Primary Education in France in the Time of John Baptist de La Salle

Richard Armandez, FSC

Education in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

By the end of the Middle Ages and before the outbreak of the wars of the sixteenth century associated with the Protestant Reformation, popular education in Western Europe had spread to a degree which was not to be attained again before the nineteenth century. In France, particularly during this period, a multitude of popular schools existed even in rural places, nearly always church-associated, staffed by the parish priest, by the vicar, or by lay teachers. As late as 1535 the Venetian ambassador in France, Marino Giustiniani, could write, "Here, every man, no matter how poor he may be, learns to read and write" (Flinton 1957, 174; Fagniez n.d., 12).

The Church, from the first Council of the Lateran in the twelfth century to the Council of Trent in the sixteenth, had consistently exhorted the clergy and laity to work together to promote the multiplication of schools. Echoes of this preoccupation are evident in the decrees of bishops and diocesan synods, as well as in provincial councils (Blain [1733] 1961, 60-61). In 1576 the Synod of Evreux declared: "All those responsible . . . must set up teachers in cities, towns and villages. Formerly, it would have been difficult to find a fair-sized town without a foundation for free schools, whereas today even cities lack them" (Beaurepaire 1872, 2:5-6). The complaint was only too justified, for, unfortunately, during the religious upheavals that made Europe desolate in the last half of the sixteenth

century, most of the pious foundations that supported the schools were appropriated by the unscrupulous, or disappeared in the aftermath of war.

Similar decrees can be noted in the statutes issued in Rouen in 1581 and in the decrees of the French Kings Charles IX in 1560 and Henry III in 1579. That the problem of education gave concern not only to the Church but also to the civil authorities is evident from the frequency with which this problem was raised in the petitions presented by the deputies of the various provinces at the sessions of the Estates General. The deputies of Normandy, for instance, repeatedly addressed this matter, and they specifically asked for help in the field of popular education in the meetings of 1595, 1614, and 1616 (Beaurepaire, 2:5–6).

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the slow process of rebuilding Catholicism had begun in France. The first step, the organization of seminaries to prepare Church leaders, was the major task of men like Cardinal de Bérulle, Charles de Condren, Jean Olier, John Eudes, Adrien Bourdoise, and Vincent de Paul. The definitive establishment of the Jesuits in France early in the seventeenth century and the educational activity of the Oratorians created a growing class of well-instructed Catholics.¹

At the time of the birth of John Baptist de La Salle, a large number and a considerable variety of educational establishments existed in France (Rigault 1937, 1:30). The most prestigious of these institutions, of course, were the great universities, especially the Université de Paris and the Collège de France. The collèges existed on what educators today would call the secondary level, and were conducted by the Jesuits, Oratorians and other religious, as well as by members of the secular clergy.²

On the primary or elementary level several types of schooling were available, depending on the social and economic status of the students. The children of the rich or those belonging to families

¹By 1608 the Jesuits already had some 30,000 students in their collèges all over France. Between 1615 and 1645 the Oratorians opened some 23 collèges in the country.

²The Collège des Bon Enfants at Reims, which De La Salle attended, was staffed and directed by the secular clergy.
in comfortable circumstances were often taught by private tutors at home, as was De La Salle himself during his early years. Primary-level classes conducted in classical boarding schools and collèges catered to the children of wealthy or noble parents who preferred not to have their children tutored at home. The courses in these schools prepared students for classical studies offered in the collèges. For the less wealthy, and offering strictly terminal programs, two types of schools existed, at least in the cities and towns: the primary schools conducted by the Writing Masters, and the so-called Little Schools. For the poor a special type of educational establishment, the Charity School, existed. To this type of school, De La Salle devoted the greater part of his activity.

The Writing Masters

The Guild of the Writing Masters (Maitres Ecrivains jurés) was an organization of teachers who, while specializing in the art of handwriting, also taught other branches of the elementary or primary curriculum, either in rooms or buildings of their own or in private homes. The Guild had developed from a society of handwriting experts begun in the late Middle Ages. At first its members were simply scribes who wrote for illiterate people, drawing up letters, deeds, and documents of various kinds. Later, many Writing Masters were connected with the universities, copying and embellishing manuscripts. Their teaching had originally been limited to the training of their own apprentices, but by degrees this activity gave rise to schools of writing open to the general public, especially after the invention of printing cut deeply into the revenue the Writing Masters had derived from copying manuscripts. The Writing Masters specialized in calligraphy, considered, with some justification, as one of the fine arts; however, little by little, they continued to add to their curriculum until, in the time of De La Salle, they taught arithmetic, spelling, and reading, along with penmanship (Beau­repaire, 2:274-76).

Until 1570 the Writing Masters apparently did not enjoy legal status. In that year it was discovered that the signature of King Charles IX had been forged on a document; in the wake of the uproar that followed, seven Writing Masters petitioned the King to set them up as a closed corporation with the exclusive right to verify signatures
and public documents, as well as to teach writing (Ravelet 1874, 38). By letters patent issued in November, 1570, the King legalized this corporation and thenceforth the Writing Masters constituted a closely knit group. To become a member, a person had to demonstrate competence as a penman, furnish proof of good morals, establish residence in the locality for at least three years, and undergo an examination (Beaurepaire, 2:274-84). When all these formalities had been fulfilled, the candidate was admitted to full membership by the prévôt, or municipal officer. Candidates had to pay to the Guild, besides other lesser fees, a fairly high initiation fee of 400 livres (Beaurepaire, 2:274-84).

In view of the limited amount of work available, the Writing Masters were not overeager to expand their membership; consequently, they never became very numerous, and their numbers gradually declined throughout the eighteenth century. In Rouen, for instance, 32 Writing Masters were teaching in 1618, 70 in 1662, 36 in 1725, 35 in 1776 (Beaurepaire, 2:283).

The Writing Masters lived solely on the fees paid by their students. Therefore, in an age when individual instruction kept classes very small, it is not surprising that they fiercely resisted competition. They tried to have all paid elementary instruction put under their control, while defending their claim to the exclusive privilege of teaching writing. As a result they engaged in a series of lawsuits with the Masters of the Little Schools, lawsuits that dragged on for a century and a half even until the time of De La Salle. The Writing Masters, who, as a rule, were looked upon with favor by the municipal authorities, generally won the first round of litigation, but on appeal the decrees of the lower courts were regularly annulled or modified.

Parliament, in fact, was reluctant to extend the Writing Masters’ monopoly to the other subjects beyond their specialty of penmanship, fearing that this privilege would seriously hamper the progress of public education. Nonetheless, a decree issued in 1651 and confirmed in 1699 guaranteed the right of the Writing Masters to teach other subjects besides writing, and even established their independence of the superintendent of schools (écolâtre), a member of the cathedral chapter of canons, or sometimes the chancellor, who exercised authority over the schools as the delegate of the chapter and of the bishop (Ravelet, 39).
But litigation continued, usually over trivial matters, until in 1714 a settlement was reached which limited the power of the Writing Masters and upheld the right of their rivals, the Masters of the Little Schools, to give lessons in writing, reading, grammar, and arithmetic. The Masters of the Little Schools could not, however, furnish their students any penmanship models more than three lines long, nor advertise the teaching of writing in their schools, nor display specimens of handwriting on the shingle over the door of the school (Ravelet, 40; Battersby 1957, 180).

