we connect De La Salle to Calvin and why would we want to? The answer to both questions is education and childhood, and specifically the education of children, because both were among De La Salle's most important contributions, and they deserve more investigation.⁵ And why a comparison? Comparisons are useful because they provide a context and mechanism for clarifying ideas by setting them side by side.

The Reformation was a war on ignorance. As early as 1529 Martin Luther composed his *Large Catechism* addressed largely to pastors and teachers, followed shortly by his *Small Catechism* aimed at the people, especially children. Luther set the standard for nearly all subsequent catechisms in what was surely its golden age. In his inimitable style, Luther decried the ignorance of the times that his catechism was meant to remedy.

The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare [publish] this Catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Mercy! Good God! What manifold misery I beheld! The common people, especially in the villages, have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and, alas! many pastors are altogether incapable and incompetent to teach [so much so, that one is ashamed to speak of it]. Nevertheless, all maintain that they are Christians, have been baptized and receive the [common] holy Sacraments. Yet they [do not understand and] cannot [even] recite either the Lord's Prayer, or the Creed, or the Ten Commandments; they live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs; and yet, now that the Gospel has come, they have nicely learned to abuse all liberty like experts.⁶

Luther held a rather traditional view of childhood, seven was the age of reason. Young children were largely innocent, yet sin stirred within them. At fourteen, with puberty and the emergence of the sex drive, innocence was lost culminating in full adulthood at age twenty-one, as vices like greed, pride, and ambition came to the fore. By fourteen it was too late to change a person, therefore, the seven years preceding adolescence were a crucial doorway, the only chance to

ensemble toutes leurs remontrances... <https://www.museeprotestant.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/01/Mus%C3%A9e-virtuel-du-protestantisme-%C3%89dit-de-Nantes.pdf>. (accessed 3 January 2016).

⁵ One investigation worth consulting is Alfred Pang Kah Meng, "What Child Is This? A Rahnerian Interpretation of the Child in Lasallian Pedagogy, *AXIS* 7, no. 3 (2016): 83-94.

⁶ Introduction, <http://bookofconcord.org/smallcatechism.php>. (accessed 5 January 2016).

remake the young.⁷ The best entrée into those crucial years was instruction and the most important form of instruction was the catechism. Its question-and-answer format created small bits of information, more easily memorized by constant repetition and vocalization. Fear, shame, and reward were the best motivations to learn, and continuous examination provided plenty of opportunities for both. The hope was that memorization would eventually lead to a change of heart. 20

Luther set the order for Protestant catechisms: 1) the Ten Commandments, 2) The Apostles' Creed, 3) The Lord's Prayer, 4) the sacraments.⁸ These essentials of Christian belief were inculcated in three simultaneous ways: through the pulpit, the school, and at home. Only public education could introduce the desirable traits uniformly and deliberately. This was one of the most important contributions of the reform.⁹ The ultimate goal for Luther went beyond mere knowledge of the faith, it was to establish order and to reform secular life as well. As Gerald Strauss put it, "the Lutheran experiment in mass indoctrination brings one of the central objectives of the Reformation into focus and suggests a criterion for judging its achievement. A conscious, systematic, and vigorous effort was made to change the human personality through pedagogical conditioning. The chief instrument in this process was the catechism."¹⁰ All follows from these fundamental ideas.

The Catholic Church followed suit with its *Tridentine Catechism*, issued in 1566 under the pontificate of Pius V – preceded by the more popular one composed by Peter Canisius in 1555 – and with two subsequent editions, an abridged version and one for children. The Council itself had made several references to the threat of ignorance and superstition, especially in its reformation decrees. Most famously, it mandated the establishment of seminaries in every diocese to ensure the proper education of priests.¹¹ In 1597 Robert Bellarmine published his *Dottrina cristiana breve* in Italian. It was the first Catholic catechism meant to be memorized and emphasized external aspects of the faith at the expense of complicated doctrine. Commissioned by Pope Clement VIII, who mandated its use in the Papal States, it had a special papal élan and was translated into a number of languages including French, by Francis de Sales. These were the general catechisms. Vincent de Paul, Jean Eudes, among others, wrote "mission catechisms" that focused on evangelizing people in the countryside. With the spread of printing, the perceived need for instruction, and special emphasis on inculcating doctrine in children, the modern age of the catechism was born.

By 1660, a third type of catechism emerged: the diocesan and parish catechism. The French bishops had a significant body of literature to borrow from, and between 1650 and 1700 they published at least 57 different catechisms in 48 dioceses. Of seventy-eight catechisms examined by Karen Carter, forty-six contained either two or three versions, larger or smaller depending on

⁷ Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), chapter 5.

⁸ In his catechism, De La Salle does not follow Luther's arrangement. While the material is basically the same it is organized first with the Creed, second the Ten Commandments, third, the sacraments, and fourth, the Lord's Prayer.

⁹ Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*, 155.

¹⁰ Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*, 175.

¹¹ The 23rd session, chapter 18 for the creation of seminaries. Also the 25th session, chap 21, "But as regards the other abuses which have proceeded from superstition, ignorance, irreverence, or from whatsoever other source, since, by reason of the manifold corruptions in the places and provinces where the said abuses are committed, they cannot conveniently be specially prohibited..." <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/trentall.html>, accessed (5 January 2016.)

the audience.¹² While their organization varied, one popular organizational principle was duties, as a way to emphasize both obligation and the need to incorporate memorized precepts into one's life. The longest section was usually on the sacraments.¹³ 21

Carter places these developments into the process of confessionalization, within which she sees the catechism as perhaps the “ultimate instrument of social discipline.” Within confessionalization theory, church and state worked together to impose social order and the internalization of a code of civility. Education in France, especially primary education, was in the hands of the church, that is, under the authority of bishops. Through the many catechisms they devised, the bishops established rules for how the *curés* were to catechize and discipline, to reduce ignorance. A time was to be set aside for catechetical activity, usually on Sunday afternoon. This was never to change nor was the organization of the classes. Students were assigned seats, with places of honor reserved for the particularly well behaved. All this gave the impression of unchanging solidity. Student officers were chosen with titles such as *Premier du Catéchisme* that were awarded to the worthy. A bell was rung signaling the start of the lessons, which consisted of the pastor asking questions of one child after the other. If a child was having difficulty learning the lesson, the teacher was advised to ask the same question of students sitting nearby. Children having difficulties answering questions were never to be met with ridicule. Students were awarded good or bad points within a system of rewards and punishments for behavior. Good behavior could be awarded with a special seat, a pious book, or a religious picture; while bad behavior could result in a demotion in seating rank. Bishops recommended that *curés* have an assistant whose function was to maintain constant control over the children, all with as little speaking as possible: “He must try to gain so much authority over the children that a glance or a sign can bring back into line those who misbehave.”¹⁴ If this all sounds familiar, it might be suggested that the fourth type of catechism, the school catechism, was an extrapolation of these episcopal guidelines. These catechisms were associated with religious congregations, and the most famous was that of the Lasallian schools. This relationship can be outlined using the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* in the following table.

¹² Karen E. Carter, *Creating Catholics: Catechism and Primary Education in Early Modern France* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 8 and Guy Avanzini et al., *Dictionnaire historique de l'éducation chrétienne d'expression française* (Paris: Éditions Don Bosco, 2001) s.v. “Catéchisme/Catéchèse.”

¹³ Carter, *Creating Catholics*, on versions, 35; on duties, 42-3.

¹⁴ Carter, *Creating Catholics*, 93.

A Comparison of Recommendations between French Episcopal Catechetical Literature and Those Mandated in <i>The Conduct of Christian Schools</i>		
Category	Recommendations by French Bishops	Recommendation in <i>The Conduct of Christian Schools</i>¹⁵
Daily Schedule	Same time (Sunday). Every week	“Catechism will be taught every day for a half hour from 4:00 until 4:30 in the afternoon.” (105)
Weekly Schedule	Same day (Sunday). Every week.	“On all Sundays and holy days, there will be catechism for an hour and a half... During the first half hour, the catechism will be on the Abridgment. Teachers will do nothing but ask questions, without giving any explanations. Teachers will not speak on one subject only but will ask various questions on the Abridgment without following any regular order.” (111)
Seating	Assigned.	“In all classrooms, there shall be definite places assigned to each student for all the different lessons, in such a way that all who are following a given lesson shall be grouped in the same area within the room. This seating area shall be permanent, unless the lesson has to be transferred to another classroom.” (206)
Bell	Bell rung to begin lesson.	“There will be in each school a student whose function will be to ring the bell for the beginning of school and of prayer exercises.” (173)
Questioning	Questioning one child after another.	“Teachers will not speak to the students during catechism as though they were preaching but will ask the students questions and sub-questions almost continuously. In order to make them understand what is being taught, a teacher will ask several students, one after another, the same question.” (106)
Students as resources	Question nearby student to provide correct answer.	“If it happens that a student slow in mind cannot repeat properly an answer even after several others have already given it one after another, the teacher will, in order to help the student to remember the answer, have it repeated four or five times alternately by a student who knows it well and by the one who does not know it. This is done to make it much easier for the slower student to learn.” (107)

¹⁵ John Baptist de La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, ed. William Mann, FSC trans. F. de La Fontainerie and Richard Arnandez, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996). Page numbers are indicated in parentheses.

Category	Recommendations by French Bishops	Recommendation in <i>The Conduct of Christian Schools</i>	23
Rewards	Points awarded, holy cards...	“From time to time, the teachers will give rewards to those of their students who are the most exact in fulfilling their duties...The things that may be given as rewards will be of three different degrees: 1) books. 2) pictures on vellum and plaster statuettes, such as crucifixes and images of the Blessed Virgin. and 3) pictures on paper, engraved texts, and also rosaries.” (133)	
Correction	Points deducted.	“The correction of the students is one of the most important things to be done in the schools. The greatest care must be taken in order that it may be timely and beneficial both for those who receive it and for those who witness it. For this reason, there are many things to be considered in regard to the use of the corrections which may be administered in the schools and which will be discussed in the following articles. This will be done after the necessity of joining gentleness to firmness in the guidance of children has been explained. (135)	
Silence	Speaking as little as possible.	“It would be of little use for teachers to apply themselves to making the students keep silent if teachers did not do so themselves. Teachers will better teach students this practice by example than by words. A teacher’s own silence will do more than anything else to produce good order in school, giving teachers the means of watching more easily over both themselves and their students...” (123)	
Ridicule	Avoid ridicule.	“It is also important never to use insulting words or words that are even in the slightest degree unseemly, for example, rascal, knave, or sniveler. None of these words should ever be in the mouth of a teacher in the Christian Schools.” (143)	
Student Officers	Student titles awarded.	“There will be several officers in the school. These officers will be charged with several different functions which teachers cannot or ought to not do themselves.” (170)	

The notable consistencies between the bishops’ catechetical recommendations and the practices found in the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* were rooted in the Reformation’s zeal for catechetical instruction as a remedy for ignorance, the unique opportunity to “create Christians” during childhood, and in the bishops’ hierarchical authority that filtered down to the parish and schools. While the bishops’ focus was broad befitting their diocesan perspective, the paramount importance of catechetical instruction within the profane curriculum of reading, writing, and arithmetic was made clear by Blain in his description of the purpose of the Christian Schools. “The interest of children alone is its object, but it is not its end: this sort of instruction is regarded only

as lures, which entice to other things more important and more necessary. It is to teach the truths of salvation and the principles of religion to those who come to learn to read, to write, and to count, that the Gratuitous Schools are opened.”¹⁶ But catechetics were just part of a broader Reformation educational movement that John Calvin and John Baptist de La Salle shared. 24

Both Calvin and De La Salle acknowledged the threat to salvation posed by ignorance. The Genevan educational system was dedicated to eliminating ignorance, creating good citizens, and pious people.¹⁷ The Reformation in Switzerland was a republican affair. The independence of Geneva from the rule of the Duke of Savoy and the embrace of Protestantism went hand in hand. The merchant and artisan elites who ran the city valued education for their sons for practical reasons and sometimes this created tensions with clerical interests.¹⁸ Eventually a consensus emerged in the creation of a free, public educational system under the control of the magistracy but with certain accommodations to the church. When Calvin returned from exile in 1541, he immediately composed the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* which created four orders of which the first two, the pastors and doctors, had the responsibility of instruction. The pastors proclaimed the Word of God, taught, admonished, exhorted, and reproved publicly and privately, while the doctors lectured on sound doctrine. This required the creation of a *collège*, “because it is only possible to profit from such lectures if first one is instructed in the languages and humanities, and also because it is necessary to raise offspring for time to come, in order not to leave the Church deserted to our children, a *collège* should be instituted for instructing children to prepare them for the ministry as well as for civil government.”¹⁹ Education was not divided into religious and secular spheres, it was whole.

The Genevan Academy opened in 1559 under the directorship of Theodore Beza. Instruction in the *collège* or *schola privata* was in Latin. It led to the *schola publica*, which eventually became the university and had the special function of training the pastors focused on humanistic studies. The vernacular schools, the *petites écoles* were based on the French model and taught reading, writing, and arithmetic.²⁰ Though practical in preparing for gainful employment, the school’s primary purpose was to promote the knowledge of God, essential to salvation. In all these things,

¹⁶ Jean Baptiste Blain, *La vie de Monsieur Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, instituteur des Freres des Ecoles Chretiennes* (Rouen: Jean-Baptiste Machuel, 1733), 1 : 34. « L'intérêt seul des enfans en est l'objet , mais il n'en est pas la fin : on ne regarde cette forte d'instruction , que comme l'apas qui at tire à d'autres plus importantes & plus nécessaires. C'est pour enseigner les véritez du salut & les principes de la Religion à ceux & celles qui viennent apprendre à lire, à écrire, & le chiffre, qu'on ouvre les Ecoles Gratuites. » This passage does not appear to be included in the English translation published by Lasallian publications.

¹⁷ Karin Maag, “The Spectre of Ignorance: The Provision of Education in the Swiss Cites,” in *Fear in Early Modern Society*, eds. William Naphy and Penny Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 137-49.

¹⁸ William G. Naphy, “The Reformation and the Evolution of Geneva's Schools,” *Reformations Old and New: Essays on the Socio-Economic Impact of Religious Change c.1470-1630* (Vermont: Scolar Press, 1996): 185-202, especially 190.

¹⁹ Calvin, *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, http://digihum.mcgill.ca/~matthew.milner/teaching/resources/docs/geneva_ordinances.pdf, (accessed 15 May 2017).

²⁰ Robert White, “The School in Calvin's Thought and Practice,” *Journal of Christian Education* 12 (1969): 5-26.

Calvin's and De La Salle's educational ideas closely paralleled each other.²¹ At the heart of this shared vision was a deep commitment to the child.

One of the most important theological concepts undergirding the Genevan educational system was Calvin's doctrine of the covenant, especially as it related to the role of children. The old covenant and circumcision differed from the new and Baptism only in their externals (*Institutes*, 4.16.4). Both demonstrated the eternal plan of God's mercy and forgiveness. But the regeneration granted to children in the covenant must progress throughout life and this depended on Christian education (*Institutes*, 4.16.21). The family and parents were entrusted with the primary responsibility to educate because the covenant was originally made with the family headed by Abraham, who looms large as the model parent.²² As the reform developed, though, Christian education was institutionalized. The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* mandated attendance at Sunday sermons and catechism, and parents were subject to a fine if they failed to fulfill this responsibility.²³ Ultimately, knowledge of the faith came from the family and the home, the pastors' sermons and the church, and the doctors' lectures and the classroom. Children and occasionally adults were required to make a public confession and to be examined on their catechism before they were permitted to receive communion.²⁴ Education in the Reformed tradition emphasized public piety and institutional control.²⁵ Some of its significant theological and anthropological challenges had to do with the importance of integrating the child into the educational system.

Because the effects of original sin extended to the womb, infants were unable to distinguish between good and evil. In Calvin's anthropology original sin has corrupted not only the sensual part of human nature but the mind and will as well. The mind was in bondage and the will was so corrupted that it was unable to obey and love God. Thus humans were totally dependent on God's grace which effects a complete transformation, at least in the elect.²⁶ "On the other hand, acknowledging that there is nothing but all wretchedness in ourselves, and that we are corrupt in all our feelings and affections, so that our souls are a very abyss of iniquity, utterly despairing of ourselves; and that, having exhausted every presumption of our own wisdom, worth, or power of well-doing, we must have recourse to the fountain of every blessing, which is in Christ Jesus." Thus original sin necessitated the incarnation of Jesus Christ whose salvific message is contained in Scripture. To understand that message catechisms were essential, so Calvin wrote to the Duke of Somerset, Lord Protector of King Edward VI of England,

Believe me, Monseigneur, the Church of God will never preserve itself without a Catechism, for it is like the seed to keep the good grain from dying out, and causing it to

²¹ John Baptist de La Salle, *Meditation for the Time of Retreat*, (hereafter *MTR*) eds. Augustine Loes, FSC and Francis Huether, FSC, trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC and Augustine Loes, FSC (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 1994), on the essential knowledge of God and salvation, 193.3, on preparation for employment, 194.1.

²² Arie Brouwer, "Calvin's Doctrine of Children in the Covenant: Foundation for Christian Education," *The Reformed Review* 18 no. 4 (1965): 17-29.

²³ Karen E. Spierling, "Baptism and Childhood," in Peter Matheson, ed. *A People's History of Christianity* vol. 5 *Reformation Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 120-42.

²⁴ Jeffrey R. Watt, Calvinism, Childhood, and Education: The Evidence from the Genevan Consistory," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 33, (2002): 448.

²⁵ Stefan Ehrenpreis, "Reformed Education in Early Modern Europe: A Survey," in *The Formation of Clerical and Confessional Identities in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 44-5.

²⁶ Anthony N.S. Lane, "Anthropology," in *The Calvin Handbook*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis, trans. Henry J. Baron, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 165-71.

multiply from age to age. And therefore, if you desire to build an edifice which shall be of long duration, and which shall not soon fall into decay, make provision for the children being instructed in a good Catechism, which may shew them briefly, and in language level to their tender age, wherein true Christianity consists.²⁷

Catechisms allowed the children to understand the sermon, itself based on the Word of God, and to distinguish between sound and erroneous doctrine, as knowledge of the faith progressed together with the ability to read and write.

Calvin ascribed ignorance of the Christian faith to God's judgment: "There is however no doubt, that the gross ignorance which reigns in the world, is the just punishment of men's idleness."²⁸ De La Salle also acknowledges the widespread ignorance of his day but does not ascribe it to any particular cause. Rather he approaches the issue in the form of a contradiction of logic. "To claim membership in a group while not knowing what the group really is, and while remaining ignorant of the name given to its members, what this name implies, and the essential duties of membership would seem to be entirely contrary to good sense and sound reason. Yet this is the ordinary situation for most Christians."²⁹

Calvin connects faith to knowledge. There are two kinds of knowledge, knowledge of faith, "...that by which the godly feel assured that God is true – that what he has promised is indubitable..." and experimental knowledge "...by actual experience, or in reality..."³⁰ The Holy Spirit mediates divine knowledge making it intelligible to the docile, especially to the prophets, who remove all doubt.

If God, accommodating himself to the limited capacity of men, speaks in an humble and lowly style, this manner of teaching is despised as too simple; but if he rises to a higher style, with the view of giving greater authority to his Word, men, to excuse their ignorance, will pretend that it is too obscure. As these two vices are very prevalent in the world, the Holy Spirit so tempers his style as that the sublimity of the truths which he teaches is not hidden even from those of the weakest capacity, provided they are of a submissive and teachable disposition, and bring with them an earnest desire to be instructed.³¹

Similarly, De La Salle organizes the entire first part of *Duties I* around the necessity to know God. But in that text he does not articulate Calvin's complex epistemology.³² He merely states that

²⁷ Calvin, "Letter to the Duke of Somerset," Geneva, 22 October 1548,

http://www.reformed.org/ethics/index.html?mainframe=/ethics/calvin_to_somerset.html (accessed 15 March 2016).

²⁸ *Commentary on Genesis*, Genesis 18:19. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/commentaries.i.html> (accessed 5 January 2016). All subsequent references to Calvin's *Commentaries* are to this source.

²⁹ De La Salle, *The Duties of a Christian*, ed. Richard Arnandez, FSC, trans. Alexis James Doval (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 18.

³⁰ *Commentary on Genesis* 18:19.

³¹ *Commentary on Psalm* 78: 3.

³² De La Salle's catechism is divided into three parts. *Duties I* refer to the first part of the text, written in narrative form, and intended to provide the basic information the Brothers needed to teach catechism. *Duties II*, constructed in the more familiar form of questions and answers, is organized around faith, law, sacraments, and prayer. *The Duties of a Christian*, ed. Alexis James Doval, trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002). For a description of the various parts of the *Duties of a Christian* see Jean Pungier, *John Baptist de La Salle: The Message of His Catechism*, ed. Gerard Rummery, FSC trans. Oswald Murdoch, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1999), especially 3-6.

“Jesus Christ says in the holy Gospel that eternal life consists in knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ, his Son, whom he sent into the world. Thus, the main duty Christians must apply themselves to fulfill in this life is to know God in himself and all that he has made, and to know the Son of God made human and what he has done for our salvation.”³³ In the *First Meditation for the Time of Retreat* he simply states that what is needed to know is revealed “...through Jesus Christ, through the holy apostles, and through his Church.”³⁴ This simpler approach is characteristic of De La Salle’s thought and may be the consequence of instruction aimed at the Brothers and ultimately at developmental level of the children/pupils.³⁵

Calvin describes the family as the “household of the Church, the relationship between child and parents is key.”³⁶

Therefore, parents have a sacred authority and children must allow themselves to be governed...; what we have been taught by our ancestors we should endeavor to transmit to their children. By this means, all pretense of ignorance is removed; for it was the will of God that these things should be published from age to age without interruption; so that being transmitted from father to child in each family, they might reach even the last family of man.³⁷

Fathers play a special role here, for they transmit the faith by divine command, “...fathers were not led to instruct their children in these truths under the mere impulse of their own minds, but by the commandment of God.”³⁸

Calvin and De La Salle shared many broad and essential ideas about the problem of ignorance, the need to know God, the valuable tool of catechism, and the unique opportunity to save souls through instruction during childhood. All of these ideas are traceable to the Reformation. Neither of them wrote a dedicated work on the child, but their ideas can be pieced together from their writings organized around concepts of childhood development; disorder, piety and social order; the origins of evil; remedies and public profession: sacramental, instructional, institutional; catechism; parenting; decorum; and cooperation with grace.

Childhood development. Calvin adhered to a traditional concept of childhood divided into three stages: infancy to around age six or seven, childhood proper from around six to fourteen years, and adolescence. Childhood was a crucial stage of life, the crossroads for attaining good habits. De La Salle also assumes an age of reason. He begins the section of the *Conduct* on corrections by acknowledging human weakness which needs to be addressed with moderation. Young children

³³ *Duties of a Christian*, 22.

³⁴ *Meditation for the Time of Retreat*, (193.1).

³⁵ Deville, *The French School of Spirituality*, 90.

³⁶ “And lest anyone should suppose that this kind of doctrine belongs only to strangers, the Lord specially appoints it for the sons of Abraham, that is, for the household of the Church.” *Commentary on Genesis* 18:19.

³⁷ *Commentary on Psalms* 78:4. On family as church, *Commentary on Genesis* 17:12, “For every family of the pious ought to be a church.” On parental authority, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, 7:37-8. Calvin’s view of tradition is typically Protestant in its reference to a tradition of doctrine and not the Catholic view of a living teaching authority of the Church.

³⁸ *Commentary on Psalms* 78:5. The Genevan reform enhanced patriarchy, for religious instruction was firmly in the hands of males, fathers, doctors, and pastors, and this paternalism was the best safeguard against the proclivity to sin and the maintenance of essential discipline. Watt, “Calvinism, Childhood, and Education,” 448.

are not yet capable of profiting from correction. Older students who create disorder in church do so because they lack faith and self-control. They need correction.³⁹

Disorder, piety and, social order. If Calvin's Geneva was famous for its social control, De La Salle was deeply concerned with disorder engendered by a lack of self-control and piety. Like Calvin he perceived a strong inclination toward evil in human nature. Some students are frivolous or undisciplined, "this is either because they cannot be subjected to remaining a whole day in the same place, attentive and with their minds busy, or because they love to run about and play. Such children are ordinarily inclined to evil, and viciousness follows lack of discipline."⁴⁰

The origins of evil. Calvin saw all humans as deeply depraved by the effects of original sin and De La Salle detected a strong inclination to evil among some children. He sometimes refers to "natural" or inherent evil, traceable to original sin, "unless they are *naturally* [emphasis added] of a bold and haughty temperament, they must be frequently admonished. They must also be corrected for their bad dispositions. When they let some of their faults appear in school, they must be subdued and rendered submissive." But De La Salle also has a strong sense that evil can develop out of social experience, especially the practice of the family. "There are some children to whose conduct their parents pay very little attention, sometimes none at all. From morning until evening they do only what they please. They have no respect for their parents. They are disobedient. They grumble at the least thing. Sometimes these faults do not come from an evil disposition of heart or mind; they come from their having been left to themselves."⁴¹ Like Calvin, De La Salle traces evil to an inherently flawed human nature but he also recognizes the effects of nurture, of growing up poor in seventeenth-century France.

Remedies. The remedies for sinfulness are several. The first is sacramental in the form of Baptism. For Calvin, Baptism is not necessary for salvation, it is the mechanism for welcoming the child into the Christian community.⁴² For De La Salle, Baptism is essential for salvation.⁴³ Both Calvin and De La Salle associate Baptism and the new covenant with circumcision and the old covenant.⁴⁴ In the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* De La Salle recommends a whole series of corrections tailored to the offense, age, and disposition of each student. Correction must be effective. "No correction should be administered unless it be considered useful and advantageous. Thus, it is bad to administer correction without having previously considered whether or not it will be of some use either to the student to whom it is to be administered or to the others who are to witness it."⁴⁵

³⁹ Barbara Pitkin, "The Heritage of the Lord": Children in the Theology of John Calvin," in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 173, and Selderhuis, "Calvin, Children and the Church," 56. On human weakness, *Conduct*, 135. On those who have not attained the age of reason, "There are also many little children who likewise must not be corrected or only very rarely. They have not attained the use of reason and are not capable of profiting from correction." *Conduct*, 150. On lack of faith and self-control, "...furthermore, they must understand that it's to be lacking in faith to be in church without piety and without both inner and outer self-control, "and "... It will be difficult for the young ones to observe the moderation and control that is required of them," *Conduct*, 146.

⁴⁰ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 159

⁴¹ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 146.

⁴² Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.15.19, "How much better it would be... whenever anyone is to be baptized, to present him to the assembly of believers, and with the whole church looking on as witness and praying over him, offer him to God..."

⁴³ De La Salle, *Duties*, 114

⁴⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.16.3-4 ; De La Salle, *Duties*, 18.

⁴⁵ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 142.

Penance is better than correction and should be more ordinarily used in the Christian Schools. The ritual of penance described is “sacramental” in character, with admission of guilt, contrition, penance, and reconciliation with the community. The guilty child is admonished by the teacher in a very grave manner, while kneeling before the crucifix because he has offended God. 29

When about to impose a penance, the teacher will give the student the ordinary sign to kneel in the middle of the classroom, with hands joined as had been signaled. The teacher then will in a serious tone pronounce the penance and name the fault for which it is being imposed, without saying a single word more than required. The teacher will use the following or similar terms, in a loud, calm, and intelligible tone: “For having come to school late today, you are to be among the first to come to school for a week, and, if you fail to do so, you will be corrected.” To be effective, this should be done when the student is least expecting it.⁴⁶

Penance was public in Geneva through the Consistory; in the Christian Schools penance was often imposed in the public realm of the classroom.

Catechism. Instruction is a vital remedy to sin, lack of self-control, and disorder. In Geneva children were required to attend catechism on Sunday at noon. They were tested four times a year on their knowledge of the catechism, while in the *schola privata* three students were chosen at the end of every week to recite the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles’ Creed.⁴⁷ The apprentice André Ryff, observed how Geneva was one big classroom,

Incidentally, I should say that it is the custom for the Genevan ministers to visit every house every three months. They gather together the inhabitants of about six or eight households, young and old together, to ask them questions, examine them, have them give an account of their faith, and catechize them before they partake in the Lord’s Supper, which is only celebrated every three months. In view of this, my master taught me himself, so that I was able to answer satisfactorily the questions set by the reverend pastors, and this was a means of edification for me, which causes me to rejoice, praying almighty God that he keeps me in this faith by his grace, as I professed it, and as it is contained in our Basel confession.⁴⁸

In the Christian Schools catechism was taught every day usually from 3:30 to 4:00 according to very specific guidelines adapted from the episcopal recommendations.⁴⁹ In addition, on Sunday the faithful were required to attend Mass and to attend a catechism lesson usually from 1:00 to 2:30. In both Geneva and the Christian Schools the accepted method of catechism learning was through memorization.⁵⁰ Catechetics were at the center of Christian life and if French society lacked the ecclesiastical and social discipline of the Genevan ministers, patriarchal family, and the

⁴⁶ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 154-55.

⁴⁷ Herman J. Selderhuis, “Calvin, Children and the Church,” *Calvin Today: Reformed Theology and the Future of the Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 61.

⁴⁸ Karin Maag, ed. *Lifting Hearts to the Lord* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 2016), 66.

⁴⁹ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 105-114. These include the parts to be taught, how to ask questions, and the duties of both teachers and students.

⁵⁰ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 156, “A student who has not remembered the catechism lesson of the preceding day will be obliged to learn it and repeat it at the end of school without making a mistake or omitting anything.”

Consistory, it was the Christian School that was the social remedy for the lax and chaotic lives of the poor, for it imposed its own form of constant activity and fraternal examination.⁵¹

30

Parenting. The necessary counterpart to the importance of childhood was the central role of parents. Calvin and De La Salle balance the teaching responsibilities of parents with the obligation of children to respect and obey their parents. Both also extend obedience to all others who possess authority. According to Calvin, “we should look up to those whom God has placed over us, and should treat them with honor, obedience, and gratefulness.” For De La Salle, those worthy of respect ranged from godparents to the king. “The phrase *father and mother* includes everyone who has authority over us: fathers and mothers, tutors, godparents, guardians, teachers, husbands with respect to their wives, lords, magistrates, prelates, and Church pastors.”⁵²

It is with parenting that this long list of similarities between Calvin and De La Salle begins to break down. There are a remarkable number of comments on parents and their roles in the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*. Most of these relate to the art of parenting actually practiced by the fathers and mothers of the children enrolled in the Christian Schools in seventeenth-century France. Some parents spoil their children: “There are some parents whose manner of upbringing their children is to give them all that they ask. They never contradict or oppose them in anything, and they almost never correct for their faults.” Others accuse their children but don’t correct them and shift this burden to the Brothers,” “...If it is parents who come to accuse their children and say that they should be corrected, this should not be done just for this reason... If, however, the fault deserves correction, the parents must be given to understand that they should correct their children themselves.”⁵³

While confessional differences are a factor, the principal source of disagreement on parenting is that Calvin’s approach is more theological while De La Salle’s is more sociological. Calvin’s family is a more symbolic, doctrinal, and ideal one, what ought to be; De La Salle’s is the more sociological, in what really is. In the *First Meditation for the Time of Retreat* he like Calvin asserts the duty of Christian parents to instruct their children in religion but acknowledges that fulfillment of this duty is rare because of the necessities of life.

One of the main duties of fathers and mothers is to bring up their children in a Christian manner and to teach them their religion. But most parents are not sufficiently enlightened in these matters. Some are taken up with their daily concerns and the care of their family; others, under the constant anxiety of earning the necessities of life for themselves and their children, cannot take the time to teach their children their duties as Christians. (193.2)

It seems that while students attend Mass at the nearest convenient parish church on schooldays, on Sundays, children attend Mass with their parents at their parish church. In addition, on Sundays children attend catechism from 1:00 to 2:30.⁵⁴ In the second *Meditation for Time of Retreat* De La

⁵¹ Fundamental is Léon Lauraire, FSC, *The Conduct of Schools, A Contextual Approach*, *Cahiers Lasalliens* 61, (Rome: Maison Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, 2008), especially chapter 2.

⁵² Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.8.35; 4.20.23-26. De La Salle, *Duties of a Christian*, 75.

⁵³ De La Salle, *Conduct*, on spoiling children 148, on not correcting them, 150.

⁵⁴ It is not perfectly clear in the *Conduct* if children should attend Mass on Sundays with their parents or with the Brothers. The text states that “Students will, therefore, assemble in the church on Sundays and holy days of obligation... and to remain until the end of Mass.” But on the same page it asserts the teacher’s responsibility is to

Salle is especially aware of the social effects of poverty in erecting financial barriers to educating children.

Consider that it is a practice only too common for working people and the poor to allow their children to live on their own, roaming all over like vagabonds, as long as they are unable to put them to some work. These parents have no concern to send their children to school, because their poverty does not allow them to pay teachers, or else, obliged as they are to look for work outside the home, they have to abandon their children to fend for themselves. (194.1)

This picture of family contrasts markedly from the ideal, spiritual one Calvin imagines based on the experience of Abraham, who is father of all believers and who "... presents us, in a few words, with a beautiful picture of domestic government. Abraham runs, partly, to command what he would have done; and partly, to execute his own duty, as the master of the house. Sarah keeps within the tent; not to indulge in sloth, but rather to take her own part also, in the labor. The servants are all prompt to obey. Here is the sweet concord of a well-conducted family..."⁵⁵

While De La Salle focuses on the poor, Calvin concentrates on the middling rank, the bourgeois family, eschewing both riches and poverty, and does so in a more ideal setting for the edification if not the terror of the reader.⁵⁶ When De La Salle explains the primary duties of parents to their children he includes material responsibilities, food, instruction, correction, good example, and that they should make their children learn a trade.⁵⁷ In the context of the Christian School, the Brothers have a special responsibility not only to teach the children but to guide their parents as well, especially as it concerns the education and formation of their children.

The means of remedying the negligence of parents, especially of the poor, is to speak to them and make them understand their obligations to have their children instructed. They should understand the wrong that they do their children in not making them learn to read and write, and how much this can harm their children, since lack of this knowledge will leave the children incapable of any employment. Then they must be made to realize the harm that may be done to their children by the lack of instruction in those things which concern their salvation, with which the poor are often little concerned.⁵⁸

"inspire the students with a great respect and affection for the offices of the church, especially for those which are celebrated in their own parishes." *Conduct*, 103. A few pages later the *Conduct* clarifies that on Sundays the children attend catechism and then vespers. *Conduct*, 111. Meanwhile, the *Duties of a Christian* states that the "parish Mass is the principal religious exercise of the faithful in public assembly," 227. The lack of clarity in the *Conduct* can be explained by its provisional and adaptive nature. Any disparity between the *Conduct* and the *Duties of a Christian* is likely explained by the different purposes of the two texts. In the *Conduct* the context is the student attending the Christian school, while the context for the *Duties* is much broader and refers to religious life in general. Here the Christian is advised of the importance of the parish church and congregation.

⁵⁵ Calvin *Commentary on Genesis*, 18:6. and *Institutes*, 4.16.13 for Abraham as "father of all who believe."

⁵⁶ *Institutes*, 3.7.8. and William Bouwsma, *John Calvin, a Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 198. See *Commentary on Genesis*, 18:19, "Moreover, we hence infer, that those narratives which serve to inspire terror, are useful to be known. For our carnal security requires sharp stimulants whereby we may be urged to the fear of God."

⁵⁷ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 201 ; 204.

⁵⁸ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 160-61.

De La Salle makes it clear that this neglect is a consequence of poverty. “Parents either neglect to send their children to school, or do not take much trouble to make them come or be assiduous. This difficulty is quite common among the poor, either because they are indifferent to school, persuaded that their children learn very little, or for some other trifling objection.”⁵⁹ 32

Decorum. In the Reformed tradition and for Calvin in particular, education was linked to humanism which saw education as a civilizing agent. This is well expressed by Theodore Beza in his inaugural address at the Genevan Academy in 1559, who operates from the assumption that humans are uniquely rational creatures. “This requires that men acquire in any manner the instruction and skill that nature alone has not assigned. And it is necessary for the most outstanding intellects, too, as a fertile ground to be cultivated and perfected by the care of a good education. For this is a sentence certainly very true, ‘those who studied Letters see twice as well.’”⁶⁰ For Calvin instruction is connected to decorum in this way:

He [Paul] passes on now to another subject – to instruct the Corinthians, what decorum ought to be observed in the sacred assemblies. For as a man’s dress or gesture has in some cases the effect of disfiguring, and in others of adorning him, so all actions are set off to advantage by decorum, and are vitiated by the want of it. Much, therefore, depends upon decorum and that not merely for securing gracefulness and beauty for our actions, but also to accustom our minds to propriety.⁶¹

And in Romans, *to put on Christ* is a metaphor for decorum, “... commonly used in Scripture with respect to what tends to adorn or to deform man; both of which may be seen in his clothing: for a filthy and torn garment dishonors a man; but what is becoming and clean recommends him.”⁶² Similarly, De La Salle makes explicit reference to the spiritual value of decorum: “It is surprising that most Christians look upon decorum and politeness as merely human and worldly qualities and do not think of raising their minds to any higher views by considering them as virtues that have reference to God, to their neighbor, and to themselves.” Like Calvin he connects the value of external appearance to the interior values of faith and virtue: “According to the same Apostle [Paul], since all of our actions should be holy, there are none which should not be done through purely Christian motives. Thus, all our external actions, which are the only ones that can be guided by the rules of decorum, should always, through faith, possess and display the characteristics of virtue.”⁶³

Cooperation with Grace. When it comes to pessimism about human nature, no one is more consistent than Calvin on the corruptive effect of original sin which pervades all humans including infants. “Even infants bear their condemnation with them from their mother’s womb; for, though

⁵⁹ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 161.

⁶⁰ Theodore Beza, *Discours du Recteur Th. De Bèze prononcé à l’inauguration de l’Académie dans le Temple de Saint-Pierre à Genève le 5 juin 1559*, trans. Henri Delarue (Geneva : Société du Musée historique de la Réformation, 1959), 12-13. “Il faut donc que les hommes acquièrent de quelque manière l’instruction et l’habileté que la nature toute seule ne leur a pas attribuées. Et il est nécessaire que les esprits supérieurs, eux aussi, comme un sol fécond, soient cultivés et perfectionnés par les soins d’une bonne éducation. Car ceci est une sentence assurément très vraie : ceux qui ont étudié les lettres voient deux fois mieux.”

⁶¹ *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 11:2.

⁶² *Commentary* Romans 13:14; see also *Institutes*, 3.10.2.

⁶³ John Baptist de La Salle, *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, ed. Gregory Wright, FSC, trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC (Romeoville, IL: Christian Brothers Publications, 1990), 3.

they had not yet brought forth the fruits of their own iniquity, they have the seed enclosed within themselves. Indeed, their whole nature is a seed of sin; thus it cannot be but hateful and abominable to God.” This gulf between humankind and God explains why humans can contribute nothing to their own righteousness. 33

And I should like to learn from those who pretend that man goes to meet God with some work righteousness whether they think there can be any other righteousness at all than that which is accepted by God. If it is mad to think so, what acceptable thing can come to God from his enemies, all of whom he spurns with all their doings? Truth testifies that all of us are mortal enemies of God [cf. Rom.5:10; Col. 1:21] until we are justified and received into friendship. If justification is the beginning of love, what righteousness of works will precede it?⁶⁴

If Calvin betrays the iron consistency of his thinking, De La Salle reveals remarkable flexibility. He begins with the concept of cooperation expressed by the Council of Trent and develops it. (*Meditation* 195.1) “That those who teach the young are cooperators with Jesus Christ in the salvation of souls.”⁶⁵ De La Salle posits not a predestinarian God who offers grace only to the elect, but one who offers it to everyone, and that we as humans have the free will to actively accept it, to cooperate and complete it, and work with it toward our own salvation. It may be that De La Salle is pessimistic about human nature but optimistic about the ability of God’s grace to overcome it, if we open our hearts. While the means to salvation is first offered by God, the individual must complete the process through an act of will. While Calvin tends to divide humanity into elect and reprobates, De la Salle places greater emphasis on the role of each individual.

Although Jesus Christ died for everyone, the benefit of his death is, nevertheless, not effected in everyone, because all do not make the effort to apply it to themselves. The response of our will is necessary on our part in order to make it effective. Although the death of Jesus Christ was more than sufficient to wipe out the sins of all and to be a complete reparation for them, because God has reconciled us through Jesus Christ, nevertheless, the grace that Jesus merited for us effects our salvation only insofar as our will is brought to correspond with it. It is up to each of us to achieve and complete the work of our own redemption.⁶⁶

Calvin will have none of this, especially regarding any role for free will and human effort. He takes special exception to the scholastic doctrine of operating and cooperating grace as articulated by Peter Lombard, who he claims misinterprets Augustine. He writes: “If this be admitted, it will be indisputable that free will is not sufficient to enable man to do good works, unless he be helped by

⁶⁴ On seeds of sin, Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.15.10, on righteousness, *Institutes*, 3.14.6.

⁶⁵ Council of Trent, Session VI, chapter 7 and 10, canons 4 and 9, but most of all VI. 5, “...that they who by sin had been cut off from God, may be disposed through His quickening and helping grace to convert themselves to their own justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with that grace...” See <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/trentall.html>, (accessed 17 March 2016.)

⁶⁶ John Baptist de La Salle, *Meditations*, ed. Augustine Loes, FSC and Francis Huether, FSC, trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC and Augustin Loes, FSC (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 1994), 195.1, 436-7. In the *Duties of a Christian* De La Salle refers to actual grace, “Actual grace helps us to will and accomplish what is good and to overcome all temptations and obstacles that the devil and our corrupt nature place in the way of our salvation. This grace also gives merit to our good actions because only the actions we perform under the influence of grace are agreeable to God.”

grace, indeed by special grace, which only the elect receives through regeneration. For I do not tarry over those fanatics who babble that grace is equally and indiscriminately distributed.”⁶⁷

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Calvin makes three arguments against cooperating grace. First, he believes it could suggest that grace is not efficacious. For Calvin grace precedes every good work and is effective without recourse to human will.⁶⁸ Second, cooperation with grace could imply human merit; for Calvin the human will is inactive. (“The thing that displeases me about this division is that, while he [Lombard] attributes the effective desire for good to the grace of God, yet he hints that man by his very own nature somehow seeks after the good – though ineffectively”). Third, cooperation with grace could imply that the gift of perseverance is given according to how we cooperate with earlier grace, which would make us masters of our own destiny rather than in the hands of God’s alone. The problem for Calvin is that the doctrine of free will robs God of his honor: “Yet he cannot claim for himself ever so little beyond what is rightfully his without, losing himself ever so little beyond what is rightfully his without usurping God’s honor, and thus becoming guilty of monstrous sacrilege”.⁶⁹

The ideas of John Calvin and John Baptist de La Salle on the nature of evil, the role of catechisms, childhood, and parenting can be summed up in this table:

A CALVIN-DE LA SALLE TEMPLATE: THE NATURE OF CHILDHOOD		
CATEGORY COMPARISON	CALVIN	DE LA SALLE
Childhood development	Traditional view: Three stages: (1) Infancy, 0-6 years of age (2) Childhood proper, age 6-14 (3) Adolescence, 14- and rebellion, strong passions, immoderate, lack of self-control. Crucial stage, crossroads for attaining good habits.	The reality of human weakness. Some have not attained reason “are not capable of profiting from correction.” Lack of self-control/lack of faith. Little ones without moderation and self-control. No specific age mentioned.