The court records of this period mention hundreds of lawsuits brought by the Writing Masters against individuals, clerical and lay, who presumed to teach writing. The legal status given to the Writing Masters by Charles IX, usually assured that these lawsuits were decided in their favor (Beaurepaire, 2:275, 280). The courts in the eighteenth century regularly found that neither the bishops nor the superintendent of schools nor the parish priests could authorize a person to teach writing if that person were remunerated for doing so (Beaurepaire, 2:18-20). In Paris, priests who taught the rudiments of Latin to the boys in the elementary classes of the colleges and those who served as tutors in private families were allowed to teach their students writing and arithmetic. In the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Normandy, however, priests could not do so, except in villages where no Writing Master taught (Beaurepaire, 2:277).

When the Ursulines and Peter Fourier's Les Filles de Notre Dame began their schools for poor girls early in the seventeenth century, they were at first cautious about teaching writing for fear of arousing the ire of the Writing Masters. However, because they found a certain immunity in their status as cloistered religious, they eventually did teach writing without too much disturbance (Beaurepaire, 2:276).

The Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence, founded in Rouen by Father Barré with the financial help of Mme Maillefer, were not cloistered, and at first had much trouble with the Writing Masters in Rouen. By the early years of the eighteenth century, the matter had been settled amicably; the Sisters' right to teach writing in their Charity Schools was confirmed by royal and ecclesiastical decree. In this instance, one reason why the Guild of the Writing Masters did not object more vigorously, apart from the fact that the
Sisters taught very poor children who were in no position to pay the usual fees, was the fact that the civil and religious legislation of the time strictly forbade the teaching of boys and girls in the same classroom, and forbade the teaching of girls by men.\(^5\) The Guild was probably almost exclusively male and the Sisters taught only girls.

With the rise of the Charity Schools for boys, the Writing Masters felt that they had to be on the alert to any possible competition. Six months after De La Salle’s Brothers arrived in Rouen, the Bureau (the governing body of the General Hospice on which the schools depended) had to deal with a complaint lodged by the Writing Masters, who saw in the Brothers new competitors. The Writing Masters complained that “they [the Brothers] teach persons of all conditions indiscriminately, despite the fact that the [Charity] schools are supposed to be open only to the truly poor [les véritables pauvres].” After considering the matter, the Bureau decided that “in the future the children who wish to attend [the Charity Schools] must bring an attestation concerning their poverty, issued by their respective parish priests” (Beaurepaire, 2:341).

In Rouen, as late as 1772, the Brothers found it difficult to subsist on the meager wages the Bureau paid them even when supplemented by the scanty alms that occasionally came their way, and they began admitting to their classes a few children belonging to relatively wealthy families who sometimes made gifts or donations to the community. The Writing Masters immediately complained to the authorities. The magistrates decided that twice a year the Bureau must check the list of families of the students of the Brothers and enforce the regulation that the Brothers admit to their classes only those boys whose families appeared on the official list of paupers. A sign reading “Charity School for the Paupers of the City and the Faubourgs” was to be placed over the door of the school (Beaurepaire, 2:352–53).

In spite of the jealous care with which the Writing Masters guarded their prerogatives, their legal situation slowly deteriorated during the eighteenth century, while their professional ability also declined. Their guild, temporarily abolished in 1778, was reestab-
lished the following year, but with much less power and prestige. It disappeared permanently in 1791, swept away by the whirlwind of the Revolution, along with so much else reminiscent of the ancien régime. It must have found few mourners (Beaurepaire, 2:285–89).

The Little Schools

The designation “Little Schools” (petites-écoles), in contrast to the “higher” schools, that is, secondary collèges and other institutions preparing students directly for university work, had a precise significance. It meant the elementary schools where children of modest circumstances could acquire the rudiments of learning. The Little Schools were pay schools and were subject to the jurisdiction of the cathedral superintendent of schools (le grand chanoine or écolâtre). Their history is a fascinating one.

Schools attached to cathedrals and collegiate churches had existed ever since the early Middle Ages. The students of these schools were mainly, but not exclusively, choirboys and other young men destined for the clerical state. These schools were a kind of combination junior seminary and boarding school. The superintendent of schools was originally the canon specially charged with directing the chant of the divine office and the other liturgical functions in the cathedral. It naturally fell to him as the delegate of the chapter and of the bishop to exercise proper supervision over the choirboys' school. As time went on other schools sprang up in cities and towns; the vast majority of these were the result of pious foundations and legacies of which the bishops were the executors. Control over these schools and the direction of their teachers gradually passed into the hands of the superintendent of schools, who thus became something like a diocesan director of primary education. By the later Middle Ages, this organizational pattern had become all but universal in France and elsewhere in Western Europe (Blain, 60).

From the thirteenth century onward, the Little Schools multiplied. In Paris, as early as 1357, statutes and regulations existed to govern them and to give the teachers as a group a certain juridical status with well-defined rights and obligations (Rigault, 1:33; Ravellet, 29). Especially in the cities and larger towns, where they were fairly numerous, the Masters of the Little Schools soon established tightly closed corporations claiming the exclusive right to teach.
elementary subjects, that is, reading, writing, arithmetic, and even the elements of Latin grammar. The teaching of Latin grammar, however, brought them into conflict with the regents of the lower classes connected with the collèges and with the Faculty of Arts of the universities, who also claimed the exclusive privilege to teach Latin (Fosseyoux 1912, 1:33). Furthermore, their teaching of the other subjects caused them to clash with the Writing Masters. When the Charity Schools began to multiply, the Masters of the Little Schools jealously watched their growth for fear that the new arrivals on the educational scene would rob them of their paying students, and this bread-and-butter reason led them eventually to join forces with their rivals, the Writing Masters, against De La Salle and his Charity Schools.

In the sixteenth century, the wars of religion, as well as the confiscation of Church goods, wrought havoc on the Little Schools, but as peace and order were restored, they began to thrive again. About 1610, Paris had in its 43 parishes 147 recognized quartiers, that is, divisions of the town established by the superintendent of schools; in each of these divisions existed a school for boys and another for girls (Ravellet, 28–29).\footnote{Rigault, 1:35 and Guibert 1901, xxiii, speaking of Paris circa 1672, give the number of quartiers as 167.}

In 1659, the superintendent of schools of Paris, Michel Le Masle, issued a set of regulations which were amended by his successor, Claude Joly in 1672, and later confirmed by a decree of Parliament in 1725. These acts sought to give the Masters of the Little Schools a practical monopoly on elementary teaching in pay schools, except, of course, for writing (Ravellet, 34). According to these prescriptions, the Little Schools were not to be too close together, at most one every 10 houses in the crowded quarters of the cities and every 20 houses in less congested areas. A sign over the door proclaimed: "Herein a Little School, [name], which is authorized to teach children [divine] service, reading, writing, grammar, and arithmetic. . . ." The program also included religion along with the usual prayers and responses at Mass, the rules of civility, and sometimes singing (Léaud and Glay 1934, 1:94).
Some Little Schools had been set up by town officials acting in the name of the population, but most of them owed their establishment to legacies and pious foundations. Bishops and councils frequently recommended to the laity the support of the Little Schools as a very practical and efficacious type of almsgiving (Allain 1881, 196). Parish priests frequently exhorted their wealthy parishioners not to forget in their testaments "the Master of the Schools, who is in some way a true father of the Republic," as the Synod of Evreux quaintly declared in 1567 (Ravelet, 22). Nevertheless, because such foundations, although very numerous, usually did not provide enough money to finance the Little Schools entirely, the problem of finances continued to be a serious one. It received varying solutions in different localities.  

Funding the Little Schools

The Masters of the Little Schools usually had three sources of income. The primary one was a fixed salary paid by the founder or foundation and set by the royal decrees of 1698 and 1724 at a minimum of 150 livres a year for men teachers and 100 livres for women (Allain, 130; Utseau 1890, 116). Because this meager amount did not suffice, especially if the teachers had families of their own, all the students of the Little Schools, with the exception of the destitute poor, had to pay a small monthly fee called écolage. This fee varied from place to place and depended on the ages of the scholars and especially on what was taught in the school. Because an elective system prevailed and no student had to follow the full curriculum, the amount a student paid was in proportion to what he chose to study (Guibert, xxix; Battersby, 71; Utseau, 148ff). The diocesan regulations at Autun, in 1685, set the écolage at 5 sols per month for the child who learned reading only; 10 sols for reading and writing; 15 for reading, writing, arithmetic, and the elements of Latin grammar, and so on, up to a maximum of 30 sols for the student who enrolled for the complete course (Ravelet, 24). On the

---

5About 1710 the Archdiocese of Rouen had 1161 Little Schools in its 1159 parishes. See Beaurepaire, 2:382-83, 407.
average, these fees would have brought the teacher 150 to 200 livres a year in addition to the minimum salary.\textsuperscript{6}

Finally, especially in rural areas, the teachers received part of their pay in kind. This practice too was, as a rule, minutely regulated either in the contracts drawn up between the teachers and the officials of the towns where they were employed or in the terms of the legacies from which the teachers benefited (Allain, 131).

What was believed in and practiced was relative gratuity, that is, free schooling for the poor who could not afford to pay anything, while others were expected to contribute according to their means (Allain, 184–85). The common opinion also was that any so-called gratuitous instruction should be really such, that is, that it should cost the beneficiaries nothing. In this sense, modern free compulsory education for all would not have been considered as truly gratuitous because schools supported by public tax funds are really paid for by rich and poor alike.

That the parents whose children attended the school should support it, at least in part, seems to have been a generally accepted principle. The idea of universal and absolutely gratuitous instruc-

\textsuperscript{6}The monetary units in common use in France at this time were the denier, the sol, and the livre, which corresponded, in relative value, with the penny, shilling, and pound of the English system in use until decimalization in 1971, i.e., 12 deniers (pence) equaled 1 sol (shilling), and 20 sols (shillings) equaled 1 livre (pound). Also, 1 écu equaled 3 livres. See Barrême 1723. It would, of course, be very interesting to have some idea of the actual value of money at that time in terms of real purchasing power and in reference to present day prices, but such a determination would be very difficult, especially in view of the fact that the currency was not absolutely standardized and prices during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries fluctuated considerably. Here, however, are a few items which give some indication of the value of money at that time: an ordinary unskilled laborer in Paris could expect to earn about 12 sols a day (Battersby, 71); the price of meat in Paris a little before 1690 was 5 sols a pound, bread 2 sols a pound, and wine about 4 sols per pint; in the cheap restaurants in Paris about 1690 one could buy a meal consisting of soup, meat, bread, and beer for 5 sols (Mongrédié 1948, 89); and about 1780 at the Brothers’ boarding school of La Rossingnolerie the board was 400 livres per year (Urseau, 333).
tion, that is, education for all children indiscriminately, was never considered by the people in those times.

As a matter of historic fact, the monastic and other church schools of the Middle Ages were open and free to all, and until the Reformation the Little Schools had often been entirely gratuitous or very nearly so, partly because the foundations that supported them provided sufficient funds, and partly because most of these schools were actually taught by members of the clergy who either had other sources of income or were willing to be content with the modest salaries offered. But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the revenues of the foundations were not, as a rule, sufficient to support the schools entirely. Furthermore, the decrease in the number of clergy teaching in the schools made it necessary to employ more and more lay people, whose upkeep required more money; consequently almost everywhere the schools had recourse to écolage.  

Apart from teacher's salaries, the financing of a Little School did not call for a great outlay of money. A special school building was not required; a room in the teacher's own house, or a room rented for this purpose, or one supplied by the authorities sufficed. Because the number of students rarely went beyond 20 or so, only a single room was needed (Rigault, 1:35). The rudimentary furnishings of the school consisted mainly of benches and tables. Furthermore, the school did not provide a playground or recreational equipment. The students brought their own books and writing materials, and the system of individual instruction usually made charts and blackboards unnecessary.

The children were all brought together in the same room, regardless of age, ability, or advancement, but bishops and councils had repeatedly enjoined the strict separation of boys and girls even under pain of excommunication. In the cities this practice was usually observed, but in rural areas it was not always possible (Urseau, 111–12; Guibert, xxx).

On the average, children spent about two years in the Little Schools. The school day was brief; classes lasted about two hours

---

7As far back as February 7, 1534, the Parliament of Paris had forbidden the superintendent of schools to name parish priests as schoolmasters except in cases of extreme need. See Cilleuls 1898, 280.
In rural areas where boys and girls were not separated in different classrooms, teachers attempted to manage large numbers of children of varied ages, abilities, and dispositions in mixed classes. *The Mixed School*, by Jan Steen. The National Galleries of Scotland.

...in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. Some schools were open only in the winter; some only for three or four days a week (Urseau, 114).

**The Profession of Teaching**

Generally, the profession of teaching enjoyed more respect than some authors have suggested. To begin with, a goodly proportion of the teachers were members of the clergy, even though at the time of De La Salle the number of clerics teaching had begun to diminish. In 1710 in the archdiocese of Rouen, some 94 Little Schools were conducted by parish priests, 274 by assistant priests or deacons, and 430 by tonsured clerics or laymen (Beaurepaire, 2:407).

These lay teachers have often been described in very unflattering terms, but it is certainly an exaggeration to say that "the only
persons who could be found for the post of schoolmaster were sextons, disabled soldiers, cobbler's, and such-like" (Battersby, 71). The accusation that Claude Joly employed "low pothouse-keepers, barbers, flunkeys, fiddlers, and marionette string-pullers" in the Little Schools under his jurisdiction should be viewed with skepticism (Rigault, 1:35; Guibert, xxx). Some such individuals may, at times, have been teachers, but that they ever constituted even a notable minority has never been proved and seems highly unlikely.

Positions available in the Little Schools were eagerly sought after, a fact that shows not only that these positions offered some appreciable advantages, but also that those who had the right and duty of selecting the teachers did not have to take everybody who applied. When a vacancy occurred, there was, as a rule, no dearth of applicants. In 1674, 14 persons applied for the post of teacher in the village of Bourbourg (Nord); as frequently occurred elsewhere, the responsible authorities organized a competitive examination to determine their final choice (Allain, 133ff). Once a person obtained a position as teacher, he usually held it and fought off all types of competition even from the clergy, a course which could hardly have succeeded if the teacher had been as incompetent as some have implied.

Masters of the Little Schools not only kept their positions for long periods of time, in many cases ten to forty years, but often succeeded in passing their jobs on to their own sons. The teachers enjoyed exemption from military service even if they were single, a valued privilege indeed, especially under Louis XIV. They also were exempted from certain taxes and could not be called upon to exercise the role of tax collectors, a difficult and sometimes dangerous duty. In addition, they were accorded a certain amount of public consideration by both clergy and laity. They occupied the second place in church after the parish priest. They often wore the surplice and took part in the liturgical ceremonies, and at solemn Mass they were the first to be incensed, even before the local gentry. These last privileges applied, however, more commonly in the rural areas than in the cities, where the schoolteachers probably enjoyed less prestige (Allain, 139–44).
The Training and Supervision of Teachers

The difficulty of recruiting competent teachers and the lack of any professional preparation or continuous supervision for teachers were the weakest points in the organization of the Little Schools. The clerics among the teachers possessed at least some training in letters and their intellectual formation might be considered adequate, especially in view of the limited curriculum. But they had no instruction in the art of teaching, in pedagogical methods, or in classroom management. The lay personnel usually had little formal training in either the content to be taught or in teaching methods (Urseau, 143–44).