⁶⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.6

⁶⁸ Anthony N.S. Lane, *The Calvin Handbook*, 286, writes, “Against this, Calvin emphasizes prevenient efficacious grace which, in Augustine’s words, “work without us to cause us to will.” It is my understanding that prevenient grace is a term usually associated with Arminianism, while irresistible grace is associated with Calvinism, although Calvin himself never used the term. I will not comment on this issue except to refer the reader to *Institutes*, 3.3.7 for further clarification.

⁶⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.10 and 2.2.6. See also Lane, *The Calvin Handbook*, 286.

Disorder: piety and social order	Aim of authorities in Geneva: to eradicate ignorance; to create good citizens; pious people; civilizing influence of education. Placing children and parents at the center of social and religious life.	Disorder: Lack of self-control and piety causes school absences. Frivolous or undisciplined activity; lack of discipline linked to an inclination to evil; the need for repression.
The origins of evil: nature/nurture	Original sin – in the womb, depravity, but not as bad as adults. Some aspect of increased proclivity for evil.	Nature: evil disposition; naturally bold. Social origins of evil: “Sometimes these faults do not come from an evil disposition of heart or mind; they come from their having been left to themselves.”
Remedies and Public Profession: sacramental, instructional, institutional	Baptism, not necessary for salvation, as welcome into Christian community. Centrality and continuity of covenant. Moral progress in life through instruction, sermons, lectures. Public school system. Public admonition by Consistory. Public profession as entrée to Lord’s Supper.	Baptism, necessary for salvation. School: corrections for bad dispositions. Penance, better than correction. Teachers will make use of it to humble their students and to bring them to a state of heart to correct themselves of their faults. Sacrament-like: kneeling, facing crucifix, admits to transgression against God. “Public” penance in the classroom.
Catechism	Knowledge of God and salvation. Must attend catechism class, Sunday at noon. Tested four times per year. End of week 3 scholars chosen to recite Lord’s Prayer, Creed, 10 Commandments. Memorization.	Knowledge of God and salvation. Daily catechism – ½ hour. Sunday catechism – 1 ½ hours, usually 1:00-2:30. First half hour constant questioning on various subjects; next hour dedicated to a single subject. Memorization.
Parenting: Obligations of parents: instruction Obligations of children: obedience	Primacy of family: covenant with the family of Abraham as model. Special responsibility of parents to educate, especially the father; also, the role of doctors/teaching and pastors/preaching. Primarily male: promotes patriarchy, the best defense against disorder and for stability.	Parental failure: Parents who give children all they ask for; parents who accuse children but don’t correct them themselves. Social causes: deficient parenting, poverty, busyness. Parents either neglect to send their children to school, or do not take much trouble to make them come. This difficulty is quite common among the poor. Remedying the

	Overall, both an increased emphasis on home instruction and formal education.	negligence of parents - to speak to them and make them understand their obligations to have their children instructed.
Decorum	Christian instruction promotes decorum as civilizing agent. Lack of decorum can affect spiritual life.	Christian instruction promotes decorum. Spiritual value of decorum to God and neighbor. External actions are guided by the rules of decorum through faith.
Cooperation with Grace	Grace given to elect only. Suspicious of cooperating grace. Lack of free will.	Grace offered to all. Free will to accept or reject grace. Jesus has chosen the Brothers to be his cooperators in the salvation of souls.

Conclusion

What good would there be if Calvin and De La Salle shared important ideas? The first answer is to confirm that they did indeed share many ideas. The second is that the basis for their agreement, their common role, is the Reformation. This confirms the Reformation as a vital analytical device for exploring De La Salle's thought. Identifying the ideas De La Salle borrowed from the common wisdom of the Reformation, allows a more accurate identification of his unique contributions. These common Reformation ideas include, (1) a central concept of childhood, of stages of human development; (2) that the effects of original sin are devastating, introducing sin and evil into human nature, and disorder into human society; (3) that childhood presents a unique though chronologically limited opportunity to ameliorate these evil effects by means of education, especially through catechetical instruction; (4) that knowledge of God's promises are best taught at home by parents but also in church, and in the classroom; (5) that the salvific value of education also has a social function in promoting decorum which is linked to faith; (6) in all these things grace plays an indispensable role, but that for Calvin grace is solely God's to dispense as he see fit and is efficacious. While for De La Salle it is a free gift to all, but the individual must decide to accept it and to cooperate with it.

From these points emerge the conclusion that the early biographers overemphasized the unique contribution of De La Salle to childhood education; he derived most of his ideas from the mainstream of Reformation thought. He was as convinced as any of human sinfulness and that the human personality could be conditioned through education, which could impose much needed social discipline on unruly children. He borrowed most of his catechetical procedures from those institutionalized by the French bishops. This may have been a factor in gaining episcopal support for Lasallian catechetical instruction in the classroom as the bishops recognized that the Brothers' approach was similar to their own.

Within the Catholic context dominated by a clerical hierarchy, the bishops set the diocese, the parish, and the parish priest as the proper context for catechetical instruction. This is well reflected in the ideas of the other great pedagogical innovator of the time, Charles Démia. He too operated within the parish and diocese. His teacher's college, Saint Charles Seminary, envisioned developing teachers while forming priestly candidates who studied Latin, theology, and homiletics; for Démia it was possible to train good schoolmasters and make them also good priests.⁷⁰ For De La Salle, less systematic than Démia, the Christian Brother was totally dedicated to teaching without the possibility to advance to the priesthood. This narrower focus on instruction of the poor allowed De La Salle to develop an exceptionally deep conception of the teacher's role in the Church. This, in turn, explains his unusually sharp sociological insights. It is almost as if his lack of theological originality allowed him to develop a new sociology of teaching and learning. This is connected to the lay status of the Brothers who vowed never to become priests, and who were freer to examine the social context in which they taught, never having entered into the First Estate. Because they were largely recruited from the less privileged classes, they were better able to relate to the family of artisans and the poor. While De La Salle and the Brothers had a profound understanding of generalizing social concepts such as the poor and poverty, they were also attuned to the individuality of each student and his special needs. Like Calvin, De La Salle recognized the prime responsibility of parents to educate their children, but unlike Calvin, and for that matter Démia, he did not forge close relations with the state.⁷¹ The Lasallian classroom, therefore, became an independent social center of an educational program for both students and parents touting the necessity and benefits of education, and promoting social discipline.

To return to theology, De La Salle shared with Calvin a deep sense of the depravity of human nature, its impact on social disorder, and the remedy of education. But his less systematic approach allowed De La Salle to veer away from Calvin's iron predestinarianism and toward the special role of teaching as vocation. In turn, this permitted the development of the cooperative role of the Brother-Teacher who with divine grace played the vital role of teacher in the Church's mission. Here again, De La Salle's originality was less theological than sociological. It wasn't so much that De La Salle disagreed with Calvin's emphasis on the sanctity of the family, as his recognition that its sanctity had been seriously compromised by the grinding poverty that increasingly separated rich from poor in the France of Louis XIV. For Calvin, the gulf between the divine and the human, the perfect and the depraved, was so profound that no human activity could bridge the fissure. The theologized family existed outside of human society. But for De La Salle it was possible to close the gap somewhat, through a ministry of education, sanctified by the Church, that could promote both salvation and material progress. The Brothers, removed from the world as vowed religious, operated in the world as teachers. The social fabric of the family was broken for the poor, but the Brothers could repair its baneful effects both by teaching the young and convincing their parents of the value of acquiring salvific and practical knowledge and skills. Just as Calvin and the magistracy created the Consistory in Geneva, De La Salle and the Brothers fashioned a new social institution in early modern France that buttressed the fragile family of the poor. This affirms Brother Léon's contextual approach which focuses on the importance of the world of the working

⁷⁰ Yves Poutet, *The Origins and Characteristics of Lasallian Pedagogy* trans. Julian Watson, FSC et al. (Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Press, 1997), 49-56.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

class and poor, to the purpose and identity of the Institute. He quotes from the beginning of the *Rule of 1705*.

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The necessity of this Institute is very great because the working class and the poor, being usually little instructed and occupied all day in gaining a livelihood for themselves and their children, cannot give them the instruction they need and a respectable and Christian education. Persons are therefore needed to take the place of fathers and mothers to instruct children in the mysteries of religion that they ought to know and in the elementary practices of the Christian life. It was to procure this advantage for the children of the working class and of the poor that the Christian Schools were established.⁷²

Having peered over Febvre's neighbor's wall, and discovered that what divided Calvin and De La Salle was less than what they shared, new questions and answers emerge. The "badly-posed" questions include the presumed, unbridgeable theological divisions between Catholics and Protestants which isolated De La Salle from the broader context of the Reformation. This conformity with Reformation ideas may seem at first to diminish De La Salle's status and reduce his contribution to teaching. Instead, it provides context for a finer appreciation of his unique contributions which were more sociological than theological. It also opens up De La Salle to still other influences. These include his relation to Jansenism and to socio-ecclesial norms; his relationship and that of the Brothers to royal and episcopal authority, and the connection between the Christian Schools and the mission of the church. Having established the crucial link between De La Salle and the Reformation, it is to these considerations and especially their interaction with De La Salle's mental world that we can now turn.

⁷² Lauraire, *Contextual Approach*, 37-8.

IV

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE: FROM JANSENISM TO HIS MENTAL WORLD

This chapter moves slightly from context to subject, from an emphasis on placing De La Salle in the context of a particular place and time, early modern Europe and the Reformations, to articulating a bit more forcefully how he begins to emerge as a unique personality. The focus is on the Founder's mental world, which requires some theoretical considerations. Mental world refers to the complex of ideas and the web of political and social attitudes, and so a context, into which the individual is placed.¹ The etymology of "context" is to weave together, and in this chapter some of the most potent intellectual forces in play will be woven together with how De La Salle responded to them. When J. H. Elliott, explored the mental world of Hernan Cortez, he described it as a process by which he set "Cortez very firmly into the context of the society from which he sprang," while examining "[h]is own mental development."² Therefore, mental world also refers to a process or development, something that has the potential to change over time. This will be particularly important in the next chapter as De La Salle imposed on himself a change of identity. An alternative is *mentalité*, an attractive term, especially given its Gallic origins and those of De La Salle and the Brothers. It indicates not the study of deliberate actions but rather the "parts of cultural contexts which are largely assumed, unquestioned, uncriticized" – a helpful definition.³ But Georges Duby, who admitted that he no longer used the term, suggested two ways to define it. The first was a desire to find out what went on in people's heads without severing it from their bodies, by which he means material culture. The second was the interest not in the individual but the collective, what he called the "confused amalgam of inherited assumptions to which everyone repeatedly refers, effortlessly but not unconsciously."⁴ The first is congenial but the second problematic because while this study is interested in collectives, it is only so far as they help to explain the mind of an individual, John Baptist de La Salle. For the purpose of this chapter, *mentalité* can be defined as not only what De La Salle thought but how and why he thought it, colloquially, what went on in his head. This must include the assumptions, perhaps confused ones, shared by many, as well as his more individual thought processes and the relationship between the two. It is also acceptable that "thought" cannot be separated from material culture. Therefore, this chapter and the next are linked. Indeed, both are also connected to the previous chapter where De La Salle more than Calvin showed an awareness of the material causes of ignorance, namely poverty. In the following chapter the term "socio-anthropological" will be employed to refer to something similar, the collective and assumed social and cultural values of the day, but also to De La Salle's critique of those values, and so to the tensions between the two, also conjoined to the material culture. It is there especially that the encounter with that confused amalgam of inherited assumptions took place. In reality, the mental and socio-cultural worlds are inseparable, but

¹ Linda Levy Peck, *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 149.

² J.H. Elliott, "The Mental World of Hernan Cortez," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 17 (1967): 42-3.

³ Michael Stanford, *A Companion to the Study of History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994), 33.

⁴ Georges Duby, *History Continues* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 73-5.

dividing them is useful for practical reasons of organization and argument. Ultimately, though, it is the complex intersection of the two that will permit a deeper understanding of what the Founder did and why he did it. Finally, while the bulk of this chapter explores De La Salle's relationship with Jansenism, at the end there will be the opportunity to refer to his connection not so much with Calvin as with Calvinism and then to place the Founder in the social context of his own family. Needless to say, these approaches are not theological and are meant to complement the classic theological studies of distinguished Lasallian scholars such as Michele Sauvage and Miguel Campos.

In his magisterial study of the educational and religious origins of De La Salle's works, Yves Poutet lists more than a dozen "influences" on De La Salle. These range from school work from his *collège* and University experiences, to individuals such as Nicolas Roland, Charles Démia, and Adrien Nyel. But they also include a host of religious communities such as the Canonesses of Saint Augustine, who ran a school for girls in Reims, and the Capuchins, who, coming out of the Franciscan tradition, emphasized apostolic poverty. Then there were the Carmelites and Jesuits. De La Salle dedicated one of his *Meditations* to Saint Teresa of Avila (177.1-3) praising her austerities and penances and especially her dedication to contemplative prayer. Ignatius of Loyola also merits a meditation (148.1-3), where De La Salle draws an explicit connection between the teaching charism of the Jesuits as a model for that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.⁵ Finally, De La Salle seems to have had a special fondness for the Benedictine tradition, for he took special solace in his retreat at the Grande Chartreuse during one of the most traumatic times of his life in 1714. But the most oft-mentioned influence is that of Saint Sulpice, given that he studied at their seminary for eighteen months. This connected him to Jean-Jacques Olier, the founder of the Sulpicians, and to his disciples and successors, and through Olier back to Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, the traditionally recognized founder of the French school of spirituality. This influence has been well studied and so will be treated here only in passing.⁶

There are two explanations for this plethora of influences, the first intellectual, the second personal. Seventeenth-century France was awash in new ideas. Some were secular, such as the philosophy of Descartes, others spiritual, as the French Reformation took root in many forms. These ranged from official royal and episcopal policy, to the more amorphous *dévots*, to the less orthodox Reformation traditions of Calvinism, Gallicanism, Jansenism and Quietism. So, it was only natural for someone of De La Salle's intellect to absorb multiple ideas from these varied traditions. We have already seen that the barriers between these ideologies were more permeable than might be

⁵ John Baptist de La Salle, *Meditations*, ed. Augustine Loes, FSC and Francis Huether, FSC, trans. Richard Arandez, FSC and Augustin Loes, FSC (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 1994).

⁶ The closest things we have to a full intellectual biography of De La Salle is volume one of Poutet's work, *Le XVII^e [i.e. Dix-septième] siècle et les origines lasalliennes, recherches sur la genèse de l'œuvre scolaire et religieuse de Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (1651-1719)* (Rennes : Impr. réunies, 1970) and Luke Salm, FSC, *John Baptist de La Salle, The Formative Years* (Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1989). Both reconstruct his education from his humanistic studies at the Collège des Bons-Enfants, two years of philosophical study, followed by theological study. This brought De La Salle to theology course work at the Sorbonne and contact with Sulpician spirituality at the seminary of Saint Sulpice. While Salm concludes his work with De La Salle's ordination and the death of Nicolas Roland, beginning De La Salle's involvement in education, Poutet continues his narrative to the influence of Adrien Nyel and the beginnings of the Institute. He concludes the volume with two sections, "The Inherent Difficulties in the Character of J. B. de La Salle," and "Ascetic and Mystical Means Implemented." These follow a section titled "The Great Ruptures of 1681-1688." Thus, Poutet sets up a narrative where one wonders how much those "formative years" actually influenced his mature thought, since he ultimately rejected so much of them.

assumed. But there also seems to be something personal afoot. In an age, not only of great intellectual diversity but of bitter contention and division, De La Salle seems to have been determined to avoid both, in favor of some middle way. He purposely avoided the disputatious spirit so evident in the Reformation. He was only partially successful. These inclinations rendered his thought considerably eclectic, but also unsystematic and seemingly somewhat inconsistent. Often this lack of consistency has been labeled practical, perhaps more as an excuse than an explanation of his mental world. In the end, it makes identification of that world difficult to define. 41

De La Salle was not a Jansenist and I have no intention to prove otherwise. As one distinguished Lasallian wrote, “As regards Jansenism: There is no doubt that from the doctrinal point of view, De La Salle is clear of all Jansenism.”⁷ The problem is not that this statement is untrue so much as it is incomplete, cutting off De La Salle from one of the most important intellectual movements of his time, and most of all depriving us of one of the most useful tools to examine his mental world. What does it mean to be “clear” of all Jansenism, what indeed is Jansenism, and why limit it to a doctrinal point of view? Indeed, is it even possible to reduce a religious movement to doctrine? If the statement is suggesting that De La Salle had no contact with Jansenism, that it had no impact on his thinking, then it is in fact mistaken, especially since Jansenism arose in the context of the Reformation.

The first challenge is to define Jansenism, a task that is difficult to accomplish for at least three reasons. They are: 1) Jansenism’s internal complexities and divisions; 2) the definition foisted on it by its enemies; and 3) its morphing over time into a more overt political movement. Fortunately, the last is mostly the consequence of the eighteenth century after the death of both Louis XIV and De La Salle, and so can be put aside. But the other two present considerable challenges to describe. See, for instance, the remarks of the Duke of Saint Simon:

I hold all party divisions detestable in Church and State. There is no party but that of Jesus Christ. I also hold to be heretical the five famous propositions, direct or indirect, and equally so all books, without exception, which contain them. I believe also that there are persons who hold them to be good and true, who are united among themselves and form a party. Therefore, in these respects I am not a Jansenist.

In this the duke defines “Jansenist” as someone who is consciously a member of a group, a party, united around a system of ideas. By this definition De La Salle’s non-membership is confirmed. The author does not stop there but immediately thereafter proclaims the Formulary – the forced consent to the papal declaration of heresy – a “pernicious invention” and voices his support for the liberties of the Gallican church: “I am intimately attached, more even by conscience than by sound policy, to that which is very improperly known under the name of the liberties of the Gallican church.” He then follows with a praise of Jansenism, noting that “...all of which these latter days have produced of most saintly, purest, most learned, most instructive, most practical, and, nevertheless, most elevated, most luminous, most shining, issued from that school and from what is known under the name of Port Royal.” Finally, he asserts “that the name of Jansenist and Jansenism is a convenient pot of paint with which to blacken those it is desirable to ruin; and that

⁷ Maurice-Auguste Hermans, FSC, “Some Spiritual Currents Which Could Have Influenced De La Salle,” *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* Vol 4, No 1 (2013), <http://axis.smumn.edu/index.php/axis/issue/view/12>, (accessed 22 March 2016).

out of a thousand persons daubed with it there may not be two who deserve it.”⁸ All told, Saint Simon declares himself not a Jansenist but denounces the Formulary; asserts his support of Gallicanism, which he associates with Jansenism; praises Jansenists for their holiness; and testifies to the abuse of the term used by many, especially its enemies, as a means to discredit foes. We begin to sense the nature of the problem. 42

Catherine Maire has written that the “difficulty in grasping Jansenism probably has a great deal to do with it being intimately intertwined with the whole theological and political structure of the French ancien régime... It is absolutism’s profoundly revealing double, its religious mirror, its ghost.”⁹ Because Jansenism is so completely entangled with so much of seventeenth-century French intellectual life, it is difficult to sustain that someone like De La Salle could in fact be entirely “clear” of it, to which, as we shall see, his experience in Marseille and in the composition of his catechism attest. And if Jansenism is absolutism’s revealing double, it is orthodox Catholicism’s as well.

One often reads in the context of De La Salle that there is a difference between being a *dévot* and a Jansenist. This is true enough but seems more than a little defensive and transparently an effort to suggest that he was the former but not the latter. The problem is that this approach ignores history. The distinction between the *dévots* and Jansenists ignores the fact that they both originate in the French Reformation. Brian E. Strayer makes this point clearly.

Even in the 1620s and 1630s, well before the release of Jansen’s *Augustinus* (1640) a nascent form of Jansenism existed in the expressions of the *dévots* movement. Led by Catholic enthusiasts like Pierre de Bérulle, founder of the French Oratory, the *dévots* espoused an Augustinian theology, opposed the Jesuits, defended the rights of the bishops against the authority of the pope, and urged Louis XIII to make policy decisions based on religion. Because of the far-reaching influence of the *dévots* and Oratorians, by the end of the seventeenth century, nearly half of the Catholic clergy in France, Belgium, Spain and other Mediterranean countries had become “infected” (Pierre Chaunu’s term) with Augustinian piety, mysticism, Richerism, asceticism, and reforming zeal.¹⁰

Associating De La Salle with Bérulle and the French school of spirituality, but clearing him completely of any connection to Jansenism, requires a bit of intellectual aerobatics. If we jettison some of the terminology and consider Strayer’s last point, we can construct a progression. The French Reformation, indeed all Reformations raised up Augustinianism, some more, some less, which greatly informed the French school of spirituality through Bérulle. This Augustinianism was especially enhanced in Jansenism. It was a difference of degree not essence. De La Salle (with the exception of Gallican Richerism) imbibed Augustine’s thought, especially its anthropology,

⁸ Saint-Simon, Duc de, Louis de Rouvroy, *The Age of Magnificence; The Memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon* (New York: Putnam, 1963), 321-3.

⁹ Catherine Maire, “Port-Royal: The Jansenist Schism,” in *Realms of Memory*, eds. Pierre Nora, Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-7), 300-51. She makes the distinction between the “two Jansenisms,” defining the second as “the political Jansenism of the eighteenth century.” 303.

¹⁰ Brian E. Strayer, *Suffering Saints: Jansensists and Convulsionnaires in France, 1640-1799* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 50.

ecclesiology, and asceticism, and was filled with reforming zeal.¹¹ To be a *dévot* is to be part of the French Reformation within which there were many strains of thought and practice. If we embrace this structure, not only is it impossible to separate clearly De La Salle from Jansenism, but we must also acknowledge the common ancestry of all these reforming traditions. Joseph Bergin's definition of the *dévots* reflects the vague breadth of the movement, "The term *dévots* always conveyed the idea of active groups of people who were imbued with the sense of a mission to influence and change the world in which they lived in accordance with their understanding of Christian religious and moral principles."¹² Certainly this definition applies to the Jansenists and De La Salle alike. So, in conclusion, De La Salle was not a Jansenist because he rejected some of its central ideas such as its predestinarian tendencies and its proclivity for political resistance. But this does not clear De La Salle from sharing other ideas fundamental to the *dévots* and Jansenists alike.

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What follows, then, is less a definition and more a list of general characteristics. No single person need embrace them all and possessing any number of them does not necessarily make you a Jansenist. This is because there are many fundamental ideas shared between Jansenists and both orthodox Catholics and Calvinists. In addition, not all Jansenists emphasized the same ideas.¹³ The list is just a starting point that permits consideration of Jansenism's impact on De La Salle's mental world.

The best place to begin are the issues leading to the condemnation of the five propositions in Bishop Cornelius Jansen's (1585-1638) *Augustinus*, published posthumously in 1640. One of the reasons that Jansenism became so controversial is that these propositions revived some of the essential questions of the Reformation that led to the division of the Latin Church. As the title suggests, Jansen based his arguments on his interpretation of Saint Augustine, especially his anti-Pelagian writings. Pelagius, a contemporary of Augustine, minimized the effects of original sin on human nature, emphasized human free will and asserted that humans can achieve salvation without the need for grace. These ideas known as Pelagianism were condemned by the Council of Carthage in 418. Jansenism revolved around these very fundamental issues of original sin, grace, good works, free will, and predestination. Jansen wrote in opposition to Luis de Molina (1535-1601) a Spanish Jesuit who he considered to be Pelagian. To make things still more complicated, Jansen also published the *Mars Gallicus* in 1635. There he criticized the policy of Richelieu and Louis XIII who had allied France with Protestant countries in opposition to the Catholic Habsburgs, during the Thirty Years War. This introduced a political component into Jansenism that it never quite lost and won the special enmity of the French state. In turn, state persecution fostered a stubborn resistance, a psychology of persecution, and an emphasis on the rights of conscience. De La Salle never embraced political Jansenism.

The papal bull *Regiminis Apostolici* issued by Alexander VII in 1664 greatly exacerbated things by introducing the notion of a Formulary, a statement of orthodoxy to be signed indicating

¹¹ Hubert Jedin and John Patrick Dolan, eds. *The Church in the Age of Absolutism and Enlightenment* vol. 6 of *The History of the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1980-82), 28. No less an authority than Yves Poutet notes De La Salle's "[m]oyens ascétiques et mystiques mis en œuvre," *Le XVIIe siècle et les origines lasalliennes*, 1:741.

¹² Joseph Bergin, *Church, Society, and Religious Change in France: 1580-1730* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 366.

¹³ Strayer, *Suffering Saints*, 14.

acceptance of the five propositions condemned by the pope as heretical. Many Jansenists refused to sign. This papal intervention stimulated a Gallican response challenging the authority of the pope within the kingdom of France and complicating things still further. The Abbey of Port-Royal-des-Champs, originally a Cistercian monastery, became one of the focal points of Jansenist resistance under Mother Marie Angelique Arnauld (1591-1661). By the end of the century Louis XIV was determined to destroy the abbey. In 1709 he had all of the nuns expelled and the buildings razed. Louis then called on the pope to condemn Pasquier Quesnel's *Moral Reflections on the New Testament* (1692). In addition to its notable Jansenist inclinations, the book maintained that it is an abuse in the Church "to forbid Christians to read the Holy Scripture and especially the Gospel" (prop. 85), for this reading "is necessary to all, in every place and at all times" (prop. 79-84).¹⁴ This proposition necessitated reading the Bible in the vernacular for the vast majority without a classical education, and introduced still another thorny issue. Louis asked the pope to condemn the book and in 1713 Clement XI issued the bull *Unigenitus*, condemning 101 propositions in Quesnel's text. What is clear is that the papal condemnations set off one of the most vibrant periods of Jansenist controversy precisely during De La Salle's life. He could not have avoided it, no matter how much he refused to enter the debate.

All was not black and white. There were Jansenists, orthodox Catholics, and some in between. Papal condemnation no doubt also stimulated Jansenist Gallican tendencies to challenge claims of papal infallibility in favor of an independent French episcopate. There was never anywhere near a majority of Jansenist bishops, but there were often significant minorities. Louis-Antoine de Noailles, Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris and De La Salle's contemporary, was suspected of Jansenist leanings. Other than the formulary there were not many issues that couldn't be nuanced in some way. Jansenists and the Jesuits who promoted the ideas of Molina, were deadly enemies over the Formulary and many other issues. For example, they split over the question of attrition or contrition and the frequency of communion. Jesuits held that attrition, or fear of the punishment of eternal damnation was sufficient, while Jansenists insisted that contrition, requiring an act of love of God, was necessary for the forgiveness of sins.¹⁵ Antoine Arnaud's *Frequent Communion* (1643) set off one of the more famous battles. In this work, Arnaud criticized the laxity of the Jesuits who promoted the frequent reception of communion, instead emphasizing the necessity of proper preparation that made frequent reception difficult. These sorts of positions gave the Jansenists a reputation as rigorists, identified with the *dévots*. Charles-Maurice Le Tellier, archbishop of Reims during De La Salle's lifetime, was hostile to the Jesuits and associated with a group of rigorist bishops. In this divided and fuzzy world in which De La Salle lived, these were all sufficient grounds to be accused of Jansenism.¹⁶

De La Salle was perceived as a rigorist. His emphasis on instruction in the vernacular, his strict evangelical basis for the *Meditations*, his stress on the necessity of the Christian to exert constant effort and total conversion, his asceticism, and the controversial idea that laymen could teach catechism with an exalted sense of the role of the teacher who had a special function within the church, were all bases for suspicion. In sum, Jansenism was a diverse ideology, difficult to precisely define. It shared a common Augustinian heritage with Calvinism, while Jansenist

¹⁴ "Pasquier Quesnel," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12601c.htm>, (accessed 6 April 2016).

¹⁵ P. De Letter, S.J., "Two Concepts of Attrition and Contrition," *Theological Studies*, 11 (1950): 3-33.

¹⁶ Bergin, *Crown, Church and Episcopate under Louis XIV*, 222, 292, 348.

claimed to be loyal Catholics. To associate De La Salle with the *dévots*, the Catholic reform, and rigorism, while asserting that he is all clear of Jansenism, is to impose a strict separation that did not exist in seventeenth-century France. The intricacies of these relationships can be illustrated by one of the key moments in De La Salle's later life. 45

Evidence I: De La Salle and the Jansenists in Marseille

De La Salle's biographer, Jean-Baptiste Blain, pays as little attention to the Jansenists as he does to the Calvinists for the same reason, namely, that they do not conform to his narrative. One exception is the 1717 episode in Marseille, when De La Salle attempted to establish a novitiate to train Brothers to serve in the southern schools. This was particularly important because the culture of southern France was very different from De La Salle's north. For Blain the narrative is about how the strong support of both lay and clerical leaders turned into unprovoked hostility, and that while the stated issue of disagreement was the preference for clerics as teachers rather than lay brothers, the real motivation was the secret intrigue of the Jansenists. Overall, Blain's meta-narrative strategy is to provide evidence of De La Salle's sanctity, especially his orthodoxy in contrast to the heretical Jansenists. However, an alternative and thick reading of Blain's account reveals important aspects of De La Salle's mental world. But first a summary of Blain's account is necessary.¹⁷

Blain's narrative shifts back and forth between the issue of the novitiate and the behavior of some of the Brothers. These two threads are actually connected by De La Salle's holy perseverance and the evil intrigues of both wayward Brothers and the Jansenist party. Due to the negligence of the visitor, Brother Ponce, the Brothers had fallen away from the strict regularity of their consecrated life. De La Salle recognized this and resolved to re-impose order which they resented. It is De La Salle's zeal for rigorous order that connects the two threads, while the trigger was the invitation extended to an unnamed Jesuit to preach on the value of the Christian Schools. Jesuits, being the traditional enemies of the Jansenists, the sermon set off a very negative reaction among what was apparently a significant and entrenched Jansenist faction among the Marseilles clergy. Was De La Salle in league with the Jesuit? There is no evidence that he was, but that may not have been the perception of the time. The significant figure here is the unnamed pastor of Les Accoules, who has been identified as Joseph Arnaud. Initially a supporter of De La Salle, he became his greatest foe, and for Blain, Arnaud and his faction are responsible for the novitiate's demise. It is here that Blain's account unintentionally becomes interesting, as the Jansenist narrative begins to subsume that of the novitiate. Blain has the Founder acting with his usual perfect equanimity and a passive trust in providence while Arnaud and others plot against him. But there is much more to be ferreted out from the narrative.

Blain writes that when Arnaud "made the first overtures, he did not get very far without noticing in De La Salle's attitude and on his countenance that the Founder did not care for the new doctrine," that is, Jansenism. While Blain's intent is to show De La Salle's orthodoxy, more

¹⁷ I have explored the Marseille episode in greater detail in Richard M. Tristano, "Crossing Cultures: The Mental World and Social Subversion of Saint John Baptist de La Salle," *Catholic Historical Review* 101 n. 2 (Spring 2017): 246-70.

interesting is the inference that Arnaud first thought De La Salle might be a fellow Jansenist sympathizer. Why? The answer is found in the Brothers' thread and the issue of De La Salle's rigor, which was likely the basis for suspecting that De La Salle might be a Jansenist. When Arnaud concludes the contrary, the Jansenists decide to persecute De La Salle but they can find no moral basis, so exemplary is his life. So, they tack and focus not on the legitimacy of his rigor but on excesses of his piety. 46

But what could they find to criticize in a man whose life was so upright, whose morals were so irreproachable? Exaggerated regularity, excessive severity, invincible inflexibility, harshness that repelled others, stubbornness, and unyielding convictions that nothing could shake - such were the descriptions they used to oppose his extraordinary virtue, his solid doctrine. Those virtues had been considered his vices, since his enemies had come to look upon him as a Molinist.¹⁸

By invoking Molinists, Blain places De La Salle squarely in the Jesuit-Jansenist debate. Paradoxically, though, he also has him described by his excessive severity, invincible inflexibility, and stubbornness, characteristics usually associated with Jansenist behavior.

Since the defamation campaign was a success, as the novitiate was forced to close, and De La Salle abandoned the city amidst hostility, there had to be some plausible basis for the slander campaign to work. De La Salle accepted the news with a "submissive mind and heart" that backers of the school had changed their minds and were now entrusting the schools to clerics and not the Brothers. The Jansenist faction then tried to win De La Salle over to their side. Why would they do this if they were convinced that he was a Molinist, and more importantly when the bishop had already acceded to removing the Brothers from teaching in the schools? This may be simply an inconsistency in Blain's narrative or a jumbled chronology, or perhaps De La Salle's submissiveness gave them pause that he could yet be won over. Either way, De La Salle was being recruited by the Jansenists, who saw him as a kindred spirit who might be convinced to join them.

The Jansenist faction visited De La Salle often, flattered him, and offered him gifts, all of which, according to Blain, he rebuffed. Most interesting is their invitation to join them in their theological discussion. Again, Blain's determination to reflect De La Salle's orthodoxy forces him into an inconsistency. If the Founder rejected all of their overtures why would they invite him to their potentially suspicious schismatic discussions? "The clerics, who held conferences regularly on certain days, were happy to have De La Salle in attendance and often invited him to come. The discussions were not always on topics of piety; the current theological issues were the matters ordinarily discussed."¹⁹ Why did De La Salle attend? And what is the difference between "topics of piety" (*Les discours...de piété*) and "current theological issues" (*Les matières du temps*)? A hint toward answering these questions may be found in this passage: "De La Salle was always amazed to hear from the same mouths the language of angels when they spoke of God and the language of Luther and Calvin when they spoke of the pope and the bishops." He could find no charity in those who acted in such a spirit of contention. "They rarely agreed among themselves, except to consign the Molinists - or at least those whom they considered Molinists - to perdition as Pelagians and

¹⁸ Jean-Baptiste Blain. *The Life of John Baptist De La Salle Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* 3 vols. ed. Luke Salm, FSC, trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), 615.

¹⁹ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 614.

enemies of the grace of Jesus Christ.” It is difficult to know if these are the true sentiments of De La Salle or rather those of Blain. But if they are the former, they supply us with some clues about De La Salle’s disposition toward the Jansenists. It may be that De La Salle was happy to discuss “topics of piety” but not contentious theological issues where the Jansenists operated with all of the self-confidence of an elect. To push things further, De La Salle found kindred spirits in Jansenists when it came to issues of rigorous piety, but he disliked contention, excessive speculation, and challenges to hierarchical authority. Was this out of a cautious disposition or more the political calculation of the superior of an infant society of laymen that could ill afford to commit to any one side, especially one that had significant politically subversive tendencies? Or was this a reflection of De La Salle’s narrower definition of Jansenism? This then leads into the section where De La Salle’s opponents launch calumnies against him.

...they found fault with the different kinds of penance and mortification that De La Salle had learned from the saints and had introduced into his Community. They represented him as unconventional, harsh, un-balanced, inflexible – a man who never changed his mind. According to them, caprice was at the root of all his behavior. He was hard headed and agreed with nobody, and what was worse still, he wanted to mold everyone else to resemble him. He laid impossible burdens on the shoulders of the Brothers and subjected them to an impractical and outlandish lifestyle... He was, they charged, excessively rigid in his approach, had no consideration for human frailty, and was as harsh with others as with himself... In the novitiate, they [the novices] could neither raise their eyes nor open their mouths nor make any use of their senses, the slightest fault was punished by some penance.²⁰

How do these charges stand up to scrutiny? The calumnies against De La Salle can be summed up as follows:

- Excessive mortification
- Unconventional
- Harsh, unbalanced, inflexible
- Capricious
- Impractical and outlandish lifestyle
- No consideration for human frailty
- Denied the novices use of their senses
- The slightest fault was punished by some penance

At first glance it is apparent that most of these accusations have something in common: they hover around alleged excesses of devotion. Indeed, only two accusations, his unconventionality and his capriciousness, are not directly connected to the idea. Before putting them aside, it is true that by initiating the creation of a consecrated society of laymen dedicated to teaching, De La Salle was being unconventional and from the perspective of some, capricious, but in reality the opposite was true, for he was anything but capricious, being so unswervingly focused on the successful establishment of what was to become the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

References in the early biographies to De La Salle’s penitence and mortification are legion. They are also somewhat controversial because of their alleged excesses. Blain, who tends to exaggerate

²⁰ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 616-17.

almost everything but especially the Founder's sanctity, is especially graphic. Does he exaggerate this aspect of De La Salle's life for the purpose of enhancing his holiness? Perhaps. First of all, both of the other early biographers, Maillefer and Brother Bernard, reference De La Salle's mortifications, though much less quantitatively and qualitatively than Blain. Maillefer describes his mortifications as "continual" and which include the use of a hair shirt and sleeping on the floor of his room.²¹ Bernard relates how the first Brothers practiced mortification and how the common people sometimes threw stones at them because of some of their practices.²² It is the attitude of those outside the community that provide the most convincing evidence for the perception of excessive self-inflicted penance. We can't judge these practices by contemporary standards, but when contemporaries react negatively, they provide persuasive external evidence, at least of perception.

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One of the most convincing of these external observations is provided by Maillefer, for when the Founder returned to Paris from the south, and lived at the Seminary of Saint Nicholas du Chardonnet, the superior was greatly impressed by his "great love of mortification and poverty." Similarly, Bishop Paul Godet des Marais, Bishop of Chartres, tricked De La Salle into staying for dinner by having all of the exit doors of his palace locked shut, whereupon he advised De La Salle that he "carried the practice of austerity too far" and they were undermining the health of the Brothers. Blain also reports how De La Salle gave his valet orders to wake him up at set intervals because he thought sleep an obstacle to perfection. He would place sharp pebbles on his prie-dieu, so that the pain would keep him awake. Once again, an outsider intervened when his spiritual director forbade him to continue very rigorous fasts. He scourged himself with whips so much so that the Brothers intervened and removed the instruments. All these examples confirm De La Salle's reputation for excessive mortification.

In his *Mind and Heart of John Baptist de La Salle* Blain refers to De La Salle as "one of the great penitents of the seventeenth century," who possessed a great "holy abhorrence" of self that was as one of the "most precious gifts that God had bestowed on him. But then comes this crucial passage:

De La Salle regarded this fallen nature as his greatest **enemy**; he mistrusted it and was always on guard against any of its propensities, always ready to thwart and combat its inclinations. It was a war without peace offering or truce. The thought of the deep-seated proneness to wrongdoing in human nature, ceaselessly prompting us to offend God, filled him with shame and sadness. He reacted to it with rigor with which a master treats a slave who is always ready to rebel. He sided with God against the evil in his nature and made it a pleasure as well as a duty to punish and crucify it to ensure victory for the supreme majesty of God....²³

Compare these sentiments to those of Blaise Pascal, the most famous of all Jansenists, in his *Pensées*:

²¹ Dom François-Elie Maillefer, OSB and Brother Bernard, FSC, *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* ed. Paul Grass, FSC, trans. William J. Quinn, FSC, rev. trans. Donald C. Mouton, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), 94.

²² Bernard, *Two Early Biographies*, 317.

²³ Blain, *Mind and Heart*, 462, De La Salle as great penitent, *Ibid.*, 460, on holy abhorrence, *Ibid.*, 461-2.

- “The true religion teaches us our duties; our weaknesses, pride, and lust; and the remedies, humility and mortification.” (493)
- Despite all this, the medicine does not cease to be bitter to self-love. It takes as little as it can, always with disgust, and often with a secret spite against those who administer it. (100)
- For myself, I confess that so soon as the Christian religion reveals the principle that human nature is corrupt and fallen from God, that opens my eyes to see everywhere the mark of this truth: for nature is such that she testifies everywhere, both within man and without him, to a lost God and a corrupt nature. (441)
- In a word, the Self has two qualities: it is unjust in itself since it makes itself the centre of everything; it is inconvenient to others since it would enslave them; for each Self is the enemy, and would like to be the tyrant of all others. (455)
- He who hates not in himself his self-love, and that instinct which leads him to make himself God, is indeed blinded.” (492)²⁴

A detailed comparison of De La Salle’s and Pascal’s thought is beyond the scope of this study. There are clear parallels, though, in their convictions of man’s fallen nature and his proclivity to sin, the recourse to mortification, and man’s abhorrence of self. The most obvious explanation for these similarities is that they were both accessing a common ascetic tradition traceable to the Desert Fathers, medieval monasticism and St. Augustine. An analysis of the *Meditations* suggests that De La Salle found inspiration in the lives of St. Anthony Abbot; St. Paulinus of Nola; St. Bruno; St. Peter Celestine (Pope Celestine V); St. Francis of Assisi; St. Carlo Borromeo; and St. Augustine. Through these sources De La Salle focused in particular on the themes of becoming poor, withdrawing from the world, the value of solitude, and most of all the need for mortification, especially its connection to prayer found in these holy men.²⁵

And so, we have the answer to the question posed earlier: the charges made by the Marseillaise Jansenists do indeed stand up to scrutiny. This is particularly true of the accusations of his harsh mortifications, his suppression of the senses, and his obliviousness to his own frailty, which he constantly pushed to the limit. He had a conviction of his own deep sinfulness. These qualities were perceived as outlandish enough to merit comment and intervention by bishop, Brothers, and spiritual director to modify his behavior. It should be noted, though, that he never moderated his own conduct, though he did moderate the mortifications imposed on the Brothers. If Jansenism stressed a severe morality, the ravages of sin, and God’s punishment, producing a psychology greatly inclined to penance, austerity, mortification, even self-loathing, then De La Salle possessed notable Jansenistic affinities.

²⁴ “Pascal’s *Pensées*,” (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1958), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/18269/18269-h/18269-h.htm>, (accessed 7 April 2016).

²⁵ For a broader analysis of De La Salle’s relationship with this ascetic tradition see Richard M. Tristano, “Crossing Cultures,” *Catholic Historical Review* 103 (Spring 2017): 261-63. For all references to the *Meditations*, John Baptist de La Salle, *Meditations*, ed. Augustine Loes, FSC and Francis Huether, FSC, trans. Richard Armandez, FSC and Augustin Loes, FSC (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 1994).

Evidence II: A Note on the Count of Charmel

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De La Salle had strong personal relationships with some Jansenists. One of the most interesting is with the Louis de Ligny, Comte du Charmel, born in 1646 and who died in 1714. He was influenced by Armand Jean le Bouthillier de Rancé (1626 - 1700). Born into a prominent family, Rancé became abbot of the Cistercian abbey of La Trappe, not far from Paris, at the age of eleven. He was ordained and underwent a conversion crisis in 1657. This led him to impose a strict reform on the monastery, popularly known as the Trappists. Rancé was accused of Jansenism, which he denied, having signed the Formulary, thus sustaining the tendency to conflate Jansenism with rigorism. The Count of Charmel experienced a similar conversion which radically altered his way of life, and which led him to forge a strong bond with the Abbey of La Trappe which he visited often, living there during Lent. His behavior at court led to accusations of Jansenism. The Duke of Saint Simon noted its effect: "I must admit that when it came to Jansenism there was never a man who was so indiscreet as Charmel: he made it a religion; we could never make him see reason on this. There were few days that his conduct in this regard did not make his friends shudder."²⁶ Finally, in 1704 Louis XIV signed a *lettre de cachet* exiling Charmel from court. The notion of Charmel so indiscreet as to make Jansenism a "religion" reveals the depths of the count's conversion, but even more the cynical detachment of royal courtly culture.

The count lived not far from Vaugirard, where De La Salle had established a novitiate. One day three Brothers heading to Vaugirard, probably for retreat, asked the parish priest for shelter. The priest was so impressed by the piety of the Brothers that he introduced them to the count. Blain continues:

He [the count] inquired after their manner of living and the purpose of their Institute. Everything he learned impressed him most favorably, and what he observed in these three young Brothers edified him so much that he wished to offer hospitality in the future to all the Brothers who might pass through the village. He even urged them to ask De La Salle on his behalf to choose his chateau as the regular lodging place of the Brothers and to send all those who might be traveling in the vicinity to stay with him.²⁷

Blain goes on to record that the count later visited Vaugirard and that he and De La Salle became fast friends.²⁸

What is most significant in this account is its connection to the Marseille episode, where De La Salle was mistaken by his intense piety for a Jansenist. Similarly, the count and the parish priest, presumably a Jansenist, perceived kindred spirits in the Brothers. Within the complex fluidity of religious ideas in seventeenth-century France, there was something congenial between Jansenism and Lasallianism. In Marseille, De La Salle went out of his way to disassociate himself from the Jansenist faction, yet he formed a close personal relationship with the Jansenist count of Charmel.

²⁶ Saint-Simon, Louis de Rouvroy, duc de, *Mémoires complets et authentiques du duc de Saint-Simon sur le siècle de Louis XIV et la Régence*. 1829 (Paris: A. Sautel et C^{ie}, Libraires Editeurs, 1829), 5: 32-3. <https://play.google.com/books/reader?printsec=frontcover&output=reader&id=Bug9AAAACAAJ&pg=GBS.PA32> (accessed 10 April 2016).

²⁷ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 312; also Maillefer, *Two Early Biographies*, 85.

²⁸ I gratefully acknowledge receipt of the document titled "Trois amis Jansenistes" from Brother Alain Houry, FSC, Archives Lasalliennes de Lyon.

What unites the two episodes is not Jansenism per se, so much as the Jansenists' perception of De La Salle as a sympathetic figure. While De La Salle suspected that the motivations of the Marseille Jansenists were less than benign, harboring ill feeling toward the church hierarchy, the count seems to have no such antipathies. His own rigorism nurtured a close affinity with De La Salle and the Brothers; distinguishing Jansenists from orthodox Christians was not so easy. 51

Finally, the case of Pierre Guyart, canon of the cathedral of Laon and lifelong friend of De La Salle, is a particularly good example of the difficulty of labeling individuals as Jansenists. Blain, who is hostile to Jansenism, gives no indication that he considered Guyart a Jansenist, yet we know that the canon protested *Unigenitus* by signing as an appellant of the diocese of Laon on 24 October 1718. Jean-Louis de La Salle, a Jansenist, recommended Guyart as one of the trustees for the Brothers' properties in Reims. The editor of the English translation of *The Letters* claims that De La Salle rejected Guyart because of his Jansenism. It may also be that Guyart was merely following his bishop in appealing *Unigenitus* to a general council of the Gallican church. On the other hand, Bergin points out that Louis-Annet Clermont de Chaste de Roussillon, bishop of Laon, managed to change his position on the papal bull four times. Was Guyart a Jansenist? The very question is problematic. But with Guyart we have still another connection between De La Salle and Jansenism.²⁹

Evidence III: The Catechism

It is evident that De La Salle was not clear of all Jansenism but possessed a complex series of affinities. This is confirmed by De La Salle's catechism, *The Duties of the Christian to God*. On two key issues, attrition versus contrition, and the frequency of receiving Communion, De La Salle embraced a Jesuitical, anti-Jansenist position. On the first issue, De La Salle aligned himself with the Council of Trent, in accepting attrition as sufficient for the reception of the Eucharist, but that contrition was much preferred.³⁰ On the second, De La Salle concluded that we should receive Communion "as often as the Church desires."³¹

It has already been noted that De La Salle's catechism was written in the context of scores of catechisms published by the French bishops. Indeed, Brother Jean Pungier has demonstrated that De La Salle used three of those episcopal catechisms as models for his own. If De La Salle exhibited a marked receptivity to Jansenism, much of his catechism leaned strongly in favor of the anti-Jansenist, pro-Jesuit side of the debates. Yet he chose catechisms that had pronounced Jansenist leanings. The first of these was Claude Joly's *Les Devoirs du Chrétien*, whose title De La Salle appropriated for his own.³² Joly, bishop of Agen, attended Saint Sulpice but exhibited

²⁹ Louis A. Noailles, *La Constitution Unigenitus déferée à l'Église universelle ou recueil général des actes d'appel interjetés au futur concile général de cette constitution et des lettres* (Cologne : Aux dépens de la Compagnie, 1769), 533. On De La Salle's rejection of Guyart as trustee, *Letters*, Letter 133A, 258-63. Joseph Bergin, *Crown, Church and Episcopate under Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 399-400.

³⁰ *The Duties of a Christian*, ed. Alexis James Doval, trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC, (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 149. "From this teaching of the council of Trent, we should conclude that because attrition is a proximate condition for receiving the grace of God in the sacrament of Penance, it is sufficient for obtaining pardon for our sins in this sacrament when joined to confessing our sins and the absolution of the priest."

³¹ *The Duties of a Christian*, 132-33.

³² Paris : Pierre Le Petit, 1677.

both rigorist and Jansenist tendencies, suggesting that the orbit of Saint Sulpice and Jansenism were not mutually exclusive.³³

The second source was Jean Le Coreur's *Les Principaux Devoirs du Chrétien, ou abrégé de théologie*.³⁴ It exhibits very strong Jansenistic proclivities. For example, in the response to "To whom has God given it [grace]?" the bishop answered "To a very small number of the faithful." His description of the necessary means to receiving communion suggests an attitude of infrequent communion. On the question of human nature, the catechism states: "A deep annihilation and extreme contempt of ourselves, seeing that "we are capable of no good of ourselves and that on the contrary, we are capable only of evil and of sin." Pungier argues that De La Salle chose Le Coreur's catechism not *because* of its Jansenism but *in spite of it*. This is not altogether convincing, and was motivated, perhaps, by an effort to proclaim De La Salle completely free from all Jansenism. While it is true that De La Salle tempered the more Jansenistic aspects of Le Coreur's text, Pungier also notes that he was attracted to it because of its "spiritual breadth" and "mystical depth." It's difficult to know how these virtues can be divorced from its Jansenism. So, it seems more plausible to conclude that De La Salle found Le Coreur's catechism attractive because of its Jansenistic spirit, while rejecting some of its more unorthodox doctrine. This is the crucial point: that De La Salle found the spirit of Jansenism congenial, while rejecting some of its doctrinal heterodoxy.³⁵

The third source, the *Catéchisme du Diocèse de Chartres* by Paul Godet des Marais, bishop of Chartres, had no Jansenistic tendencies, in fact it contained a strong statement about how Christians are "coworkers with God," which may have influenced De La Salle's emphasis on the ability of humans to cooperate with grace.³⁶

What can we conclude from all this? Pungier suggests that De La Salle composed his catechism like a puzzle.³⁷ This is an important aspect of his mental world: ideological pieces that only loosely fit together and an eclecticism often described as practical, but might also suggest some intellectual incoherence. Better still is that De La Salle was able to draw boundaries. One of the most important was the boundary between his own personal spirituality and that of the Brothers. This was not always the case, he needed to work on this skill and the intervention of people like Godet des Marais, who convinced De La Salle to lessen the burdens of mortification on the Brothers. It is one of his attributes that eventually made him an effective superior. Embracing the moral pessimism, the complete confidence in God and the utter helplessness of the sinner found in Le Coreur's text appealed to him personally. When it came to personal beliefs and practices, De La Salle was as unrelentingly and consistently rigorous as any, indeed, he was singled out by contemporary observers as rather extreme. But he was no system builder. All of his theological training, particularly in scholasticism, would have imbued him with a strong sense of philosophical systematics. But teaching young boys the fundamentals of learning required more hands-on flexibility, especially if one wanted to be innovative. He needed to learn how to separate his

³³ Jean Pungier, *The Message of His Catechism*, ed. Gerard Rummery, FSC, trans. Oswald Murdoch, FSC (Landover, MD, 1999), 53-55.

³⁴ (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1689).

³⁵ Pungier, *Catechism*, broadly, 90-100; on the « not because but in spite of argument, » 98-9.

³⁶ Pungier, *Catechism*, 107.

³⁷ Pungier, *Catechism*, 121.

personal life from those of others for which he had responsibility. Ultimately and for example, in his catechism, while attracted to Jansenist models, he opted for a more practical, less polemical approach to Christian doctrine. This tendency to shift back and forth ideologically, found sustenance in a natural aversion to disputation. He came to understand that the focus of his catechism was the instruction of young minds whose salvation depended on knowing sound doctrine but who need not be dragged into arcane theological disputes. De La Salle's mental world was as complex as it was flexible, perhaps even paradoxical. He had deep Jansenistic proclivities, but he was able to suspend them for the sake of praxis and through a mental world that was in some ways fundamentally contradictory.

Evidence IV: A Note on Jansenist Little Schools

A full-blown comparison of the Little Schools at Port Royal with the Christian Schools is beyond the scope of this study, but a brief comparison of the two can provide more data on the complex relationship between De La Salle and Jansenism. The Jansenists founded five types of schools: free charity schools for the poor; primary and secondary schools for both girls and boys; seminaries to train priests; and *petites écoles* or Little Schools.³⁸ There were significant differences between the Jansenist schools and the Christian Schools, given that the former were boarding schools and tended to attract the wealthy, but there were many more similarities.

The most important correlation is probably the use of the vernacular. M. de Guyot wrote: "It is a very serious fault to begin teaching children to read in Latin, as is usually done, instead of in French." This not only discourages the pupils and early engrains in them a hatred for study, but it also wastes three or four years and so exhausts the master's patience and enthusiasm." This is almost exactly one of the arguments De La Salle made in response to Bishop Godet des Marais' insistence that the language of instruction in the Christian Schools should be Latin. "Since French is their native language, it is incomparably easier for them to learn how to read it rather than to read Latin... Consequently, it takes far less time to teach children to read French than to teach them to read Latin."³⁹ Both schools embraced a far more cautious attitude toward corporal punishment than was common at the time. The Abbé de Saint-Cyran offered this rule "to treat him kindly, but none the less to use the rod when he is obstinate or repeats his faults." In turn De La Salle wrote, "If a school is to be well regulated and in very good order, correction must be rare. The ferule must be used only when necessary, and things must be so ordered that this is a rare necessity..."⁴⁰ Both insisted that the personality of each student needed to be taken into consideration. Pierre Coustel wrote that "a gentle and timid disposition must be dealt with differently from one that is haughty and arrogant." De La Salle wrote, "As for those who are bold and insolent, teachers must speak with them little and always only seriously... Those who are heedless and frivolous must be corrected a little."⁴¹ Both schools generated hostility from competitors: The Jansenists from the Jesuits, the Christian Schools from the Writing Masters.

³⁸ Strayer, *Suffering Saints*, 100.

³⁹ Guyot quotation, Howard Clive Barnard, *The Little Schools of Port Royal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 114; De La Salle's argument, Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 379.

⁴⁰ Quoted by Barnard, *Little Schools*, 97; John Baptist de La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, ed. William Mann, FSC, trans. F. de La Fontainerie and Richard Arnandez, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), 140.

⁴¹ Quoted by Barnard, *Little Schools*, 98; De La Salle, *Conduct*, 147.

Finally, Howard Clive Barnard concluded that the Christian Schools were the most significant heirs of the Jansenist Little Schools, that were destroyed by Louis XIV.⁴² Whether the Jansenist Little Schools had a direct influence on Lasallian pedagogy is uncertain. But clearly there were significant points of contact between the two, establishing yet another link between De La Salle and the Jansenists. 54

Evidence V: Jansenism in Paris, A Comparison of “Molinist” and Jansenist Parishes

Marie-Joseph Michel has constructed a fascinating profile of seven Jansenist parishes in Paris which he contrasts with what he calls “Molinist parishes,” especially those associated with Saint Sulpice. He argues that the considerable Jansenist clergy in Paris attempted to put in place a “Jansenization” of parish life and that its characteristics and methods can be identified. Lists of appellants, those who appealed the required, royal formularies to the Assembly of Clergy, identify Jansenist clergy, especially three *curés* of Jansenist parishes (Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, St. Severin, and Saint-Étienne-du-Mont). Budgets and efficient record keeping, spiritual formation, catechetical instruction, material welfare, and parish furnishings provide the requisite criteria for constructing a profile and comparing it with Molinist parishes.

Jansenism was largely a northern and urban phenomenon, especially the manufacturing centers of Boulogne-Sur-Mer, Châlons sur-Marne, Reims, Beauvais, Laon, Paris, and Rouen. Its social origins were bourgeois and from the nobility of the robe; of 2,182 ecclesiastical appellants, 38.5% were of robe origins and 35% were bourgeois, 72.5% had diplomas in theology. Michel concludes, “The description-model of the Parisian, Jansenist ecclesiastic thus emerges more and more precisely: he is a man of northern France, originating from the robe or the mercantile class, who has studied theology, and incorporating into his life moral and sacramental rigor.”⁴³ Ideologically, these priests defended the principles of rigorous reform as a remedy for the crisis of the Church identified by the Reformation. De La Salle’s brother Jean-Louis, an appellant to *Unigenitus*, epitomized this profile, but then so does John Baptist. Reims was one of the strongholds of Jansenism. Both brothers were sons of a prominent northern, bourgeois family, both earned degrees in theology, and both exhibited all the moral rectitude and rigor of the *dévo*t. Both brothers fit the description-model. One may have been a Jansenist while the other was not, but according to Michel’s profile there was little to separate them.⁴⁴

The Jansenist parishes were known for their social activism, especially focused on the young. Of the 135 Parisian leaders, 43.5% were notable for their social programs. “The concern of Jansenist clergy for the poor manifested itself in several forms: material, educational, and spiritual. Jansenist parishes were very generous in supporting schools.”⁴⁵ Important parallels between the *petites*

⁴² Howard Clive Barnard, *The Port-Royalists on Education: Extracts from the Educational Writings of the Port-Royalists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), 2-3.

⁴³ Marie-José Michel, *Jansénisme et Paris* (Paris : Klincksieck, 2000), 262-69. Le portrait-type de l’ecclésiastique janséniste parisien se dessine donc de façon de plus en plus précise : il s’agit d’un homme de France septentrionale, originaire de la robe ou de la marchandise, qui a fait des études de théologie en intégrant dans sa vie la rigueur morale et sacramentaire.”

⁴⁴ See below for more on Jansenism and the De La Salle family.

⁴⁵ Michel, *Jansénisme et Paris*, 274. « Le souci des ecclésiastiques jansénistes pour les plus pauvres rejoint toutes les formes de misère, et en particulier l’illettrisme et la pauvreté spirituelle. C’est pourquoi, ils sont très généreux à l’égard des écoles,”

écoles of Port Royal and the Christian Schools have already been noted. The *curé* of Magny-l'Essert established a school for boys and Charles Tambourin devoted his efforts to establish a charity school in the suburb of Saint-Antoine. This won the affection of the people and contributed to a process of democratization, by which Michel means the ardent embrace of Jansenism by the working poor.⁴⁶ Similarly, conscious of the French social system and its deleterious material and spiritual effects on the poor, De La Salle joined the Jansenists in seeking remedy in education.

Religious formation was especially rigorous in the charity school founded in Saint-Jacques du-Haut-Pas, and in Saint-Severin a school for thirty poor boys was established. These efforts were effective in promoting popular attachment to the Jansenist clergy. Testimonials abound, for instance from the Marquis d'Argenson, who emphasized in his memoirs that "the common people and the rabble also became Jansenists [as] we see in most parishes of Paris."⁴⁷ Teachers and subjects were chosen with care and presented with rigor:

All these comparisons reveal the advantage of the Jansenists parishes, which offer an early and systematic instruction of very high quality. Thus, at Saint-Roch, catechisms were provided "in a manner so useful and so solid that the new pastor would have found Jansenist children as young as six years ... Finally, in Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, the acquisition of knowledge takes place in stages, with children from the first course learning the basics of religion. In the second, the commandments of God and the sacraments are learned, and the third "the necessary steps to approach the last judgment." At the end of each year students receive a close and accurate monitoring, during which they are interrogated one after the other. It is only when they show a "mark of understanding in their responses that we admit them, writing their name on a register," otherwise they must redouble their efforts ... All Parisian Jansenist parishes, therefore present a genuine plan of coherent and solid spiritual formation...⁴⁸

This description is reminiscent of both Calvinist and Lasallian catechetical instruction and spiritual formation: the recognition of child development levels, the systematic presentation of material, the constant monitoring and rigorous questioning, and the effective use of registers."⁴⁹

Under the heading of "The Triumph of the Spiritual" (*Le triomphe du spirituel*), Michel points out a series of efforts to provide a strong spiritual life in each parish. One of these was good preaching.

⁴⁶ Michel, *Jansénisme et Paris*, 273-76.

⁴⁷ Michel, *Jansénisme et Paris*, 274.

⁴⁸ Michel, *Jansénisme et Paris*, 288-89. Toutes ces comparaisons font apparaître l'avance des paroisses jansénistes, qui offrent de façon précoce et systématique un enseignement complet de très grande qualité. Ainsi, à Saint-Roch, les catéchismes auraient été dispensés « d'une manière si utile et si solide que le nouveau curé [aurait] trouvé des enfants jansénistes dès l'âge de six ans... Enfin, à Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, l'acquisition des connaissances se fait par étapes, avec des enfants qui, des connaissances se fait par étapes, avec des enfants qui, dès le premier cours, acquièrent les rudiments de la religion. Au deuxième, les commandements de Dieu et les sacrements sont appris, et au troisième « les dispositions nécessaires put approcher du jugement ». À la fin de chaque année les élèves subissent un contrôle serré et précis, au cours duquel ils sont interrogés les uns après les autres. C'est uniquement lorsqu'ils « marquent de l'intelligence dans les réponses qu'on les admet, en écrivant leur nom sur un registre », sinon ils doivent redoubler... Toutes les paroisses jansénistes parisiennes présentent donc un véritable projet de formation cohérent et solide, ... »

⁴⁹ On when in the schoolday to teach catechism, De La Salle, *Conduct*, 105-6. On how to ask questions, *Conduct*, 106-7. "Teachers will... ask the students questions and sub-questions almost continuously... a teacher will ask several students, one after another, the same question. Sometimes the teacher will ask it of seven or eight, or even ten or twelve, sometimes of even a greater number."

Preaching in Jansenist parishes had a special Augustinian color as did its catechetical instruction. There were many references to “divine omnipotence” (*la toute puissance divine*) and to the need to extirpate the thorns and thistles (*les ronces et les épines*) of our nature by grace. The need for an austere morality and salutary penance was emphasized (*pour l’homme, de vivre dans une profonde austérité morale, le cœur amolli par les larmes d’une salutaire pénitence*). Access to catechetical instruction was stressed, the parish priest of Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas persuaded the superior of the Seminary of St. Magloire to help by sending on Sundays and holidays twenty seminarians to offer the young people the instructions they needed.⁵⁰

The apostolate to the poor was especially strong in Jansenist parishes. The *pain à benir* was an ancient tradition in France where bread was collected from donors and distributed to the poor. The faithful presented bread to the priest who then blessed it and distributed it to the faithful after Mass.⁵¹ This tradition was adapted in the Jansenist parishes. At St. Severin the flock complained because few people receive bread blessed on Sunday. The churchwardens responded by providing three loaves of blessed bread to be distributed to parishioners.⁵² This ancient practice was adapted in the Christian Schools as well. At the end of Mass, when blessed bread (*pain béni*) is given to the pupils, one of them, who is the rosary bearer, will carry a basket to put it in and distribute it to each of the students.⁵³ In addition, a little basket was placed in each classroom where students were encouraged to leave leftover-bread to be distributed among the poor students.⁵⁴

Effective management of resources was another key trait of the Jansenist parish. Its material organization rested on a particularly serious basis of parish records really worthy of the name. Gathered and protected in parishes like in St. Jacques du Haut Pas, which installed a “wardrobe and two chests with lock and key... The Jansenist parish was distinguished by the strength of its records and accounting” (*Le paroisse janséniste se singularise donc par la solidité de ses archives et de sa comptabilité*). Registers for weddings and funerals were particularly precise as were the systematic collection of receipts and the strict control of expenditures. In non-Jansenists parishes management was less systematic and often they were without a series of complete archive. Jansenist time management was a model of efficiency, it restored order and rationalization, it “put the assets of the Catholic reform into the best of the *dévo*t circles.”⁵⁵

An efficient management style was also characteristic of the Christian Schools. One of the reasons that the Christian Schools were so successful and attracted even those who could pay tuition was their orderliness. The management style of the Brothers was exact, from the organization of the school day, to policies on attendance and discipline, to the selection of school officers. Seating of

⁵⁰ Michel, *Jansénisme et Paris*, 287.

⁵¹ “Du Pain-béni. La cérémonie du Pain-béni, que l’on fait tous les Dimanches & les Fêtes solennelles, nous marque l’ancienne discipline de l’Eglise, qui vouloit que tous les fidèles offrissent le pain & le vin pour servir au Sacrifice.” M. Nicque, *Conduite Chrétienne Tirée des meilleurs Livres de Piété...* (Soisson : Chez Louis- François Waroquier, 1787), 147.

⁵² Michel, *Jansénisme et Paris*, 284.

⁵³ *Conduite des écoles chrétiennes, divisée en deux parties, Composée par Messire De la Salle, Prêtre-Docteur en théologie* (Lyon : Chez Rusand, Libraire, Imprimeur du Clergé, 1819), 122. “Lorsqu’on donnera du pain béni pour les écoliers, un d’entr’eux, qui sera le porte- chapelet, portera un panier pour le mettre dedans ; et à la fin de la Messe, il le distribuera à tous l’un après l’autre.”

⁵⁴ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 52.

⁵⁵ Michel, *Jansénisme et Paris*, 277-82.

students and processes of promotion were precise. Perhaps the best example of Lasallian exactitude was the system of registers contained in the 1706 manuscript of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*. This was explicitly stated: “One thing that can contribute much to maintenance of order in the schools is that there be well-kept records or registers. There must be six kinds of Registers [then listed].”⁵⁶ Personal information on each student was recorded as they entered the school. These included the name of the student, of the family, and whether the pupil had received first Communion. More interesting still, was the obligation of the teacher to record a list of good and bad qualities for each pupil, including if he showed good will and piety, resisted correction, was diligent, punctual, and could learn easily.⁵⁷

Another identifying feature of the Jansenist parish was its desire to limit luxury and so to focus on the spiritual side of worship. Furnishings were few and old, obtained by donation. This was in contrast with other parishes especially those of Saint Sulpice, where the churchwardens spent considerable money decorating the church with stained glass and marble tiles.⁵⁸ On the contrary, the Jansenist churchwardens ensured scrupulous maintenance of religious objects and did not hesitate to sell them to rebalance the parish budget. One searches in vain in the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* for any reference to art or decoration. While the classroom and its furnishings are laid out meticulously, everything is practical and functional, well-lit and well-ventilated without a hint of luxury.⁵⁹

All in all, the parallels between the Jansenist parishes and the Christian Schools were broad and deep, imbued with a common spirit of ameliorating the spiritual and the material lives of the poor. Both traditions placed great emphasis on education, especially catechetical instruction, inculcating a rigorous morality, providing material assistance, and delivering all of these services with great efficiency. Jansenist record keeping was precise and its time management was a model of exactitude and efficiency.⁶⁰ This too was strongly paralleled in the Christian Schools where every minute was accounted for. When it came to ordering life temporally no one was more diligent than John Baptist de La Salle. In Jansenism and in the mental world of De La Salle there were similar urges to order temporal existence. One of these mental zones was to use time as a means of ordering one’s life.

Evidence VI: Calvinist “Ordering of Time” and “The Rules I Have Imposed on Myself.”

Max Engammare has written a brilliant analysis of the “ordering of time” in the Reformed tradition, which he claims was different from both Lutheran and Catholic orderings. Summarizing Engammare’s work and then using it to analyze one of the most revealing Lasallian texts will take us to the most personal and individual place in De La Salle’s mental world. “Reformed Protestants, especially in Geneva but also in Huguenot France, London, or Berne, internalized a different way of relating to time and developed a new approach to their daily schedule. External constraints gave

⁵⁶ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 239.

⁵⁷ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 239-42.

⁵⁸ Michel, *Jansénisme et Paris*, 284-5.

⁵⁹ De La Salle, *Conduct*, 179.

⁶⁰ Michel, *Jansénisme et Paris*, 282. « La gestion temporelle janséniste fait figure de modèle d’exactitude et d’efficacité. »

a rigid structure to their relations to time. These constraints, in the form of all-important church discipline in Geneva, shaped Calvinists' relationship to God."⁶¹ Such is Engammare's claim, and the internalized relationship he identifies refers to the perception of time in the form of daily schedules, rigid structures, and constraints on freedom, all of which ultimately affect relationships with God. 58

This chapter has provided abundant evidence of the attraction and power of Augustinianism in all Reformation traditions, but which was especially strong in Calvinism and Jansenism. For Calvin, time was Augustinian or linear rather than liturgical. Human history was providential; human destiny was in the hands of God because God ruled time, culminating in the Last Judgment. Time was not measured in hours but by the presence and absence of God and was always short due to the looming threat of damnation.⁶² Yet Calvin makes dozens of references to minutes and hours and is constantly bereft of time because he tries to adapt human time to divine time. One of the strategies for doing this was to impose an increasingly strong discipline on himself and the community. With the Reformed emphasis on the sermon, this meant imposing a strict discipline on the punctual attendance of church services. Together with technological innovations, such as the addition of the minute hand to clocks in the last third of the sixteenth century, the Reformed tradition was more prone to be specific about the passing of time. References such as "two hours after midnight", and to lengths of time such as "half day" and "five hours" appeared in the writings of Calvinist authors to a degree not found in other Christian traditions. Awareness and expressions of time became part of Swiss culture; it is no accident that even today Swiss watches are famous for their timekeeping. This greater awareness of the passage of time led to more intense reflection on one's past which in turn led to self-accusation about wasting time, God's time.⁶³ For Calvin, strict scheduling counteracted human frailty and laziness, one was constantly reminded that time was in God's hands.⁶⁴

Engammare claims that sixteenth-century Genevans invented a new virtue, punctuality. The famous Protestant pedagogue, Mathurin Cordier, who instructed Calvin, taught children punctuality by emphasizing strict timekeeping.⁶⁵ Over time punctuality established new social norms. He cites Norbert Elias who claims that children were taught to think about the constraints of time so that by the age of ten they had learned to develop "an interior self-discipline within a spirituality linked to punctual time."⁶⁶

The counterpart of the virtue of punctuality was the vice of idleness. Reformed Christians had to give an account of their time and could not waste a minute of it because it was God's gift.⁶⁷ Calvin's writings are filled with the baneful effects of idleness. "There is however no doubt, that the gross ignorance which reigns in the world, is the just punishment of men's idleness." For Calvin since the earth was given to man he must not be idle. "And the Lord God took the man": Moses now adds, that the earth was given to man, with this condition, that he should occupy himself in

⁶¹ Max Engammare, *On Time, Punctuality, and Discipline in Early Modern Calvinism*, trans. Karin Maag (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

⁶² Engammare, *On Time*, 11; 17.

⁶³ Engammare, *On Time*, on technology, 41; on self-accusation, 99.

⁶⁴ Engammare, *On Time*, 205.

⁶⁵ Engammare, *On Time*, 108-9.

⁶⁶ Engammare, *On Time*, 245-6.

⁶⁷ Engammare, *On Time*, 251.

its cultivation. Whence it follows that men were created to employ themselves in some work, and not to lie down in inactivity and idleness.”⁶⁸

One of Engammare’s most salient insights is “To describe or present the way one spends one’s time is to reveal oneself, but it is also a way to construct one’s identity.”⁶⁹ It is, therefore, possible to think in terms of a Protestant Reformed identity and a Catholic one. Engammare pays particular attention in the English translation of his book to criticisms that he did not sufficiently take into account the influence of monasticism on perceptions of time. Putting that point aside, Engammare is particularly concerned in making distinctions between Reformed and Catholic perceptions. He cites a passage from Francis de Sales’ *Introduction to the Devout Life* where he uses the metaphor of a clock that needs to be wound twice a day and completely taken apart once a year to be cleaned. So in the devout life one must “wind” up the soul in the morning and night through prayer and at least once a year one must examine one’s conscience, confess one’s sins and receive Holy Communion. Engammare’s point is that De Sales has no interest in clocks as instruments to measure time but only as ones to be cared for. Indeed, he does not suggest any particular schedule for meditation exercises.⁷⁰ And so the task is to look for specific references to measurements of time, to schedules, regularity, punctuality, and idleness, in De La Salle’s text. Most of the evidence presented thus far has been praxic, but the *Rules I Have Imposed on Myself* gives us a better sense of the theoretical construction of De La Salle’s mental world.

The *Rules I Have Imposed on Myself* is one of the most important single source for discerning that world. According to Blain, De La Salle destroyed almost all similar documents out of humility, so the document provides a rare entry into the Founder’s thinking about himself. As always, the challenge is to distinguish between what De La Salle said and did versus what Blain says he said and did. He places the document in the context of De La Salle’s fidelity to the *Rule*. Given the fact that De La Salle titled the documents “Rules Imposed” (*Règles imposées*) and that he wrote the Brothers’ “Rule,” this is plausible. Blain uses the term “Regularity” (*Régularité*), capitalized, to indicate something quite formal and specific, as a mechanism to “impose order and method on what we do, to hold in check natural impulses and emotions, to correct failings and wayward inclinations ... to bring into subjection the free exercise of the will and its dominant impulses ... The effect of fidelity to the rule is to leave no moment in a lifetime that is not made use of for eternity.” Here we do not have reference to specific measurements of time but we do have reference to “moment.” This is a project of self-discipline rooted in the conviction that time is God’s, that the *Rule*’s purpose is to minimize the threat to purloin that time for more human and mundane ends.⁷¹ Blain notes De La Salle’s punctuality, to carry out the *Rule*. (*Sa ponctualité à accomplir les règles*

⁶⁸ Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 2:15.

⁶⁹ Engammare, *On Time*, 214.

⁷⁰ Engammare, *On Time*, 240-43. The passage in the *Introduction to the Devout Life* is “However good a clock may be, we still must wind it daily; and, furthermore, at least once a year it will need being taken to pieces, in order that its rust may be cleaned, those parts which are displaced be restored, and those which are worn renewed,” ed. Walter J. B. Richards (London: Burns and Oates, 1878), 316.

⁷¹ Blain, *Mind and Heart*, 238. The original French reads, “Sa nature est de mettre l’ordre & la règle dans toutes les actions de l’homme, de tenir en bride les penchants de la nature & les inclinations du cœur, de réformer ses vices & ses passions & de les détruire jusques dans la racine, par le sacrifice continuel de l’esprit naturel, de la propre volonté & de l’amour propre. Sa fin est de captiver la liberté de l’homme & l’attrait dominant qu’il ressent pour être le Maître de sa personne & de sa conduite, de le tenir dans une sujétion continuelle si ennemie de la violente passion qu’il a pour l’indépendance...”. *La vie de M. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, instituteur des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes* (Rouen : Jean-Baptiste Machuel, 1733), 2 :317.

dans le tems). How punctilious he was about attending divine service, dropping everything instantly at the sound of the bell [alas no clock] as if it were the voice of God (*se rendant avec diligence aux lieux qui y étoient destinez au moment marqué, quittant tout au premier son de la Cloche comme à la voix de Dieu*). 60

It is in *The Rules I Have Imposed on Myself* that we fully discern the importance of time in De La Salle's mental world.

1. I will not leave the house without necessity and without spending a quarter of an hour considering before God whether the need is real or only imaginary. If it is urgent, I will take the time of a Miserere for that purpose and to put myself in the proper frame of mind.
2. I will take a quarter of an hour every day to renew my consecration to the Most Holy Trinity.⁷²

In numbers one and two there is reference to the kind of specific time measurement (quarter of an hour) to which Engammare alludes. Not leaving the house may be related to the "the world" as De La Salle seems to argue that leaving the house is tantamount to leaving the Rule and the self-discipline that it embodies. The "world," as temptation, threatens the Rule's order and method, therefore, exiting its realm should occur only if there is real need determined after fifteen minutes of careful discernment. By implication, therefore, going out into the world could be a distraction, a waste of time or worse, a distraction from eternal time and a threat to one's salvation. Engammare cites Calvin's sense of time, that allowed him to look back and use the past as a mechanism for self-scrutiny. Famously De La Salle does the same in the *Memoir on the Beginning* where he draws a distinction between human and divine time. For if he had known what the future held "I would have dropped the whole project."⁷³

3. It is a good rule of life to make no distinction at all between the work of our vocation in life and the work of our salvation and perfection. We can be sure that we cannot work out our salvation better or achieve perfection more surely than by discharging our responsibilities, provided that we accomplish them in view of the will of God.

Number three picks up on the theme of wasting time, though it has reference to no precise measurement of time. This is because time is God's. There is no distinction between work and salvation and we must not allow business to distract us. Calvin says something similar in his *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, "For because we are drawn away with divers businesses, and there is no end of turmoiling, unless we bridle ourselves, it is good to have certain hours appointed for prayer, not because we are tied to hours, but lest we be unmindful of prayer, which ought to be preferred before all cares and business."⁷⁴

11. When I have to go into the countryside, I will spend a day in prayer and reflection to prepare myself and will firmly resolve to spend three hours daily at interior prayer during my trip.

⁷² John Baptist de La Salle, *Rule and Foundational Documents*, eds. and trans. Augustine Loes, FSC, and Ronald Isetti (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 199-202. I retain the original numbering throughout.

⁷³ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 80.

⁷⁴ Calvin, *Commentary on Acts*, 10:9.

Whereas number three makes no distinction between vocation and salvation, number eleven makes no distinction as to space. It is time that links us to God through prayer. Once again, the world, the countryside, can be a source of distraction which needs to be overcome by means of prayer—specifically ordered by time, three hours. 61

5. At least twenty times a day, I will unite my actions with those of our Lord and try to make his perspective and intentions my own. To keep myself on track, I will pierce a small piece of paper as often as I perform this act. For as many times as I fail to observe this practice each day, I will say the Pater Noster, kissing the floor after each one, before I go to bed.

Number five contains no specific reference to time but does refer to actions in numerical terms, “twenty times.” Piercing a small piece of paper is a good example of the method De La Salle uses to monitor his behavior. This monitoring is continuous and its goal is unity of action with the divine. Failure is tantamount to sinning and requires penance.

10. In whatever circumstance I find myself, I will always follow a plan and a daily schedule, relying only on the grace of God, in which I place full trust, to carry them out because I have never been able to accomplish this on my own. As my situation changes, I will adjust my plan and daily schedule. To make sure this happens, I will spend a day in retreat.

15. Every morning I will devote fifteen minutes to prepare myself for the coming day, foreseeing the business I must attend to, so that I can act prudently, and anticipating the occasions when I might commit any faults, so that I can sidestep them. Thus I will be able to spend my day well.

Numbers ten and fifteen can be taken together; they both relate to the need to construct a daily schedule, to prepare the day, to order one’s time properly. Number fifteen designates fifteen minutes spent at rising, so that the day may be spent well, since time cannot be wasted. Heinrich Bullinger, who succeeded Zwingli to lead the reform in Zurich, arose at three or four, devoting the first hours to prayer, followed by theology and philosophy. At eight he turned to domestic matters, took a meal and a walk and returned to his studies. At four he dealt with external matters of the household and then the evening meal around five, took another walk and spent the rest of the evening in study before going to bed at nine.⁷⁵ Engammare cites Jean Ribit, professor of Greek at the Academy of Lausanne, as an example of extreme daily regimentation. Ribit organized his day with comments such as “after rising at four in the morning and getting dressed, I will thank God for having preserved me...” and “At nine o’clock I will begin my lecture ... at ten, it will be time to eat ... at noon I will return to my study.”⁷⁶ Blain explains how for De La Salle too “a particular time was fixed for every activity: rising and retiring, vocal and interior prayer, studies, and meals.” His credibility is enhanced by reference to “Some of the Brothers who knew him best” (*Quelques-uns des Frères qui l’ont le plus connu*), suggesting that the information was based on direct testimony.

⁷⁵ Engammare, *On Time*, 86.

⁷⁶ Engammare, *On Time*, 93.

13. I must keep an accurate account of the time I have squandered and be careful not to do so again. Only constant watchfulness can ensure this; furthermore, only a long retreat will enable me to acquire this vigilance.

Here the issue of squandering time comes to the fore, and with it the sin of idleness and the remedy of regulation. Calvin held that we must avoid indolence and *regulate* (emphasis added) our lives. “If any man infers from this, that men are created for the purpose of doing something, and that every man has his province assigned him by God, that they may not sit down in idleness, he will offer no violence to the words of Christ. We are also at liberty to infer, that our whole life is unprofitable, and that we are justly accused of indolence, until each of us *regulate* (again, emphasis added) his life by the command and calling of God.”⁷⁷

To De La Salle’s great emphasis on the *Rule* and these “Rules” he imposed on himself, can be added the account of De La Salle’s dedication to Saint Remy which regulated his life through his “pious deception,” where he appeared for morning prayer with great punctuality, arriving before everyone else, because he had spent the entire night in prayer or had spent the hours before morning prayer in the oratory alone.⁷⁸ For De La Salle sleep was an enemy, a particularly dangerous threat to self-regulation, because in sleep one loses control.

What shall I say of his efforts to conquer sleep, which he himself said was his greatest enemy, for it caused him to be late for the office of Matins. Often he had to be awakened several times, only to fall back into sleep, which caused him much concern. All his life he was to fight this battle against sleep ... his efforts in this matter were not in vain, for, many times in later years he would pass entire nights attending to the affairs of his Institute or in composing various books. To avoid falling asleep during prayers, he would place a stone on the pre-dieu on which he was kneeling in such a way that if he nodded, his chin would strike the stone and cause him considerable pain. This was an effective way to overcome the enemy.⁷⁹

One Brother related the story of needing to get the keys to the house early in the morning. He knocked on De La Salle’s door and receiving no answer entered the room to find that “His kneeler was overturned, and he was lying on the floor beside it, fast asleep just where he had fallen when sleep overcame him.” The Brothers closed the door, knocked more loudly and woke the Founder who opened the door and acted as if he had just gotten out of bed.⁸⁰

Once he severely punished himself for failing to wake.

He made himself responsible over a period of years for waking the community in the morning, and he failed on this one occasion. The penance he gave himself was to kneel during the midday meal, to eat nothing more than a piece of bread, and to make the round of all the Brothers and novices, kissing their feet and begging their pardon for the bad example he gave and for having caused an upset in the first exercise of the day.⁸¹

⁷⁷ On just punishment, *Commentary on Genesis*, 18:19; on earth given to man, *Commentary on Genesis* 2:15.; on regulation of life *Commentary on Matthew* 20:1.

⁷⁸ Blain, *Mind and Heart*, 172-3.

⁷⁹ Bernard, *Life of De La Salle*, 282.

⁸⁰ Blain, *Mind and Heart*, 175.

⁸¹ Blain, *Mind and Heart*, 245.

De La Salle perceived his failure to wake as a moral failure both to himself and the community. 63 As a failure of self-discipline it deserved penance. This notion of sinning against the community is also found in *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, where sleeping too long is an affront to decorum, defined as consideration for one's neighbor. "Although civility has nothing to say about the hour when you ought to retire or the time when you ought to get up, it is a matter of decorum to rise early in the morning. Besides the fact that it is a defect to sleep too long, it is, says Saint Ambrose, a shameful and intolerable thing for the sun at its rising to find you still in bed."⁸²

Finally, the demanding, time-centered method that De La Salle imposes on himself is transferred to the rigor of the pupil's school day and to the daily routine of the Brothers.⁸³ In the "Regarding the Use of Time" in *Reflections on Their State and on Their Work That the Brothers Are to Make from Time to Time, Especially During Retreat*, there are also references to wasting time.

1. Consider how important it is to make good use of time. To do so, you must live in an ordered way, but if you wish to have order in your exterior actions, you must control your interior life and be determined to live only by the guidance of grace.
4. Do you ever allow yourself to waste time by neglecting to keep strictly to the order that you ought to follow?⁸⁴

The *Rules I Have Imposed on Myself* provide ample evidence that De La Salle possessed a refined sense of the "ordering of time" Engammare's associates with sixteenth-century Reform Protestantism. How do we explain this transfer to De La Salle? Engammare associates the ordering of time with Calvinism, identifies it as especially Genevan, but notes its presence in other places where the Reformed tradition flourished, including Huguenot France. It is likely that in the nearly one hundred years between Calvin's death and De La Salle's birth, that the Calvinist ordering of time seeped into other French traditions, especially that of the *dévots*, who shared with the Reformed a common distrust of human nature and the world and the need for a particularly time-ordered regimen of self-discipline.⁸⁵

Evidence VII: Jansenism and the De La Salle Family

Considering Michel's profile of the Jansenist as urban, northern, upper class, religiously rigorist, and theologically educated, it is not surprising to find that Jansenism flourished within the De La Salle family. Viewing De La Salle in the context of his family helps us to understand that his interaction with Jansenism was not extraordinary but part of the fabric of his existence.

⁸² John Baptist de La Salle, *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* ed. Gregory Wright, FSC, trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC, (Romeoville, IL, Lasallian Publication, 1990), 43.

⁸³ Alfred Calcutt, FSC, *De La Salle a City Saint and the Liberation of the Poor through Education*, 2nd ed. CD-ROM version (Essex, UK: Matthew James Publishing Company Limited, 2004), 404-406 for the organization of the school day; 406-407 for the Brothers' school day.

⁸⁴ John Baptist de la Salle, *Collection of Various Short Treatises*, ed. Daniel Burke, FSC, trans. W. J. Battersby, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1993), 79-80.

⁸⁵ Dr. Karin Maag, director of the Henry H. Meeter Center for Calvin Studies at Calvin College, who translated Engammare's book into English was kind enough to review De La Salle's *Rules*. She saw a definite connection between Calvin's and De La Salle's ideas, which she referred to a "echoes" of Calvin. I thank her for this insight and for introducing me to Engammare's text.