The need, however, for some sort of teacher training institution had not escaped thoughtful people. Various efforts had been made toward the end of the seventeenth century to do something constructive about this situation. De Portmorant at Paris, François Jogues at Orleans, the Bishop of Beauvais, Peter Fourier, and Charles Démia had tried to establish teacher training schools, but to no avail (Rigault, 1:31).8 The schools conducted by the Brothers of De La Salle and the various congregations of religious women founded at this period were clearly superior. In the novitiate candidates received at least rudimentary teacher training and instruction in classroom procedure; furthermore, once in the classroom, they enjoyed regular supervision of superiors and more experienced teachers. De La Salle's activity in this field of teacher preparation constitutes one of his most significant contributions to education.

The wise and practical suggestions for organizing the school which De La Salle makes in the Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes, the supervision provided the Brothers by their superiors and theInspectors of Schools, De La Salle's insistence that the Brothers study constantly to learn thoroughly what they were called upon to teach, all helped significantly to make his schools superior to those run by the Masters of the Little Schools. The Little Schools were often unorganized, isolated, and abandoned to their own limited academic resources.

---

8See also Alphonse Hermans, FSC, 1959–1960, on the seminarian as teacher during this period.
The Little Schools were, of course, entirely Catholic. The students were taught prayers, catechism, and Bible history, and were brought to Mass regularly. The whole organization of these schools was oriented toward religion, and the superintendent of schools exercised strict supervision over the teachers' morals and teaching (Ravelet, 33; Léaud and Glay, 1:94-95). The overriding consideration was for orthodoxy among the teachers, especially in those times when heresy was so often spread surreptitiously by means of schooling (Ravelet, 35-36; Léaud and Glay, 1:96). Illegal schools were called *écoles buissonnières* (hedgerow schools) because the itinerant teachers of heresy often gathered children in out-of-the-way places to inculcate their doctrines.

The Superintendent of Schools

On February 7, 1544, the Parliament of Paris had commissioned the superintendent of schools to "see to it that outside of the Little Schools established and controlled by him there should be no other schools or unauthorized teachers." The purpose of the ordinance, often reiterated in Paris and elsewhere, was "to obviate the inconveniences that would arise through the evil and perverse doctrines that might be taught to the young." Similar measures were adopted for similar reasons in other localities such as Narbonne in 1511 and Cologne in 1536. In Rouen the Parliament of Normandy issued such a decree in 1576 and renewed it in 1618. This decree provided that "all and sundry, whatever their quality, are forbidden to undertake the task of teaching and instructing the youth without the permission of the Archbishop of Rouen and the approbation of the chancellor" (where the chancellor filled the role of the superintendent of schools). This ordinance, reissued as late as March 24, 1752, carried for violation severe penalties, such as fines up to 100 livres and the confiscation of the school furnishings (Beaurepaire, 2:12-13, 16-17).

The superintendent of schools, then, had extensive control over the teachers. He inspected their classes in the name of the bishop and authorized them to teach, usually for a year at a time. If any difficulty arose or any complaint was lodged against one of the teachers, especially in reference to faith or morals, the superintendent investigated the matter and dismissed the teacher if necessary.
He also had the power to issue regulations to which the Masters of the Little Schools had to conform (Ravelet, 20–21, 31–32).

By the mid-seventeenth century, it was taken for granted and confirmed by law that the superintendent of schools was the undisputed head of the Little Schools (Ravelet, 32–33; Rigault, 1:34). No Little School could be opened in a diocese without his approval, and he was also regarded as the main protector of the Masters of the Little Schools, the champion of their rights and privileges, especially in their continuous struggle with the Writing Masters.

So extensive was the superintendent’s power that he exercised control even over the Charity Schools when these first came into existence. When Louise de Marillac opened her first gratuitous classes in 1641, she was careful to obtain prior authorization from the superintendent (Flinton, 184–85; Fosseyeux, 28). The superintendent’s concern was to make sure that the growth and multiplication of the Charity Schools caused no financial harm to the Masters of the Little Schools and, indirectly, to himself. While welcoming the founding of schools that cared for the destitute, because the destitute did not attend the Little Schools in any case, the superintendent and the teachers wanted to make sure that none of their own paying students should be admitted to the Charity Schools. The Masters of the Little Schools, the Writing Masters, and the superintendent held firmly to the principle that the Charity Schools were for the “truly poor,” not for such as could afford to pay. On this principle they were regularly upheld by the courts.9

Within a few years, however, the parish clergy of Paris, like their counterparts all over France, realizing that the poor did not attend the Little Schools even though they had a right to do so...
(Allain, 190), and eager to multiply their Charity Schools in view of the great good which they accomplished, resolved to ignore the superintendent's jurisdiction and to break the monopoly.

In 1656, the Writing Masters and Claude Joly, the superintendent of schools in Paris, seeking to limit the alarming development of the Charity Schools, exerted their authority. However, the parish priests resisted, aided by the powerful influence of members of the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement. Forced to concede, the superintendent offered to authorize all the Charity Schools that the parish priests wished to create. But the priests, unwilling to grant him any legitimate control over their schools, refused the offer and took their case to Parliament (Fosseyeux 1912, 3).

Disputes Over the Education of the Poor

A real cause célèbre then occurred in the courts and continued until 1699. The Masters of the Little Schools protested that the Charity Schools actually admitted children whose parents could afford to pay for their education, thus ruining the pay schools and making beggars of the teachers themselves. Claude Joly, for his part, naturally disliked seeing a new opportunity for elementary instruction escape his previously exclusive and uncontested jurisdiction. Moreover, he realized that if the Charity Schools actually did cut into the revenues of the teachers his own income would eventually suffer because the teachers apparently paid him an annual fee, probably when they applied for a renewal of their licenses (Fosseyeux, 33).

In 1678 Claude Joly had published a monumental work entitled Traité Historique des Ecoles in which he attempted to prove instead, a written certificate of poverty was made out for such children. This document, according to a regulation dated March 6, 1654, had to be produced by the child before he could be admitted to school. In 1674, it was decreed that these certificates could be issued only when validated by the pastor of the parish to which the pauper belonged. The Writing Masters were authorized to present to the authorities the names of parents who were not poor but who nevertheless sent their children to the Charity Schools. Such parents might then be forced to enroll their sons in the regular schools. See Beaurepaire, 2:313–14.
his claim to power over the Charity Schools by arguments at once legal, canonical, and historical. According to Joly, both teaching and social work (i.e., organized charity, hospitals, and welfare work) had originally been inaugurated and developed by the cathedral chapters; consequently, the superintendent, as the qualified representative of the chapter and of the archbishop, should keep control of all teaching and charitable enterprises. The parish priests, however, argued that their Charity Schools for the poor were a necessary adjunct to and extension of their parish catechism classes and that as pastors of souls they had an inherent right and duty to provide for the religious upbringing of these children.

Joly argued that the education of the poor was not necessarily a parish function and pointed to Lyon where the archbishop had called on Father Charles Démia to found and organize Charity Schools for all the destitute children of that city, without reference to the parish organizations or the parish priests. He likewise complained because the parish charity bureau, which took care of the schools as well as of the sick and indigent, frequently failed to respect the authority of the archbishop or of the superintendent (Fosseyeux, 33-35). He even questioned the very necessity of parish Charity Schools because, according to standing regulations and precedent, the poor had the right to attend the Little Schools gratis. The parish priests replied that even if poor children were supposed to be admitted free to the Little Schools, in practice they were not welcomed there and were often embarrassed; consequently, the children chose not to attend (Rigault, 1:37; Ravelet, 45). Therefore, the poor were not receiving any instruction and were, in fact, living in ignorance and immorality, running wild to the detriment of society and jeopardizing their eternal salvation (Démia 1668, cited in Battersby, 71-72).