Jean-Louis de La Salle was born in 1664, the eighth child of Louis de La Salle and Nicolle Moët and the fifth to survive into adulthood. Of all his siblings Jean-Louis' life most resembled that of his eldest brother.⁸⁶ When Nicole and Louis de La Salle died in 1671 and 1672 respectively, and John Baptist became his sibling's guardian, Jean-Louis was eight years old, an age that allowed John Baptist to influence his brother's important life decisions. For example, the Founder sent his brother to College of Bon Enfants, the same school that he had attended. When De Salle introduced the early brothers into his own house motivating several of his siblings to object and leave, Jean-Louis chose to remain. Shortly thereafter he too embraced a priestly vocation entering the seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris on 8 November 1682, again following in his brother's footsteps. In March 1686, he completed his studies at the Sorbonne earning a Bachelor of Theology degree. In October 1687 he returned to Paris for further studies and was awarded a doctorate in theology on 19 October 1693. Sometime in between these dates he was ordained to the priesthood and in 1694 became a canon of the cathedral in Reims, an office he occupied for thirty years. Again, in all these things he emulated his brother. In Reims he developed a reputation for piety and achieved a place of prominence in the diocese. He was director of the seminary, and *chanoine fabricant*, a member of the *Conseil de fabrique*, with responsibilities to ensure accountability in the collection and administration of funds and income necessary for the construction and maintenance of religious buildings. In 1714 he was appointed *Seneschal du Chapitre Métropolitain*, which gave him the rank just behind the archbishop and vicar general.

All of these accomplishments, honors, and privileges were jeopardized when Pope Clement XI issued the apostolic constitution *Unigenitus* (8 September 1713) condemning 101 propositions in the work of Pasquier Quesnel, which rekindled the sectarian division within the French Church. Jean-Louis entered eagerly into the doctrinal dispute it raised. We know that after the ecclesiastical province of Paris, there was no other as distinguished by its opposition to the papal pronouncements than that of Reims. The theology faculty, the university body, the chapters, the pastors, and both secular and regular communities were all *Appelants*, those who wanted to appeal the pope's condemnation to a French church council. The Reims province alone provided three prelates who defended the appeal, including Pierre de Langle, Bishop of Boulogne, one of the four leaders of the *anticonstitutionnaires*; François Clermont, bishop of Laon, and Jean-Baptiste Gaston de Noailles, bishop of Chalons-sur-Marne and brother of the archbishop of Paris. Six members of the theology faculty, one of the most prestigious in all of France, wrote to the king requesting him to delay submission of the bull until he heard the opinion of the bishops in council.

There is no evidence to doubt Jean-Louis' orthodoxy up to this point, when he publically expressed his opposition to the condemnation of Jansenism. In April 1715 archbishop Francois de Mailly ordered assent of *Unigenitus* under pain of excommunication. On 28 May 1715 three of the cathedral canons were excommunicated, including Jean-Francois Maillefer. On 9 December 1716 Jean-Louis de La Salle was suspended from his office, functions, and benefices.

Jean-Louis was far from the only Jansenist in the De La Salle family. The Maillefer family, the descendants of De La Salle's sister, Marie and Jean Maillefer, were ardent supporters of Jansenism.

⁸⁶ This section on Jean-Louis de La Salle is based on Leon de Marie Aroz, FSC, *Les actes d'état civil de la famille de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, Transcription et commentaire accompagnés de quelques documents*, 2 vols. *Cahiers lasalliens*, 26-27 (Rome: Maison Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle,) 2 (vol. 27) : doc. 42.

Better known is François-Elie (baptized François-Hélye, 1684-1761), the biographer of De La Salle.⁸⁷ His elder brother, Jean-François (1682-1723), was one of the leaders of Jansenism in Reims.⁸⁸ He earned a doctorate in theology and was a canon of Saint Symphorien. Renowned for his piety, rigorous lifestyle, and service to the spiritual and corporal well-being of the poor, Jean-François not only reflected the Jansenist profile but also that of John Baptist, so much so that Brother Leon Aroz concluded that “Jean-François Maillefer could have become another John Baptist de La Salle, but the Constitution of Clement X, *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, was his stumbling block.”⁸⁹ Suspended from orders and losing his benefices, he refused to withdraw his objections to the papal condemnation until his death. Ultimately Brother Leon Aroz lists eight members of the De La Salle family who were Jansenists.⁹⁰ In this context John Baptist seems more the exception than the rule.

From the moment Jean-Louis embraced public Jansenism his relationship with his brother, previously so close, was broken. In 1717 John Baptist de La Salle traveled to Reims and studiously avoided meeting his brother. Indeed, Jean-Louis’ “appeal” and the similarity of the brothers’ names caused some to accuse John Baptist of Jansenism, so that he had to issue a public statement of support of the papal condemnation.⁹¹ On 2 March 1718, De La Salle was forced to contact his brother. Their younger brother Jean-Remy was feeling the increasing effects of mental instability which forced him to resign his position as an official in the royal mint in Reims. His children faced destitution and De La Salle assigned to Jean-Louis the right to distribute funds from properties he owned to Jean-Remy’s children.⁹² Jean-Louis acknowledged his brother’s reluctance to communicate in a letter dated 3 January 1719. “Although it would appear that you are determined to forget this part of the country completely and that you have decided to cut off all communication with us for a year or even several years...”⁹³ The immediate purpose of the letter was to replace trustees who had died to administer properties of the Brothers in Reims. But the theological chasm between the two brothers appeared even here, for Jean-Louis proposed names clearly associated with Jansenism. There he made a veiled reference to the Jansenist self-perception of their rigor amidst corruption when he wrote, “I do not know why you hesitate to name him out of the very small number of good priests that we have today.”

In a society where family was one of the most important anchors of social solidarity, and where De La Salle’s role as eldest child and guardian of his siblings created stronger than average family ties, there was a particularly strong bond between himself and Jean-Louis. Jansenism, as an amalgam of intellectual, behavioral, and doctrinal forces acted as both a mechanism of attraction

⁸⁷ On François-Elie see the introduction by Donald Mouton, FSC in *Two Early Biographies*, 11-15.

⁸⁸ This section on the Maillefer is based on Leon de Marie Aroz, FSC, *Les actes d'état civil*, vol. 27, doc. 29.

⁸⁹ Aroz, *Cahiers lasalliens*, 27, 18. «Jean-François Maillefer aurait pu devenir un autre Jean-Baptiste de La salle, la Constitution Unigenitus Dei Filius de Clément X fut sa pierre d'achoppement. »

⁹⁰ Aroz, *Cahiers lasalliens*, 27, doc. 42, 96-7. 1) Guillaume de La Salle (1666-v.1730) son of Pierre (1639-1702); 2) Jean-François de La Salle (1688-1759), son of Louis de La Salle (1654-1701); 3) Jean-Baptiste-Louis de La Salle (1698-1736), son of Pierre (1666-1741); 4) Charles-Antoine de La Salle (1664), son of Claude (1626-1684 ?); 5) Jean-François Maillefer (1682-1723), son of Jean Maillefer (1651-1718); 6) Simon-Louis Maillefer (1683-1752), brother of the previous; 7) François-Elie Maillefer (1684-1761), brother of previous two ; 8) Remi Lespagnol (1677-1743).

⁹¹ *The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle*, ed. Augustine Loes, FSC, trans. Colman Molloy, FSC, (Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1988), Letter 132, 251-54.

⁹² *The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle*, Letter 133, 254-5.

⁹³ *The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle*, Letter 133A, 258-61.

and imitation between the brothers. Ultimately, though, external forces rendered it a wedge that severely damaged their relationship, which must have been painful for both brothers.

Conclusion

The evidence provided in this chapter demonstrates significant correlations between De La Salle's mental world and Jansenism. De La Salle was not a Jansenist but he imbibed the spirit of his times. He rejected Gallicanism and Jansenist predestinarian tendencies, he avoided disputation, and eschewed political Jansenism. But he shared Jansenism's emphasis on man's fallen nature, on the necessity for rigor and asceticism especially as these ideas and practices applied to himself. His mental world was not formed by the iron logic of Calvin; he was not a system builder. He imposed on himself such stringent discipline that observers noted its excess. He imposed similar discipline on the Brothers until friendly advisers persuaded him to reduce their severity. De La Salle had personal Jansenistic affinities, which ironically was another reason he was not a Jansenist. His affinities were largely personal and private and not the product of public polemic and system building so characteristic of Jansenist authors who wrote and disputed constantly. He exhibited a Calvinist sensibility in his tendency to order his spiritual life around specific measures of time. Rules are by definition universal concepts, but the *Rules I Have Imposed on Myself* are just that, personal impositions, and not public proclamations, imposed on himself but not necessarily on others. They are not causally applicable to the human condition but only to De La Salle's personal relationship with God. So, De La Salle's affinities were deeply personal and spiritual. There was something in his mental world that would not allow a full and formal embrace of Jansenism.

De La Salle's mental world was much wider than traditionally understood. In Marseille he was perceived as an extreme rigorist, which suggested Jansenist convictions and merited an invitation to take part in Jansenist conversations. He forged close personal relations with Jansenists, such as the Count of Charmel, based on mutual respect for lives of rigorous self-control and discipline. He was an eclectic thinker, one who picked and chose from several catechisms, some of which had notable Jansenistic tendencies, and assembled them together as if it were a puzzle. Sometimes this puzzle did not fit together seamlessly. While his catechism made use of Jansenist-inspired catechetical texts, he tended to avoid "doctrinal Jansenism" as he passed over its theological intricacies, since he was writing for the instruction of young children. He shared with Jansenism an Augustinian anthropology and a pessimism about human nature that required the check of mortification practices. He may have been influenced by the Jansenist *petites écoles*; he would have certainly been aware of them. He shared with them their emphasis on using the vernacular, reluctance to use corporal punishment, and a policy of respecting the individual personality of each student. The Christian Schools shared several characteristics with Jansenist parishes in Paris including their concern for the formation of a Christian life through catechetical instruction, for the material wellbeing of the poor, its managerial precision, and its rejection of luxury. He imposed rigid rules on his personal life especially, but also through the *Rule* on the Brothers, and of the lives of the pupils in the Christian Schools. Those personal rules embodied a strong tendency to think in terms of time measurement, something he may have borrowed directly or indirectly from the Calvinist tradition.

While often labeled a practical thinker, more creatively he was an inductive one.⁹⁴ Perhaps he was imbued with some of the spirit and method of the scientific revolution and the value of experimental epistemology. His early biographers, motivated by their zeal to prove his orthodoxy, depicted a narrower, more parochial thinker. In fact, he was deeply engaged in the intellectual life of seventeenth-century France and influenced by a goodly number of intellectual traditions. To deny his interaction with the Calvinist and Jansenist traditions is to reduce his intellectual vitality. 67

The next step is to explore how this intellectual eclecticism came into contact with the social reality of his time. De La Salle was rightly concerned about “leaving the house” for out the door lay a world deeply suspicious of him and in many ways inimical to his mental world. Traditionally, he has been depicted as intrepidly confident in God, abandoning himself to Divine Providence, and practicing a heroic charity in loving his many persecutors.⁹⁵ Again, this is only part of the story. The vicissitudes of his last years deeply shook his conviction that he had set on doing God’s will. De La Salle’s contact with the harshness of social reality came much more in the form of conflict and subversion than is traditionally told. On occasion, De La Salle’s mental world could interject itself into French society with dire personal consequences.

⁹⁴ Léon Lauraire, FSC, *The Conduct of Schools, A Contextual Approach*, Cahiers Lasalliens 61, (Rome: Maison Saint Jean-Baptiste De La Salle, 2008): 12.

⁹⁵ On intrepid confidence in God see Blain, *Mind and Heart*, 121; on heroic charity, 342. The question of the relationship between De La Salle and divine providence is of capital importance. One of the best descriptions of that relationship is articulated by Paul Grass, FSC in this private communication. “The early biographers, especially Blain, focus on the saintly virtues of De La Salle. Although it is evident from De La Salle’s behavior and writings that Divine Providence is the major linchpin of his beliefs and his behavior, the way he discerns what God wills is through the signs of the times, the people he consults, the length of time he needs before making a decision, the people in a particular place who support and who need a Christian School, the events and the key personalities in France, his own understanding of and loyalty to the “Catholic Church,” and his meditating on Scripture, especially the Gospels. A letter from a bishop or a benefactor, an entry of a new teacher candidate, a lawsuit, a controversy in the Church, a royal edict, an influential spiritual counselor, a famine – everything can be a sign of the times that indicates the will of God. De La Salle’s personality and psychological profile are not the main topic in this draft, of course, but I think that his decisions and their timing and placing are always related to his meditation on Divine Providence and on his practical decision that “now is the time to act.”

V **LA PUISSANCE PATERNELLE : THE CLÉMENT AFFAIR, A SOCIO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL READING**

Some forty years ago Brother Bonaventure Miner wrote a brief essay, “La Salle and the Social Order of Louis XIV” in which he wrote, “In the context of these political and social factors, it is clear enough that St. La Salle moved with the times. He did not seriously question the social order, much less try to work against it. Even the briefest perusal of his life indicates his acceptance, if not his actual endorsement, of the forces that were set in motion by the king and his ministers.”¹ Brother Bonaventure adds that De La Salle also recognized that an increasing number of families paid the price for this new social order, which particularly had economic effects on the children of the artisans living in the cities and towns.

This is a good starting point not because it is right or wrong, but because it is incomplete and will allow the presentation of a “better-put” question: what was De La Salle’s relationship with the social order? De La Salle was indeed a man of his time connected to the Reformation, both Catholic and Calvinist, and to the importance of childhood and Christian education, episcopal catechisms, Augustinian ideas on human nature, and the temporally defined rules he imposed on himself. While he officially disassociated himself from Jansenism he shared certain Jansenist affinities, and had close personal relationships with some Jansenists. Emphasizing De La Salle’s connections with unorthodox influences is important because they have been understudied. However, he was a profoundly Catholic thinker, thoroughly integrated into an increasingly devout French culture. He endorsed and participated in the royal policy to convert the French Protestants, and he respected the authority of the pope to intervene in the Gallican church.

De La Salle’s Mental World

This is already a more complex depiction of John Baptist de La Salle than the traditional portrait of a super-orthodox saint. He was indeed a man of his times, but the times were contentious with increasing novelties. An earlier contemporary, Galileo Galilei, comes to mind, a dedicated Catholic but an innovator who reinvented the relationship between religion and science. Paradox was not hard to come by. One mechanism for reconciling the paradoxical aspects of De La Salle’s mental world was the boundary between his personal and public life. So, as Brother Bonaventure suggested, De La Salle generally supported the status quo publicly, or perhaps more accurately, he was not engaged in public political discourse, but in more personal ways he undermined some of the central tenets of the ancien régime. Of course, the distinction between private and public is artificial and limited, stories were told and information leaked out from the community about De

¹ Bonaventure Miner, FSC, “La Salle and the Social Order of Louis XIV,” *A Seminar on Power and Authority* (Lockport, IL: Christian Brothers Conference, 1976), 41-46, especially 44-5.

La Salle's private life and sometimes became an issue, as in the Marseille episode. To use a medieval metaphor, he was not bombarding the ramparts of the regime with missiles but tunneling under the edifice itself. This is the other De La Salle, the "social revolutionary." There were some who perceived this clearly enough and it cost him dearly. This "revolutionary" side of De La Salle is socio-anthropological because not only does De La Salle traverse social class but cultures as well. Indeed, it was his cultural transformation that was the most personal, even harrowing, challenge for him and was the basis for the most radical part of his thought. The method by which he accomplished this transformation was fundamentally mental, an act of sheer will, and must be understood as part of his mental world.

The Clément Affair

The place to begin is Blain's account of the Clément affair which is particularly valuable because he had access to a memorandum De La Salle wrote in his legal defense.² The Abbé Jean-Charles Clément, age 23, approached De La Salle in December 1707 with a proposal to collaborate on a project to raise homeless boys and teach them a trade. When the Founder explained that this was not within the scope of the Institute, the Abbé accepted De La Salle's alternative suggestion to establish a school to train rural schoolmasters. With a friend of De La Salle's, Louis Rogier, acting as intermediary, De La Salle agreed to provide a down payment of 5200 *Livres* to buy a property to house the school in October 1708. In February 1711, while journeying to the south to visit the still newly-established schools there, De La Salle received letters from Paris informing him of a lawsuit initiated by the Abbé's father, Julien Clément. De La Salle was quickly found guilty of suborning a minor, forfeited his down payment, and was liable to be arrested. De La Salle fled Paris and returned to his tour of the southern schools. These are the barebones facts of the case.

Blain makes it clear that the younger Clément had every good intention and proceeded properly, obtaining the permission of the archbishop of Paris for the project and an exemption from billeting troops from the king. He attributes his ultimate bad faith to the pressure put on him by his father. This is an essential point but one that tends to go unnoticed because Blain treats the affair as a sort of morality play. Clément père was evil, Clément fils was "either very weak or very clever," and De La Salle was long suffering. Blain uses all sorts of imagery linking Jesus' trial to De La Salle's in terms like "the case of a man whom God wished to crucify" and "just as Jesus was in the hands of Pilate." "When the verdict went against him because no one took his part in spite of his innocence, he accepted it in the way that Jesus Christ accepted the judgment of Pilate: silently and with patient equanimity."³ Blain claims not to understand how all this could have happened: "What is incomprehensible is how a twenty-two-or-twenty-three-year-old ecclesiastic could agree to join forces with his father and declare himself the adversary of De La Salle in a petition so injurious to the reputation of this holy man." Yet it is unlikely that Blain was so socially naïve, for he scatters some strong clues in his account that could have provided the means to comprehend and explain the affair.

² The account of the Clément Affair can be found in Jean-Baptiste Blain. *The Life of John Baptist De La Salle Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* 3 vols. ed. Luke Salm, FSC, trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC, (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), 588-601.

³ Blain, *Mind and Heart*, 350.

“Certainly the son could have opposed the fury of his father by pointing out to him that every age is appropriate for doing good works.” Really? Does Blain really not understand the laws and traditions governing paternal authority in contemporary France? He almost certainly did but sublimated them to his moral interpretation, to enhance De La Salle’s suffering. He notes, for instance, that De La Salle’s “interests and honor were at stake.” By interests he surely means the money that was in danger of being forfeited, but he also recognizes that French society was an honor-based one. Similarly, he notes that all offers to settle were refused, that this was not an issue of money. They wanted “the holy man to pay for forfeiting his honor and his liberty,” “those people wished to ruin the holy man,” and they treated him “with extreme discourtesy.” In the end, Blain creates a bit of a quandary. An earnest young man who turns on De La Salle, an angry and vengeful father, a friend who joins the other side, a determination to humiliate and to destroy the reputation of De La Salle. These are the elements around which Blain could have explained the Clément affair but which he failed to pursue. In many ways, this is the classic example of the difference between a hagiographical and a socio-anthropological reading of De La Salle’s life.

Blain’s error was focusing on the son when it is the father who merits scrutiny, for they were by no means equal.⁴ That father, Julien Clément (1648-1728), was one of several physicians attached to the court and who, through service to the king, was ennobled.⁵ Clément was ambitious enough to marry the daughter of his teacher, Jacques Lefèvre, a renowned obstetrician. A second marriage to the daughter of a minor noblemen, produced four children, including our John-Charles, who became abbot of the royal abbey of Saint Calais.⁶

The key to Julien Clément’s advancement was his service to Louis XIV. Led blindfolded to a secret room, he delivered one of Madame de Montespan children, sired by the king.⁷ Eventually, he presided over the births of the first child of the Dauphine, Marie-Adelaide of Savoy, went three times to Spain to deliver the children of the Dauphine’s sister, Marie-Louise Gabriella of Savoy, queen of Spain and wife of Philip V of Spain, Louis’s grandson. He attended for nearly 70 hours the birth of the Duke of Burgundy on 6 August 1682, the first grandson of Louis XIV. He also delivered the son of the latter, namely the Duke of Anjou on 15 February 1710, the third great-grandson of Louis XIV and his successor as Louis XV. This delivery was a breeched birth. The *Memoires* of the Duke de Saint Simon refer to the advanced pregnancy of the Duchess of Burgundy who wished to accompany the royal party to Fontainebleau. Clément was consulted and declared

⁴ On the Clément Affair, Richard M. Tristano, “Crossing Cultures: The Mental World and Social Subversion of Saint John Baptist De La Salle,” *Catholic Historical Review* 103 (Spring 2017): 246-270, which I summarize here.

⁵ François de Vaux de Foletier, “Anoblissements de médecins et chirurgiens de Louis XIV à Louis XVI,” <http://www.biusante.parisdescartes.fr/sfhm/hsm/HSMx1982x016x003/HSMx1982x016x003x0163.pdf> (accessed 7 August 2015).

⁶ The earliest reference to Julien Clément seems to be François Quesnay and Jean-Louis Girodat, *Recherches critiques et historiques sur l’origine, sur les divers états et sur les progrès de la chirurgie en France* (Paris : Charles Osmont, 1744), 615-16. See also the lively but distracted Auguste Cabanès, *Curious Bypaths of History: Being Medico-Historical Studies and Observations* (Paris: C. Carrington, 1898), 59-74.

⁷ Frantz Funck-Brentano, *Les lettres de cachet à Paris étude suivie d’une liste des prisonniers de la Bastille (1659-1789)* (Paris : Imprimerie Nationale, 1903), 155. The racy and probably fictional account of the Count of Bussy-Rabutin records Clément’s hunger sated by the king himself, who prepared the physician some jam and bread, [Roger de Rabutin], Count de Bussy-Rabutin, *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1858, 2: 54-55).

that the journey would place her in danger and king forbade her to go.⁸ The king trusted him with the supreme responsibility of preserving the dynasty.

Named first head valet of the duchess of Burgundy on 22 January 1707, Louis XIV issued a letter of ennoblement in August 1711, putting a condition that he not abandon the practice of his art, “so that the princesses of the blood, whose happy fertility had given so many princes and princesses to the royal family, were not deprived of effective help to increase the number, and that the most qualified women, as well as those of any other state can also benefit from the opportunity.” The letter is written in intimate terms of “our dear and beloved Clément” and included the proviso in order “to give a more authentic testimony of his esteem” a full coat of arms with the playful motto “si regnare cupis, regnet clemencia tecum” (if you would reign, let clemency reign with you).⁹ Clément’s rise was quite extraordinary.

We know that a summons for De La Salle to appear in court was filed on 23 January 1712, five months after Clément’s ennoblement.¹⁰ Given the time it takes to plan, draw up, file, and execute the necessary documents, this was probably as immediately after ennoblement as possible. There can be little doubt that the prosecution of De La Salle was connected to Julien Clément’s new social status. What motivated Julien Clément to take this step more than three years after the founding of the partnership between De La Salle and his son, that seemed to have been entirely amicable?

In 1700, France was still a society of orders, three to be precise: the clergy, the nobility, and everyone else, an idea traceable to the twelfth century.¹¹ The last were the *Laboratores*, the order identified by their function to work, while the clergy (*Oratores*) prayed and the nobility (*Bellatores*) fought. Of course, much had changed over six hundred years, the third estate had considerably diversified from its peasant origins. The nobility too had diversified, the old nobility of the sword no longer constituted a feudal army and it was being challenged by the “Robe,” a nobility of legal magistrates who sat in the *parlements* and could hand down their offices to their sons. Each of these orders shared a culture, a common lifestyle, similar sources of wealth, parallel interests, and distinguishing features such as the right to wear a sword or robe that gave them their common names. Both the clergy and nobility were privileged, largely tax-exempt, certain high government offices were their preserve, and they enjoyed special prestige recognized by just about everyone. Each order was subdivided into sub-orders. So, the clergy was divided between seculars and regulars, bishops and priests, abbots and monks, canons and parish priests. Since only the third estate worked, the nobility relied on its fiefs and the income the land produced. The upper clergy

⁸ “Le lendemain de cette visite de l’église des Invalides, Clément, soutenu de Fagon, declara au Roi que Mme la duchesse de Bourgogne ne pouvoit aller à Fontainebleau sans se mettre en plus évident hasard.” Duc de Saint-Simon, *Memoires, texte établi et annoté par Gonzague Truc* (Paris : Gallimard, 1954-1961), 2 : 653, n.15.

⁹ “Nommé d’abord premier valet de chambre de la Duchesse de Bourgogne le 22 janvier 1707, Louis XIV lui donne par la suite des lettres de noblesse en août 1711, en y mettant pour condition que l’anobli n’abandonnera la pratique de son art, « afin que les princesses de son sang, dont l’heureuse fécondité avait donné tant de princes et de princesses à sa royale famille, ne fussent pas privées d’un secours si efficace, pour en augmenter le nombre, et que les dames les plus qualifiées, ainsi que celles de tout autre état, en puissent aussi profiter dans l’occasion».

[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julien_Cl%C3%A9ment_\(m%C3%A9decin\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julien_Cl%C3%A9ment_(m%C3%A9decin)) (accessed 25 April 2016).

¹⁰ Armand Ravelet, *Histoire du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1874), 400.

¹¹ Roland Mousnier, *The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy 1598-1789* trans. Brian Pearce, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 3-48; 112-46.

relied on benefices. These were income attached to ecclesiastical offices. As with everything else in the ancien régime, there were gradations from benefices that provided enormous wealth to canonries that provided a comfortable lifestyle. Many benefices were controlled by patrons, again on many levels, and they could be handed down and bought. De La Salle basically inherited a canonry at the Reims cathedral from his great-cousin Dozet at age fifteen.¹² And it is here that we can find Jean-Charles Clément who near the end of 1709 acquired the Abbey of Saint Calais, its income, the title of archpriest, and a great number of seigneurial jurisdictions.¹³

The Duke of Saint Simon, whose gigantic memoirs illuminate the age of Louis XIV, was among the great sword nobility. He was a reactionary who resented the changes that Louis XIV had introduced to weaken his order. He wanted to restore the old military character of the feudal nobility. He begrudged the ascent of the robe nobility with all its venality (ennobling offices could be purchased), the preeminence the king gave to his royal bastards, and mechanical ennoblement (the practice of nobility as a reward for talent). This notion that social advancement should be based on talent rather than privilege of birth was a modern idea to be taken up by the French Revolution, and here we find Julien Clément, the social climber.¹⁴

But the three estates were far from the only corporations – indeed French society was imbued with all sorts of corporate bodies. The working class was organized in guilds, corporate bodies organized around crafts such as saddle makers, bakers, printers, and goldsmiths. Professionals also had their own corporations including universities, apothecaries, and surgeons, to which Julien Clément would have belonged. The hierarchy in the craft guilds was made up of apprentices, journeymen, and masters. Guilds were legal entities, licensed by the king and municipal governments. They had privileges to create their own statutes, to construct rules for entry, to govern themselves, to collect dues and disburse funds. These corporations were jealous of anyone who infringed on their prerogatives. Blacksmiths and farriers, tailors and second-hand clothes dealers, *rôtisseurs*, who sold roast meats, and butchers, all those whose domains overlapped, contested those prerogatives.¹⁵

Turning more closely to Lasallian history, two of those guilds, the teachers of the Little Schools and the Writing Masters brought a series of legal cases against De La Salle and the Brothers from 1704 to 1706.¹⁶ On 4 February 1704 the Writing Masters brought suit accusing De La Salle of accepting students into his schools whose parents could afford to pay fees. The court summoned De La Salle, found him guilty, seized teaching materials, and subsequently restricted acceptance

¹² Alfred Calcutt, FSC, *De La Salle: A City Saint and the Liberation of the Poor Through Education: a Figure for Our Times from the Age of Louis XIV*. 2nd ed. CD-ROM version (Essex, UK: Matthew James Publishing Company Limited, 2004), 38.

¹³ Jean Guibert, *Histoire de S. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle : ancien chanoine de l'église métropolitaine de Reims, fondateur de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes* (Paris : Librairie Ch. Poussielgue, 1900), 474. “Dans les derniers mois de 1709, le jeune Clément avait obtenu la riche abbaye de Saint-Calais, dont le titulaire, Charles-François de Mérinville, avait remplacé Paul Godet des Marais, son oncle, sur le siège épiscopal de Chartres. Devenu archiprêtre de Saint-Calais et chanoine titulaire du Mans, ayant juridiction seigneuriale sur un grand nombre de prieurés et de cures...”

¹⁴ Mousnier, *Institutions*, 20-23.

¹⁵ Mousnier, *Institutions*, 463-72.

¹⁶ Henri Bedel, *An Introduction to the History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Origins, 1651-1726* (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1996), 128-32. Calcutt, *A City Saint*, 2nd ed., 518-26.

to only the genuinely poor. On 14 February, the teachers of the Little Schools secured a ruling that forbade the Brothers to teach and fined De La Salle. These kinds of legal actions continued over the next two years and De La Salle tended to lose them. 73

The source of opposition to the Christian Schools came from the elites as well. They feared that teaching the poor to read and write would cause them to stop doing the menial labor for which they were intended and had the potential to disrupt the entire social order. Famously, Louis-Rene de La Chalotais decried how too many laborers and artisans send their children to colleges to study useless things. “The Brothers of the Christian Doctrine, who are called *Ignorantins*, have appeared to complete the ruin of everything. They teach reading and writing to people who ought to learn only to draw and to handle the plane and the file, but who no longer wish to do so.”¹⁷

The problem was that the Christian Schools did not fit perfectly into any of the existing categories of schools.¹⁸ They were like the Charity schools in that they taught gratuitously to the poor. But the Lasallian School did not restrict itself only to the indigent poor but also admitted those who could afford to pay tuition. The Brothers taught a curriculum that was more in line with the Little Schools, but with a new pedagogy, the simultaneous method, and in French. They staffed schools in small groups, usually three, each one teaching a class with multiple rows of students, while the Little School teachers taught alone, in Latin, and each student individually. The Writing Masters’ guild had been sanctioned by the king in 1570, awarding them the right to teach writing and maintaining standards of penmanship. They initiated legal proceeding against De La Salle up to 1712. Finally, De La Salle and the Brothers came into conflict with some pastors and bishops because they insisted on autonomy from both parish and diocesan authorities.

In sum, this review of the corporate nature of French society provides crucial context to better understand the motivations of Julien Clément to initiate legal proceedings against De La Salle. As a newly ennobled royal surgeon, one with clear social ambitions, Clément had to create a noble lifestyle for himself and his family. To be noble is to live as a noble and that meant not working. But Julien Clément was commanded to continue to work as an obstetrician, because his services to the royal family were so valued. This reminder of his bourgeois origins, in addition to the newness of his title made his noble status extremely vulnerable. At Versailles, Clément’s new wealth derived from his role as royal obstetrician engendered this obscene couplet,

Just as many men deposit good morsels in the female cavity,
So does Clément extracts riches from them.¹⁹

Here was his son, in the process of accumulating benefices, engaged in a common enterprise with a priest who had a sustained record of challenging the status quo while losing legal challenges. De La Salle was superior of a society with no legal standing, a cleric acting as superior to laymen. This violated the traditional division between clergy and laity. Lay teachers in parish schools was

¹⁷ Louis-Rene de la Chalotais, “Essay on National Education,” in F. de la Fontainerie, *French Liberalism and Education in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1932), 59-60. On the question of how the Christian Schools affected social change, see Calcutt, *A City Saint*, 2nd ed., 677-78. I thank Paul Grass, FSC for pointing out this section to me.

¹⁸ Léon Lauraire, *The Conduct of Schools: A Contextual Approach*, trans. Leonard Marsh, FSC (Rome: Maison Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, 2008), 208-18.

¹⁹ Quas bona pars hominum mulieri condit in antro, /ex illa Clemens eruit unus opes.

a new idea, recalling that the issue was at the center of the dispute over the novitiate in Marseille. The evidence of De La Salle's social subversion was piling up. Julien Clément risked associating his name with someone who many considered to be of ill-repute, and a threat to social norms. But there were two even more important motivations for Clément's actions. 74

La Puissance Paternelle

Of all the corporate bodies that constituted the ancien régime, the most important was the family. Birth was at its center. *Lignage*, the succession of kinfolk from a common stock, was more the focus of family life the higher in the social hierarchy you went.²⁰ For the great nobility, lineage was essential to identity and status claims. *Livres de raison* consisted of three sections. The first recorded the origin and antiquity of the *Lignage*, its genealogy, dates of births and marriages. The second contained everything concerning the patrimony, its income and management. The third counselled family solidarity, respect, honor, to one's parents, the unity that should be maintained between brothers.²¹ These were the essential and defining features of the family: the lineage, the patrimony, and the honor of the family name, and they were trickling down to the bourgeoisie during Louis XIV's reign. Family solidarity was one's most important social asset, the one institution you could count on; relatives of blood helped each other. Marriages were essential links to other families, sources of income through the dowry, and the principal method for building relationships and support systems outside the family. Spiritual kinship was established through baptism and godparenting, while the more powerful families gathered around themselves clients engaged in reciprocal relationships. Property was all-important as the means to sustain one's name and honor and to provide an appropriate lifestyle. Real property, containing the family home, may not have produced the highest return of income but it was the most secure and honorable asset and a public manifestation of status. Primogeniture and other techniques were tools meant to preserve the family's fortune, to prevent it from being divided and reduced over time. For Julien Clément, it was his second son, Alexandre Julien, who provided heirs that perpetuated the lineage. John-Charles, as third son, was destined for the church and therefore the abbé who approached De La Salle at around the age of twenty. A daughter, Louise-Antonette, became a Carmelite nun, sparing the family the cost of a large dowry.

De La Salle's own household was thoroughly bourgeois. Louis de La Salle's marriage to Nicole Möet, the daughter of a petty noble family, was an advantageous match. The De La Salle house, known as the *Hôtel de la Cloche*, or House of the Bell, was as substantial as the De La Salle family. De La Salle, his parents and siblings, shared the mansion with his paternal grandparents and a paternal uncle. This was a *ménage* of the old type, the extended family of three generations living under the same roof. Over the course of the eighteenth century it would yield more and more to the nuclear family of parents and children.²² The family's wealth and social expectations allowed John Baptist to attend the Collège des Bons-Enfants, which set him on the path to attend university.

²⁰ I do not mean to enter into the intricacies of terms such as *Lignage*, *race*, household, and house. For a discussion of these terms see Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Families in Former Times, Kinship, Household and Sexuality in Early Modern France*, trans. Richard Southern, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1-10.

²¹ Mousnier, *Institutions*, 50-1.

²² Mousnier, *Institutions*, 81-3.

De La Salle's life, like that of most Frenchmen, was set at birth, any inspiration to alter that path was viewed with deep suspicion.

One of the most important social developments within the family was the increasing power of the *paterfamilias*, the father of the family, and paternal power, *la puissance paternelle*. This was the monarchical principle that influenced all sorts of social relations from the power of the king as father of the nation, to the supremacy of the father who presided over the household, wife, children, and servants. The authority of both king and father was established by God and protected by Roman civil law. All this was premised on the assumption that human inequality was natural and that human nature was deeply flawed by original sin. "By expanding the authority of fathers over wives, children, and servants, the monarchy and magistrates constructed political patriarchy in its classic form and translated the rhetorical assimilation of fatherhood and kingship into something resembling legal reality."²³

The *paterfamilias* possessed legal rights over his wife and children. He controlled their property, he could have his sons under the age of twenty-five detained by the police and his wife imprisoned for adultery. Children could not marry or take religious vows without paternal permission.²⁴ Serious insult of a parent was treated as a public crime. Paternal control over contracts, especially those concerning property, were particularly strict.

... fathers nevertheless preserved or recovered, in the France of that time, most of the rights granted them by the ancient Roman laws. Their 'paternal power' covered the person and the property of their children, grandchildren and other descendants. These 'children of the family' were unable to bind themselves by contracts – chiefly those involving loans and marriage – and even with the agreement of their father, they could not make wills. This was because all their property belonged to the father. The latter enjoyed full ownership of all property that they held of him, for he could always undo whatever he had done; similarly, he was the full owner of the profits that they derived from such property; he possessed in addition, the usufruct of their other goods, from whatever source they had come...²⁵

This suggests that in the eyes of the law, the contractual arrangements between John-Charles, a minor, and De La Salle were subject to the authority of the father, Julien. In addition, there is evidence that John-Charles was intimidated by his father to become a cleric against his will. In a document in the Christian Brothers' Generalate archive, there is reference to Julien Clément's strategy to force his younger son to *enter into Holy Orders and that he did so without a priestly vocation*.²⁶ Such was the power of *paterfamilias* over a minor son.

²³ Jeffrey Merrick, "Fathers and Kings: Patriarchalism and Absolutism in Eighteenth-Century French Politics," in *Family, Gender, and Law in Early Modern France*, eds. Suzanne Desan and Jeffrey Merrick (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 103.

²⁴ Merrick, "Fathers and Kings," 104.

²⁵ Flandrin, *Families in Former Times*, 130.

²⁶ Archivio dei Fratelli Scuole Cristiane, Casa Generalizia, Memoire Autographe, « Le Sieur Jean-Charles Clément, Memoire à son Eminence le Cardinal Fleury, » 9.19-20. « La vénération du sieur Clément pour l'état sacre du sacerdoce étoit trop grande parer que cette frêle de vénération fut capable de l'y faire entrer sans vocation. » "The veneration of Mr. Clement for the sacred state of the priesthood was too great to say that this frail veneration was capable of bringing him into it without a vocation." « Dans cette vue il n'y a sorte de stratagème dont il ne se son

These legal privileges were buttressed by religion. Jean Delumeau and Daniel Roche have argued for a massive movement to Christianize ways of thinking and collective behaviors (*christianiser mentalités et les comportements collectifs*). The Renaissance brought with it a revival of classical culture, Roman law, and greater emphasis on the father as the guarantor of stability. He ruled by divine right; fathers were gods on earth. The spiritual basis for their power was the Fourth Commandment and Paul's *Letter to the Ephesians* (5:22-33). The Council of Trent under Protestant attack reinforced all of the sacraments and sought to buttress the stability of the family through the sacrament of marriage. It condemned clandestine marriages, imposed new regulations requiring the priest to act as witness, and the announcement of the banns to the community. The seventeenth century was the golden age of the paternal monarchy, spanning the trinity, the king and the *paterfamilias*. The father's authority was uncontested, he engendered, nourished, raised up, instructed and it was he who transmitted heritage from father to son. "The ideal relationship of father and son was the fundamental hierarchical relationship and the model for all others."²⁷ While God is our real father, the father of the family was the image of God on earth. As one writer suggested, it is the good God who has the power to beget and rule, "the father of all fathers," who "governs the world with as much ease as if it were just a house." St. Joseph was increasingly depicted as the ideal father and head of the family, the model of the faithful father in popular culture and whose intercession was increasingly sought. In turn, the Holy Family, as the epitome of the Christian family, became a standard topic for sermons.²⁸ When Blain expressed his surprise that the abbé followed his father's wishes and turned against De La Salle, implying that the son could defy his father, he ignored the reality of "paternal power," because he crafted a spiritual narrative instead of a historical one. And when De La Salle entered into a legal agreement with a minor and one who was a member of a family about to make a strategic leap into the privileged noble estate, he placed himself in the midst of these powerful social forces.

But there was something personal in Julien Clément's legal action against De La Salle, the second factor that explains his legal action. It was something that tapped into the epicenter of the ancien régime, something that infuriated the surgeon and triggered bitter contempt for the priest. De La Salle was class traitor. Fernand Braudel, Febvre's student, put it this way:

The bourgeoisie turned class traitor all the more readily since the money which distinguished rich from poor was in the sixteenth century already appearing to be an attribute of nobility ... If the social order seems to have been modified, the change was sometimes more apparent than real. The bourgeoisie was not always pushed out, brutally liquidated. It turned class traitor... The chief ambition of these pseudo-bourgeois was to reach the ranks of the aristocracy, to be absorbed into it, or at the very least to marry their richly-dowered daughters to a nobleman ... But in 1615 the same spectacle could be seen in France ... It was the same everywhere in the seventeenth century, for the class barrier was always being crossed and social censure was ever on the watch.²⁹

servir pour forcer le Sieur Clément à entrer dans les ordres sacrés. » (In this view, there is no kind of strategy which cannot serve to force Mr. Clément to enter into Holy Orders.)

²⁷ Mousnier, *Institutions*, 94.

²⁸ Jean Delumeau and Daniel Roche eds. *Histoire des pères et de la paternité* (Paris : Larousse, 1990), 130-54.

²⁹ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 2: 726; 729; 733. Yves Poutet puts it somewhat more benignly, using the terms such as "The Great Breaks of 1681-1688, and "the break with bourgeois habits. » I rather prefer the more violent language of "traitor" because it more accurately describes the personal violence evoked by these breaks. Yves Poutet,

Julien Clément epitomized the ambition of the “pseudo-bourgeois.” Jean Francois Sacombe (1750-1822) in his poem *Luciniade*, attacked contemporary obstetrical practices. There he lampooned the physician for his greed,

Clément owed his vogue and his credit at random
He enriched art less than art enriched him.
Obstetrician of harlots, despite Lucine,
Clément made a fortune where... he ruined many loves.³⁰

De La Salle's conversion was social and cultural as well as religious. He not only challenged the social order, he inverted it. Indeed, his treason was the mirror image, the very opposite of what Braudel describes. While the typical bourgeois class traitor earned the resentment of the aristocrat as a nouveau interloper, it at least affirmed the desirability and status of aristocracy. On the other hand, De La Salle's downward movement cast aspersions on both the validity of the bourgeoisie and their aristocratic aspirations. Julien Clément's climb from the nephew of a barber to a noble first valet of the Duchess of Burgundy was invalidated; he despised De La Salle because he represented the negation of who he was and who he strived to become. The most immediate threat, though, was the partnership between his son and the Founder that risked having his family contaminated by this social rebel, this criminal. He wanted to expose De La Salle to public ridicule because he represented a radical rejection of the ancien régime and this was one of the reasons for Clément's swift legal victory. The court had an interest in upholding the social order that De La Salle threatened. The most revealing phrase in the court's judgment was its reference to « ... Priest and so-called or pretended superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools from the city of Reims » (*... contre le sieur de la Salle prêtre se disant supérieur général des frères de l'école chrestienne de la ville de Rheims ...*). This was both a legal claim, that the Institute had no legal basis in French law, and a socio-cultural assertion, that De La Salle was a mere priest from the city of Reims. He had neither the legitimacy nor social respectability.³¹

This was a priest who once hailed from a solid bourgeois family, the canon of one of the most famous cathedrals of France, but who had renounced both, for its shallow focus on earthly accoutrements. He was a threat to the status quo. This is why De La Salle's conviction for suborning a minor was so apt in the eyes of the court and of Clément. The judgment marked De La Salle as a threat to the family, to the traditional roles of father and son, to the very foundation of the social order. Moreover, this was a subversive priest, a troublemaker who violated the natural

Le XVIIe [i.e. Dix-septième] siècle et les origines lasalliennes, recherches sur la genèse de l'œuvre scolaire et religieuse de Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (1651-1719) (Rennes : Impr. réunies, 1970), 1:715-717.

³⁰ « Clément dut au hasard sa vogue et son credit/Il enrichit moins l'art que l'art ne l'enrichit. /Accoucheur de catins, en dépit de Lucine,/Clément fit fortune où maint amant se ruine. » Cited in M. Dumont, “Nicolas Puzos : un accoucheur du XVIII^e siècle. » *Journal de gynécologie, obstétrique et biologie de la reproduction*, 17 No. 4 (1988) : 432-33. See also G. J. Witkowski, G.J and G. Steinhell. *Accoucheurs et sage-femmes célèbres* (Paris, Steinheil Éditeur, 1891), 142-43.

³¹ Cited in Armand Ravelet, *Histoire du Vénérable Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1874), 403-5. It was also, in a different context, a canonical judgment. Brother Pedro Gil, FSC has pointed out the radically new nature of the Brothers' Institute. The confusion over just what sort of canonical society De La Salle had founded may have contributed to suspicion of it by the authorities. Pedro Gil, « Proposals Made by Father Barré to La Salle and a New Definition of Consecrated Life in Modern Times: A Lasallian Example to Think It Over in The French Context of The Spirituality of The XVIIIth Century, » *Digital Journal of Lasallian Research* (13) 2016: 1-28

boundaries that divided the rich from the poor, who challenged so many of the corporate structures of the ancien régime, and flouted the law protecting the corporate legal rights of the Writing Masters. He needed to be taught a lesson. This is likely the reason why De La Salle was not arrested when he returned to Paris three years later, his humiliation was complete, they had driven him from the capital to the wilds of the Midi, the deed was done. 78

De La Salle's "Social Revolution."

We now have the tools to offer an alternative reading to one of Blain's most effective and important narratives, De La Salle's conversion experience. The traditional interpretation of this defining moment in De La Salle's life has been treated as something spiritual, which it indeed was. But it was simultaneously also a turning point which thrust De La Salle into a whole new social and cultural world that bit by bit not only transformed him and the Institute he founded but challenged the ancien régime and made him a target of Clément's vicious insecurity.³²

The traditional narrative also describes De La Salle's conversion as a rather gradual and passive process of discerning God's plan for him. But within this story lies another that is equally personal but more social and cultural, more rapid and traumatic, and in which De La Salle plays a much more active role. As he was being guided to abandoning his birthright, his prebend as a canon, and his bourgeois social status, and toward the foundation of schools for the poor, De La Salle had to learn about the poor and to establish contact with them. This was difficult because as the son of a prominent family, he was sheltered from contact with the lower classes. But mere knowledge was insufficient, "He needed to *become* [emphasis added] one of the poor so that he might enrich them." This was a conscious act of downward social mobility, and it was immediately followed by a greatly increased determination to overcome his senses. De La Salle was realizing that his effort to become one of the poor was both a psychological and physical challenge. He gave his valet (a bourgeois remnant) orders to wake him in his battle against the physical need for sleep. During Holy Week he attempted to eat nothing but a broth made from herbs, but he was unable to retain anything he ate. This is De La Salle's first bout with vomiting, a physical sign of the repugnance triggered by his social and cultural devolution into the class of the urban poor.³³

The psychological and physical feeling he needed to overcome was repugnance. One of his first feelings of repugnance occurred in the form of people, the first teachers in Reims. As he recalled in the beginning, "I considered the men whom I was obliged to employ in the schools at the beginning as being inferior to my valet, the mere thought that I would have to live with them would have been insupportable to me."³⁴ His next bout of repugnance also concerned the teachers and it came through his revulsion with their lives of disorder. "His human reactions and natural inclinations revolted at the very thought." De La Salle was battling himself, though here the revulsion was more psychological than physical. Increasingly active, this effort to subject the senses to the will is one of the important connections to his mental world and the principal source

³² Poutet refers to "internal tensions and mystical forces," a "mystical conquest," and a "contemplative life of exceptional intensity." He also provides an interesting psychological profile of De La Salle. Yves Poutet, *Les origines lasalliennes*, 738-47.

³³ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 43-45

³⁴ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 80.

of his mortification.³⁵ When he finally introduced the teachers into his home, most of his family were horrified and their response took on the language of Clément père, with reference to honor, blood, and heraldry. “They accused him of staining the honor of the family and of blotting the escutcheon by associating with people of such low standing. They said that he was not living up to his blood ... that it was ridiculous not to make any distinction between them and his own brothers.”³⁶ Here again we see reference to *lignage* and family.

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His decision to leave his house, whose meaning refers to both a domicile and a consanguinity, is quite literally a liminal moment. It leads to the beginning of his conscious pauperization. The teachers challenged him by pointing out the social gap that still divided them. If the enterprise they have embarked upon fails, they may well starve while De La Salle has income from his canonry and patrimony to fall back on. His response to this challenge was to resign his benefice within which he included another act of social revolt. De La Salle decided to turn over his canonry not to his brother Jean-Louis but to a priest of low birth named Faubert. De La Salle inverted the acquisitiveness of the Abbé Clément to secure the income of the abbey of Saint Calais and the precedence of birth and family. This decision anticipated the French Revolution’s promotion of social merit in lieu of family ties. His decision offended Archbishop Charles-Maurice Le Tellier, the son and brother of two of Louis XIV’s most powerful ministers, who were the very epitome of privilege in the ancien régime. The canons, the vicar general, his family, indeed all of the privileged class tried to persuade De La Salle not to shun his brother, to no avail. Later, the bishop righted De La Salle’s wrong by making his brother a canon explaining that “I am offering you this gift to make reparation for the foolishness of Monsieur de La Salle, who gave his benefice to someone other than his own brother.”³⁷ Eventually, De La Salle left Reims for Paris for several reasons, but the most urgent may have been his status as *persona non-grata*. He had severed himself from Reims’ society.

The next and most radical step was to give away his patrimony during the famine of 1693-94, “the most unusual, heroic, and unworldly action he ever performed.” It is at this point that De La Salle becomes poor, poorer than those to whom he gave away his wealth and actually begs door to door. This singular act is the real point of origin for the Brothers of the Christian Schools, especially as an extension of the Founder’s personality. It is soon thereafter that De La Salle makes the first effort at composing a rule and designing a distinctive habit. These are both further manifestations of “Lasallian order,” so important to De La Salle’s mental world. The extravagance of the habit symbolized the rejection of the world. The most amazing thing about the habit is the reaction it evoked from artisans and the poor. “People pointed the finger of scorn at them. They were escorted with raucous cries amidst scenes of near riot ... they were spattered with mud and pursued by those who threw stones at them until they reached the door of their house ... What kind of people are these? They asked in mockery. Where do they come from?”³⁸

³⁵ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 82; 87. Poutet refers to the « renunciation of self-will » as De La Salle was attempting to subject himself to the will of God. This is true, but this “renunciation” is rather “willful” in the sense that it required a conscious decision on De La Salle’s part. Yves Poutet, *Les origines lasalliennes*, 724-28.

³⁶ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 89.

³⁷ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 131.

³⁸ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 188.

Brother Bourlette, who Blain calls a “martyr of penance,” thanks to his extreme mortification, was reviled by the very street children the Brothers dedicated themselves to teach. His parents were desolated when he joined the Brothers. They felt disgraced and hoped to wipe away the stain to the family’s honor. Albeit, on a very different social level, their reaction was similar to Julien Clément’s, it was an affront to their family’s honor. De La Salle transferred Bourlette several times but his parents hunted him down and pleaded with him to leave the Brothers without succeeding. The people especially singled out De La Salle,

[He] was personally insulted more often and more outrageously than any of his followers ... They railed at him over the state he had given up, over that which he had embraced, over his eccentric manner of living, over the supposed extravagance of his behavior and his dress. The imaginary dishonor he was bringing down on the chapter of which he had been a member and on his family, one of the most highly respected in the city, the supposed wrong he had done to his brother by not leaving him a benefice by which his birth seemed to give him a right – all were crimes which people had not forgotten.³⁹

The Brothers were perceived even by the poor as social subversives and De La Salle as a class traitor. In language reminiscent of the Marseilles episode but more socially explosive, De La Salle acted eccentrically, extravagantly, dishonorably, he gave up his God-given status and committed a wrong against his own brother. The people were stunned and offended by his violations of the most accepted and revered codes of social behavior. Who in their right mind would freely embrace the misery of poverty?

Finally, De La Salle’s social subversion was extended to canon law and to the church hierarchy as well. This came in the form of the election of Brother Henri L’Heureux as superior. “a simple Brother placed over a priest, a doctor, a former canon? The Founder, father, director, confessor of the little Community at the feet of one of his children, one of his penitents, seemed to them a disorder that called for a remedy, a monstrosity in the area of government.”⁴⁰ The ecclesiastical authorities nullified the election and restored De La Salle as superior.

This is the social part of De La Salle’s subversion. If he had no desire to challenge the status quo but to act only out of a desire to emulate Jesus and to pursue the apostolic life, this was not the perception of family, friends, the rich, the poor, civil and ecclesiastical authorities. They saw De La Salle and the first Brothers as social nonconformists, cranks, threats to the family and the social fabric, even to the sanctity of the Church’s hierarchy. Alongside this social struggle against the world was a much more personal, cultural clash in which De La Salle subjected himself to serious physical and psychological trauma.

Crossing Cultures: The Personal Trauma of John Baptist de La Salle

Parallel to De La Salle’s social subversion was an even more personal and dramatic undermining of cultural norms. Food was one of the most important markers of social and cultural distinction in early modern French culture. Peasants ate the most rudimentary diet of black bread and soups,

³⁹ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, on harassing the Brothers, 188-9, on singling out De La Salle, 189, and on Brother Bourlette, 202-7.

⁴⁰ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 223. Note the father/children language that Blain uses.

with meat on very rare occasions. Urban dwellers ate white bread and a more sophisticated diet, while aristocrats gorged themselves on meat. Taste, which food to eat, and how much of it was desired, were social products. In addition, good manners distinguished the rural folk from the urban, and the rich from the poor.⁴¹ But most of all, the poor in the ancien régime were never very far from the threat of famine and starvation.⁴² 81

The term “repugnance” (*répugnance*), appears frequently in Blain’s biography.⁴³ Rachel Herz associates repugnance with disgust, and refers the term “disgustable” to that which disgusts. Food is culturally defined, learned and conditioned, but also individualized: what disgusts one person may delight another, while one food, insects for example, might be all but taboo in one culture and considered a delicacy in another. Whether or not to eat meat can become a moral issue for the vegan.⁴⁴ Disgust also has a social function, it maintains boundaries, frames the social order, and weeds out undesirable behaviors. As a child, De La Salle had acquired a highly refined sense of repugnance and overcoming his bourgeois sense of disgust to the poor and their food was his greatest physical and psychological challenge.

As noted, De La Salle’s willful impoverishment was a response to the Brothers’ challenge to his wealth and their poverty. Blain makes it clear that De La Salle’s decision was not principally an economic decision so much as a moral one. The Founder was determined to live like the Brothers, because he wanted to establish fraternal bonds with them. De La Salle was violating here one of the deepest divisions in the stratified society of the Sun King’s France and it presented him with deep social, cultural, and psychological hurdles to overcome.⁴⁵ This is reminiscent of the resignation of his canonry on behalf of a poor fellow priest instead of his own brother, the substitution of a spiritual brotherhood for a consanguineous one. Food is a vehicle for anticipatory socialization, by “consciously or unconsciously adopting the ways, tastes, and manners of a social group to membership of which one aspires.”⁴⁶ This was exactly De La Salle’s goal. In learning how to eat the Brothers’ food, De La Salle was attempting to establish the most intimate of relationships with them, and his principal motivation was love. But it was also a conscious decision, an act of will, not of birth, that despite the best efforts of the Brothers to dissuade him, he was resolute to complete. Blain describes De La Salle’s state in vivid terms. “He was never in greater distress than when it was time to eat. Nature, alarmed at the mere thought of what it would have to endure, caused him to shudder when they brought on the soup. There ensued for him a grievous struggle, an agonizing conflict, for on such occasions nature and grace lock in strenuous battle, and the latter does not emerge victorious over the former save at the cost of a galling

⁴¹ Tristano, “Crossing Cultures,” 264-68. Massimo Montanari, *Food is Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 61. Marvin Harris, *Good to Eat, Riddles of Food and Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 72.

⁴² For example, the famines of 1693-4 and 1709-10, that significantly affected De La Salle’s life. Jean-Louis Flandrin, “Introduction, The Early Modern Period,” in eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, *trans. Clarissa Botsford et al., Food, a Culinary History* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 351-2.

⁴³ See also the use of the term in Bernard, *Two Early Biographies*, 282-83, 325-326; Maillefer’s *The Life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle* both in *John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* ed. Paul Grass, FSC, trans. William J. Quinn, FSC, rev. and notes, Donald Mouton, FSC, (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), 62.

⁴⁴ Rachel Herz, *That’s Disgusting, Unraveling the Mysteries of Repulsion* (New York: Norton, 2012), 232, 46, 21.

⁴⁵ Krystal D’Costa, “What’s Stopping Us from Eating Insects?” *Scientific American*, July 24, 2013, <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/anthropology-in-practice/whats-stopping-us-from-eating-insects/> (accessed 3 May 2016).

⁴⁶ Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food* 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 75.

ordeal.”⁴⁷ Blain’s theologized but perceptive depiction of De La Salle’s mental state is expressed in more contemporary terms by Norbert Elias, who describes a process of embarrassment, of deep personal conflict: “... within his own personality; he himself recognizes himself as inferior. He fears the loss of the love or respect of others, to which he attaches or has attached value.”⁴⁸ No where can you find a greater contrast with the Julien Cléments’ ethic than here. De La Salle’s descent to the culinary world of the poor was an inversion of the royal physician’s rise to noble status, confirmed, not accidentally, in culinary terms, when according to Count Bussy-Rabutin, Louis XIV personally served the physician with jam and bread.⁴⁹ With this gesture, the king signaled the possibility of a personal relationship with himself and his family, if he proved to be a competent deliverer of royal babies. One can well imagine the Clément family feasting in their mansion, celebrating their noble status, while De La Salle was turning his body into a mechanism of sacrifice.

He did violence to his feelings and ate, but he could not keep the food down. His vomiting began when he saw and smelled the soup; when he tried to eat it, the heaving became so violent that he brought up blood... To win a total victory over himself, he forces himself to swallow again what he had thrown up, and this repeatedly. Before him I do not know of anyone who had ever given such an example of mortification. This torture, which lasted all through this first meal, continued for several more days.⁵⁰

Not only has De La Salle reduced dining into a penitential act, he has turned it into a ritual of horrific mortification, an instrument of torture inflicted on himself. Norbert Elias has identified this phenomenon as “shame-fear.” “Shame takes on its particular coloration from the fact that the person feeling it has done or is about to do something through which he comes into contradiction with people to whom he is bound in one form or another, and with himself, with the sector of his consciousness by which he controls himself.”⁵¹ De La Salle was in the midst of an extreme social and cultural transmutation. He had successfully freed himself from the social opinion of the dominant classes when he begged in his native Reims, when he designed the Brothers’ extravagant habit that brought such derision, and when he passed over his brother, handing over his canonry to a poor stranger. The anger, rejection and humiliation suffered at their hands did little to disturb him. But his failure to conquer his own repugnance, first associating with the early Brothers, and then actually sharing their food created shame-fear. He feared the loss of the Brothers’ love and respect because of his failure to keep their food down which led him to shame himself in their eyes by consuming his own regurgitation. These are signs of the most profound trauma he experienced

⁴⁷ Blain, pp. 165-6.

⁴⁸ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, rev. ed., eds. Eric Dunning et al., trans. Edmund Jephcott, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 415.

⁴⁹ Count de Bussy-Rabutin, *Histoire amoureuse des Gauls*, 54-5, “Le roi, sans attendre qu’une des deux femmes qui étoient dans la chambre s’entremît de le servir, s’en fut en même temps lui-même à une armoire où il prit un pot de confiture qu’il lui apporta ; et, lui étant allé chercher du pain d’un autre côté, il le lui donna de même, lui disant de n’épargner ni l’un ni l’autre, et qu’il y en avoit encore au logis.” “The king, without waiting for the fact that one of the two women who were in the room had agreed to serve him, went himself to a cupboard, where he took a jar of jam, which he brought with him and, having gone to look for the bread from another side, he gave it to him in the same manner, telling him to spare neither the one nor the other, and that there were still more at home.” This story may well be the product of Bussy-Rabutin’s imagination, but it captures the truthfulness of the intimacy of Clément’s relationship with the king as deliverer of royal babies.

⁵⁰ Blain, p. 166.

⁵¹ Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 415.

in this painful process of radically changing his social status and his cultural moorings, an inversion of the upper mobility so prominent and admired in French elite culture, personified by the Cléments. 83

Eventually, De La Salle developed a strategy, fasting strictly for days, he created such hunger that he came to find the food previously found so repulsive, to be palatable. Hunger is biological, one of the most powerful human survival drives. Appetite is psychological, a state of mind, a desire to eat. When one feels hungry, an internal process begins that regulates what, when, and how much to eat or if one should not eat at all.⁵² De La Salle was attempting to adjust his appetite by amplifying his hunger to the point that almost anything would have tasted good. His victory, to use Blain's metaphor, came in the "Absinthe story," recounted by all three early biographers. So complete was De La Salle's triumph over his repugnance that he could no longer tell the difference between what was appetizing and what was foul-tasting. One day the Brother-cook made a stew of only absinthe leaves, thinking it was a palatable herb. All the Brothers immediately laid down their spoons upon their first taste. Not so De La Salle, who ate his entire portion and was surprised when the Brothers expressed their alarm that he had been poisoned by the foul concoction."⁵³ His victory was complete. He could now eat almost anything, even that which the very poor would reject, it was his greatest triumph of the will.

Of course, De La Salle's battle with food had a deep religious basis as well. Food has very strong religious connotations and most religions have rules and rituals regulating consumption and enforcing abstinence and food taboos. Fasting was an essential part of medieval religion. In theory people were supposed to fast on ember days, three days a week (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday) four times a year; on major saints' feast days; and during Lent. Gluttony was one of the seven deadly sins and Saint Augustine famously denounced the pleasure found in the enjoyment of food. Stephen Mennell tells the story of Dr. Johnson whose table manners were repulsive. He perspired and so focused on eating that he never uttered a word as he wolfed down large quantities of food. His behavior scandalized because it betrayed the self-command expected of a philosopher. On the other hand, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, regulated his appetite by choosing whatever was less pleasing to his taste, implementing a rule of self-denial. It was religious motivation that drove Wesley's and De La Salle's behavior. For De La Salle, fasting had both spiritual and social significance. Fasting was still a central practice of Tridentine Catholicism. It was an act of denial for the bourgeoisie, who had enough food to give up. For the poor, gluttony was hardly a threat and fasting could not be easily distinguished from the simple lack of food.⁵⁴ For De La Salle, food denial was meritorious, for the poor it was a fact of life.

In the complexity of human society, it is difficult to distinguish between the social and the religious, and in the intricacies of the human mind the ability to culturally transform oneself is never total, for memories always linger. In the midst of such radical acts of willful denial, it is

⁵² Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 20-21.

⁵³ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 310.

⁵⁴ Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, on Dr. Johnson, 32; on Wesley, 106, on fasting and the poor, *Ibid.*, 27-30. On fasting and the Council of Trent, Session 14, Canon 13, "If any one saith, that satisfaction for sins, as to their temporal punishment, is nowise made to God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, by the punishments inflicted by Him, and patiently borne, or by those enjoined by the priest, nor even by those voluntarily undertaken, as by fastings, prayers, almsdeeds, or by other works also of piety; and that, therefore, the best penance is merely a new life; let him be anathema." <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/trentall.html>, (accessed 29 May 2017).

astonishing that De La Salle wrote *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*. For the Rules embody the very bourgeois ethic that he strove so hard to liberate himself from, indeed, they represent the converse of his personal journey. While he was adopting the culinary culture of the poor, he was aspiring to cultivate in the poor French boys he taught the art of good manners, to lift them up a bit into the behavior of the upper classes. If Brother Bonaventure's conclusion that De La Salle supported the social order has merit, this is it. For in the text one can find precise rules for where to sit in a carriage according to rank, and quite complicated rules for walking according to a precise social order. Civility dictates that the middle place be given to the most distinguished member of the group, followed by the right-hand position, and lastly the left-hand position. "If the individuals are of about equal rank, they can yield the middle place to one another alternately, each time they turn, the one who was in the center simply stepping aside and letting his place be taken by one of those walking with him."⁵⁵ This is truly a social pirouette of the ancien régime.

How do we explain this paradox? Most simply, it was the product of the boundaries, the rules, that he imposed on himself and those he enforced on others. He charged himself with very severe mortifications while reducing those he placed on the Brothers. He was much more forgiving of others than of his self, imposing harsh penalties on himself while readily forgiving the failure of his subordinates. He so perfectly preserved bourgeois manners in *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* that in his classic study, *The Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias uses the Rules as one of the great landmarks of that civilizing process.⁵⁶ De La Salle was one of the key figures in the development of *civilité*, and in the transition from courtly to bourgeois culture. This is another Lasallian paradox, while De La Salle had the capacity to transform downward his own behavior and status at great personal cost, he affirmed the advantages of the rules of politeness for promoting the social advancement of his students in the world he so completely rejected.

This paradox is discernable in the text. On the one hand, the diner has the obligation to obey intricate manners by placing anything that cannot be eaten, bones, shells, and the like very carefully at the edge of one's plate. Yet there are also echoes of De La Salle's personal struggle, especially when the issue of repugnance is raised. For it should never be allowed to be noticed a distaste for anything being served. Such aversions are often purely imaginary, De La Salle opines, and are easily corrected.

Undoubtedly, an easy way to do this would be to go hungry for a few days, for hunger makes everything seem appetizing. It often happens that things a person cannot force himself to eat when he is not hungry seem truly delicious to him when he is. Pay attention also not to cultivate your appetites; as far as possible, accustom yourself to eating any kind of food. To do this, have food you do not particularly like served often, especially when you have not eaten for some time.⁵⁷

Here, De La Salle exhibits a clear understanding of the difference between hunger and appetite. What he advises is really the cultivation of self for the good of the community, in the form of civility. There can be no better example of the impact of De La Salle's mental world, in particular his own personal experience, on his writings than this. Once again, his mental world shows signs

⁵⁵ John Baptist de La Salle, *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* ed. Gregory Wright, FSC, trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC, (Romeoville, IL, Lasallian Publication, 1990), 87, on where to sit in a carriage, 137.

⁵⁶ Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, especially chaps. 5-8.

⁵⁷ *Christian Civility*, 64-5.

of intellectual fragmentation, a capacity to sustain the paradox of simultaneous strategies of downward and upward social mobility.

Conclusion

Returning to Brother Bonaventure's assertion that De La Salle did not seriously question the social order, that he in fact endorsed it. How viable is this contention? Was De La Salle a social revolutionary? Technically no. He was no Robespierre, he had no intention to change the social structure and took no action to do so. Perhaps we can call him a social subversive in the sense of consciously undermining the accepted principles of contemporary society. These included economic acquisitiveness, the primacy and inequality of birth, and the disorder of a sinful world. Is it too fanciful to assert, as Blain does, that the first assembly of the Lasallian community (probably 1686) reflected that of the first Christians at Antioch? Perhaps, but what is certain is that in both cases the assembly triggered a process of self-awareness as community. It is instructive that De La Salle suggested three topics for discussion at that assembly. The first was a rule or rather some more informal guidelines to be tested. This was the introduction of regularity, the subjection of the community to a common canon. In the words of Cicero (*De finibus*) it is "... only by ... observing the Rule or Canon that has fallen as it were from heaven so that all men may know it – only by making that Canon the test of all our judgments – that we can hope always to stand fast in our belief...".⁵⁸ Cicero identifies the need for some mechanism to promote steadfastness to some ideal, in Christian terms a charism. The second topic was a distinctive habit, some instrument to proclaim public distinctiveness, especially to mark those who wear it as constituting a community bound by a rejection of worldly values. Third, and it would seem most strange, is food. "In a word, everything served at table was to conform with the spirit of poverty which the Community professed." Here De La Salle was striving for a cultural component, the behaviors and beliefs of a group. This directly enlightens what at first seems to be the bizarre behavior of De La Salle as he learned to eat the Brothers' food. What the three have in common is community, the collective, defined by rule, habit, and food, but as Blain puts it, "his followers did not yet make up a true *Society* (emphasis added). All of them dressed differently... they had no binding commitments." What is most interesting about this new "society" is how typical it is of the ancien régime. De La Salle is doing nothing less than creating an order, not in the technical ecclesiastical sense but one that parallels the three legal and social orders of French society. The same De La Salle who challenged so many social and cultural mores, was creating a new order, defined essentially by function, gratuitous teaching, with distinguishing patterns of behavior, distinctive clothing, and characteristic eating habits. Thus, he simultaneously endorsed the social order while subverting it, undermining the dominant culture while creating an alternative and rejectionist one.⁵⁹

This seeming paradox is altogether Lasallian. If we return to Duby's definition of *mentalité* as the study of "parts of cultural context which are largely assumed, unquestioned, uncriticized," we can see that just what De La Salle consciously questioned and criticized is not so clear. That he intentionally questioned his wealth, rejected his bourgeois sensibilities, cannot be doubted. That he elicited the venomous reaction of entrenched elites cannot be denied, though that that was his intention can. He purposely rejected the world in radically enough ways to elicit the intervention of

⁵⁸ Cicero, *De finibus*, Book 1, 19: 63.

⁵⁹ All references, Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 172-76.

friends and supporters to reduce the level of his mortification practices. Yet, he wrote one of the most influential bourgeois civilizing treatises, in order to help students prosper in the very world he rejected. He challenged so many traditional collectives, the guilds, the patriarchal family, *lignage*, while imposing such harsh discipline on himself to create a new brotherhood. Duby wanted to find out what went on in people's heads without severing it from their bodies, and De La Salle was not severing heads from body either, but remaking their relationship in such a radical way that in the conflict between the two, as body had to catch up to head, even physical reactions such as chronic vomiting could occur. If the time in which he lived was filled with intellectual diversity and bitter contention, then his trial and conviction for suborning a minor is ample proof of that nasty strife. And if the *mentalité* of his time was the confused amalgam of inherited ideas identified by Duby, then De La Salle's paradoxical behavior can be well understood. Perhaps the best description of De La Salle is non-conforming ascetic. Recalling the extreme mortification practices he imposed on himself, reminds us of still another source of his behavior, the ascetic tradition traceable to the Desert Fathers.⁶⁰

In his mental world, De La Salle imposed rules on himself to order that new world he had created. It is little wonder that his social realm as was eclectic and paradoxical as his mental world. Here was the steadfast subject of the king, subordinate of the pope, who undermined the royal principles of birth - who alienated the deliverer of royal babies; who challenged the royally sanctioned corporation of Writing Masters; the faithful son of the Church who created a new type of school, who resisted the traditional authority of bishop and pastor in order to preserve the community's autonomy. Blain and the other biographers describe De La Salle as persecuted by the Cléments and abandoned by the treachery of his friend, Louis Rogier. In truth, the court ruled correctly, according to the laws and the customs of the kingdom, in conformity with those inherited assumptions of nobility, family, minority, and the rights of fathers. Louis Rogier saw the handwriting on the wall and the high stakes of social revolt in De La Salle's actions and he switched sides. As *paterfamilias*, Julien Clément had complete control over his minor son and his property while he possessed all the influence that elites enjoyed in the France of Louis XIV. As such, he inevitably prevailed over that priest, the "... so-called superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: condemned by the court." In the topsy-turvy world of socio-anthropological subversion, this judicial defeat was one of De La Salle's greatest victories.

⁶⁰ Tristano, "Crossing Cultures," 261-63.

VI HUGUENOTS AND CAMISARDS: THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL AS MISSION

It is traditional to focus on De La Salle's "formative years" because the story of the foundation of the Institute is so important. But the period from ca. 1700 to ca. 1714 is certainly as dramatic and important and, in many ways, more revealing of who De La Salle was. These years were in large part an unhappy time for the Founder, beset with the failure in Marseilles, the Clément affair, and his alienation from the Brothers, but they were also the time of De La Salle's great literary productivity and when the Institute began to assume a national identity. The exotic and violent *Midi* was the focus of much of this activity. De La Salle introduced the Brothers there, exposing them to a very different culture and placing them in great risk of bodily harm. This is an account of another Lasallian paradox. Alongside the De La Salle who resolutely refused to engage in the public disputation so typical of the Jansenists, the social subversive who challenged so many social traditions, and the ecclesiastical innovator who was inventing a new form of religious congregation, was another who was drawn into the royal and ecclesiastical policy of conversion following the disastrous revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the War of the Camisards. Overall, education and especially primary education was the preserve of the church and local authorities, not the central state. It was through the bishops, who authorized new schools in their dioceses, that De La Salle had his substantive contacts with public policy and the central state. It is here that the French Reformation, De La Salle's relationship with Calvinism, and the episcopal catechisms converge in the form of a royal and a Lasallian narrative.¹

Put in Febvrian terms, the value of examining this convergence relies on the synthesis of history and the theology to generate new questions. How do the foundations of the Christian Schools in the south, an area so remote from the center of Lasallian activity in far northern France, reveal something significant about the Founder's life and thought, and the evolution of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools? Indeed, was the southern experience a key influence on the Institute and the French church? Did De La Salle's act as priest or Frenchman? Can these aspects of his person be separated? How do these questions relate to the traditional historiography, which tends to separate De La Salle from royal politics and episcopal authority? And how is this all more evidence of the complex paradoxes of his mental world?

The Royal Narrative

Louis XIV detested both Jansenists and Huguenots for the same reason: they failed to conform to the royal theory of "one king, one law, one faith." In his *Memoirs for the Instruction of the*

¹ On contacts between De La Salle and Louis XIV, see Yves Poutet, *Le XVIIe [i.e. Dix-septième] siècle et les origines lasalliennes, recherches sur la genèse de l'oeuvre scolaire et religieuse de Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (1651-1719)* 2 vols. (Rennes: Impr. réunies, 1970), 2: 41-8.

Dauphin, Louis wrote: “I dedicated myself to destroying Jansenism and to breaking up the communities where the spirit of novelty was developing, well-intentioned perhaps, but which seemed to want to ignore the dangerous consequences that it could have.”² For the king, religious non-conformity was not far removed from the threat of political revolt. When it came to the Calvinists his aversion was not imaginary, since the Reformers had thrown the kingdom into chaos for decades and as late as the War of the Duke de Rohan in 1629, they conducted armed resistance. In the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the document drew explicit connection between war, peace and “the troubles, the confusion, and the evils which the progress of this false religion has caused in this kingdom.”³ It is difficult to say which he disliked more: the Jansenists were schismatics, threats from within; the Huguenots were beyond the pale, a people apart. There was no people more “apart” than the Protestants who lived in the Cévennes. This is the far southeastern part of the Massif Central and boasts some of the France’s highest mountains. It is also the eastern part of the province of Languedoc whose name is derived from langue d’oc or Occitan, a romance language spoken in southern France and parts of Catalonia, and northwestern Italy. The Camisards, the peasant and pastoral Calvinists of the Cévennes, named for their distinctive white shirts (*camisa*), were thrice separate from the centers of power in Paris: by religion, by language and culture, and by history. It is no accident that Calvinism took root in this part of France as in no other. Estimates range that upwards of 90% of the population had converted to the reformed religion by the middle of the sixteenth century. This was the land of the Cathar heresy centered at Albi, in the twelfth century. These Albigensians were dualists, traceable probably to the ancient Manicheans. They provoked the Albigensian Crusade, authorized by Pope Innocent III and greedily embraced by the northern nobility, who invaded the south. One historian has categorized the crusade as a form of genocide.⁴ The memory of this religious violence lingered and was revived by the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion, which, in turn, were reignited at the time of De La Salle. Blain describes the conflict in vivid terms. “There, more than anywhere else, heresy combined with fanaticism made use of fire and sword, showing the hatred that hell inspires toward faithful members of the Roman Church. Catholics were torn to pieces, beheaded, and suffered martyrdom by new sorts of torments inflicted with unheard-of cruelty.”⁵

Alain Molinier’s analysis of wills from the Cévennes has produced some remarkable statistics. He traces the shift from a religion of works to the Protestant reform focused on the key Reformation idea of justification by faith alone. He divides his study into three periods: the age of traditional belief, 1450-1530; a period of resistance, temptation, and hesitation, 1530-1560, where those beliefs were being questioned; and the triumph of Calvinism, after 1560. This transformation took several forms. For example, the number of invocations of the saints declined from 96% in 1450-1530 to 28% in 1531-1560. The number of references to the Virgin Mary declined in exactly the same percentages. The presence of at least one priest in the will declined from 83% in 1450-1530 to 25% in 1531-1560. On the other hand, the number of invocations of the Holy Spirit increased

² *Memoirs for the Instruction of the Dauphin by Louis XIV*, trans. Paul Sonnino (New York: The Free Press, 1970), 54.

³ See the preamble, http://huguenotsweb.free.fr/english/edict_1685.htm.

⁴ Mark Gregory Pegg, *A Most Holy War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 188-9.

⁵ Jean-Baptiste Blain, *The Life of John Baptist de La Salle Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* 3 vols. ed. Luke Salm, FSC, trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2000), 555.

from 0% to 31% and of the Trinity from 0% to 30% over the same time periods. Conversion of the Cévennes had to confront the deep-seated beliefs of an alien theology.⁶

One of the things that made Calvinism so potent during the Wars of Religion was the conversion of most of the local nobility who possessed wealth, military expertise, and the capacity to bring along large numbers of clients in resistance to central authority. While the overall number of Protestants had dwindled, there were still substantial clusters in the deep south. By 1600, the diocese of Nîmes, had 11-12,000 members of the Reformed Church and only 3-4,000 Catholics. Protestants were the richer segment of society, dominating occupations such as merchants and the upper artisanate, while Catholics tended to be laborers.⁷ As early as 1584 the Jesuits appeared in this mission territory. But it was only in 1629 with the Peace of Alès that confessional war ended, or rather was suspended. In the meantime, the cathedral had been destroyed in 1621 and Nîmes, along with the entire region of Bas-Languedoc, was the center of the most vibrant Protestant culture in France.⁸ The Counter Reformation only began with Bishop Cohon in 1634 who implemented the decrees of the Council of Trent. He reformed the clergy, established a seminary in 1667 and an Ursuline convent in 1637.⁹ But the old pattern continued: every assertion of Catholic power was met with stiff Protestant resistance. But then something new happened in 1685.

The strategy of Henry IV (reigned, 1589-1610), Louis' grandfather, was to issue the Edict of Nantes (1598), establish peace, and gradually wean away the Huguenots from their religion. This was largely successful, abetted later by Richelieu's policy of reducing Protestant armed forces allowed by supplementary provisions to the Edict. Louis XIV was content to renew the Edict for several decades but by the 1680s his attitude had changed and he was determined to eliminate Protestantism from his realm. This was not an exceptional idea. The concept of "cuius regio eius religio" – that the prince would determine the religion of his realm and the people living in it – was enshrined in the Peace of Westphalia (1648). The influence of Louis' mother and that of Madame de Maintenon has been often cited as promoting the king's religiosity in his later years. The deaths of Mazarin in 1661 and Colbert in 1683, both of whom advocated toleration of the reformed religion, are another possible contributing cause. But the most plausible explanation for the change in royal policy was the clergy, the First Estate. By the 1650s, indeed in 1651, 1654, 1655-57, 1660, and 1665, the General Assembly of the Clergy issued increasingly militant appeals to the king to strictly enforce the Edict of Nantes, complaining of Huguenot "innovations" such as the building of illegal Protestant temples. The bishops chose Jacques Adhémar de Monteil de Grignan – bishop of Uzès, one of a bevy of Grignan bishops favored by Louis – as their principal spokesman, most likely because his diocese was among the most Protestant. In response, the king issued an edict in 1666 imposing a series of restrictions on Protestants including a prohibition on building new temples and a requirement to use "RPR," *Religion Prétendue Réformée*, (the Supposed or So-Called Reformed Religion) in all official documents. The idea of the sacral monarchy was at stake: "From the lowest priest to the highest archbishop at Court, the Roman Catholic clergy viewed any law that tolerated heresy as a violation of the King's coronation

⁶ Alain Molinier, "De la religion des œuvres à la Reformation dans les Cévennes (1450-1600)," *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France* 72 (1986): 245-263, especially Table 1, 256.

⁷ Robert Sauzet, *Chronique des frères ennemis* (Caen : Paradigme, 1992), 25.

⁸ Sauzet, *Chronique des frères ennemis*, 29.

⁹ Sauzet, *Chronique des frères ennemis*, 31

oath.”¹⁰ The main disagreement among the clergy was over tactics: better to use force or persuasion? This question is essential to explore. But first to the culmination of this process in October 1685 with the issue of the Edict of Fontainebleau. 90

The Edict was made up of 12 articles: the first formally revoked the Edict of Nantes and the Edict of Nîmes (1629), signed by Louis XIII. The second and third article forbade all Protestants, especially the nobility, from practicing their religion publicly or privately. The fourth banished pastors, who had to leave the country within two weeks; the seventh banned Protestant schools, and the eighth required children of the Reformed religion to be baptized and educated in the Catholic faith.¹¹ The Edict systematically dismantled the Calvinist church, placed the lives of the new converts under the supervision of church and state, from cradle to grave, and enforced its policy with a combination of repressive measures and inducements to convert. This was the royal policy.

By the 1660s tensions between Protestants and Catholics in the Cévennes had already been rising. The French Reformation was in full swing, the clergy's increased pressure on the king to restrict Calvinist worship was having its effect, and Catholicism was relatively weak and poor in the region. While royal policies were gradually reducing the number of Protestants in the country, in the Cévennes their number actually increased.¹² Prelates hesitated to enter into this foreign and troublesome realm. The bishop of Lavaur, writing to his patron, confided that he would decline any transfer to Mende or anywhere else in Languedoc because “the volume of business that one is engulfed by in the dioceses of Languedoc is not one that suits me... and the burden is intolerable.” Later, Esprit Fléchier first declined his assignment to become bishop of Nîmes but was persuaded to reconsider.¹³ Being a Catholic bishop in the land of the Camisards was not for the faint of heart. The Edict of Fontainebleau triggered these latent tensions into full-blown war and not only stimulated conflict between the confessions, but had a profound effect on the Camisards themselves. The unintended consequence of forcing the reformed pastors to leave France created a leadership vacuum, filled in large part by women. The family, not the temple, became the principal place of worship and instruction, not at all an idea foreign to Calvinism, while mothers instead of fathers became the most effective means of handing down the faith. As a result, the Cévennes had a particularly militant and millenarian form of Calvinism, where women in particular played the role of “prophets.” The Catholics perceived the Camisards as fanatics. This idea was greatly popularized by Jean-Baptiste Louvreur's *Histoire du fanatisme renouvelé*, first published in 1703, and then enlarged and published in several other editions.¹⁴ Fanaticism on both sides was never very far from the surface.

¹⁰ Pierre Blet, S.J. *Le clergé du Grand Siècle en ses assemblées (1615-1715)* (Paris : Éditions du Cerf, 1995), on the bishop of Uzès, 109-114. Brian Strayer, *Huguenots and Camisards as Aliens in France, 1598-1789: The Struggle for Religious Toleration* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 2001.), 115, for restrictions on the RPR; 165 on the king's coronation oath.

¹¹ For a translated version of the text see http://huguenotsweb.free.fr/english/edict_1685.htm, (accessed 18 February 2016.)

¹² W. Gregory Monahan, *Let God Arise: The War and Rebellion of the Camisards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 12.

¹³ Quoted by Joseph Bergin, Crown, *Church and Episcopate under Louis XIV* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 217; on Fléchier, 412.

¹⁴ Jean Baptiste Louvreur, *Histoire du fanatisme renouvelé, où l'on raconte fidelement les sacrileges, les incendies, & les meurtres commis dans les Cevennes, & les châtimens qui en ont été faits*. A modern edition has been published edited by Patrick Cabanel (Les Montpellier: Presses du Languedoc, 2001). An English translation was quickly

Royal policy was particularly violent and coercive, balanced somewhat with promises of tax relief, suspension of fines, and dangled royal offices. On the other hand, memories of Protestants as a contagion that threatened the body social were easily revived, bringing about the brutal consequences of the dragoons and the galleys. The *dragons* were recruited from the dregs of society; taverns and convicted criminals were favorite sources. The key strategy consisted in billeting the dragoons in households of Protestants who resisted conversion. There, they ate up the family's food, stole its money and possessions, destroyed property, even tortured and raped, depending on the amount of supervision and the ruthlessness of the local official. The dragoons were considered "booted missionaries" (*missionnaires bottés*) or for the more sympathetic "missionaries from hell" in the quest for religious uniformity. The Edict of Fontainebleau stipulated that violators were punished, women by prison, men by the galleys. In addition to Turks and common criminals, Protestants who refused to abjure their faith were sentenced to the galleys for a number of years or for life. Two to five hundred rowers were chained to their oars where they ate and slept, exposed to the elements, ill-clothed and ill-fed. Mortality rates approached 50% and members of the reformed religion were especially selected for harsh treatment.¹⁵ Ultimately, the Edict of Fontainebleau was a disaster. Early expectations of conversion proved illusory. When conversions did occur, it was clear that most of the "New Catholics" were converts in name only and continued to be even more attached to Calvinist beliefs than before. When forced to attend Mass they averted their eyes at the consecration and otherwise practiced subtle defiance. The memoir of Jean Cavalier, one of the most dashing of the Camisard military leaders, reveals the sophisticated strategies parents, especially women, developed to counteract systematically efforts to convert the children to Catholicism.

MY Mother being one of those who would not abjure their Religion my eldest Brother and I were oblig'd to go to School to one of these Missionaries, to whom the King had assigned a certain Sallary which the Parents were obliged to pay in proportion to their Ability ... My Father paid for a long Time for us till we were perfectly well instructed in the Roman Religion ... I went for six Years successively from one School to another for as soon as our Vicar saw I was well instructed my Father got leave to send us to another School. Having got a little more liberty I was very often at my Father's House the Priests believing we were good Romans and then my Mother us'd to instruct us in her Religion and to explain to us the Errors of Popery which she was very capable of doing as understanding perfectly well the holy Scriptures: She would dispute on Matters of Religion with the Missionaries who came to Preach at our House and would often confound them which occasion'd great Persecutions against her and cost my Father (who was very timorous and who went to Mass to shun the cruel Persecutions) a vast deal of Money. We continued to go to School however and consequently to Mass: But my Mother's instructions ran in my Head and altho' very young, I began to have some Distaste for the apish Tricks at Mass; such as Ringing a small Bell under the Priest's Robe during the Elevation of the Host; all

published, Jean-Baptiste Louvreur, *The History of the Rise and Downfal of the Camisars Giving an Account of Their False Pretences to Prophecy and Inspiration, Their Brutish Carnality, Their Many Bloody and Inhuman Murders and Massacres of Persons of All Ages, Sexes and Conditions, and Their Horrid Devastations of Towns and Villages by Fire. Collected from Original Letters, and the Testimony of Ey-Witnesses* (London: Printed for the Booksellers of London and Westminster, 1709).