Joly also objected to the Charity School on historical grounds as a departure from Christian principle and precedent. The schools fostered the separation of the poor from the wealthy, a practice not consistent with educational tradition which had mixed social classes since the Middle Ages. But the parish priests must have considered this segregation the lesser of two evils. In practice, the only alternative was to see the poor grow up without any education at all. The solution offered by the Charity School for the poor, while far from the ideal, was probably the best that could be had at the time.
and under the circumstances. "It was the old Christian idea of gratuitous instruction but interpreted by men living in an epoch of marked social inequality. In the Middle Ages one and the same school served all children, rich and poor alike, without requiring or accepting anything from anybody. In the seventeenth century the poor were segregated; to them instruction was imparted as an alms" (Rigault, 1:38).

The quarrel between the parish priests and the superintendent continued. In 1684 the Archbishop of Paris, François de Harlay de Champvallon, issued a decree in the hope of ending the matter. He recognized the right of the parish priests to establish and maintain their parish Charity Schools independently of the superintendent on condition that they accept only truly poor children (Ravelet, 46). This proviso simply reiterated what had already been current practice for some 40 years. The agreement entered into in 1646 between the superintendent and the parish priest of Saint-Eustache had stipulated that the priest would admit to his Charity School "only truly poor children . . . sent to school with an attestation of poverty." Every three months a list of the children taught in the Charity School had to be sent to the superintendent so that a check might be made on the financial condition of their families (Rigault, 1:38–39).

Archbishop Harlay’s decree did not put an end to the dispute, and it was not until 1699, 15 years later, that the litigants finally agreed on a compromise which specified that Charity Schools run by the parish priests could accept only those children who were certified by their pastors as being truly poor. Lists of poor children had to be kept and reverified every six months (Fosseyeux, 35–36). The decree also recognized that the superintendent had the right to visit and inspect the Charity Schools once a year. The parish priest had full authority to hire and fire the teachers. A sign reading, "Charity Schools for the Poor of the Parish of . . ." was to be placed over the door of the school. The parish priest of Saint Sulpice in Paris was one of the signers of this document (Fosseyeux, 35–36; Ravelet, 46–47).

Such, then, was the situation in Paris in 1688 when John Baptist de La Salle arrived at Saint Sulpice to take over from M. Compagnon the direction of the Charity School in the Rue Princesse. The Brothers’ school, with good discipline, many students, and
remarkable scholastic results, immediately aroused the jealous suspicion of both the Masters of the Little Schools and their traditional adversaries, the Writing Masters. These rivals, sensing their positions threatened by the Brothers, agreed to collaborate, and early in 1690 they brought the first lawsuits against De La Salle and the Brothers. Suits continued with a few interruptions for more than 15 years until, in 1706, they succeeded in having the courts condemn De La Salle and his schools.

Given the prevailing legislation and the existing precedents, it is not surprising that De La Salle and the Brothers had to endure these attacks nor that the lawsuits turned out as they eventually did. Furthermore, no evidence indicates that the Writing Masters or the Masters of the Little Schools were animated by a spirit of hatred for the Charity Schools or motivated by personal animosity toward the Brothers or De La Salle; these Masters had already come into conflict with the personnel of other Charity Schools. Their motives were quite frankly economic. In principle they had no objection to seeing the poor taught reading, writing, and the other subjects. Bluntly stated, they were not interested in the poor, but they were determined not to allow any of their paying students to be enrolled in the Charity Schools.

Charity Schools for the Poor

The French revolutionaries of 1789 did not originate the idea of gratuitous instruction for all; it already had a long history in that country and in most of the rest of Europe as well. As early as 1179...

---

10 In England about 1699 the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge began to open subscriptions for Charity Schools for the poor. Within six years, there were 40 such schools in London and its environs, and by 1711 over 1000 were functioning all over England. Apparently the inspiration was the Anglican Church. Teachers were paid by results. The teacher got 2 shillings 6 pence when each child could name and distinguish each of the letters in the alphabet; a like sum when all could spell; 5 shillings more when they could read well and say the Church catechism; and 15 shillings more when they could write and add accounts. See the “Account of Charity Schools in Great Britain and Ireland,” 1711, quoted in Lamb 1950, 59.
the Third Lateran Council had ordered that free schools be founded, and the Council of Trent had done the same. The implementation of these decrees by many reforming bishops, such as Charles Borromeo at Milan, is a matter of record. But the gratuitous education practiced and recommended in De La Salle's time was restricted to the children of indigent families or to those in very impoverished circumstances. The notion that anybody should furnish an education free to those able to pay would have struck most people as strange. The reason given by the municipal authorities at Saumur who, in 1783, voted against allowing Charity Schools to be established there, was that there “are in this town very few workmen who are not in a position to send their children to the schoolmasters [i.e., to the Little Schools], and of these latter there is no dearth” (Urseau, 97).

Still, places like Saumur were rare exceptions. In seventeenth-and eighteenth-century France many partially or wholly destitute people were to be found, especially in the larger towns and cities. This population constituted a proletariat without regular employment or trade, individuals and families who lived from day to day, often in conditions of great squalor, on what they could obtain by doing odd jobs, picking pockets, or begging (Battersby, 23). Vast numbers did survive thanks to public charity, often administered by a municipal Charity Bureau composed of ecclesiastics and laity whose piety and devotedness were exceptional. A curious but pertinent remark of De La Salle himself deserves notice here. In the Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes, referring to the parents of the children who miss school frequently, he writes, “These poor people are ordinarily those to whom alms are given.” The normal and proper clientele of Charity Schools, the poor, were people who today would be considered paupers or welfare cases.

All along, the problem of providing instruction, particularly religious instruction, to the children of these families had proved extremely difficult. In theory these underprivileged youngsters should have been accepted and taught free of charge by the Masters of the Little Schools. Diocesan regulations repeated that “the poor are not to be turned away” (Fosseyeux, 27). L’Escole paroissiale, published in 1654, records that the “children of the parish, both poor and rich, shall be accepted, as long as there is room. The poor shall be taught gratuitously; those who can pay shall do so according to their
means" (Bathencourt 1654, 71). But L’Escole paroissiale suggests that the teacher gather the poor children in a special place in the classroom, apart from the rest, lest their dirt and vermin prove obnoxious to their more fortunate companions (Rigault, 1:51).

The proceedings of the assembly of Parisian schoolmasters held in 1672 under Claude Joly declare: “Remember that you are supposed to teach the poor children gratuitously. God will bless your school if in it the poor are evangelized. So, love the poor tenderly.” Similar injunctions appear in the Synods and Statutes of the dioceses of Toulouse, Chalons, Aix, Grenoble, and Arras (Allain, 191).

Frequently, a clause in the agreement between a teacher of a Little School and the local authorities or the representatives of the founders of the school specified that the teacher must accept free of charge either a definite number of poor children or even all those who might present themselves, providing they brought a “certificate of poverty.” One such contract drawn up at Mâcon in 1620 reads: “The teacher will accept no payment from students who are notoriously poor” (notoirement pauvres). At Avesnes the two pious ladies who taught the girls agreed to accept up to 20 needy students gratuitously; however, these children had to bring with them a written statement from the mayor certifying that they were poor. Most of the time, the parish priests drew up such attestations in favor of the destitute children who wished to enroll in the Little Schools.