¹⁵ Strayer, *Huguenots and Camisards*, on dragoons, 207-225, especially n. 108; on galleys, 238-249.

the Bows one must make before the Altar, all the Poms of their Churches; in short I found them all very ridiculous...¹⁶

Hundreds of thousands of Protestants fled the country taking their talent and wealth with them. The dragoons, galleys, and other forms of intimidation and violence were a propaganda nightmare for the Sun King, who was virulently attacked in print as a bloodthirsty tyrant. Eventually, it provoked the Camisard revolt, the most serious domestic revolt during Louis' reign save for the Fronde. The Camisards formed local armies, adopted guerilla tactics in the mountains they knew so well, and took special delight in murdering priests. Pacifying this insurrection siphoned off resources that threatened the conduct of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) and the king's policy goals.¹⁷

Louis appointed Nicholas Lamoignon de Basville, scion of a very prominent robe family, intendant of Languedoc just months before the issue of the Edict of Fontainebleau. Energetic, dedicated, and incorruptible, he presided over the province for thirty-three years. Early on, in 1698, he produced a detailed survey of the province. Haut-Languedoc consisted of eleven dioceses and relatively few Protestants; while Bas-Languedoc, the eastern part roughly contiguous with the Cévennes, had twelve. It was the heartland of the Camisards. The diocese of Mende contained 173 parishes. Basville described it as nearly all mountain and the very heart of the Camisard uprising. The diocese of Alès (formerly known as Alais) contained ninety-one parishes.¹⁸ It was mainly mountainous, but parts were well cultivated and it was the richest canton of the province. The dioceses of Nîmes and Alès had the largest number of New Catholics, indeed in Nîmes they were virtually equal with 39,665 Protestants against 40,720 Catholics. In Alès, Protestants were actually in the majority, 41,766 against 30,390. In Mende there were 128,302 Catholics and 18,189 Protestants; and in Uzès, where Les Vans is located, 78,502 Catholics and 23,112 Protestants.¹⁹

The Lasallian Narrative

The following table arranges events chronologically aligning royal ones with Lasallian developments. It indicates just how intimately integrated the two narratives were. It is clear that De La Salle decided to enter into the *Midi* in the midst of its most violent revolt.

¹⁶ Jean Cavalier, *Memoirs of the Wars of the Cevennes under Col. Cavalier in Defence of the Protestants Persecuted in that Country* (London: John Clark, 1727), 9-11, original spelling preserved.

¹⁷ Strayer, *Huguenots and Camisards*, 259-60.

¹⁸ On Alès see Yves Poutet, "Alès et Saint J.B. de La Salle, les vieux quartiers disparaissent," *Cahiers lasalliens* 44, (1999) 194-200. (Reprint from the newspaper *Le Méridonal*, 27, 28 août, 1962).

¹⁹ These figures are derived from Maurice Wilkinson, "Survey of Languedoc in 1698 by Lamoignon de Bâville, Intendant of the Two Généralités of Toulouse and Montpellier," *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London* 12 (1917-1924): 169-170 and Henry Baird, *The Huguenots and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*. 2 vols. (New York: Scribners, 1895), 2: 217 n. 2, whose figures sometimes slightly disagree.

A COMPARISON OF TIMELINES, OF ROYAL AND LASALLIAN EVENTS THAT CONSTITUTE THE ROYAL AND LASALLIAN NARRATIVES	
22 October 1685	Edict of Fontainebleau revokes Edict of Nantes.
1694	Diocese of Alès created out of diocese of Nîmes.
7 January 1699	Royal instruction to bishops to avoid all invective and harsh debates.
1699–1700	Second wave of Huguenot persecution.
29 July 1702	Assassination of the Abbé du Chayla begins Camisard Revolt.
February 1703	Rome permits priests in diocese of Alès to carry weapons.
Early 1703	Christian School in Avignon founded.
14 August 1704	Death of Roland Laporte effectively ends Camisard Revolt.
28 March 1707	Christian School in Mende founded.
September 1707	Christian School in Alès founded.
Summer 1709	Second Camisard insurrection.
October 1711	Christian School in Les Vans founded.
11 February 1711	De La Salle leaves for the South.
31 March 1712	Judgment against De La Salle handed down in Paris: the Clément Affair.
1 June 1712	De La Salle on second journey south arrives in Marseilles.
March 1714	De La Salle meets Sister Louise at Parménie.
1 April 1714	Letter of Principal Brothers orders De La Salle to return to Paris; 10 August 1714, De La Salle arrives in Paris.
8 March 1715	Edict declaring all former members of the RPR are now Catholics effectively concludes the Reformation.

It is difficult to believe that De La Salle was ignorant of the circumstances into which he was placing the Brothers. The story of the royal narrative was known to every Frenchman. As a priest, he would have been aware of the attitude and acts of the Assembly of Clergy and its implementation of royal policy. It is similarly implausible to present De La Salle as the faithful and respectful subordinate of episcopal authority and then immunize him from that authority. Francois-Elie Maillefer's account is a good place to begin illustrating De La Salle's active embrace of the Christian School as mission. Maillefer mentions that "certain highly respected and virtuous persons" were interested in attracting the Brothers' gratuitous schools.²⁰ This almost certainly refers to bishops, for in the case of Avignon, Mende, Alès, and Les Vans, Maillefer makes clear that the initiative came from the bishops or their subordinates. This is important because it connects De La Salle to the bishops' agenda and that of the Assembly of Clergy, as agents of ancien régime

²⁰ This section is based largely on Maillefer's *The Life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle in John Baptist de La Salle: Two Early Biographies* ed. Paul Grass, FSC, trans. William J. Quinn, FSC, rev. and notes, Donald Mouton, FSC, (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), 134-45.

public authority. Yves Poutet points out that from 1679-1699 the Brothers established relationships with three or four bishops, while between 1700-1711 they associated with fourteen more.²¹ 94 Gradually and progressively De La Salle was aligning the Institute more with diocesan institutions. In the case of Alès, Maillefer notes that the bishop, Francois Chevalier de Saulx, had obtained royal funds to set up a school which he entrusted to the Brothers, thus linking the Christian Schools to the royal agenda in a quite specific way.²² Maillefer's suggestion that De La Salle overcame his caution and accepted the episcopal invitations only because he could no longer politely refuse is unconvincing because it suggests that he did not fully understand the nature of the violence caused by the Edict of Fontainebleau. No, this was not a matter of politeness, De La Salle knew exactly what he was doing and the challenges he was about to take on.

De La Salle entered into the *Midi* amidst a broad strategy to link the Christian Schools to the institutional church. The first step was establishing a school in Avignon. It was a canny move. Avignon was not part of France but was owned by the papacy, going back to when the popes resided there in the fourteenth century. So, the city was both a bulwark of Catholicism in the south and an entrée into the Vatican central bureaucracy. To this end he had sent Gabriel Drolin to Rome to open a school, not coincidentally the year before, and this Brother remained there for twenty-six years. It is also no coincidence that in his letter of 11 February 1705 De La Salle wrote to Drolin asking him for news of the Roman initiative and then immediately told him the news of the "fine progress" being made in Avignon.²³ Four Brothers were sent to staff the school, and the Archbishop and papal nuncio, Lorenzo Fieschi, personally blessed them. In his next letter to Drolin, 27 April 1705, De La Salle mentions that Fieschi was returning to Italy to become Archbishop of Genoa and cardinal and that he had assured De La Salle that he would look after the Brothers' interests in Rome. Avignon was also a convenient physical link between the Institutes new headquarters in Rouen (1705) and those established in the Camisard heartland, a sort of secondary headquarters. On both of his trips south De La Salle stopped first in Avignon, using it as a launchpad to the "mission" schools in Mende, Alès, and Les Vans.²⁴

If De La Salle understood the nature and consequences of the Edict of Fontainebleau and decided to commit his still very limited resources, what was his purpose? Maillefer quotes a letter from the bishop of Mende, Francois-Placide Baudry de Piencourt, to De La Salle, "that good teachers give the first impressions of piety and the Christian religion." Maillefer comments on how much the bishop "saw clearly that the schools would be a great help to his people in preserving them from the poison of heresy."²⁵ The bishop of Alès, François-Maurice de Sault, who had been active in the Cévennes missions back in the mid-1680s, had a concrete plan for converting the Protestants

²¹ Poutet, *Le XVIIe siècle et les origines lasalliennes*, 2 : chapter 2.

²² Bergin, *Crown, Church and Episcopate*, 398-9.

²³ On Drolin sent to Rome Luke Salm, FSC, *The Work is Yours* 2nd ed. (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Publications, 1996), 90-92. Letter of De La Salle to Drolin, no. 16 (11 February 1705) in *The Letters of John Baptist de La Salle*, ed. Augustine Loes, FSC, trans. Colman Molloy, FSC, (Romeoville, IL: Lasallian Publications, 1988), 67-68. Both Maillefer and Blain get the chronology wrong and attribute the foundation in Avignon to François-Maurice Gontery who became archbishop in 1706. It was Lorenzo (or Laurent) Fieschi who was archbishop in 1703. See Maillefer, *Two Early Biographies*, 242 and Blain, *The Life of John Baptist De La Salle*, 410.

²⁴ Henri Bédel, FSC, *An Introduction to the History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools: The Origins, 1651-1726* trans. Allen Geppert, FSC (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 1996), 155, 164

²⁵ Maillefer, *Two Early Biographies*, 137, letter of 8 April 1707. On François-Placide Baudry de Piencourt, Bergin, *Crown, Church and Episcopate*, 375-6.

through instruction. The missionary nature of the instruction strategy was especially clear in the founding of the school in Les Vans, for Maillefer writes that the Abbé de Saint-Jean “was motivated by his zeal for the conversion of the heretics in his part of the country.”²⁶ By accepting the bishops’ invitations De La Salle was committing the Brothers to a grand national missionary effort to convert the Camisards to the Catholic faith through instruction. The editor of Maillefer’s life wrote that “De La Salle did not envisage a missionary school in the strict sense of the term of bringing people from one religion into another. For him, “conversion” concerned primarily those who were already Catholic...”²⁷ This is true enough in that the charism of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was not focused on the foreign missions and France was overwhelmingly Catholic, but the Edict of Fontainebleau had abolished the *Religion Prétendue Réformée*, so legally there were no longer Protestants in France and its former members were now considered to be “New Catholics,” subject to the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church.²⁸ These technicalities miss the more salient point that the Cévenne was religious and cultural mission territory and that the Brothers were especially valued as missionary catechists.

Blain’s account of the foundation of the southern schools is greatly expanded and filled with many pieties, but it also includes some valuable references to letters sent to De La Salle by episcopal authorities. For the most part, Blain confirms the account of Maillefer, the invitation to establish the school in Avignon and De La Salle’s plan to go to Italy to visit Drolin and to initiate contact with the Roman curia. Blain also confirms a strategic motivation of the Founder in a roundabout way when he notes that both the treasurer and bishop were later instrumental in putting in a good word in Rome when the Brothers applied for the papal Bull of Approbation.

Blain is more connected to the French politics of the time than Maillefer, indeed he carefully lays out the united strategy of church and state to convert the Camisards. He praises the “laudable project” of the king, “who took the right measures.”

Two kinds of people, very different from each other, were needed in order to accomplish this task: soldiers and evangelical laborers (*Ouvriers Evangéliques*). The former had to keep the rebels subdued while the latter taught them and tried to deliver them from their errors. Without the former the latter were in danger of becoming the victims of that false zeal, which is so easily kindled. Without the latter, the former would have succeeded only in fomenting more disorder and in increasing irreligion.²⁹

He also notes the important role of Father Merez, a former canon of Nîmes noted for his zeal to convert the Huguenots, and who was appointed vicar general of Alès by Bishop François-Maurice de Sault. Merez knew De La Salle from when they both attended the seminary of Saint Sulpice and recommended him to the bishop. Quoting from Merez’s letter of invitation, Blain makes clear that what the bishops wanted were catechists.

²⁶ Maillefer, *Two Early Biographies*, 144.

²⁷ Maillefer, *Two Early Biographies*, 242, n. 249.

²⁸ Strayer, *Huguenots and Camisards*, 269. The Edict of 8 March 1715 confirmed this retroactively. It was also a fiction and tacit acknowledgement that the efforts to destroy the RPR had failed and that it was alive and well, Strayer, *Huguenots and Camisards*, 321.

²⁹ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 556.

“It is difficult for us to find Catholic teachers to whom we can entrust the education of the young. The problem is to root out heresy in this area and to establish the Catholic religion. The diocese of Alais is almost entirely Huguenot and so has a crying need for good workers to re-establish religion here through the education of the children ... We have men who can preach, but we lack catechists.”³⁰

Blain embeds De La Salle’s decision to send Brothers to Alès in a French national strategy coordinated by state and church, and states that he welcomed the invitation “with no little joy” and as an “opportunity of satisfying his zeal for the extirpation of heresy.” In so doing, he also reminds us that teaching catechism was essential to the Christian Schools and the formation of the Brothers, and as Merez illustrates, they were perceived and valued as such. The needs of the Huguenot-dominated dioceses and the special skills of the Brothers and their schools were beginning to merge.³¹

Les Vans: A Case Study

Both Maillefer and Blain make clear that the bishops invited De La Salle to send the Brothers south to establish Christian Schools as part of a huge missionary effort to convert the children of the New Catholics. The case of Les Vans is especially instructive. In 1560 Reformers began to seize control of the area surrounding Les Vans. By 1563 they occupied the city. Not only the populace but also the bishop and his entire chapter apostatized. Only the vicar general remained faithful to the Church and for more than half a century Catholicism ceased to exist in the town. Only in 1629 did Louis XIII succeed in razing the fortifications and restoring Catholicism. The cathedral was rebuilt in 1665 on the ruins of the Protestant church. Slowly, Catholicism grew. In 1719 there were three hundred hearths, 1500 Catholics and 500 to 600 Protestants. Only lay teachers operated before 1711.

Maillefer much more than Blain explains the role of Vincent du Roure d’Elze, Seigneur de Saint-Jean d’Elze who left all of his worldly possessions to the Brothers for the purpose of establishing a school in the town. Descended from an illustrious family from the diocese of Viviers, Languedoc, the ancestral home of d’Elze was at the time in the diocese of Uzès. The abbé was a *dévot*, dedicated to wearing a hair shirt and applying the cilice. Motivated by his ardent zeal for the Christian education of children, a task which he considered essential for the moral restoration of the country, he was filled with admiration for the results obtained in the Brothers’ classes in Avignon. In recompense for the scandal of the apostasy of his ancestors converting to Calvinism, he resolved to found at his own expense a Christian School in favor of the people of Les Vans, where he had spent part of his youth.³² His will contained the following:

³⁰ Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 558.

³¹ On the important role of catechetical teaching to the Christian Schools and Brothers’ formation, Gerard Rummery, “The Lasallian Catechetical Heritage in its Origins.” *AXIS*, 4, no. 3 (2013), <http://axis.smumn.edu/index.php/axis/article/view/88/174>, (accessed 6/28/2017).

³² “Les Frères dans la ville des Vans,” *Bulletin des Écoles Chrétiennes*, 1 (1923) :17 – 21. “Animé d’un zèle ardent pour l’éducation chrétienne de l’enfance, œuvre qu’il estimait essentielle pour la restauration morale du pays ; rempli d’admiration pour les résultats obtenus dans leurs classes par nos Frères d’Avignon ; ayant à cœur de réparer le scandale produit en 1563 par l’apostasie d’un des membres de sa famille, il résolut de fonder à ses frais une École Chrétienne en faveur de la population des Vans, au milieu de laquelle il avait passé une partie de son enfance.” The

Everything under the approval of the Lord Bishop and the Count of Uzès or their successors in the bishopric, charging said Brothers thus established with the care of the instruction of the youth of said city in order to train them in piety and to give them the principles of the Catholic religion, convinced as I am that the majority of the young children of the said city, by the lack of education, fall into dissoluteness, and being born in the bosom of heresy have no feeling for nor cognizance of the Catholic religion, the fatal cause of all their dissoluteness and licentiousness. And it is to prevent this misfortune that I am founding in perpetuity the establishment of the said Brothers, with the charge to them and their successors in perpetuity to raise the youth of the city of Vans in good morals and in the principles of the Catholic religion.³³

Upon the Abbé's death, De La Salle received word of the bequest. In January 1711 he sent Brother Ponce, Visitor of the Midi, to Les Vans so that he could negotiate the provision of a building and furniture for the school with the city council. Brother René, the first director, arrived in September. He was followed by Brother Henri. There was considerable animosity to the Brothers' ministry, culminating in the "three days of siege."³⁴

On a morning in March 1712 there were ominous signs that something was wrong. Armed men were keeping watch; streets were deserted, the doors and windows boarded up; merchants carefully closed their shops. "It seemed that day the sun had to light a city without inhabitants."³⁵ At the entrance of the adjacent streets huge barricades were built made of materials of all kinds: planks, slates, stones, broken tables and benches, old casks filled with sand or earth. A crowd of 4-500 people, armed, more than a third of the population of the town, approached the Brothers' school. They brandished spades, forks and crowbars; they "screamed and yelled, uttering blasphemies and death songs. For three days they besieged the School of the Brothers."³⁶

The Protestants were aroused; no one had consulted them. The Brothers taught French (the language of oppression) and religion (the idolatrous faith), it was difficult to know which was worse. By the third day the school had been reduced to a very bad condition. "The small cross surmounting the threshold was broken. Tile, slate, glass or wood splinters littered the ground, mixed with stones and stakes of the attackers. The shutters hung miserably on their shaken hinges;

article credits the research of Father Canaud, honorary canon of Viviers, whose historical notes appeared in the *Viviers Religious Weekly*. The article also references an earlier one in the *La Croix de Ardèche*, 11 March 1900, under the title "Trois jours de siege." I thank Brother Alain Houry, FSC of the Les Archives Lasalliennes de France à Lyon for furnishing me with this source.

³³ "Les Frères dans la ville des Vans," 16. « Le tout sous l'approbation de Monseigneur l'Evesque et comte d'Uzès ou de ses successeurs dans l'évesché, chargeant lesdits Frères ainsi établis du soin de l'Instruction de la Jeunesse de ladite Ville, pour la former à la piété et lui donner les principes de la religion Catholique, persuadé que je suis que la plupart <les jeunes enfants de ladite Ville, par le défaut d'éducation, tombent dans le dérèglement des mœurs, et étant nés dans le sein de l'hérésie n'ont aucun sentiment ni connaissance de la Religion Catholique, cause funeste de tous leurs dérèglements et désordres. Et c'est pour prévenir ce malheur que je fonde à perpétuité l'Établissement desdits Frères, à la charge par eux et leurs successeurs à perpétuité d'élever la Jeunesse de la Ville des Vans dans les bonnes mœurs et dans les principes de la Religion Catholique. »

³⁴ "Les Frères dans la ville des Vans," 17 – 21.

³⁵ "Les Frères dans la ville des Vans," 18, « il semblait que ce jour-là le soleil dût éclairer une ville sans habitants. »

³⁶ "Les Frères dans la ville des Vans," 19. "Entre ces barrières menaçantes, une foule de 4 à 500 personnes armées de piques, de fourches et de leviers criait et hurlait, proférant des blasphèmes et des chants de mort. Depuis trois jours, on assiégeait l'École des Frères."

and one could predict the moment when the furious Protestants would gain entrance to the school to ransack and martyr the people.” The crowd shouted “Down with the School! Death to the Brothers! Fire!”³⁷ 98

Suddenly, at the sound of trumpets troops marched in. An officer addressed the crowd, “... in clear and energetic terms, he called upon the rioters to disperse, to return to their home quietly, and to avoid any future hostile demonstration against the Brothers, who were the benefactors of the town, and so the municipality had decided to act vigorously with the support of the troops.”³⁸

Congruent with his strong sense of the oppression of the faith in the world, De La Salle rejoiced to learn that his followers had suffered persecution for the sake of justice. Considering the siege as a sign of heavenly goodwill for his followers, he congratulated Brothers René and Maximin for their attitude full of courage and moderation in such perilous circumstances.³⁹ The Brothers acted within the Christian missionary tradition as they faced possible martyrdom. The evidence is convincing. The mission to convert the Camisards set off a violent revolt into which De La Salle sent the Brothers at episcopal request. In this he acted as both priest and Frenchman, for within the sacral monarchy where the king had sworn to suppress heresy as part of his sacred duty, it was impossible to act otherwise.

Counter-Reformation Missionary Zeal

If De La Salle opened the southern schools at the behest of the southern bishops; and if the bishops were operating within the national policy to extirpate heresy from the realm, seeking the Brothers as catechists; and if De La Salle viewed the southern schools as part of a broad strategy to engage the institutional church, then there was an even broader context into which all of these actions should be placed. The Council of Trent stimulated an enormous European-wide mission to the rural poor. This was a concentrated program of Catholic revivalism, based in part on the importance of the religious instruction of children and therefore the need for schools, schoolmasters, and catechists. Within a French context, Jean Eudes and the Eudists connected mission to the French school of spirituality.⁴⁰ How could it be possible to reform the church and

³⁷ Les Frères dans la ville des Vans,” 20. « Le siège l’avait d’ailleurs réduite en fort mauvais état. La petite croix qui surmontait le seuil était brisée. Tuiles, ardoises, éclats de verre ou de bois jonchaient le sol, mêlés aux pierres et aux piquets des assaillants. Les contrevents pendaient de façon lamentable sur leurs gonds ébranlés ; et l’on pouvait prévoir le moment où les protestants furieux pénétreraient dans l’École pour la saccager et en martyriser les habitants.” « A bas l’École ! mort aux Frères ! ... Le feu ! »

³⁸ “En termes nets et énergiques, il somma les émeutiers de se disperser, de regagner sans bruit leur demeure, d’éviter à l’avenir toute manifestation hostile contre les Frères, qui étaient les bienfaiteurs du pays, car la municipalité était décidée à agir vigoureusement avec l’appui de la troupe.” Les Frères dans la ville des Vans,” 20,

³⁹ “Les Frères dans la ville des Vans,” 21. “Jean-Baptiste de La Salle se réjouit d’apprendre que ses disciples avaient ainsi souffert persécution pour la justice. Considérant cette épreuve comme une marque de la bienveillance céleste sur sa Congrégation, il félicita les Frères René et Maximin de l’attitude pleine de courage et de modération qu’ils avaient gardée dans cette périlleuse circonstance.”

⁴⁰ Louis Chatellier, *The Religion of the Poor, Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500-c.1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), on the importance of schools, 55; on Eudes and Eudists, 45. On mission as revival, Andrew Barnes, review of *The Religion of the Poor, Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500-c.1800* by Louis Chatellier, *Journal of Social History* 33 no. 4 (Summer, 2000): 1013.

ignore heretics who lived among it and who were murdering priests? The Marquise de Sévigné proclaimed that the dragoons were good missionaries and the preachers would complete the work, “Everybody is a missionary,” she said, all of France was a nation of missionaries, dedicated to a sacred task.⁴¹ If the Edict of Fontainebleau’s ultimate purpose was shared by most, the best means to achieve conversion was not. An enormous propaganda effort led to the publication of a large number of books and pamphlets arguing the superior truth of Catholicism. Others advocated tougher measures, a kind of “holy violence” embodied by the dragoons as “booted missionaries.” More subtly, Louis XIV had created the *Caisse des Conversions* in 1676, a bank that in effect bribed Huguenots to convert. Upon signing a certificate of abjuration a pension would be granted to New Catholics.⁴²

The missionary ideology of conversion was, of course, supported by the church and was especially strong in the parts of France where Catholicism was a mission religion. Thus, Bishops and clergy like Father Merez and the Abbé d’Elze were highly motivated to convert the Huguenots in the Cévennes. John Baptist de La Salle, priest, doctor of theology, founder of a religious society, would have understood this Counter Reformation missionary zeal better than most, indeed there are at least two instances where De La Salle himself acted as “missionary.” The first is the account of the conversion of the Chevalier d’Armetat, a German, Lutheran aristocrat who was subsequently possessed by a demon and exorcised by the Founder.⁴³ But the better and more successful example is the conversion of the Young Dutchman. De La Salle met him on his way back to Paris from Reims, found him engaging, paid his way, and gave him a room in the novitiate at Vaugirard. He then employed a number of conversion strategies, catechizing him in the faith, praying, fasting, and mortifying himself, spending “considerable amounts of time with him during the day and into the night.”⁴⁴ This was in effect a more intense program of conversion, similar to the one the Brothers were practicing in the classroom, but on a one-to-one basis. After three months, the young man abjured his Calvinist faith and eventually returned home to convert his entire family to Catholicism. In Blain’s version, the young man is a Scotsman and De La Salle was “inspired to try to convert him,” and was “overjoyed at his conversion.” Someone who exhibited such personal zeal to save the soul of a single heretic would have embraced the idea of employing the Christian Schools to save the children of the Camisards from eternal damnation.

Bishop Esprit Fléchier

“Everybody is a missionary.” From 1685 to the death of the king in 1715, the government of Louis XIV, urged on by the General Assembly of Clergy engaged in a national missionary effort to convert Calvinists to the Catholic faith. As a *dévot* John Baptist de La Salle took special interest in this project, committing precious resources far from his base of operation in northern France. Twice De La Salle travelled south to visit the “missions,” placing his life in danger as he walked the roads deep in Camisard territory. In the vicious war between the Camisards and Catholics each act of violence led to another, more violent reprisal. In December 1702 alone renegade groups

⁴¹ Cited by Strayer, *Huguenots and Camisards*, 222-223.

⁴² Strayer, *Huguenots and Camisards*, 339.

⁴³ Blain, *The Life of De La Salle*, 667-670 and Maillefer, *Two Early Biographies*, 170-72.

⁴⁴ Blain, *The Mind and Heart of John Baptist de La Salle* ed. Augustine Loes, FSC, trans. Edwin Bannon, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 2002), 285-7; Maillefer, *Two Early Biographies*, 95-97.

(Black Camisards) burned 40 Catholic churches and murdered 80 Catholic priests.⁴⁵ De La Salle placed his life and those of the Brothers on the line to promote the conversion of the Camisards. 100 In that great national effort, the only debate among the *dévots* was one of tactics, whether to use force or persuasion. Which did De La Salle favor? He wrote nothing that we know of on the subject, and his letters reveal little. In light of this void, there is recourse to the words of Esprit Fléchier, bishop of Nîmes, famous orator and writer of hundreds of letters.⁴⁶ As the principal spokesman for the French hierarchy on the mission to convert the Huguenots, he gives voice to De La Salle.

Persuasion or repression? That was the question. The Camisards in particular had proven themselves impervious to all threats and inducements over the course of the seventeenth century. When faced with the use of force they responded in kind and fought a successful guerilla war against the king's forces from 1702-1705/1710.⁴⁷ Could they be beaten into submission? And if they did submit would it be a sincere conversion? Sometime in 1698, when it was already clear that the Edict of Fontainebleau was not going to eliminate the Calvinists as quickly as hoped, Bishop Fléchier wrote a long letter at the behest of the archbishop of Paris, addressed to the same, and titled "Letter in the Form of Memoir to His Grace the Archbishop of Paris, Concerning the New Converts".⁴⁸ As a commission from the archbishop, it was in effect an official report to the king from the bishops on the state of the New Catholics.

After praising the actions of the king, his concern for the salvation of his subjects' souls and his love of the Church, Fléchier reveals that there are 40,000 new converts in his diocese alone. This huge number is no doubt why he was delegated to write the report, as the most credible southern bishop, in addition to his reputation as a great preacher and stylist. He then lays out his thesis that conversion can only be successful if it is a joint effort of church and state, charity and fear. "... I acknowledge, as Saint Augustine recognized, in his time, that preaching, reason, argument, meetings, and all the offices of charity and pastoral care little advance their cure and conversion, if they are not supported by the fear of the laws and rulings of the prince."⁴⁹

The most impressive part of the letter though, is Fléchier's ability to see the Huguenots in socio-anthropological terms. They are a people apart (echoes of the duke of Saint Simon's perception) a party, a distinct culture, self-supporting, and steeped in their own ignorance. As a corporation based on belief, their conversion is a formidable challenge. Meanwhile, they violate the royal ideal of one king, one law, one religion; they reject the sacral monarchy, and so are distrusted and must

⁴⁵ Strayer, *Huguenots and Camisards*, 299.

⁴⁶ Valentin Esprit Fléchier was bishop of Nîmes from 1687 to 1710. He was especially famous for his funeral orations. A prolific writer, his *Œuvres complètes* fill ten volumes. Bergin, *Crown, Church and Episcopate*, 412.

⁴⁷ The bulk of the violence occurred between 1702 and 1704. By 1705 most of the Camisard leaders were dead, or in the case of Jean Cavalier in exile. However, sporadic fighting still occurred until 1710.

⁴⁸ Esprit Fléchier, "Lettre en forme de mémoire, à Monseigneur l'archevêque de Paris, concernant les nouveaux convertis," *notice, ou discours préliminaire, sur la vie et les ouvrages de ce célèbre orateur*, 10 vols. (Paris : Boiste fils aîné, Berquet, Dufour et C^{ie}, 1828) 10 : 258-77. "... la lettre que vous nous avez fait l'honneur de nous écrire, que le roi est dans le dessein de régler les affaires de la religion qui le regardent, et d'ordonner aux nouveaux convertis..."

⁴⁹ Fléchier, "Lettre en forme de mémoire concernant les nouveaux convertis," 260. "... je reconnois, comme saint Augustin le reconnut de son temps, que la prédication, la raison, la dispute, les conférences, et tous les offices de la charité et de la sollicitude pastorale n'avancent guère leur conversion, s'ils ne sont soutenus de la crainte des lois et des ordonnances du prince. »

be re-assimilated into the religio-political body. True conversion calls for careful, patient evangelical instruction and civil authority.

We must also persuade ourselves that what remains of Calvinism is no longer a religion but a faction (party) that supports itself as it can through concerted conspiracy where there is almost no knowledge of the mysteries, where fathers are accustomed to live without religion and without exercise of piety, and only teach their children this maxim: that it is better to do without religion than to embrace the Catholic religion. This ignorance strengthens their bias, and this forgetfulness of God always renders them more hardened. It is necessary, therefore, to weaken the faction (party), by healing their ignorance, not by odious controversies but by solid teachings and sound explanations of our mysteries, and shattering, so to speak, their hardness by a prudent but strong authority, which at least brings them down so that they can be instructed.⁵⁰

Fléchier counsels a carefully balanced approach that combines fear with instruction.

These are the two ways to bring heretics to the bosom of the Church; instruction and fear: if we act to frighten without instructing them, it would be a kind of arrogant domination; if we endeavor to educate without scaring them, they will remain hardened in their old habit. If only fear, it will raise the spirits; if only instruction, it will not raise them enough. But one can well expect their conversion, when fear is joined to beneficial doctrine, so that the light of truth chases the darkness of error, and force breaks the bonds of custom.⁵¹

For the bishop, heresy is existential rather than historical. All heresy is alike, the product of human error and so the example of Saint Augustine in his battle with the Donatists applies equally well today as it did 1200 years previously.⁵² Heresy must be destroyed, ended by the diligence and application of prelates and by the authority of the prince.⁵³ The forces of both church and state must be employed, the latter by “battle” or coercion, the former with charity. “Our ministry is a ministry of peace. We are established for edification, and not for destruction. We must remember that we live in the time of the new covenant, where one must not only have charity in the heart, but also in our works ... We must gain the confidence of our people as we are the mediators

⁵⁰ Fléchier, “Lettre en forme de mémoire concernant les nouveaux convertis,” 260-1. “Il faut se persuader aussi que ce qui reste du calvinisme n’est plus une religion, mais un parti qui se soutient comme il peut par une conspiration concertée où il n’y a presque plus de connaissance des mystères, où les pères sont accoutumés à vivre sans culte et sans exercice de piété, et n’enseignent à leurs enfants que cette maxime : Qu’il vaut mieux se passer de religion que d’embrasser la catholique. Cette ignorance fortifie leur prévention, et cet oubli de Dieu les rend toujours plus endurcis. Il faut donc affaiblir ce parti, en guérissant leur ignorance, non par des controverses odieuses, mais par des enseignements solides et par des explications judicieuses de nos mystères, et brisant, pour ainsi dire, leur endurcissement par une autorité prudente, mais forte, qui les réduise du moins à se faire instruire.”

⁵¹ Fléchier, “Lettre en forme de mémoire concernant les nouveaux convertis,” 260. “Ce sont les deux moyens de ramener les hérétiques dans le sein de l’Église ; l’instruction et la crainte : si l’on ne faisoit que les effrayer sans les instruire, ce seroit une espèce de domination orgueilleuse ; si l’on ne faisoit que les instruire sans les effrayer, ils demeureroient endurcis dans leur ancienne habitude. La crainte seule révolteroit les esprits, l’instruction seule ne les rameneroit pas assez. Mais on peut bien espérer de leur conversion, lorsqu’on joint à la crainte une doctrine salutaire, en sorte que la lumière de la vérité chasse les ténèbres de l’erreur, et que la force rompe les liens de la coutume.”

⁵² Fléchier, “Lettre en forme de mémoire concernant les nouveaux convertis,” 265.

⁵³ Fléchier, “Lettre en forme de mémoire concernant les nouveaux convertis,” 266. “... par la diligence et l’application des prélats et par l’autorité du prince.”

between God and them.⁵⁴ The former members of the *Religion Prétendue Réformée*, are not catechumens or infidels, they are no longer heretics. They are now considered New Catholics, 102 baptized in the name of Christ. By means of their public abjurations they are subject to the authority of the Church by solemn commitment. “They are considered as our brothers and our intention is to make them real Catholics.”⁵⁵

Fléchier writing to the king via the archbishop, needs to place his ideas in the context of royal policy, which he must respect. So, he refers to the former RPR as a party, something with political connotations, not in the sense of a modern political party but as a faction detached from the social body and potentially politically subversive. Fléchier is accessing the idea of the ancient sacral monarchy derived from Clovis and epitomized by Saint Louis. This is the unity of church and state that was the *ancien régime*, where heresy threatens not only individual souls, but the entire body politic while posing an existential threat to the state and the idea of “one king, one law, one religion.” While he recognizes the need for force, he advocates a moderate, balanced approach, an act of charity in concern for their souls. But it is a love tempered by the teaching authority of the magisterium and the jurisdiction that the church possesses over the New Catholics. The church has certain legal rights and moral obligations as the First Estate. Fléchier makes this still clearer in another letter.

Early in 1698 Louis XIV asked Archbishop Noailles of Paris to survey his fellow bishops on the success of the Revocation. The letter of Fléchier just examined was surely part of this process. His letter put the best face on what was a disappointing situation. The bishops were united in their insistence that the Edict of Fontainebleau should not be revoked, but they were divided over whether the most effective response to Protestant resistance was kindness and toleration or repressive force. On 13 December 1698 Louis XIV issued an edict that rejected calls to revoke the Edict of Fontainebleau but issued orders that amounted to tacit toleration. New Catholics were encouraged, not constrained, to attend Mass. A few weeks later on 7 January 1699 the king issued instructions to the bishops to avoid all invective, to focus on the Bible, and to use discernment in choosing teachers to the new converts.⁵⁶ This is the context for Fléchier’s letter of 4 June 1699 to the Marquis de Chateauneuf, Secretary of State. Indeed, the bishop mentions the edict in his second paragraph. The letter is titled “To Monsieur the Marquis de Chateauneuf on the State of the

⁵⁴ Fléchier, “Lettre en forme de mémoire concernant les nouveaux convertis,” 267. « Notre ministère est un ministère de paix. Nous sommes établis pour l’édification, et non pour la destruction. Nous devons nous souvenir que nous vivons dans le temps de la nouvelle alliance, où il faut non-seulement avoir la charité dans le cœur, mais encore dans nos œuvres... Il nous faut attirer la confiance de nos peuples ; et, comme nous sommes les médiateurs entre Dieu et eux... »).

⁵⁵ » Fléchier, “Lettre en forme de mémoire concernant les nouveaux convertis,” 269. “Ils ne sont pas dans l’état des catéchumènes ou infidèles. Ils reconnoissent Jésus-Christ par profession. Ils ont été baptisés en son nom. Ils ne sont pas non plus hérétiques déclarés, du moins ne doivent-ils pas être regardés comme tels. Ils se sont soumis à l’Église par un engagement solennel, je veux dire, par un acte public accompagné d’affirmation et de serment, sans qu’il paroisse aucune rétractation du moins publique.) Fléchier, “Lettre en forme de mémoire concernant les nouveaux convertis,” 270, « ... nous avons droit de les considérer comme nos frères... Notre intention est de faire des catholiques véritables.

⁵⁶ Strayer, *Huguenots and Camisards*, 285-89.

Religion and the Dispositions of the New Converts in their Dioceses after the Declaration of the King.⁵⁷

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This letter is more pastoral in spirit than the first, though in writing to a minister of the court it also emphasizes the advancement of the king's policy. The bishop assures the marquis that he had sent the king's orders to all the parishes in his diocese, requiring all of his pastors to explain its contents to the people and that he personally held monthly conferences laying out the methods for instructing the new converts "that conform to the rules of charity and evangelical prudence."⁵⁸ The letter affirms the importance of instructing students:

One of my first cares was to ensure the education of children, their age makes them more docile and more sensitive to the impressions of religion that we want to give them. The schools have met, but it was not without much trouble. We have seen in the parents more enforcement than ever to keep them from going to church and to learn the Catholic religion. Sometimes they use the pretext that they have to have their children with them, to make them work for the family's livelihood; sometimes they claim that their children were fourteen, and that according to the stated policy they are no longer subject to instruction or the school discipline. Fines bring them back sometimes, but you always have to have eyes on them.⁵⁹

And,

As I have seen that education was the most effective way to bring them back, I have established here a very skillful missionary who preaches all the holidays and Sundays after dinner in the cathedral. They praised and approved when they heard him; but suddenly they left the audience free to Old Catholics. They came quite assiduously to sermons from a Jesuit priest that I had brought from Paris to preach here for Lent. I sent a mission to various parts of my diocese, it has produced great fruit among Catholics, others are have not attended.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ « A M. le Marquis de Chateauneuf, sur l'état de la religion et les dispositions des nouveaux convertis de son diocèse, après les déclarations du roi. » Fléchier, "Letter to Monsieur the Marquis de Chateauneuf," *Œuvres complètes*, 10, 56-62.

⁵⁸ Fléchier, "Letter to Monsieur the Marquis de Chateauneuf," (57-8). « ... les conférences que je tiens tous les mois, la méthode qu'ils doivent suivre dans les instructions qu'ils font aux nouveaux convertis, afin qu'elles soient utiles, et qu'il n'y ait rien qui ne soit conforme aux règles de la charité et de la prudence évangéliques.

⁵⁹ Fléchier, "Letter to Monsieur the Marquis de Chateauneuf," *Œuvres complètes*, 10, 59. "Un de mes premiers soins a été de veiller à l'éducation des enfants que leur âge rend plus dociles et plus susceptibles des impressions de religion qu'on veut leur donner. Les écoles se sont remplies, mais ce n'a pas été sans beaucoup de peine. On a vu dans les parens plus d'application que jamais à les empêcher d'aller à l'église et de s'instruire de la religion catholique. Tantôt ils prétextent la nécessité qu'ils ont d'avoir leurs enfants auprès d'eux, pour les faire travailler à la subsistance domestique ; tantôt ils allèguent que leurs enfants ont quatorze ans, et que selon la déclaration ils ne sont plus sujets à l'instruction ni à la discipline de l'école. Les amendes les ramènent quelquefois, mais il faut avoir toujours les yeux sur eux."

⁶⁰ Fléchier, "Letter to Monsieur the Marquis de Chateauneuf," *Œuvres complètes*, 10 : 60-1, "Comme j'ai vu que l'instruction étoit la voie la plus efficace pour les ramener, j'ai établi ici un très-habile missionnaire qui prêche toutes les fêtes et les dimanches après dîner dans la cathédrale. Ils l'ont loué et approuvé quand ils l'ont entendu ; mais tout d'un coup ils ont laissé l'auditoire libre aux anciens catholiques. Ils sont venus assez assidûment aux sermons d'un père jésuite que j'avois fait venir de Paris pour prêcher ici le carême. J'ai envoyé une mission en divers endroits de mon diocèse, elle a fait de grands fruits parmi les catholiques, les autres n'y ont point assisté.

The next step was to embrace classroom instruction. This came in the form of a *pensée*, “Thoughts on the Requirement to Give a Christian Education to Children,” (*Pensées sur la nécessité de donner une éducation chrétienne aux enfants*). By now we are very much in the world of John Baptist de La Salle, of Calvin, and the Reformation’s concern for children and their education. The role of parents is crucial to their children’s salvation, mandated by the Council of Trent, and the proper remedy for the effects of original sin. “Fathers and mothers must repair the impurity of our origin by means of the sanctity of education... The salvation and honor of families depend on these first aids without which there is no hope on behalf of these young creatures.”⁶¹ 104

“Childhood is the age of education” (*L’enfance est l’âge de l’éducation*.) As one of the most enlightened of the southern bishops, Esprit Fléchier articulated, as official spokesman for his fellow bishops, a compromise approach to conversion, balancing force with persuasion. But as time wore on and he experienced the determined, united, and sometimes violent response of the New Catholics, he understood more clearly that the true conversion of the Calvinists was illusory. So, he shifted his attention to the children and to education. Conversion would come gradually by winning the minds and hearts of the young. This approach was reluctantly and tacitly accepted by the king in 1699.

Conclusion : De La Salle, Francité, and Bold New Claims

This was the state of the question when De La Salle sent his first Brothers to Avignon only four years later. There are good reasons to suggest that De La Salle supported the vision of the French bishops as articulated by Fléchier, and was not in serious discord with the southern bishops. One of these reasons was his Frenchness, his *francité*. Rooted in the traditional historiography is the claim that De La Salle was a man of his times, only to then focus on how truly exceptional he was. In this case, his exceptionalism took the form of dissent from the coercive royal policies toward the Camisards. We cannot deny that De La Salle was personally outstanding in many ways – we have seen much evidence of this – but he was also quite an ordinary Frenchman of his time. He had inherited the assumptions of French culture, or *francité*.