Whatever the theory, however, this right of the poor to attend the Little Schools gratis seems to have been widely disregarded in practice. The teachers, especially those who had families of their own to support, were understandably reluctant to accept these charity students. With the number of their students severely limited by the individual method of instruction then in vogue, every poor child taught without charge meant one fewer paying student. Furthermore, the presence of ragged, dirty, poor children might prove distasteful to the more fortunate students and therefore cause some of them to withdraw. At the same time the poor, seeing no great advantage in learning and realizing that they were not particularly welcomed in the Little Schools because of their social inferiority, simply did not attend (Rigault, 1:37). But whatever the cause, only a very small number of poor children actually attended the Little Schools. The great majority spent their time running the streets and
growing up without any instruction, particularly religious instruction. This problem preoccupied thoughtful people whose attempts to solve it led to the establishment of special Charity Schools for the destitute poor.

As early as 1527, such special institutions existed at Lille (Fosseyeux, 27). In 1555 the Bureau des Pauvres in Rouen bought four houses in separate parts of the town to serve as free schools for poor children. The clerics who at first directed these four establishments (called the "schools for the four quarters," écoles des quatre quartiers) received 40 livres a year and free lodging. They were to teach the students to "fear and praise God, [to know] the Creed and Commandments, the little Catechism, reading, writing, and above all, [to possess] good morals" (Beaurepaire, 2:289). The Bureau also organized a similar school in the precincts of the General Hospice for orphaned or abandoned children.

In 1556 two more schools, these for poor girls, were started and entrusted to two pious laywomen who, in addition to the elements of religion, reading, and writing, instructed their students in the art of sewing (Beaurepaire, 2:290). At Toulouse the institute founded by Saint Jeanne de Lestonnac about 1607 did similar work. Other foundations were established in various parts of France throughout the first half of the seventeenth century (Fosseyeux, 27).

Charity Schools in Paris and Rouen

Paris seems to have lagged behind the provinces in this respect. The organization of Charity Schools for the poor began in Paris only about 1640 as part of the vast charitable movement under the influence of men like M. Olier and Vincent de Paul. Charitable associations appeared everywhere and their members engaged in various types of welfare work, all strongly organized along parish lines. Members of these associations visited the hospitals, took care of the sick, established orphanages, procured medicines, ran soup kitchens, and provided clothes and lodgings for destitute families. Naturally, the

---

11 Parish catechism lessons were rare and poorly organized. The first official diocesan catechism at Nantes is dated 1690.
12 Her uncle was Michel de Montaigne, the famous essayist.
people active in these Charity Schools also saw the problem posed by the lack of educational opportunities for the children of the poor, and before long founding, organizing, and financing Charity Schools became an important part of their work. "These schools for the poor were both a welfare activity and an educational enterprise; they catered to the dregs of society, where stark poverty and lack of interest in the value of an education usually go hand in hand" (Fosseyeux, 25-26, 27-28, 32).

Most of the charitable groups active in the parishes of Paris and elsewhere were offshoots of the powerful, semi-secret society known as the Compagnie de Saint-Sacrement. These wealthy and influential people contributed funds and solicited gifts and legacies for the Charity Schools. Donations, made either to the parish or directly to the parish charity, were often designated for opening Charity Schools where the indigent could be taught gratis (Fosseyeux, 28-31).

Within a few years, practically all the parishes of Paris possessed one school of this type, with the larger parishes and those with the neediest populations having more than one. On both these criteria the parish of Saint Sulpice was ranked highly. During his time as pastor, Jean-Jacques Olier (d.1657) founded seven Charity Schools for boys and a number for girls in various parts of the parish (Rigault, 1:191). At Lyon, Father Charles Démia spent his own fortune and devoted the last years of his life to organizing Charity Schools. When he died in 1689, the city had 16 free schools for the poor, with over 1600 students (Rigault, 1:66).

At Rouen the four Charity Schools established in the sixteenth century had disappeared by the mid-seventeenth century. But the spirit of Jean-Jacques Olier, Adrien Bourdoise, and Vincent de Paul found imitators. In 1654 the Charity Bureau decided to gather all the poor children de l'aumone (i.e., those who depended for their subsistence on the aims of the Bureau des Pauvres) into a single institution where "they could be instructed in piety and the Catholic religion, taught to read and write, and be employed in the diverse tasks for which they should be prepared." These children lived in and went to the school associated with the General Hospice.

13 About 1685, within the limits of the parish of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, five Charity Schools and seven Little Schools existed. See Fosseyeaux, 40, n. 4; Allain, 188.
Jane Frances de Chantal (1572–1641) founded with Francis de Sales the Visitation, which had teaching in the Charity Schools as one apostolate.
At first, priests seem to have done the teaching of religion and the Writing Masters taught the other subjects. Later, Laurent de Bimorel (d. 1669), who headed the Bureau, reopened the schools of the four quarters of the town and associated them with the one already functioning in the General Hospice. In this project he was greatly helped by Adrien Nyel who, as early as 1657, was teaching catechism, reading, and writing to the boys at the General Hospice. From 1661 to 1669 Nyel and Bimorel worked at reorganizing the four schools of the parishes of Saint Maclou, Saint Vivien, Saint Godard, and Saint Eloi, the very schools which the Brothers of the Christian Schools took over after 1705, when De La Salle moved the center of the Institute to Rouen (Beaurepaire, 2:299–305).

The rest of the country witnessed similar initiatives undertaken by charitable ecclesiastics and public-spirited laypeople. Father Barré established schools for poor girls at Rouen and Darnétal with the help of Mme Maillefer, and later established schools in Paris. Canon Roland undertook the education of poor girls in Reims. M. Aubery established schools at Moulins; and schools were established by the Ursulines and Peter Fourier. Many similar enterprises were also undertaken (Allain, 189).

**De La Salle and the Charity Schools**

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, at the time when De La Salle was becoming involved in the education of the poor, a considerable number of Charity Schools for the gratuitous instruction of the indigent existed all over France, especially in the large centers. Practically all these schools, with the notable exception of those in Lyons, were strongly centered on the parish. The vast majority of the congregations of the Sisters who taught in the Charity Schools for girls were, for all practical purposes, entirely parochial in constitution. They had no chapel other than the parish church, and many of them had the parish priest as superior (Fosseyeux, 44).

With the victorious conclusion of their long struggle against the superintendent of schools, the parish priests of Paris had established themselves as the real authority in their schools, which depended on them entirely for financing, recruiting and selection of teachers, and for organizing and administering scholastic details (Fosseyeux, 36).
In general, the parish priests did not relish sharing authority over their Charity Schools with anyone else, which helps to explain the attitude assumed by the pastors of Saint Sulpice, De La Barmondière, Baudrand, and De La Chétardie, regarding De La Salle and his Brothers. The idea of a religious congregation of men devoted to teaching, having its own central system of government and a superior responsible for schools spread throughout many dioceses and even beyond the borders of France, was sufficiently novel at that time to find very slow acceptance.\textsuperscript{14}

When De La Salle and the Brothers came to Saint Sulpice in 1688 to take over the direction of the Charity School in the Rue Princesse (the only school remaining out of the seven founded by Olier some 40 years earlier), they found that the school was totally a parish project, completely subject to the authority of the parish priest. The school cared for the children of the numerous indigent families of the neighborhood. None but officially poor children (enfants reconnus pauvres), that is, those whose poverty was duly certified by the parish priest, were to be admitted. To make sure that no other children were accepted, the superintendent, the Masters of the Little Schools, and the Writing Masters all monitored what occurred in the Rue Princesse, ready to invoke the law on parish priest and teachers alike if that Charity School were to admit children who could pay the modest fees charged by the regular schoolmasters.

Gratuity of instruction was the Charity School's one sure and powerful defense against the vested interests arrayed against it. Only the Writing Masters and the Masters of the Little Schools had the right to engage in public primary education. This right they were willing to waive in the case of Charity Schools which accepted only the verifiably indigent who would otherwise not have come to their classes.

If children who could pay were admitted to the Charity School, both priest and teachers would be fined and their schools closed. Such a policy was the root of the difficulties De La Salle and the Brothers encountered and led to the temporary closing of the Saint Sulpice schools in 1706 and the schools in Chartres in 1719 (Rigault, 1:263–68).

\textsuperscript{14} In De La Salle's lifetime, the community of Brothers had no juridical or canonical status.
Most of the numerous teaching congregations of women that evolved during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries found in the Charity Schools the main, if not the exclusive outlet for their zeal; in their Rules are found prescriptions concerning gratuitous teaching, much like those established by De La Salle.\textsuperscript{15} Books, food, clothing and school supplies were also often given to the students (Beaurepaire, 2:224, Allain, 195). The Rule of the Brothers specified that the children should be furnished with free ink.\textsuperscript{16}

**Funding the Charity Schools and the Schools of the Brothers**

In many cases the Charity Schools were supported by the charity budget of the parish derived from collections, alms, donations, and legacies. However, the heavy drain of the schools on parish finances led pastors and bishops to seek more positive means of support for them.\textsuperscript{17} "The greatest act of charity toward the poor," wrote the Bishop of Arras in 1678, "is to provide them with the opportunity of instructing themselves" (Allain, 196–97). That such pastoral exhortations did not go unheeded is evident in the multiplication of these pious foundations. The origin of most of the early schools of the Brothers followed this pattern.\textsuperscript{18}

Donations for founding schools took various forms: real estate, buildings, rents, vineyards, farms, cash for investment, revenue bear-

\textsuperscript{15}See the *Common Rule*, Brothers of the Christian Schools, Manuscript of 1705, chapter 6.
\textsuperscript{16}See *Règles et Constitutions de l'Institut des Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes*, 1718, Chapter 13.
\textsuperscript{17}In 1697 the parish of Saint Sulpice alone had seven Charity Schools for girls and three for boys, taking care of some 2000 children, all of whom were taught without charge and given books and other school supplies gratis (Fosseyeux, 52).
\textsuperscript{18}The act of foundation of a school at Soulaire in 1700 reads in part: "Considering that if God visits with malediction those who furnish the little ones with an occasion of losing [their] souls, God likewise reserves rich rewards for those who give them the means of sanctifying themselves and saving their souls; and since the most useful and necessary of such means is a good education and proper instruction in the faith . . . . Dame Jeanne Gille . . . hereby establishes in perpetuity . . . a Christian school in which the girls of the parish can be instructed and educated" (Urseau, 100).
ing securities. At times ecclesiastical benefices were created with the express purpose of providing funds that would allow the titular to instruct the children of the parish free of charge. Sometimes existing ecclesiastical benefices were converted into revenue producing investments so that schools could be endowed (Allain, 101-05). At other times, a wealthy person guaranteed a fixed sum sufficient to cover the expenses, or a group of people collaborated to raise the required capital (Rigault, 1:273-75). Although some municipalities helped in a few cases, this practice was the exception; education was not yet considered one of the normal responsibilities of the public authorities. The schools of the Brothers at Calais and Versailles received occasional grants from the King, but such subsidies did not become a regular source of income (Rigault, 1:271).

What did it actually cost to maintain a teacher in a Charity School in those days? No uniform contract for the teachers of the Charity Schools existed. Salaries depended on local circumstances, on the duties demanded of the teacher, and on the extra emoluments he might enjoy along with his salary (Guibert, xixx). The royal decrees of 1698 and 1724 set the minimum cash salary for a Master of a Little School at 150 livres a year; however, salaries for teachers in the Charity Schools varied considerably from this amount because they, unlike the Masters, could not supplement their wages by fees.

When the Brothers came to Paris in 1688, Claude de La Barmondière, pastor of Saint Sulpice, agreed to pay each of them 250 livres a year (Battersby, 93; Ravelet, 182). A contract for one teacher in Paris in 1711 indicates that he received 420 livres a year of which 70 livres represented the cost of his lodging, and from his salary he was expected to give pens and books free to the children (Fosseux, 65). The 14 Brothers employed at Saint Sulpice in 1740 were paid 4592 livres a year from the parish, or 328 for each Brother. At this time the three Brothers teaching at the Gros Caillou school received 1158, or 386 livres each. In both cases, lodging was provided free by the parish. In 1744 the three Brothers at Saint Etienne du Mont received 900 livres plus lodging, and the six at the Madeleine in 1757 were paid 2250 livres, or 375 livres each (Fosseyeux, 66).

When Mme Mâilléfer sent Adrien Nyel to Reims in 1679, she promised him 100 écus, the equivalent of 300 livres, a year. With this sum Nyel paid M. Dorigny, the parish priest of Saint Maurice,
for board and lodging for both himself and his young companion (Rigault, 1:138, 143).

Mme De Croyère, in order to establish the school in the parish of Saint Jacques, bequeathed for the support of two teachers a sum of money the interest on which came to 500 livres a year (Rigault, 1:145). At Chartres the Brothers had no fixed revenue. As long as Bishop Godet des Marais lived, he provided generously for them out of his own resources. But not having made any provision in his will for these benefactions to continue, he left the Brothers and their work in a very precarious position when he died, a situation in which the Brothers suffered great hardships for years (Blain, 376–77).

Considerable negotiation was needed to accumulate the capital to insure the annual salary of about 265 livres for the two Brothers in the school at Troyes. The lower cost of living at Troyes and the free use of the presbytery as a community residence may have accounted for such a modest salary. At Darnétal the two Brothers who took over the parish school after the death of the lay teacher had to be satisfied with the 150 livres that their predecessor had received.

When the Brothers began teaching in the schools of the four quarters at Rouen, they received board and lodging free at the General Hospice and 36 livres a year each for their other expenses. The contract signed in 1707 between the Bureau and De La Salle called for ten Brothers plus a Director and a cook to work in the four schools. The only remuneration the Bureau agreed to pay the Brothers was 600 livres a year, out of which they had to pay the rent for their house (Rigault, 1:273–89).

A comparison of the salaries paid to the Brothers with the wages of other workers can be drawn from the records of a wealthy nobleman in Paris about 1690. The chaplain was paid 200 livres; the private secretary, 300; the maître d’hôtel, the most important man in the household, 500; the chief cook, 300; assistant cooks, 75; coachmen, 100. All these persons received board and lodging free (Franklin 1957, 19).

School Policies

Although the *Conduite des Ecoles chrétienes* describes how the Christian school in general should operate, it also demonstrates why those gratuitous schools conducted by the Brothers were superior
in organization, in pedagogy, and in efficiency. By inference at least, this superiority explains the popularity of the Brothers' schools with pastors and parents and the animosity they aroused among the Writing Masters and the Masters of the Little Schools.

Although the parish priests made their own decisions on the general policies of their schools, they left the real operations and practical details to the Brothers and Sisters in charge. As a rule, a Charity School included two divisions or classes, one for children up to about seven years of age, and the other for those older. Lessons lasted approximately five hours a day, generally from 8:00 or 8:30 to 11:00 in the morning, and from 2:30 to 4:00 or 5:00 in the evening. In many places the schools were not open on Wednesday or Saturday.