This point bears a little investigation, the first part of which is the imperfect description of the episcopal policy toward the Protestants by Calcutt who writes: “All this episcopal and royal intolerance certainly puts the Brothers in a false and painful position.”⁶² There was plenty of intolerance in the seventeenth century, typical of a time of hardened confessions, endemic revolt, and centralizing statist tendencies. But Calcutt’s failure to discern the differences between royal and episcopal attitudes (especially the more enlightened policies of bishops like Fléchier), to note the evolution of those attitudes, and to discount the ability of the bishops to convince the king to moderate his policies in the Cévennes, all set the question of De La Salle’s relationship with the southern bishops on the insecure foundation of an alleged “false and painful position” imposed on

⁶¹ Fléchier, *Œuvres complètes*, V, 447-54, especially, 447. « Les pères et les mères doivent réparer par la sainteté de l’éducation l’impureté de notre origine... Le salut et l’honneur des familles dépendent de ces premiers soins, sans lesquels il n’y a rien à espérer de la part de ces jeunes créatures. »

⁶² Alfred Calcutt, *De La Salle: A City Saint and the Liberation of the Poor Through Education: a Figure for Our Times from the Age of Louis XIV* 2nd ed. CD-ROM version (Essex, UK: Matthew James Publishing Company Limited, 2004), 628.

the Brothers that didn't quite exist. As Frenchman and priest, De La Salle accepted the authority of church and state as divinely ordained institutions. The heroic and dissenting De La Salle traditionally presented, suspiciously resembles a more modern post-Enlightenment persona than a man of the ancien régime. 105

There are three bases for the rather mythical account of the Founder's breach with the episcopacy, which supposedly threatened the well-being of the Brothers. The first is Calcutt's response to Bishop Chevalier de Saulx's letter of 28 January 1708 to De La Salle, requesting him to send a third brother to the school in Alès. Here is the original French: "Nous avons ici, Monsieur, vos Frères Maîtres d'Ecole, dont on est fort content; ce qui m'en fait souhaiter plusieurs autres, pour les répandre dans nos Villes des Cévennes & dans tous les gros lieux. Quand j'en aurois trente, je les employerois bien."⁶³ This can be translated as: "We have here, Sir, your Brothers, Masters of School, with whom we are very pleased; which makes me wish for several others, to spread them throughout our cities of the Cévennes, and in all the important places. If I would have thirty, I would use them well." The bishop is expressing his great pleasure with the work of the Brothers and adds that he could use many more, such is the great need in his diocese. He would "spread" them (note the use of the plural) in the "places of the Cévennes." Since the bishop is requesting De La Salle to send him a third brother, he understands that De La Salle could never send that large a number, so thirty simply means "many," and it is doubtful that such a mountainous and remote area as the Cévennes possessed any "places" that deserved the name cities, much less large ones. Having negotiated over the school in Alès, he had to be familiar with De La Salle's policy of always sending brothers in community, so this reference does not indicate that he wanted to scatter them, one by one, hither and yon. Yet, Calcutt responds, "[t]he Founder did send a third Brother, but he had no intention of sending Brothers singly throughout this hilly country. Had he been a fanatic for converting Protestants, he no doubt would have done so."⁶⁴ Calcutt not only assumes the veracity of this plot to disperse the Brothers, by denying that De La Salle was a "fanatic," he implies that the bishop was one. Calcutt's rejoinder is likely traceable to Poutet who refers to a "scattered apostolate," (*un apostolat dispersé*) and depicts a De La Salle doing the work of the Lord in spite of gross episcopal interference.⁶⁵ This is the second source of this conflict myth.

⁶³ Jean Baptiste Blain, *La vie de Monsieur Jean-Baptiste de La Salle instituteur des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes* (Rouen : Machuel, 1733), 52.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 629.

⁶⁵ Poutet is the principal source emphasizing the differences between De La Salle and the bishops. He writes, « Mais, là où Mérez el de Saulx ne voyaient qu'une sorte d'habileté manœuvrière pour aboutir à la catéchèse, La Salle décelait des valeurs intrinsèques. Ses Frères n'étaient pas des catéchistes dont l'école servait d'appât pour rassembler les enfants autour de leur chaire, mais des éducateurs qui ne pouvaient développer pleinement l'intelligence et le cœur de leurs élèves sans leur procurer le double aliment des connaissances profanes et religieuses. » But where Mérez and de Saulx saw only a sort of maneuvering skill in leading to catechesis, La Salle detected intrinsic values. His Brothers were not catechists whose school served as bait to gather the children around their pulpit, but educators who could not fully develop the intelligence and the heart of their pupils without giving them the double food of secular and religious knowledge. » Poutet, *les origines lasalliennes*, 202-3. Accusing the bishops of using catechesis as bait is unfair. Moreover, his argument for De La Salle's irenic spirit by citing the lack of reference to heresy in the *Meditations* is unconvincing, since its purpose was the spiritual formation of the Brothers and not the examination of religious unorthodoxy. In De La Salle's catechism, *The Duties of a Christian to God*, there are at least forty-three references to heretics in the English translation, but an examination of De La Salle's attitude toward heresy and heretics is beyond the scope of this study.

A single bishop of Alès consequently had a direct influence on the development of the Lasallian work, but it was almost confined to introducing the Brothers in the diocese. When a divergence of views appeared between the Founder of the Brothers and Bishop de Saulx, who wanted to profit from the zeal of the teachers in order to employ them in a scattered apostolate to which they were not intended, the bishop expressed his ideas but did not impose them. La Salle listened to them, then he continued on his way journey without changing direction...⁶⁶

The third element is the official English translation of this passage: “Je vous mande, Monsieur, mes sentimens, afin que vous vouliez bien que nous agissions de concert ensemble dans ce Païs perdu...” This was translated as “I send you, Monsieur, my best regards, hoping that you will lend us your help in evangelizing this unfortunate area which deserves the best efforts of your charitable zeal.”⁶⁷ But the bishop does not use the term “evangelizing.” He simply states that “I send you, Sir, my regards, so that you may want us to work together in this lost country.” From the bishop’s statement of appreciation for the Brothers’ work, a reference to the number thirty, understood as meaning “many,” (plusieurs) and a vague reference to spreading them around the diocese, due to extensive need, a tradition has been created of a resolute De La Salle, with his policy of kindness towards heretics, and a determination to protect the integrity of the Lasallian community against a straw man of episcopal intolerance and fanaticism, and a diabolical plot to strand solitary Brothers within some crusade against heresy. All of this based on an unwarranted reading of a text ostensibly for the purpose of creating a hagio-mythical John Baptist de La Salle, inbred with post-Enlightenment values of toleration and individual autonomy.

The point is relevant because it seriously and anachronistically distorts who De La Salle was – a typical priest and Frenchman. As a Tridentine priest, he would have been imbued with a deep reverence for the sacerdotal dignity, especially the centrality of the office of bishop. For the council fathers, the office of bishop was the key to church reform.⁶⁸ He would not have regarded the bishops, especially those he was working with closely, as fanatics. More specifically, much has been made of De La Salle’s connection to the French school of spirituality, in particular to the ideas of Bérulle and Olier. Both men, like De La Salle, founders of new ecclesiastical communities, were particularly interested in the episcopal office and both published on the subject and forged many close personal relationships with bishops. One of Bérulle’s most important ideas was hierarchy, for which he drew inspiration from Dionysius the Areopagite or the Pseudo Dionysius. The Neo-Platonism of Dionysius emphasized a hierarchical structure of divine and human relations, through which one could ascend to God by means of self-renunciation, an idea that must have appealed to De La Salle. Olier valued the episcopacy so much that he viewed it in terms of father, leader, and king. The bishop was like a father to his flock, guiding it to the perfection of Christian life. As king, the bishop shared in Christ’s kingship. He even used the term “absolute king” in reference to the office of bishop and was a staunch supporter of monarchical government.⁶⁹ If De La Salle was truly a man of his times and connected to the French school of

⁶⁶ Poutet, *Le XVII^e siècle et les origines lasalliennes*, 2 : 206.

⁶⁷ Blain, *Life of De la Salle*, 559.

⁶⁸ Allison Forrestal, *Fathers, Pastors and Kings, Visions of Episcopacy in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), chapter two.

⁶⁹ Allison Forrestal, “Fathers, Leaders, Kings’: Episcopacy and Episcopal Reform in the Seventeenth-Century French School,” *The Seventeenth Century* 17 (2002): 24-47. On Bérulle see especially 26-34, on Olier, 34-40.

spirituality, then he was a man who deeply respected the episcopal office and considered the monarch God's chosen on earth.⁷⁰ That De La Salle as saint did not practice power politics is true, but he certainly encountered and negotiated with it in his disputes with the guilds, the Clément affair, the courts, and in negotiating staffing schools with the bishops. De La Salle understood the ways of the world, the French world of the ancien régime and the Sun King.⁷¹ 107

Evidence of De La Salle's Frenchness, *francité*, can be discerned in his *Meditations* where he devotes space to at least four figures identified with French national consciousness. The first is Saint Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris. She was born sometime around 420 and died after 510. According to legend, her prayers diverted Attila the Hun from Paris. Clovis founded an abbey for her in which she was buried. In 1619, by order of Louis XIII, the abbey was reformed by Cardinal François de La Rochefoucauld, according to the decrees of the Council of Trent. De La Salle notes (*Meditation*, 95) her great devotion to prayer, but does not mention the Attila story. It was Geneviève who had a church built over the tomb of Saint Denis, the patron saint of France. Later, King Dagobert had Denis' remains transferred to the Abbey of Saint Denis, outside of Paris, the eventual burial place of French kings. In the feast of Saint Denis or Dionysius (*Meditation*, 175), De La Salle mixes up the Pseudo Dionysius with Denis, the third-century bishop of Paris. This was typical of the time. De La Salle attributes the conversion of France to him, for "... all he had done to procure in the kingdom the establishment of religion and the true worship of God" (175.3). De La Salle's devotion to Saint Remigius (Remy) has already been noted. In *Meditation* 171 he attributes Clovis' conversion to the saint, along with Saint Clotilda, the king's wife. Finally, De La Salle cites Saint Louis, King Louis IX, for his zeal "...for the good of the Church and his country," and his activity in the Crusades. He invokes the saint-king as a model to unite zeal for "... the good of the Church with zeal for the good of the state of which your disciples are beginning to be, and one day should be, perfect members" (*Meditation*, 160.3). While De La Salle certainly focuses in the *Meditations* on emulating the spiritual virtues of each saint, he also chooses to honor the very saints most associated with French national identity and its sacral monarchy. In this he was a Frenchman of his times.

Finally, two authors as far apart in time as Krumenacker and Blain attest to De La Salle's zeal for the conversion of the Protestants. Blain writes in the context of the invitation from Alès: "De La Salle experienced no little joy when he was offered an opportunity of satisfying his zeal for the extirpation of heresy, and his Brothers were called upon to combat it in the very places where it had taken refuge and where it had felt itself strong enough to insult the true religion and put Catholics to death."⁷² Without denying De La Salle's unique and heroic spirituality, he must be viewed in a more balanced and complete way, noting his *francité* and the assumptions of French culture. Those assumptions included shared attitudes toward the pernicious threat of heretics, the divine right of kings, and a hierarchical French Church exemplified by the bishops. Acknowledging De La Salle's acceptance of the divine nature of Church and state permits some important new conclusions.

⁷⁰ Yves Krumenacker, *The French School of Spirituality and John Baptist de La Salle*, ed. William Mann, FSC. trans. Allen Geppert, FSC (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2015), William Mann, Introduction, 12.

⁷¹ I have always viewed De La Salle's decision to leave Paris before the verdict in the Clément case was delivered as an indication that he understood that the only verdict possible was to find him guilty. Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 598.

⁷² Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 558. Blain, *Life of De La Salle*, 558. Krumenacker, *French School*, 24, reads, "Another concern of his schools – at least founded in the South of France (Mende, Alès, Les Vans) – is the conversion of Protestants.

Far from any hostility and perception of episcopal fanaticism, there was a fundamental exchange of ideas between De La Salle and the bishops. While he was not directly beholden to state and king as they were, and did not share their legal and moral jurisdiction at the top of the ancien régime's First Estate, there was one essential idea on which De La Salle and the bishops agreed. Fléchier's acknowledgement that "childhood is the age of instruction" was at the heart of the Lasallian charism. Some of the bishops came to understand this conjuncture of episcopal policy and charism and invited De La Salle to establish Christian Schools in Mende, Alès, and Les Vans. De La Salle recognized the same confluence and it afforded him the confidence to expand the Brothers' ministry far beyond the urban north. Maillefer attributes this to the survival of the school in Les Vans from the "three days of siege." "Far from discouraging him, this extraordinary event served only to give De La Salle greater confidence. It seemed in fact that his own understanding became more enlightened in proportion to the bitter trials that he had to endure. He admitted that he no longer was prey to those uncertainties and misgivings which formerly had made him hesitate when there was a question of extending his work into the various other provinces of the kingdom."⁷³ The missionary activity in the Cévennes and his "zeal for the extirpation of heresy," was confirmed by the violent attack on the Brothers' school in Les Vans and its rescue by royal troops. This is not to suggest that De La Salle relished the violence, only that it supplied him with a crucible of validation for extending the work of the Schools in mission territory.

The implications of this corrected account of De La Salle's relationship with the bishops are potentially profound. Was this a (or perhaps even "the") tipping point at which the still precarious existence of the Lasallian community set down the path to becoming the "archetype of all the congregations of teaching brothers?"⁷⁴ Was the episcopal embrace of the Lasallian charism, the catechetical conversion of heretical youths, a key moment in the history of the French church?

The failure of the Edict of Fontainebleau, its policy of coercion, and the Camisard revolt promoted the evolving attitudes of the bishops, who eventually realized that the education of youths was the key to converting the Huguenots. This was congruent with De La Salle's thinking and the purpose of the Institute. Fléchier's acknowledgement that the Huguenot parents were the major barrier to winning the hearts and minds of the children, confirmed by the memoirs of Jean Cavalier, corresponded well with the idea that the Brothers of the Christian Schools, acting *in loco parentis*, fulfilled a critical service to the church.⁷⁵ As the philosophy of the Christian Schools became better known, De La Salle received increased invitations from the southern bishops to staff schools in the heart of Camisard territory. From this conjuncture of episcopal and Lasallian ideas, two extraordinary claims become plausible. The first is that the bishops, or at least those who faced a large proportion of Huguenots among their flock, may have influenced the thought and practice of the Christian Schools by verifying the ideas contained in the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*. The first surviving reference to the *Conduct* is in 1705 and its oldest extant copy is dated from 1706. This was precisely the years between the founding of the school in Avignon and those in

⁷³ Maillefer, *Two Early Biographies*, 145.

⁷⁴ This is the phrase used to describe the Brothers of the Christian Schools in the context of congregations of religious teachers in Guy Avanzini et al., *Dictionnaire historique de l'éducation chrétienne d'expression française* (Paris: Éditions Don Bosco, 2001) s.v. "Congrégations Religieuses Enseignantes."

⁷⁵ John Baptist de La Salle, *Meditations*, ed. Augustine Loes, FSC and Francis Huether, FSC, trans. Richard Arandez, FSC and Augustin Loes, FSC (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 1994), 193.2

Mende and Alès.⁷⁶ As Maillefer suggested, the confirming effect of the “three days of siege” in Les Vans on De La Salle’s mind, as the evangelizing zeal of the Christian Schools expanded into a missionary experience, may well have played a significant role in the development of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, especially its pedagogical approach, as it became the prime force within a French national mission of primary education. Second, is the possibility of the reverse influence, that of the Lasallian charism on the French bishops and the Gallican church. It is possible that the practical success of the Brothers in the classroom, so explicitly attested to in the bishops’ letters to De La Salle, came to concretize episcopal attitudes towards catechizing the young. In this way the Lasallian charism became part of the mainstream of the French church’s thinking on evangelizing the young in the classroom, thanks to the missionary experience afforded by the Camisard revolt. 109

The evidence to support these claims begins with Robert Sauzet’s appraisal of the bishop of Alès, one of the prelates most experienced in dealing with the Camisards. Far from the fanatic claimed by Calcutt, De Saulx was much more the epitome of the proper Tridentine bishop.

The new bishop, François Chevalier de Saulx knew well the area that he had administered since 1687 as vicar general. We saw that he had visited in 1688, 1690 and 1692. He traveled again through the Cévennes in 1696. These inspections were made seriously, the bishop visiting 2 or 3 parishes a day. He asked the priests to prepare briefs on the practices of the old and new Catholics. The unwillingness of the communities translates into the disappointing finding in 1690 to 1692 and 1696 of the frequent failure to comply with the 1688 orders for the supply of items needed for worship. Moreover, the Chevalier de Saulx regularly held diocesan synods where he urged priests to vigilance “regarding their conduct and that of the people.” He established, in 1701, a seminary run by the Jesuits who were to provide “some subjects for ecclesiastical functions of the parishes and to maintain schools” and to serve as a retreat house for “the reform of clergymen who are already employed in the countryside and to even establish the same if possible for lay people who had affection for the Catholic religion to make retreats.” More rigorous even than Fléchier, the position of Chevalier de Saulx with respect to the New Catholics did not succeed in getting more results in the part of the diocese entrusted to him.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ John Baptist de La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, ed. William Mann, FSC, trans. F. de La Fontainerie and Richard Arnandez, FSC, (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), 26. I thank Paul Grass, FSC for pointing out this connection to me.

⁷⁷ Robert Sauzet, *Contre-réforme et réforme catholique en bas-Languedoc : le diocèse de Nîmes au XVIIIe siècle*. (Brussels : Nauwelaerts, 1979), 489-90. « Le nouvel évêque, François Chevalier de Saulx connaissait bien la région qu’il avait administrée depuis 1687 en qualité de vicaire général. Nous avons vu qu’il l’avait visitée en 1688, 1690 et 1692. Il parcourut à nouveau les Cévennes en 1696. Ces inspections ont été faites sérieusement, l’évêque visitant 2 ou 3 paroisses par jour. Il demandait aux curés d’établir des mémoires sur la pratique des anciens et des nouveaux catholiques. La mauvaise volonté des communautés s’y traduit par la constatation désabusée en 1690-92 et 96 de la fréquente inobservation des ordonnances de 1688 sur la fourniture des objets nécessaires au culte. Par ailleurs, Chevalier de Saulx tint régulièrement des synodes diocésains où il exhortait les prêtres à la vigilance « touchant leur conduite et celle des peuples ». Il établit, en 1701, un séminaire dirigé par les Jésuites qui devait donner « des sujets pour les fonctions ecclésiastiques des paroisses et pour tenir les écoles » et servir de maison de retraite pour « réformer les ecclésiastiques qui sont déjà employez dans le pays et d’établir même s’il se peut la pratique des retraites pour les laïques qui voudront s’affectionner à la religion catholique ». Plus rigoureuse encore que celle de Fléchier, la position de Chevalier de Saulx à l’égard des Nouveaux Catholiques ne devait pas obtenir plus de résultats dans la partie du diocèse qui lui avait été confiée.”

By the time the Christian Schools had been established, episcopal strategy had shifted. On 19 October 1707 de Saulx' colleague, François-Placide de Baudry de Piencourt, bishop of Mende, 110 signed a contract founding and funding schools in his diocese:

We Placide Francois Baudry Piencourt, bishop, the lord and governor of the town of Mende [...] convinced that the salvation of the people and their temporal happiness depend mainly [on] a holy education of the youth of one and the other sex [... we base] public schools [...] on] three schoolmasters and two schoolmistresses to inspire the youths [...] the principles of ours holy religion, learning to read, to write, and [do] arithmetic, for whose maintenance the masters and mistresses of school we give the sum ... The sum of 250 livres with which they will devote themselves exactly and religiously to their functions in the rules of their institutes and like those of the Abbe de La Salle and the institution of the St-Enfant Jesus of Paris [which] are the most famous of the Kingdom and those where youth makes more progress in virtue I want and understand that the executors of my foundation take subjects of the said institutes as long as they will preferably exist to all others.⁷⁸

Here the bishop describes the education necessary to convert heretical youth and he does so in terms quite precisely as practiced in the Christian Schools, three Brothers, teaching sacred and profane studies, reading, writing, and arithmetic, according to “their functions in the rules of their institute” and which are “the most famous of the kingdom,” for making more progress in instilling virtue in youths. The bishop has recast his view of Christian education in Lasallian terms, which he associates with the wellbeing of the entire kingdom.

These are bold claims which are supported by the broader, parallel argument of Furet and Ozouf.⁷⁹ In their history of elementary schooling in France, they focus on the last century of the ancien régime, the time of De La Salle, and three interacting factors. The first is the Church and the Reformation. “Luther made necessary what Gutenberg made possible:” reading the printed word of Scripture. This is what they refer to as the cultural consequences of Protestantism, the eminence of written culture, the Protestant challenge to which the Counter Reformation had to respond. This developed into an ideology of the school, which contained the need to impose discipline, to inculcate morality, and the emergence of the priest and schoolmaster at the head of the local community, but most of all the value of literacy.

The second factor was the state. It was largely disinterested in elementary education because it was the preserve of the church, until the advent of heresy. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, “gave the signal for an educational counter-offensive in which the State committed itself heavily

⁷⁸ Cited by Yves Poutet, *Le XVIIe et les origines lasalliennes*, 2 : 192. “Nous, Francois Placide de Baudry de Piencourt, évêque, seigneur et gouverneur de la ville de Mende [...] convaincu que le salut des peuples et leur bonheur temporel dépend principalement d’une éducation sainte de la jeunesse de l’un et de l’autre sexe [...fondons] des écoles publiques [...] trois maîtres et deux maîtresses d’école pour inspirer à la jeunesse [...] les principes de nostres sainte religion, leur apprendre à lire, à escrire et l’arithmetique, pour l’entretien desquels maistres et maistresses d’escole [...] nous cedons [...] « ... la somme... » and « la somme de 250 livres avec quoy ils vacqueront exactement et religieusement à leurs fonctions dans les règles de leurs instituts et comme ceux de Mr l’abbé de La Salle et de l’institution du St-Enfant Jésus de Paris sont les plus fameux du Royaume et ceux où la jeunesse fait plus de progrès dans la vertu je veux et entens que les exécuteurs de ma fondation prennent des sujets desdits instituts tant qu’ils existeront préférablement à tous autres [...]... »

⁷⁹ This section is based of François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Reading and Writing, Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 58-82.

alongside the Church,” through a series of declarations already explored such as the mandate for parents to send their children to Catholic school. “As regards the elementary school, Church and State were responding to a common factor, the Protestant challenge. But the church derived a doctrine and a popular education policy from it, whereas the State only acted intermittently: in order to extirpate heresy...”⁸⁰ (This confirms, by the way, that state and church policy were not identical.) 111

Third was the community. It was from the depths of traditional society that the demand for schools arose. It is here that Furet and Ozouf introduce De La Salle, who they associate with bourgeois, urban Catholicism and how this model filtered down to rural society.⁸¹ One of these is a kind of local democracy whereby the schoolmaster was generally chosen by the inhabitants.⁸² But then they introduce something of special interest, that in some places the demand for primary education came from above, namely from the bishops. This was especially the case in the south where schooling was connected to the extirpation of heresy. “The Reformation – Counter-Reformation dialectic accounts for many of the features of Church and State schooling policy; it explains, for example, why the supply of schools was more plentiful in Languedoc than in Brittany at the time of the Revocation.”⁸³ This confirms the importance of the Camisard revolt in promoting primary schools and developing a coherent philosophy of educating youths under episcopal leadership.

In sum, Furet and Ozouf’s supply the broad context for the development of an episcopo-Lasallian model of conversion through primary education. The development of French elementary education was a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. It is important to recognize that the role of De La Salle and the Brothers is just a part of this broader narrative. The component parts of the authors’ argument include the importance of Scripture in the Reformation, its promotion of a culture of writing, and the Counter-Reformation’s response. The Protestant claim of the necessity for each Christian to read Scripture promoted literacy and increased the value of schooling as essential to salvation. Finally, the political threat of heresy induced the state to intervene in primary education (one recalls the funding of the school in Alès by the royal government), which created a national movement of conversion and stimulated the transfer of a northern, urban, bourgeois concern for salvation and the exercise of charity embodied by De La Salle and the Christian Schools. These component parts of early modern French primary education are also the constituent elements of the Christian School as mission. Far from the estrangement depicted by Poutet and Calcutt, the goals and eventually the methods of church, state, and the Christian Schools were in sync. Perhaps it is not so fanciful to suggest that the founding of the Christian Schools in the south in order to eradicate heresy in the *Midi* was really a special moment and a notable turning point in the history of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the French church. De La Salle and the Brothers, once derided by both elites and the poor, were becoming the center of an institution of ecclesial and national importance.

⁸⁰ Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, 63.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁸² On the satisfaction with the teaching of the Brothers, see Mireille Laget, « Petites écoles en Languedoc au XVIII^e siècle, » *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*. 26 n. (1971), 1398-1418, especially 1403.

⁸³ Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, 68.

VII EPILOGUE: THE MUTUAL SCHOOLS, GUIZOT, AND THE DE-CONTEXTUALIZATION OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

This is an epilogue because it does not fit into the chronological confines of the study, 1525 to 1725. This inquiry began with a good deal of theoretical speculation asserting that the life and work of John Baptist de La Salle can be better understood by contextualizing them. This epilogue suggests something quite contrary that ripping him out of his own historical context raises important questions and identifies certain consequences. What makes someone or something historically important? Was the life and work of John Baptist de La Salle historically important? There is evidence that it was not. That evidence is best viewed by comparing the Lasallian-authored literature to the secular and general historiography. The former, written almost exclusively by Brothers of the Christian Schools such as Yves Poutet, FSC, Henri Bédel, FSC, Léon Lauraire, FSC, among many others, asserts his fundamental importance to French education, particularly pedagogy, and to the history of Catholic religious teaching orders.¹ But the latter offers a very different picture. One example is Karen E. Carter's *Creating Catholics, Catechism and Primary Education in Early Modern France*. If there was ever a title that seems to refer to De La Salle, this would be it. And when one learns that the book is really about the Little Schools, the *petites écoles*, and that it is particularly focused on three dioceses, Auxerre, Châlons-sur-Marne, and Reims, the last being De La Salle's home diocese, one would expect even more. Yet, Carter mentions the Brothers of the Christian Schools five times, (not counting endnote references) does so very briefly (usually one sentence), and she never refers to them by their proper name but almost only as the *petits frères*, a common enough nickname for them, but one that diminishes their significance. Except in passing, as founder, she mentions De La Salle once, a two-page summary of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools*. This sort of telescoping is not the exception but the rule in the historical literature, at least in English.² Based on this evidence, the most obvious conclusion is that De La Salle, the Brothers, and the Christian Schools are not particularly important in history. Such a conclusion places this study, and others like it, in a certain jeopardy. Are they much ado about very little?

¹ The entries in Guy Avanzini et al., *Dictionnaire historique de l'éducation chrétienne d'expression française* (Paris: Éditions Don Bosco, 2001) where Christian Brothers or Christian Schools are prominent are a case in point. They include "Catechism", "Religious Teaching Congregations," "Christian Schools and Christian Pedagogy," and "Little Schools."

² See, for example Joseph Bergin who cites the Brothers four times in his 500-page study of the early modern French church. Two of those references are mere mentions of their existence. One, the one and only cross-reference to De La Salle, is an excellent paragraph, but a mere paragraph nonetheless. See *Church, Society, and Religious Change in France: 1580-1730* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 114, 118 (the paragraph), 128, and 308. It should be noted that De La Salle and the Brothers do get more attention in the Francophone literature, which confirms the importance of the French context. That list would be quite long but largely limited to French primary education and not particularly focused on De La Salle, except in his role of founder.

This epilogue, then, is focused on two issues, one new, the other old. New is the question of the historical importance of De La Salle, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and the foundation of the Christian Schools in France. How historically important were they? The old revisits the question of historical context. What is the most appropriate context for evaluating the life and thought of John Baptist de La Salle? The two questions shall be taken up together and with acknowledgement that the importance of *Lasalliana* sometimes pops up in the most unexpected places, Norbert Elias' *The Civilizing Process* being a prime example. Finally, the influence of Brother Léon Lauraire is noted. His fourth volume on the *Conduct of the Christian Schools, A Diachronic Approach, Development of the Text from 1706 to 1916*, provides both inspiration and a theoretical foundation for this epilogue.³ In that volume Brother Léon traces the development of *The Conduct of Schools* over time; he uses the historical method to determine importance. While some aspects come and go with time, by identifying the constant elements embedded in all the *Conduct's* editions, Lauraire establishes their importance to the Lasallian charism. This is the concept of continuity in historical thinking and it creates one of the most important of all historical contexts, chronology. What happens when we remove De La Salle from his chronological context?

The hundred years following De La Salle's death were the most tumultuous in French history. The Enlightenment challenged the ancien régime in so many ways. Then, there was the French Revolution, itself really a series of revolutions that lurched to the left and back again, culminating in the First Empire of Napoleon Bonaparte, the First Restoration of the Bourbons, Napoleon's brief return, the Second Restoration, and finally the July Monarchy, the product of still another revolution in 1830. These traumatic events not only destroyed the ancien régime, they fractured French politics. The context into which De La Salle was born and the Christian Schools created was consciously destroyed. The privileges of birth (*lignage*), of the aristocracy and of the clergy were demolished, the sacral monarchy dismantled and replaced by much greater separation of church and state. The new regime was organized around an ethos of merit, of sorts, because class had replaced the medieval orders and wealth is at the heart of class. The bourgeoisie was ascendant and one can argue that France was more plutocracy than meritocracy. The absolute monarchy of Louis XIV became that of the "citizen-king," Louis Philippe, whose father had voted to execute his cousin Louis XVI. Subjects were replaced by citizens. The Catholic Church, the First Estate, had not only lost its privileged place, it had been one of the foremost victims of the Revolution. The typical categorization of François Guizot, a person so integral to this story, as a "Conservative Liberal" suggests just how complex politics had become in post-revolutionary France. The context had been so completely transformed that perception of the role of the Brothers in French society was transmuted, most immediately by the *écoles mutuelles*, the mutual schools.

The Revolution of 1830 was the triumph of liberalism. Liberals believed in liberty, individual freedoms, liberty of conscience, free enterprise capitalism; but not so much in equality. Voting rights were accorded to property owners only, hence conservative liberalism. The bourgeoisie, who controlled the regime, and Guizot, their most eloquent spokesman, hated revolution and feared the empowerment of the working class. In many ways the July Monarchy and its liberalism were attempts to occupy the political middle, when that middle was precarious and subject to vigorous forces to the right and the left. Louis Philippe and the liberals who ran his government were not particularly hostile to religion, but they were wary of a Catholic Church so closely

³ *Cahiers lasalliens* 67, trans. Allen Geppert, FSC (Rome: Casa Generalizia, 2014).

identified with the ancien régime. They strove for a government that was religiously neutral. The really revolutionary change was the state. Despite all of the rhetoric about French absolutism under Louis XIV, the power of his government was limited by the privileged estates. And when it came to education it was still basically medieval, reserving education to the clergy, who in the Middle Ages had been the best educated part of society. 114

Liberal attitudes toward education were not particularly new; they flowed from the Enlightenment. As early as 1763 Louis de la Chalotais, who famously decried the work of the *Frères ignorants*, called for the creation of a French national educational system. There he laid out what was to become the liberal agenda. Its first tenet was statism, reducing the control the church had over education and creating an educational system whose purpose was to develop good citizens, not good Christians. “I do not presume to exclude ecclesiastics, but I protest against the exclusion of laymen. I dare claim for the nation an education which depends only on the State, because it belongs essentially to the State; because every State has an inalienable and indefeasible right to instruct its members; because, finally, the children of the State ought to be educated by the members of the State.”⁴

We must recall that one of the purposes for adopting a distinctive habit was to mark the Brothers publicly as living apart from the world. This very renunciation of the world was in turn rejected by La Chalotais because he was seeking a religion inspired by the ancients, a civic religion.

The greatest vice of education, and perhaps the most inevitable, while it shall be entrusted to persons who have renounced the world, is the absolute lack of instruction on the moral and political virtues. Our education does not affect our habits, like that of the ancients. After having endured all the fatigues and irksomeness of the college, the young find themselves in the need of learning in what consist the duties common to all men. They have learned no principle for judging actions, evils, opinions, customs. They have everything to learn on matters that are so important. They are inspired with a devotion which is but an imitation of religion, and with practices which take the place of virtue, and are but the shadow of it.⁵

The first attempt to realize La Chalotais’ educational vision was made by the Marquis de Condorcet. On 20-21 April 1792, Condorcet submitted to the French Legislative Assembly a Report on behalf of the Committee on Public Instruction on the need for organizing a complete democratic system of public instruction for France.

The Primary School receives children at the age of six years. Every village containing over four hundred inhabitants must be provided with one. Tuition will be given in the rules of arithmetic, the first elements of morality, the rudimentary knowledge of natural science and economy, essential either to agriculture, arts, or commerce, according to the rural or manufacturing occupations of the population. Religion will be taught in the churches by the respective ministers of their different creeds.⁶

⁴ Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Readings in the History of Education* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 410.

⁵ Cubberley, *Readings in the History of Education*, 410-11.

⁶ Cubberley, *Readings in the History of Education*, 413.

This was essentially the primary education actually implemented by the July Monarchy. Compulsory, state-supervised, it envisioned an expanded and secularized curriculum from that taught by the Brothers, especially in the sciences and in economics, focused on the updated needs of rural and urban workers, with a de-privileged Catholic Church in a pluralistic society. The salvific purpose of the Christian Schools was replaced by a secular and civic morality. If John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers of the Christian Schools were products of the Reformation, the Enlightenment was fundamentally hostile to the Reformers' otherworldly vision, to the still medieval concept of privileged corporations such as guilds while on the cusp of industrial capitalism, and in favor of the fundamental redirection of education to the interests of the modern nation-state. All this spelled danger for the Brothers and the educational legacy of De La Salle. 115

The Revolution and especially Napoleon created the first truly modern French state and its first great success in establishing a centralized state-controlled educational system was the founding of the Imperial University in 1808. All of French education was subject to it; no one could teach without the permission of the Grand Master, head of the University and appointed by the emperor. Despite the many regime changes and variations in title, the university as the embodiment of state control of education remained into the Second Republic. The good news for the Brothers was that the central government lacked the resources to remake completely the educational system and was mostly interested in secondary education, within which it saw both the interests of the middle class and the subversive dangers of inculcating revolutionary ideas in the older students. Ironically, it was the conservative Restorationist government of Louis XVIII that first promoted the new innovative mutual method.

On Individual, Simultaneous, and Mutual Methods

The traditional form of instruction in the Little Schools was the individual method. Since each child did not have his or her own book it was impossible to teach them together. In addition, children came and went and everyone was not on the same level. So, the master would instruct students one at a time. Meanwhile, the other students were left on their own, with the result that much time was wasted and it was practically impossible to exert discipline on the group. To compensate for this, corporal punishment was frequently used.⁷

John Baptist de La Salle and the Brothers developed the simultaneous method, based on two principles. The first was that there were never less than three Brothers in a school. The pupils were divided into three sections with one Brother in charge of each section. Second, the Brothers taught simultaneously, to all of the students at the same time. Each student had a book, thanks to their parents or some benefactor. Lost time was kept to a minimum, discipline was more easily enforced, and corporal punishment was held to a minimum.

The mutual method, monitorial system, or the Bell-Lancaster system was an educational method that became popular in the early nineteenth century. Dr. Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster were British educators who independently created schools with similar though not identical methods.

⁷ For a most efficient explanation of the various methods of instruction see Antoine Prost, *L'enseignement en France 1800-1967* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1968), 115-19.

Bell was an Anglican priest and Lancaster a Quaker and therein lay one of the problems for the French, namely, that the origins of the mutual system were British and Protestant.

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At the heart of the mutual system was the notion of the instruction of the child by the child. The teacher trained capable students who became “monitors” or leaders of a “squad” or small group of students, perhaps eight, ten, or twelve, organized by their level of knowledge. The teacher kept order and directed the groups set up in parallel tables. There was a series of motives that made mutual schools popular for a while. The first was economic: the system required but one teacher for the school and if properly run could accommodate up to 200 to 300 students. The pedagogical motives were more numerous. The first was ease and simplicity: the entire school was divided into a series of self-supporting sub-divisions. The second was promptness: it was claimed that students could learn to read and write much more quickly than in the simultaneous system because reading, writing, and counting were taught together and not successively as the Brothers did. The third motive was that the mutual system was less arduous for the teacher, since the teaching burden was largely transferred to the student-monitors. In addition, there were ideological reasons that made the mutual system attractive to liberals. The system embodied new social relations based on merit not birth. The monitors were chosen for their ability to grasp the subject at hand. Since children were teaching children, the system had an egalitarian patina. Finally, the mutual system was religiously neutral and reduced the influence of church-run schools. All of these claims were challenged, especially by the clergy and the Brothers, who, despite their many innovations circa 1700, were still essentially of the ancien régime and definitely not religiously neutral. Hence the great debate over the two systems.

There were also pedagogical arguments against the mutual system. The successful mutual teacher was highly trained, competent in coordinating the complex system and so finding qualified candidates was difficult. Discipline was difficult to maintain. Placing instruction in the hand of children rendered education mechanical. Opposing arguments were ideological, especially religious, and the concept of religious neutrality fueled concern that the schools were not inculcating proper moral values in the students; and that much depended on the moral status of the teacher. Finally, the system was perceived as foreign, that is English, the “work of regicides” (*l’œuvre des régicides*, a reference to the execution of Charles I) and posed the danger of turning the children into Quakers! (...*le dangereux enfant d’un quaker*).⁸ The Brothers argued that the simultaneous method was time-tested and provided a true Christian education, thanks to the influence of the teacher who played a much more decisive role than in the mutual system.⁹ Inevitably, in post-revolutionary France, the debate was politicized. The clergy was strongly opposed to the mutual system which it saw as a threat that could de-Christianize education and had thrown in with the Restoration. As the Abbé Denis Auguste Affre, vicar general of the diocese of Amiens, and the future archbishop of Paris, put it: “It’s easy to appreciate how such a method is defective, since children learn early to count for nothing the authority of age... What’s more, their disposition toward their own ambition, pride, and independence is nourished, since they are shown the ease of each becoming in turn leaders and superiors of their fellow students.” The

⁸ Essential is Robert Tronchot, *L’enseignement mutuel en France de 1815 à 1833, les luttes politiques et religieuses autour de la question scolaire*, 2 vols. (Lille: Service de reproduction des thèses de l’université, 1973), here 591.

⁹ This section draws heavily on Brother Henri Bédel, FSC, *An Introduction to the History of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The 19th Century (1805-1875)*. *Lasallian Studies* 9 (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2006), 35-45.

sources of the bishop's criticisms were the very characteristics that liberals found so appealing. In nineteenth-century France it seemed that everything was political and Affre also associated the mutual method with republicanism, a system of government he deeply suspected. "All morality that results from a similar method amounts to this: that the best government is where one does not obey one's equals and where one can continuously aspire to become their leader. This is obviously a republican principle..."¹⁰ 117

Criticism against the Brothers and the simultaneous system turned these arguments around. The Brothers provided an antiquated training using outdated methods. The mayor of Lyon said that "the Congregation of Saint-Yon represents the retrograde system and the Society of mutual education, the system of improvement." At Saint Denis, the Brothers were requested to remove their cassocks, to no longer recite the rosary with the children, while taking the children to church on weekdays was an exercise "that wastes time."¹¹

While the Brothers eventually were willing to incorporate some aspects of the mutual method into their pedagogy, over the short term they strongly resisted it, dug in their heels, and looked backwards to the Founder and tradition. Then came the July Monarchy and its foremost thinker, François Guizot.

Guizot is a fascinating figure, a Huguenot, born into a bourgeois family in Nîmes, Esprit Fléchier's old diocese, a product of the Revolution's emancipation of Protestants, he hated revolution. His first ministerial office was as Minister of Public Instruction. He was responsible for the drafting of the fundamental law for organizing primary education, passed on 28 June 1833. Earlier, in 1816, he had published his *Essay on the History and on the Current State of Public Instruction in France* (*Essai sur l'histoire et sur l'état actuel de l'instruction publique en France*.) It served as a blueprint for his later ministry. Most striking about Guizot's view of education is how closely it serves the interest of the state. He defines primary education to include, "the precepts of religion and morality, the general duties of men in society, and these life skills that have become useful and almost necessary in all conditions, both for the interest of the state as one of people." Indeed, the interests of the state and those of the people are thoroughly intertwined: "Primary education provides the lower classes of society the means to expand their industry to improve their lot and thus open for the benefit of the state, new sources of wealth." He closely ties ignorance, lack of schooling, to a slippery slope of irritation and discontent that can lead to revolution.

If the course of events or the passions of men cause some unrest in society, the misconceptions, and imperfect knowledge that the people have acquired, in spite of all obstacles, become new causes of disorder and feed, propagate, render more dire the burgeoning fermentation. Then in the lower classes, this disgust with their situation, this thirst for change, this wanton greed that nothing can neither contain nor satisfy manifests itself. Even if the governments recognize their mistake, it is too late to fix it and if they

¹⁰ Quoted by Prost, *L'enseignement en France*, 126. "Il est facile de sentir combien une telle méthode est vicieuse, puisque les enfants y apprennent de bonne heure à ne compter pour rien l'autorité de l'âge ... Quoi de plus propre à nourrir leurs dispositions à l'ambition, à l'orgueil, à l'indépendance, puisque'on leur montre la facilité de devenir chacun à leur tour les chefs et les supérieurs de leurs condisciples. » And, "Toute la morale qui résulte d'une semblable méthode se réduit à ceci : que le meilleur des gouvernements est celui où l'on n'obéit qu'à ses égaux et où l'on peut aspirer sans cesse à devenir leur supérieur. C'est là évidemment un principe républicain..."

¹¹ Tronchot, *L'enseignement mutuel en France*, 198-99.

persist in so doing, they only increase the scope and intensity of the evil that has already been the result.¹²

It is here that Guizot mentions the Brothers. Before the revolution, primary education was almost completely abandoned to public charity and to that of the Church:

The Christian Brothers formed, it is true, an excellent institution, but they were far from satisfying the needs of the population. No general supervision was exercised in this regard; religious instruction [was] very incomplete and often strongly neglected, such was the whole of popular education; and when in the course of events these people are abandoned into the hands of the factious, or to themselves, nothing can be found in the lessons and habits of their childhood which could oppose any obstacle to their errors and their excesses¹³.

Primary education under the Brothers failed to provide sufficient guidance to prevent the people from being swept up in revolution. Guizot argues that the Brothers' religious instruction was too narrow, too parochial, to allow them to resist the excesses of factionalism. In effect, the Brothers failed to instill sufficient docility and stability in their students to provide the necessary dedication to the state. This argument in favor of primary education for the sake of political order and social stability is made much more explicitly in the circular letter distributed to primary school teachers that accompanied the passage of Guizot's law on 28 June 1833.

The law is for the state at large, and for public advantage; and because liberty can neither be assured nor regular, except with a people sufficiently enlightened to listen under all circumstances to the voice of reason. Universal elementary education will become henceforward a guarantee for order and social stability. As all the principles of our government are sound and rational, to develop intellect and propagate light is to confirm the empire and durability of our constitutional monarchy.¹⁴

In the end, Guizot's view of the relationship between church and state is a combination of classic Calvinism and the French royal notion of at least one king and one law, albeit with religious freedom and pluralism guaranteed. As in Geneva, church and state are closely entwined and religion exercises a moral force that effects all aspects of life. As Tronchet put it: "Religion is not a study or exercise to which one assigns place or hour; it is a faith, a law which must be felt

¹² François Guizot, *Essai sur l'histoire et sur l'état actuel de l'instruction publique en France* (Brussels : Meline, Cans and Company, 1846, 1st pub. 1816, 5. "Si le cours des événements ou les passions des hommes amènent quelque agitation dans la société, les idées fausses et les connaissances imparfaites que le peuple a acquises, en dépit de tous les obstacles, deviennent de nouvelles causes de désordre, et alimentent, propagent, rendent plus funeste la fermentation naissante. Alors se manifestent, dans les classes inférieures, ce dégoût de leur situation, cette soif de changement, cette avidité déréglée que rien ne peut plus ni conte ni satisfaire. Si les gouvernements reconnaissent leur erreur, il est trop tard pour la réparer ; s'ils y persistent, ils ne font qu'accroître l'étendue et redoubler l'intensité du mal qui en a déjà été la suite."

¹³ Guizot, *Essais de l'instruction publique*, 29. Les frères des écoles chrétiennes formaient, il est vrai, une institution excellente, mais ils étaient loin de suffire aux besoins de la population. Aucune surveillance générale ne s'exerçait à cet égard ; une instruction religieuse très incomplète, et souvent fort négligée, était toute l'éducation populaire ; et, lorsque le cours des événements a livré ce peuple aux mains des factieux ou à lui-même, il ne s'est rien trouvé dans les leçons et dans les habitudes de son enfance qui pût opposer quelque obstacle à ses erreurs et à ses excès.

¹⁴ Quoted in Cubberley, *Readings in the History of Education*, 502.

constantly and everywhere, and which exercises only at that price, on the soul and life, all salutary action.”¹⁵

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Guizot, despite his conservatism, was the product of post-revolutionary France and possessed a vision of France, a mental world, that was essentially different from De La Salle's. So too was his view of education. His confidence in the salutary effects of education was inspired by the Enlightenment. No longer was its purpose knowledge for the sake of salvation, but enlightenment for the sake of the state. No longer was the context for primary education a consecrated order of men, set apart from society by religious vows and a distinctive habit, but a new concept of a politicized social world imbued with values of liberty, equality, fraternity, and citizenship. This is precisely where the Brothers of the Christian Schools fell short despite the excellence of their schools, for this was not the essence of their charism. The problem was that for more than forty years before Guizot's law was promulgated, the meaning of those revolutionary abstractions had more divided than united Frenchmen and would continue to do so for another half century. Education was being secularized and the Brothers didn't quite fit in. And so we come to the thesis of Anne Querrien, who unlike Carter places great emphasis on the ideas of De La Salle. But when she refers to the “genius of De La Salle” she does so in a radically new way. Guizot's statism and Querrien's Marxist analysis, each in its own way, de-contextualize the life and work of John Baptist de La Salle, especially its Christian, salvific basis, creating some odd and provocative suggestions about the historical importance of both.

The Mutual Schools: the Querrien Thesis

Querrien's starting point is what she calls the “enchantment” of capitalism, its promise of infinite progress, which she debunks due to its environmental degradation and the routinization of work. Nevertheless, she accounts for its impact on society and the new educational needs of a proletarianized workforce. She also recognizes that Protestant societies embraced capitalism earlier than Catholic ones which she ascribes to reformers like Luther and Calvin who favored free compulsory education for the poor, which gave their workforce an advantage over Catholic ones. She favors the mutual method as more befitting an industrial society and as a more truly mass education system able to provide the better-educated workers needed in the modern factory. She also prefers the mutual system as more democratic, more empowering of the learner, and more efficient as opposed to the Brothers' system, weighed down by an “arsenal of moralistic rites” (*arsenal de rites moralisateurs*).¹⁶

The key to Querrien's thesis are the goals of the political ruling class to suppress the rights and power of the working class. They supported the mutual method over the simultaneous one of the Brothers because they thought it cheaper to maintain and capable of constantly adapting, since unlike the Brothers' schools the educational space, the tables at which the children sat, were constantly being moved. But most of all the authorities saw the system as promoting obedience

¹⁵ Tronchot, *L'enseignement mutuel en France*, 401. “La religion n'est pas une étude ou un exercice auquel on assigne son lieu ou son heure ; c'est une foi, une loi qui doit se faire sentir constamment et partout, et qui n'exerce qu'à ce prix, sur l'âme et la vie, toute salutaire action”.

¹⁶ Anne Querrien, *L'École mutuelle, une pédagogie trop efficace ?* (Paris : Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2005), 82.

and order commensurate with the interests of the modern state. “The method organizes mutual submission to the collective order, the law, not the personal authority of the teacher, and behind him God.”¹⁷ The manuals published in support of the system emphasized its ability to impose on the children regularity, consistency, and discipline.¹⁸ A 1823 circular proclaimed: “Long live the mutual schools! Down with the Ignoramuses !” (*Vive l’école mutuelle ! À bas les Ignorantins*). Government support for the mutual method continued into the July Monarchy, however it soon performed a “volte-face” due to a lack of local support for the new system linked to considerable confusion between the mutual and simultaneous systems. In 1818, during the Restoration, the Council-General of the department of Indre pointed out the benefits of using the Brothers as teachers, while associating them with the mutual method.

Public education cannot be said to be in better hands than in those of ministers of religion who are dedicated by zeal, duty, and by supernatural motives to education and especially to the education of youth. These are powerful reasons for why the Council sees to entrust the care of mutual education in the main cities of the department to the association so respectable and which has already done so much good, that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools who have popularized the first elements of this kind of education.¹⁹

But in the end, according to Querrien, the authorities realized that the mutual system was too efficient. If the working class learned all that they needed to learn more quickly than with the Brothers, what will those age 9 to 12 do with their spare time? They could disrupt society, even become threats to the regime. The simultaneous system took longer but the Brothers provided cradle to adolescence guidance and created more docile young men.²⁰ It is at this point that Querrien’s analysis becomes interesting, when she begins to apply it to an account of the influence of De La Salle and the Brothers.

Before compulsory education, schools for poor children, whether “Christian” or municipal, were resolutely anti-family. Far from being an ally of the school, the poor family was its enemy. The school was a war machine against the poor family, against its non-participation in “social work.” Here Querrien quotes from *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* and the failure of the parents of the poor to provide an education for their children. She then cites *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* and how De La Salle attempted to address this problem by civilizing them. She introduces the notion of the good family (*la bonne famille*), “The good family is the one that places in the school the rules that may organize the behavior of the child; the good family is the one to whom the school recognizes compliance with its laws and the ability to raise the child. The good family is the one that the school recognizes as having delivered a normal child.”²¹ The good family accepts the invitation to become a member of the great family of the state, through education. A series of political bodies is established of which the family is the smallest entity. The school’s mission is to train the child in the physical participation of the family to the nation; the school

¹⁷ Querrien, *L’école mutuelle*, 84.

¹⁸ Querrien, *L’école mutuelle*, 89.

¹⁹ Querrien, *L’école mutuelle*, 100. One of the sources of confusion was that the mutual method claimed the advantage of teaching reading, writing, and counting *simultaneously*.

²⁰ Querrien, *L’école mutuelle*, 104-6.

²¹ Querrien, *L’école mutuelle*, 157-8. “La bonne famille est celle qui s’en remet à l’école des règles qui doivent organiser le comportement de l’enfant ; la bonne famille est celle à qui l’école reconnaît la conformité à ses lois et la capacité d’élever l’enfant. La bonne famille est celle à qui l’école reconnaît qu’elle a livré un enfant normal.”

becomes the instrument of both the production for and protection of the state.²² We have returned to Calvin and De La Salle, to the importance of children and childhood, and especially in the former to the need to create good citizens, that is, docile ones. But we have also returned to Guizot where the whole purpose of primary education has been secularized in the name of and for the sake of the state. On top of this is Querrien's Marxist analysis imposing a veneer of proletarian exploitation on it all. 121

The genius of John Baptist de La Salle and the success of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian schools for Querrien is precisely this pioneering role of organization promoting conformity. The community of the Brothers of the Christian Schools is the first community explicitly formed for primary education and dedicated to the premise that instruction requires agents subject to much more stringent laws than those that apply to regular members of society. It is the passion of the Brothers to obey, to submit to the law that makes them effective transmitters of obedience and submission. Querrien cites the *Memoir on the Habit* as the origin of this sense of community. Everyone wears the same habit, is submissive to the same Rule; the Brothers in the local school are subject to the absolute authority of the Brother Director. Conformity reigns.

It is here that Querrien re-introduces Guizot and the July Monarchy, for it is Guizot, building on the creation of the Imperial University, who translates the work of the Brothers into a national educational program. He notes the beneficial effects of the Napoleonic policy of protecting the Brothers and increasing their numbers:

Article 109 of the decree of 17 March 1808 placed the Brothers of the Christian schools under the supervision of the university and instructed the council to receive and approve their statutes. The grand master availed himself of this right to protect the Brothers of the schools everywhere, and to exempt their novices and young masters from the laws of conscription, as well as from the vexations of the military authorities. The aid of money, distributed in the houses, which formed new subjects, contributed to extend the benefits of the institution, and the number of the schools of the Brothers was tripled under the system of the university.²³

For Guizot, public teaching professionals, like the Brothers, are entrusted with a sacred duty to provide moral instruction and preparation for life. "To gather all public education in a large body under the supervision of a higher authority placed at the center of government; to give this authority every means to spread and distribute instruction appropriately, to spread good religious, moral, and political doctrines, and to thus prepare the children entrusted to state care, to one day become virtuous citizens, illuminated and useful: this was, as always will be, in this respect, the social interest."²⁴

²² Querrien, *L'école mutuelle*, 161-5.

²³ L'article 109 du décret du 17 mars 1808 plaçait les frères des écoles chrétiennes sous la surveillance de l'université, et chargeait le conseil de recevoir et d'approuver leurs statuts. Le grand maître usa de ce droit pour protéger partout les frères des écoles, et pour soustraire leurs novices et leurs jeunes maîtres aux lois de la conscription, comme aux vexations des autorités militaires. Des secours d'argent, distribués dans les maisons qui formaient de nouveaux sujets, contribuèrent à étendre les bienfaits de l'institution, et le nombre des écoles des frères a été triplé sous le régime de l'université. François Guizot, *Essai sur l'histoire l'instruction publique en France*, 91.

²⁴ Querrien, *L'école mutuelle*, 70. "Réunir tous les établissements publics d'éducation en un grand s soumis à la surveillance d'une autorité supérieure placée au centre même du gouvernement ; donner à cette autorité tous les moyens de répandre et de distribuer convenablement l'instruction, de propager les bonnes doctrines religieuses,

The charism of the Brothers has been thoroughly secularized, decontextualized from its Christian Reformation origins. Instead of serving God's will, education now serves the will of the state; instead of the duties of the Christian we now have the duties of the citizen. The moral and religious are now the political. The author Ambroise Rendu in his *Essai sur l'instruction publique et particulièrement sur l'instruction primaire* (1819) stated it most succinctly: the "genius" of De La Salle and the Brothers was to create a system of discipline. "Good priest who knew at that point to tame the rebellious will of man, to sacrifice unceasingly the individual interests of the body and to find charms in eternal dependence."²⁵

If Querrien is somewhat subtle, Geraldine Brausch is more direct in pointing out primary education as essentially a process of dehumanization. "The individual is the essential part of the machinery: it applies to his alter ego monitoring, control, it requires docility, utility, normality." The school is an integral part of a vast disciplinary system. "It will be understood that the school is probably less of an application of the Enlightenment's emancipation program than a vital part of the disciplinary system."²⁶

By detaching De La Salle from the context of his time, the Reformation and the salvific purpose of education, Querrien and Brausch have created a De La Salle who is one of the founders of a secularized educational system created to discipline students, to conform them docilely to the needs of industrial capitalism and the modern centralized state. Brausch also makes it much clearer than Querrien that they are both accessing some of the ideas of Michel Foucault.

Foucault, Discipline, and De La Salle

In his *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault examines the origins of the modern prison and the idea of imprisonment, a revolution in punishment between 1660 and 1840. This entailed a new modality of political power from the theatricality of the Renaissance state that punished with public, bloody, gory entertainment for the urban masses, to the quiet, mild, repeated, and systematic penalization of the mature early modern state. In the midst of a wide-ranging examination of the effects of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, he examines the origins of modern institutions of social control. In addition to prisons, those institutions included the army and the barracks, capitalism and the factory, and compulsory education and the classroom. These are all state institutions that created spaces of discipline. This connection between teaching and classroom discipline, between prison and religious discipline is not as farfetched as it might at first seem.

morales et politiques, et de préparer ainsi les enfants confiés aux soins de l'État à devenir un jour des citoyens vertueux, éclairés et utiles : tel était, tel sera toujours, à cet égard, l'intérêt social."

²⁵ Quoted in Querrien, *L'école mutuelle*, 75.

²⁶ G. Brausch, "L'école : rouage d'un projet démocratique ou pivot d'une société disciplinaire ?"

https://orbi.uliege.be/bitstream/2268/176186/1/gbrausch_2007_ecole_democratique_disciplinaire.pdf. (Accessed 19 May 2016). "L'individu est donc le rouage essentiel de la machinerie : il applique à son alter ego la surveillance, le contrôle, il en exige la docilité, l'utilité, la normalité." And « On l'aura compris, l'école est probablement moins une application du programme d'émancipation des Lumières qu'un rouage essentiel du dispositif disciplinaire."

Louis Chatellier describes how imprisonment, moral reform, and rigorous discipline were intimately intertwined in early modern Naples.

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The desire to reform morals through charity was what, to a large extent, determined the choices made. The ideal was to succeed, as with the Monte of Mercy in Naples, in persuading the prisoners to lead quasi-monastic lives. They were to rise promptly in the morning at the first ring of the bell, pray in their cell for half an hour, attend Mass, then work in silence. After the meal came an hour of catechism, then instruction in how to scourge oneself and how to wear a hair shirt. This was followed by more work in silence, then a meeting before bed for the reading of a passage from a spiritual book. After which, safely in bed, they recited together the litanies of the Virgin, then examined their consciences before observing absolute silence till the bell rang. There was nothing like prison for the successful conversion of sinners! They were always there, and they welcomed visitors with open arms.²⁷

The similarities between this prison regimen and the daily routine of the Christian Schools is quite remarkable. The day is thoroughly organized, no time is wasted, prayer and catechetical instruction are central, accompanied by silence, and even the bell, that was so much an integral part of the classroom culture is present. Within the chronology of Foucault's study, basically from Louis XIV to Guizot, De La Salle and the Christian Schools play a much more significant role than in Carter's book on the *petites écoles*. The sub-title of Foucault's book is *The Birth of the Prison*, but in reality, it is about much more, mostly about power and discipline. Modern societies are disciplinary societies, with sophisticated techniques of power, manifested in many institutions, prisons, but also factories, the army, and schools. Four types of disciplinary techniques can be identified: the state divides and arranges bodies; it prescribes activities; it divides and connects time; and creates a disciplinary machine. Gradually, Foucault pulls us into the Lasallian world.

Foucault introduces De La Salle in the midst of his discussion of the importance of detail. "For the disciplined man, as for the true believer, no detail is unimportant, but not so much for the meaning that it conceals within it as for the hold it provides for the power that wishes to seize it."²⁸ This meticulous observation of detail manifests itself in the distribution of individuals in space, in four ways. The first is enclosure, the second partitioning, making sure that each individual has his own place. The third is functional sites, useful space, the fourth is rank or classification. Foucault concludes:

The organization of a serial space was one of the great technical mutations of elementary education. It made it possible to supersede the traditional system (a pupil working for a few minutes with the master, while the rest of the heterogeneous group remained idle and unattended). By assigning individual places it made possible the supervision of each individual and the simultaneous work of all...it made the educational space function like a learning machine, but also as a machine for supervising, hierarchizing, rewarding. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle dreamed of a classroom in which the spatial distribution might provide

²⁷ Louis Chatellier, *The Europe of the Devout, The Catholic Reformation and the Formation of a New Society*, trans. Jean Birell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 134.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977): 140.

a whole series of distinctions at once: according to the pupils' progress, worth, character, application, cleanliness and parents' fortune.²⁹

The simultaneous system was born and with it modern education. It eliminated idleness and created order. In this case, Foucault's treatment of the Christian Schools is fair because in the Lasallian tradition De La Salle did indeed place great emphasis on the need for order, while the Christian Schools' innovations produced a more orderly and effective system of instruction. On the other hand and less fair, the term "learning machine" threatens to decontextualize the Schools by associating them with an educational system commensurate with the mechanized factory and industrial capitalism, which did not exist when the Christian Schools were created. In addition, Foucault, like Querrien and Brausch, secularizes what was in essence a religious institution.

Under the subheading of "The Control of Activity," Foucault introduces the time-table. He quotes from *The Conduct*, its meticulous accounting of time: "At the last stroke of the hour, a pupil will ring the bell, and at the first sound of the bell all the pupils will kneel...when the prayer has been said, the teacher will strike the signal once to indicate that the pupils should get up, a second time as a sign that they should salute Christ, and a third that they should sit down." (Perhaps not clocks, but shades of Engammare's ordering of time thesis!) Foucault then describes the methodically detailed prescription for good handwriting and the position of the body, "... the part of the left arm from the elbow to the hand must be placed on the table. The right arm must be at a distance from the body of about three fingers...". He concludes, "In the correct use of the body, which makes possible a correct use of time, nothing must remain idle or useless: everything must be called upon to form the support of the act required."³⁰ The connectedness of discipline, space, and time reminds one of the synergy of a machine. While the image of a machine is not literally present in *The Conduct*, the notion of a systematic, comprehensive, and time-conscious approach to the school certainly is. In this section on the control of activity, Foucault most accurately connects his thesis with the traditional Lasallian historiography that emphasizes both the need and the allure of the well-oiled Christian School.³¹

Foucault then explores some of the mechanisms for how De La Salle was able to impose discipline on individual students. On the subject of "correct training," Foucault reminds us of De La Salle's preference for correction rather than punishment and the institution of a double system of gratification-punishment. The Brothers organized a whole "micro-economy" of privileges and impositions, a sort of "game of quantification." "Through this micro-economy of perpetual penalty operates a differentiation that is not one of acts, but of individuals themselves, of their nature, their potentialities, their level or their value."³² This system promotes conformity and Foucault explores the power of the "Norm" or normalization, as a mechanism for coercion in teaching, hence the term Normal School for institutions of teacher training. The Norm is connected to the examination which combines an observing hierarchy with normalizing judgment. "It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them." The Brothers of the Christian Schools practiced constant examination. In all this Foucault sees the invention of

²⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 147.

³⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, on time, 150, on position of the body, 152.

³¹ Foucault connects this idea of machine to Julien Offray de La Mettrie's *Man a Machine (L'homme Machine)* first published in 1747, *Discipline and Punish*, 136. The idea of some sort of linear relationship from De La Salle to La Mettrie to the disciplinary state is startling.

³² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 180-81.

pedagogy. “The school became the place of elaboration for pedagogy. And just as the procedure of the hospital examination made possible the epistemological ‘thaw’ of medicine, the age of the “examining’ school” marked the beginnings of a pedagogy that functions as a science.”³³ All in all, Foucault argues that the Christian School embodied the new disciplinary society. It arranged the students in rows, divided by age and competence, organized the day around precise periods of time, inaugurated an exacting system of command under the constant supervision of the teacher, and normalized activity through constant examination. It was the perfect disciplinary machine. 125

Conclusion

What do we make of all this? The accomplishment of Querrien, Brausch, and Foucault connecting the Reformation, the French Revolution, Marxism, and the modern disciplinary state to the Lasallian charism, via the concept of social discipline, is remarkable. Perhaps the better question, given the distinction between the Lasallian and non-Lasallian historiography, is what do the Brothers make of all this? One interesting answer is Brother Léon Lauraire’s book on the diachronic approach to *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*. There he cites Querrien’s book in the bibliography but doesn’t mention her or her book in the text. The message is unclear but Brother Léon seems to suggest that he wanted his readers to know that he was familiar with Querrien’s thesis but that he declined to use or comment on it. While Brother Léon does not mention Foucault in this volume he both lists in the bibliography and references *Discipline and Punish* in his *Pedagogical Approach* published eight years earlier (English translations). There, in the context of the section called “working in an orderly manner” he quotes from Furet and Ozouf’s book that mentions Foucault’s “brilliant and accurate pages,” summarizes Foucault’s thesis, and offers a brief response “without going into the pertinence of his analysis.”³⁴ What he does go into is to point out that most of Foucault’s references to *The Conduct* are to the 1828 edition and so he absolves De La Salle of responsibility for its content. In fact, in his *Diachronic Approach* Brother Léon discusses the 1838 edition at length because it contained many innovations including chapters on geography and drawing, new subjects that had been added to the curriculum. But most innovative of all was the addition of language from the mutual method, indeed the term “simultaneous mutual” method was used in the updated edition. Clearly the 1838 edition was a response to both the simultaneous-mutual method debate and Guizot’s law on primary education.³⁵ This still leaves us in a quandary. A close reading has Brother Léon quoting a work that praises the insight of Foucault’s analysis but which he suggests requires a reply, but that reply is in fact limited to a very narrow argument based on the dating and content of the *Conduct* editions. It would seem that Foucault’s and Querrien’s arguments are more evaded than refuted.

The reluctance of the Brothers to respond to Querrien and Foucault is not unrelated to the question at hand: why does Carter’s book on the *petites écoles* in Reims and others like it contain so few references and so little credit to De La Salle and the Brothers, while the books by Querrien and

³³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 180-87.

³⁴ Léon Lauraire, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools, Pedagogical Approach, Cahiers lasalliens* 62, trans. Allen Geppert, FSC (Rome: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2006), 169-70. For a publishing history of the *Conduct* see John Baptist de La Salle, *The Conduct of the Christian Schools*, trans. F. de La Fontainerie and Richard Arandez, FSC, ed. William Mann, FSC (Landover, MD: Lasallian Publications, 1996), 26-32.

³⁵ Léon Lauraire, *Conduct, Diachronic Approach*, 121-6.

Foucault (we could add Norbert Elias' *The Civilizing Process* in an altogether different context), much more tangential to Lasallian studies, make such strong arguments about the influence of both? 126

First of all, the Brothers, Yves Poutet, Henri Bédel, Léon Lauraire and others argue for the importance of order in the Christian Schools. In his *Pedagogical Approach* Brother Léon offers a masterful mini-dissertation on the principle of order in chapter seven. He supplies quantitative evidence of its importance to the text, its pedagogical function, the vigilance of the teacher, the role of silence and signs. But the context is the classroom, the amelioration of the relative chaos of the individual tutorial system traditionally employed in the Little Schools. This is certainly a valid approach, but it renders the central principle of order rather wan. The weakness here is that the context is too narrow; there is a reluctance to consider the broader social effects of order outside the classroom, the school as a social institution à la Foucault. This is likely the product of some discomfort with the order, the stratification, and exploitation of French society in the seventeenth century. This takes us back to Yves Poutet's and Alfred Calcutt's attempts to separate De La Salle's and the Brothers' work in the southern schools from the royal and ecclesiastical policies of coercion during the Camisard revolt. There the Brothers sought to disconnect, to decontextualize De La Salle from what they perceived as the injustices of the ancien régime. The Brothers are willing to view De La Salle as a man of his times. But those times tend to be limited to the theological and pedagogical, to French spirituality, and the simultaneous method. Their De La Salle is a narrower, more ideal type, conceived within a thinner, more selective context.

Some of the secular writers, interestingly those who take the broadest contextual approaches, Foucault and discipline, Querrien and the mutual schools, Brausch and dehumanization, Elias and the civilizing process, have made De La Salle and the Brothers central to their theses. If the Brothers' context is too narrow, these writers try to fit the Lasallian charism into a context so wide that they lose touch with its essence. That essence is a spiritual one and to ignore it or to reduce its importance to something material and/or merely repressive is to run the risk of seriously distorting the charism.³⁶ But history is often about perception and as Guizot noted there was widespread recognition that the Christian schools were excellent. That the Brothers figured so prominently in the debate about public primary education is a testament to the eminence of their schools, so much so that they had come to define it by the time of the French Revolution. It is one of the ironies of history that through their success, a success based on the perception of order and efficiency, they became political targets.

Eventually, the Christian Schools were subsumed by the state and a secular public education system. The politicization and secularization of the Brothers' work led to the loss of the spiritual dimension essential to the Christian Schools, reflected in the goals of the pupils' salvation or in the sacred relationship between teacher and student in service to the church. But this process, completed only in the beginning of the twentieth century, does not retroactively negate the fact that while the early Christian Schools intentionally acted as disciplining agents, the Brothers understood the nature and purpose of the disciplinary process differently from the political authorities, especially the modern ones. It is the strength of the secular writers that they have

³⁶ This is well pointed out by Diego Muñoz, FSC who recognizes Foucault's understanding of the "teacher as worker with mechanical discipline but without spirit." "Can We Speak of 'Lasallian Pedagogy' Today?" *Digital Journal of Lasallian Research* 3 (2011): 7.

identified a link of historical continuity between the pedagogical innovations of the Christian Schools and the formation of the modern state, the proletarianization of industrial capitalism, and modern compulsory public education. But they do so risking the anachronism of viewing the formative period of Lasallian history as a mere prelude to the development of the modern, centralized, disciplinary state. In the Brothers' work, De La Salle and the Brothers are de-contextualized, removed from the full frames of reference that give them life, thought, and meaning. In the case of the secular writers, they read De La Salle not in the context of his times, so much as reading the times in the context of De La Salle. The result is a selective picking and choosing of parts of De La Salle's mental world. He becomes more evidence in service to a thesis, a means to an end, but one that is tangential to the Lasallian charism. Both approaches reduce De La Salle's historical importance, the first because he appears too narrow, too parochial, too one dimensional, cut off from the mainstream of history, to a degree cut off from history itself, a priest but not quite a bourgeois Frenchman, a *dévot* but untouched by Jansenism, a saint untainted by politics, in sum not quite in possession of *francité*. In the second, ironically, his importance is more manifest because of his broader connection to the historical mainstream, but not as subject so much as the object of mere supporting evidence. To put it another way, the Brothers emphasize the continuity and fidelity to the Lasallian charism, while the secular writers focus on the continuity of early modernity, the development of industrial capitalism, the modern state, and public education. The Lasallian historiography is a victim of its own success. By focusing on the consistency of John Baptist de La Salle and the imperviousness of the Lasallian charism, it has convinced the secular historians that the movement is a narrow, somewhat detached one, not particularly relevant to broader historical narratives and so relegated to a few references and footnotes. One can recall Poutet's strenuous and strained attempt to show the heroic resistance of De La Salle to the alleged attempt by the bishop of Alès to portion the Brothers, one by one, in his diocese. Even if this were true, it was hardly a frontal assault on the charism.

A remedy for the undervaluing of De La Salle's historical importance is the broadening of badly-put questions through the expansion of context, but confined to the chronology of the early modern period. In this study, I have identified several of those under-examined references, ca. 1525-ca. 1725. They include Calvin, Calvinism, the broader Reformation, especially its French experience, Jansenism, the centrality of the ancien régime's social structure based on privilege and birth, and the ecclesio-royal policy to convert the Huguenots and eliminate heresy. This list is probably incomplete. The product of the Brothers' research is a John Baptist de La Salle somewhat outside of context, indeed to a large degree outside of time itself, sanctified and theologized. In addition, the lack of recognition of the unintegrated nature of De La Salle's thought, that was simultaneously supportive of the status quo, discipline, order, ecclesiastical and royal policy, while also effecting significant subversive tendencies rooted in educating the poor and challenging traditional corporate entities, activities the ruling elites found highly suspicious, even threatening. Moreover, the personal story of De La Salle as founder, his conversion, his class treason, is the most radical aspect of all in the Lasallian story, never completely private, never sheltered behind high walls, observed and judged by many, evoking negative reactions even from supporters, especially to his perceived social aberrations and exaggerated mortification as a non-conforming ascetic. This narrative has also been downplayed by the Brothers as perhaps embarrassing and ignored by the secular historians as perhaps irrelevant.

If the Founder was motivated by a determination to act as cooperator with God's grace in the salvation of his pupils' souls and by instilling right belief through catechetical instruction, he also understood the social consequences of educating the poor. This manifested itself in the secular motivation of the Christian Schools to compensate for parental failures to do their Christian duty and to empower the poor economically through social discipline, evocation of *francité*, profane studies, and literacy training. This agenda often evoked the opposition of families, pastors, bishops, ascendant bourgeois physicians, Camisards, and *philosophes*, while piquing the interest of Jansenists and other rigorists, and was often dismissed by Blain as the humble perseverance of a passive John Baptist de La Salle. The idea of De La Salle's total abandonment to God, identified as a "dominant trait of Lasallian spirituality," that made the founder one of the best representatives of that doctrine is perhaps the key to the Brothers' notion of his mental world.³⁷ Just how this concept functioned in everyday life is elusive, at least to the historian. How possible is total abandonment? And how did it function in someone like De La Salle who manifested an enormous strength of will? These questions are difficult if not impossible to answer, in very large part because De La Salle made it so, by revealing so little about himself. 128

The context matters, all of it. To broaden that context is to risk some greater incoherence, to create a more complex and elusive John Baptist de La Salle, but it serves to enhance his historical importance and that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and their Institute. Betwixt the narrowing context of the Brothers, eager to protect the reputation of the Founder from perverse historical influences, and the broader but agenda-swapping context of the secular social scientists, lies a middle ground respectful of the person of the Founder, the continuity of the charism, but with a willingness to shift the focus from his person to the historical context and to let the results go wherever they may lead.

Finally, in his history of the first Jesuits John W. O'Malley, S.J. argues that the enormous success of the Jesuit school system (especially focused on secondary education, the *collège*) greatly impacted the Society. It absorbed a great deal of manpower, focused the Society on the education of adolescent boys, especially those of the middle and upper classes. For practical reasons Jesuits recruited and trained Jesuits, contributing to a more closed intellectual atmosphere. Building schools required the Jesuits to become large property owners. They were forced to broaden their expertise in order to teach mathematics, astronomy, physics, theater, music, dance, fencing, horsemanship, thus embracing secular culture more than they may have planned. He sums things up in this way: "They did not grasp that this ministry had an intrinsic dynamism that would change the organization undertaking it."³⁸ By "intrinsic dynamism" O'Malley is referring to a historical process, something perhaps inexorable and outside of human control and which brought the Society's charism to a place neither planned nor intended. It is interesting to ponder if something similar happened to the Brothers of the Christian Schools, for they too became victims of their own success, as they came to define French primary education. How aware were the Brothers of the "intrinsic dynamism" that had turned them into such a force that like the Jesuits, albeit to a lesser degree, they had become part of the political conversation, indeed objects of political attack, something De La Salle would have wanted to avoid but could not. The issue of the *écoles mutuelles*

³⁷ John Baptist de La Salle, *Meditations*, ed. Augustine Loes, FSC and Francis Huether, FSC, trans. Richard Arnandez, FSC and Augustin Loes, FSC (Landover, MD: Christian Brothers Conference, 1994), Introduction, 23.

³⁸ John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 239-42. My thanks to Father O'Malley for reading an earlier version of this epilogue and for his kind and helpful suggestions.

was but one of their encounters with modernity. Earlier, like the Jesuits, they had responded to modernizing social forces and established fee-paying boarding schools that introduced modern technical education for the bourgeoisie. They broke with the Institutes' fundamental rule of gratuity in favor of the marketplace.³⁹ 129

I asked if contextualizing De La Salle diminishes him. Perhaps. But only if one chooses to diminish his humanity and the historicity, the intrinsic dynamism of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

³⁹ François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Reading and Writing, Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 78-80.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study began by invoking five models. From William Bouwsma's research on Calvin's eclecticism and the tensions inherent in the sixteenth century, came an awareness of the non-integrated, sometimes paradoxical nature of De La Salle's thought, the inherent, centrifugal pull of the complexities of the human personality within a time of deep divisions. From Brother Léon Lauraire, FSC came an appreciation for his contextual approach to the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* and his insight that De La Salle was an inductive thinker. This reliance on the experiential also helps to explain the tensions that coexisted within De La Salle's mental world. For example, it allowed him to embrace a radical life of apostolic poverty yet extoll the value of decorum and civility associated with the higher classes, and it permitted him to be respectful of traditional authority while undermining traditional social structures of the ancien régime. Another contributing factor was confessionalization theory which promoted the awareness of boundaries, the deep fissures, that pervaded French society, mostly religious, but socio-economic as well. In many ways, the sixteenth-century, three-way religious civil wars continued through continued through the seventeenth century in the form of intellectual conflict between orthodox Catholics, Jansenists, and Huguenots. While De La Salle was a Catholic thinker, categorizing him as untouched by other intellectual forces is an anachronism and deprives him of the full richness of his mental world. Moving from confessionalization to the broader Reformation provided the most important of all contexts for exploring De La Salle's life and thought. While the chronological stages for the German Reformation translated poorly to the unique circumstances of its French counterpart, there emerged several fundamental Reformation ideas common to both. These included a focus on childhood; the instruction of children, especially in catechetics; and special emphasis on the need for order and discipline in a religiously fractured society. Finally, Lucien Febvre's article on the origins of the French Reformation provided the methodological glue that guides and holds this study together. His emphasis on establishing a broader context and on the benefits of incorporating history and theology were crucial contributions producing new questions.

The first two chapters, therefore, provided the theoretical and methodological means, the context and questions, to begin exploring the mental world of John Baptist de La Salle. Here, the special relationship between church and state, the sacral monarchy, the royal ideal of "one king, one law, one religion," came into conflict with a significant Protestant minority. Behind the examination of the French Reformation, lies the question of the importance of De La Salle as a bourgeois, urban, Frenchman. Except for the narrower context of the French school of spirituality, this is an approach that has not been deeply pursued by the existing research. Lasallian induction sometimes manifested itself in the form of a puzzle-master, as De La Salle borrowed extensively from French episcopal catechisms, which he cut, pasted, supplemented, and made his own. More theoretically, this eclecticism raised the question of historical importance. Is someone historically important because he represents something unique, maybe even contrary to the time or because he personifies the time? There is evidence that both concepts apply to De La Salle. He was typical of his time in his pessimistic view of human nature, his interest in religious instruction, catechetics, decorum, order, and social discipline. In these things he followed more than led. But he made unique

contributions to pedagogy through the simultaneous system of instruction, the enhanced ecclesial and social status of the teacher and teaching, and the founding of a religious society of consecrated laymen dedicated to teaching. Eventually, through his efforts and those of many others, the Brothers of the Christian Schools came to be closely identified with French primary education. 131

Chapter three was directly inspired by Febvre's call for a new, more comparative form of historiography. Looking beyond narrow theological issues to a Reformation with social, cultural, and political ramifications and peering over the wall to one's neighbor provided new questions and answers. By comparing De La Salle to Calvin, a "neighbor" traditionally seen as personifying the most profound differences between Catholics and Protestants, surprising conjunctions emerged. Most fundamental was the conviction that the Christian must know what he or she believes, that childhood presents a unique opportunity to rehabilitate the human soul deeply wounded by original sin. Therefore, parents must play a crucial role in a sin-filled world where disorder reigns and decorum is threatened. Yet among these similarities was the very significant difference between Calvin's conviction of a vast and irremediable rupture between the human and the divine, while De La Salle believed that humans had the capacity to cooperate with God's grace, and that as teachers the Brothers could make a unique contribution to the church's mission.

Chapters four and five were deeper analyses of De La Salle's mental world. As a *dévot*, he practiced mortifications on a scale unusual even for the time, such that contemporaries as well as biographers cited it and commented on it. He conformed quite closely to the social and intellectual profile of the typical Jansenist, exhibited significant jansenistic affinities, which were observed by the Marseille Jansenists, while maintaining a clear distance from Jansenism as a formal movement. Two authorities have noted the bourgeois, scholastic, and urban origins of De La Salle, and who "committed the local church and university, with a Jansenist flavour."¹ As a rigorist, he shared an Augustinian anthropology, a deep pessimism about human behavior and an abhorrence of self that led to his mortification practices. In addition, he embraced a conscious ordering of time that echoed a unique Calvinist culture that valued ceaseless activity and despised idleness. Yet, he held that humans possessed significant freedom to accept or reject God's grace and he was able to separate the intense rules he imposed on himself from those he applied to others, especially inferiors. Jansenist Little Schools prefigured the Christian Schools in many ways: their use of the vernacular, awareness of the individual personality of each pupil, and a reluctance to use corporal punishment. There were many parallels between Jansenist parishes and the conduct of the Christian Schools, such as an interest in the poor, education, efficient management, and avoidance of luxury. De La Salle was a class traitor, abandoning his bourgeois upbringing, giving away his fortune, resigning his canonry, and forcing himself to move down in social class. The last caused a rupture in his psychological moorings which he overcame by a sheer act of will. This manifested itself most obviously in his repugnance for the food of the poor. De La Salle's inversion of the typical desire to ascend the social ladder led to the scorn of some segments of society and provides the social basis for the Clément affair. Yet as he challenged traditional ideas as an avant-garde non-conforming ascetic, he drew on a bevy of traditional ascetic practices, extending back to the ancient desert fathers.

¹ François Furet, and Jacques Ozouf. *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 65.

While there is considerable evidence for De La Salle as social subversive, when it came to the ecclesiastical and royal policy revoking the Edict of Nantes, the legal elimination of French Protestantism, and the extirpation of heresy, De La Salle was supportive. In fact, it is probable that the Christian Schools were influential in providing a concrete model to convert youths through classroom catechetical instruction that was embraced by the institutional church. Some bishops fully embraced the Lasallian educational model. Committing the Brothers to missionary activity in the *Midi* (in Avignon, Mende, Alès, and Les Vans), De La Salle presaged the evolution of the Institute into a French national institution. His engagement in the Camisard War demonstrates yet another side of De La Salle, who exhibited marked political acumen and intimate relations with the papal nuncio/archbishop of Avignon and some French bishops with whom he not only negotiated but influenced. Similarly, he sent Gabriel Drolin to Rome to establish a strategic association with the Holy See. 132

The last chapter broke with the chronology of the study and explored some of the diachronic ramifications of De La Salle's thought. The issue of historical importance came to the fore. The profound changes ushered in by the Enlightenment and French Revolution placed the Brothers squarely in the midst of the debate over compulsory state-controlled and secularizing primary education, best articulated by François Guizot and precipitated by a flirtation with the mutual method. Exploration of the research of some modern social scientists, such as Norbert Elias, Anne Querrien, and Michel Foucault highlighted De La Salle's influence on the civilizing process, capitalist proletarianization, and the modern state's interest in maintaining class discipline. Comparing this secular research to that of the Brothers identified the strengths and weaknesses of each. This brought the conversation back to the importance of expanding context: in the case of the secular scholars the need to develop a dialogue with theology; in the case of the Brothers, loosening the grip of theology. With this we returned to Lucien Febvre's article where the study began.

Re-reading Febvre's article never ceases to produce new insights. His acknowledgment that once hard fact is abandoned, the French Reformation appears a "jumble of conflicts and contradictions," alerts us to the complexity of historical investigation where not all issues are solvable.² One eminent Lasallian scholar presents a sort of intellectual biography of De La Salle in four paragraphs. First there was the Protestant Reformation; and then there was the Catholic Counter-Reformation organized around the Council of Trent; its vision for a trained presbyterate was implemented in France through "the French School of Spirituality," whose ideas were embedded in the seminary at Saint Sulpice; and the themes therein found influenced De La Salle.³ Such theological reductionism, while tempting and valid in its own way, needs to be avoided. Similarly, Febvre's description of the Reformation as a sign of a "profound revolution of religious sentiment," alerts us to the deep fissures in French culture that De La Salle had to negotiate and which account for at least some of the trauma he experienced.⁴ For Febvre the origins of a historical movement so profound requires an expansion of the context.

² Lucien Febvre, "The Origins of the French Reformation: A Badly-Put Question," in *A New Kind of History and Other Essays*, ed. Peter Burke, trans. K. Folca (New York: Harper, 1973): 44.

³ Gerard Rummery's Foreword in Yves Krumenacker, *The French School of Spirituality and John Baptist de La Salle* (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2015), 7-8. In fairness to Brother Gerard, he wrote as part of a brief introduction. The point is not so much its brevity as its repetition of an oft-repeated and seemingly unquestioned orthodoxy, an answer to a badly-put question.

⁴ Febvre, "The Origins of the French Reformation," 59.

Febvre's contention that the bourgeoisie were the social engines of the reform, men who relied on their own "qualities and talents," and a "consciousness of their own worth" and who were searching for a certitude they found in the precept of justification by faith alone alerts us to De La Salle's own bourgeois origins, for he too relied of his own talents, perhaps more than he has been given credit for.⁵ Moreover, this search for certitude signals us to the possibility that religious, social, psychological, and intellectual components of one's mental world are not easily distinguishable or reconcilable. As a result, the traditional interpretation of a more passive De La Salle awaiting God's direction gives way to a man who exhibited a remarkable strength of character and iron will that sustained him through decades of rejection and setbacks. Despite his profound humility, there is a steeliness to De La Salle's personality, the self-confidence of one of Febvre's early modern bourgeois, who became convinced that he was executing God's will. While this may reveal the essence of De La Salle's mental world, significant penetration of it is elusive, not the least because De La Salle successfully blocked its full expression in what he failed to reveal about himself, or destroyed when he did.

The key to Febvre's methodology is to incorporate history with theology and to connect the latter with the outside world. "[T]o lay hold of the psychological facts which lie concealed beneath the clichés of the schoolroom and bring out their significance for sixteenth-century Frenchmen ... would lead us to completely new conclusions."⁶ Although by "schoolroom" Febvre meant the parochial classrooms of his day, the idea works just as well as a broader metaphor for the historical enterprise. Moving beyond the cliché of De La Salle as a stalwart, pious, and suffering figure, broad contextualization reveals the more complex psychological facts of his intellectual flexibility and savvy, a heroic figure who was also the victim of great trauma and vulnerability, for the most part self-induced. Febvre's interest in "sixteenth-century Frenchmen," alerts us to the question of De La Salle's *francité*, something that has not been deeply pursued.

Finally, Febvre asserts that those who returned to the old religion did not return as "lambs to the old faith that had existed before the upheaval," they were changed.⁷ This is another metaphor for how De La Salle's Counter-Reformation Catholicism was a transformative one. Justification by faith alone is the theological linchpin for the Protestant Reformation and the idea that assuaged Luther's terror of an eternal damnation that awaited him no matter how hard he tried to be a good monk. When it came to John Calvin, one suspects that the other fundamental Reformation precept "sola scriptura," by Scripture only, was the more operational. W. de Greef has calculated that Calvin composed five lectures and five commentaries on the Old Testament, twelve commentaries on the New Testament, and 1544 sermons, surely focused on Scripture as well.⁸ Such monumental scholarship is a remarkable achievement illustrative of Calvin's repudiation of idleness and his extraordinary ethic as he worked in God's time. When one considers that the entire collection of the *Meditations*, monumental in their own way, though dwarfed by Calvin's *opera omnia*, are based entirely on Scripture, one gets the sense, once again, of an unexpected affinity between De La Salle and Calvin. In De La Salle's text one can discover a truly evangelical Catholicism within

⁵ Febvre, "The Origins of the French Reformation," 71; 75.

⁶ Febvre, "The Origins of the French Reformation," 80.

⁷ Febvre, "The Origins of the French Reformation," 86.

⁸ W. de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin, An Introductory Guide* trans. Lyle D. Bierna (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), especially chapter three.

a remarkable Counter-Reformation synthesis. Behind that text can be found a man and his mental world utterly transformed from that not quite yet eleven-year-old tonsured bourgeois boy who probably thought that his life had just been laid out before him. That, it turned out, was a badly—
put assumption.

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