The Rule of the Brothers prescribed only one holiday during the week, Thursday, but the eves of major feasts were often holidays as well as the feasts themselves. The school year lasted 11 months, with September usually the long vacation (Fosseyeux, 68). On the average, a child spent two years in a Charity School, but some children might stay for three or four.

In many schools, once the simultaneous method became accepted, a classroom might have 60 or 70 students, presumably following the same lesson, with little attention to differences between the slower and the brighter, the more and the less advanced. However, following the directives of the Conduite, the Brothers' schools were organized with three or more divisions to each class based upon the ability and progress of the students, with careful grading, regular evaluation, and promotions. This organization contributed to the superiority which the Lasallian schools enjoyed over schools where classroom procedure was much more haphazard (Rigault, 1:195).

In the Charity Schools considerable emphasis was placed on proper behavior and politeness; this practice was also a unique characteristic of the schools the Brothers conducted. De La Salle's The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility exercised considerable influence on French society until well into the eighteenth century and was frequently reedited. Many other books on good manners were published about this time, a genuine sign that the topic was very much emphasized.

The Charity Schools received regular visits not only from the pastor but also, at least in certain parishes, from the cleric who looked
after them in the pastor's name. In addition to the clergy, the officers delegated by the parish Charity Bureau made monthly inspections and presented regular reports on the situation in the schools to the other members of the Bureau at their general meetings (Fosseyeux, 70–71).

Teaching Orders

The girls' schools were staffed almost exclusively by Sisters belonging to one of the many congregations established all over France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For the most part these were non-cloistered. Ravelet sets the number of such congregations at over 50 without claiming to have included them all (Ravelet, 58). Among these Orders was that of the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence founded by Father Barré with the help of Mme Maillefer. They had opened a convent in Paris as early as 1677, where they were known as the Sisters of Saint Maur, and had begun working in the parish of Saint Sulpice two years before the Brothers arrived. By the end of the century, these Sisters were conducting eight schools in the parish of Saint Sulpice alone (Fosseyeux, 44).

The Daughters of Charity, founded by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, also conducted many schools in Paris, along with hospitals, orphanages and other social works. Unlike the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence, they undertook teaching in parish Charity Schools only after drawing up a written contract with the parish priests to cover the conditions of their employment.

The Daughters of Charity always remained under the control of their own superior general and enjoyed the spiritual guidance of the Lazarists. In the early eighteenth century, 217 Daughters of Charity were employed in 31 parishes of Paris, either as teachers in the poor schools or as social workers (Beaurepaire, 2:407).

Other religious groups included the Sisters of Saint Joseph, founded at Le Puy in 1650 by Bishop Henri de Maupas du Tour; the Daughters of Charity and Christian Instruction of Nevers (1650), to which Saint Bernadette was to belong; the Sisters of Saint Charles, founded by Father Démia at Lyons; and the Sisters of Érémont, founded at Rouen in 1690, whose ecclesiastical superior for many years was Canon Blain. Many of these seventeenth-century congregations have continued in existence to the present day. Among those
that did not survive were the Sisters of Saint Martha, founded in 1713 by the widow of the French sculptor, Théodon, who had helped Gabriel Drolin in Rome and to whom De La Salle alludes in several letters (De La Salle 1988, Letters 13, 14, 19, 20, 22). These Sisters, attached to Jansenistic traditions bequeathed to them by their foundress, finally ceased to exist toward the middle of the nineteenth century (Fosseyeux, 46–47; Allain, Chapter 11). 19

One effect of the development of the non-cloistered religious congregations of women was to improve the education of girls. The foundresses, founders, and early members of these congregations came for the most part from among women better educated than the average laywoman in a society which, as a general rule, permitted only women to teach girls and limited the education of girls to preparation as housekeepers and mothers. 20 These congregations were a limited source of teachers for the girls, at least initially. However, recruits to teach boys existed in abundance among both clerics and laymen.

The great weakness of the schools for boys was the lack of any organized system for selecting, training, and supervising the teachers after they were in the classroom. The schools were usually conducted in a very inefficient manner and the children grew restive and left. Also, hiring laymen to teach the poor put a strain on parish finances. In addition, to retain good teachers in the Charity Schools was difficult. A man sufficiently educated, trained, and anxious to succeed as a teacher in the Charity School could make much more money in some other occupation or even as a Master of the Little Schools. 21 For these reasons and to provide support and motivation, good men had tried to establish religious congregations or confraternities dedicated to teaching poor boys. None of these efforts, previous to the work of De La Salle, had met with any success.

At Lyon, Father Charles Démia had set up a seminary or normal school for the training of the young men he hoped to employ

---

19 See also S. M. D’Erceville 1956.
20 Even among the upper classes, intellectual training for women was not generally encouraged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
21 This seems to have been the temptation to which some early members of De La Salle’s Brothers succumbed.
in his Charity Schools. That his teachers came exclusively from among clerics no doubt contributed to the ultimate failure of his enterprise; his seminary lasted for only a few years after his own death. Earlier, Peter Fourier had planned a community of schoolteachers, but his proposal did not meet with the approval of the authorities and had to be abandoned. Father Nicolas Barré, after succeeding so well with the Sisters, did his best to establish a similar group of Brothers, but the community was short-lived (Allain, 288-89).

In addition to the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the only other religious congregation of laymen who were teachers and who continued for any length of time in France was a Jansenist Community called the Frères Tabourin. Named for the priest who founded them in Paris about 1711, they also were called Brothers of the Christian Schools of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, because for a while they practically monopolized teaching in the Charity Schools of that area. They still conducted 17 schools in Paris as late as 1738 but eventually died out (Fosseyeux, 48).
The Legal Battle Between De La Salle and the Schoolmasters

When the Writing Masters, the Masters of the Little Schools, and the superintendent of schools brought various lawsuits against De La Salle and the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Paris and elsewhere, they did not oppose Charity Schools as such because these institutions had been founded for the destitute (Battersby, 108). The Masters feared, however, that students who were not destitute would go to the schools of the Brothers where they would receive a better education free. Consequently, the Masters were constantly concerned about the student population in the Brothers' schools.

As early as 1690 the classes of the Brothers in the parish of Saint Sulpice came under the scrutiny of the Masters. Not long after the Brothers started work in the Rue du Bac, the Masters of the Little Schools filed suit, alleging that De La Salle admitted to his classes children whose parents could afford fees. This fact, they contended, meant that the Brothers' schools were not really Charity Schools and therefore had no legal right to exist because, "Charity Schools were tolerated only on condition that the gratuitous instruction they provided should benefit none but the truly poor" (Rigault, 1:194; Battersby, 108-09, 155).

Nothing is known of how De La Salle defended himself in court on this occasion, but, in all likelihood, he simply argued that, because the superintendent had no jurisdiction over Charity Schools and could not prove that the school in the Rue du Bac was not a Charity School, he had no legal grounds for interfering (Rigault, 194-96). De La Salle won the case and during the next ten years or so the Brothers won various similar lawsuits (Battersby, 110).

Eventually, the Masters of the Little Schools joined with the Writing Masters, to force the issue, and began to take aggressive action. Early in 1704 the Writing Masters of Paris attacked the Sunday school in the Faubourg Saint Antoine and the seminary for rural schoolteachers in the Faubourg Saint Marcel. They had all the school material seized and the classrooms closed on the plea that the parents

22 "Had the Brothers taught writing in the Charity Schools only, the Writing Masters might have overlooked this infringement of their alleged rights; but when they now saw them teaching this and other subjects at a more advanced level in the Sunday Academy and training college, they
of the students included “a surgeon, a locksmith, a jeweler, a grocer, a wine-merchant, and so forth.”

On February 22 the Lieutenant General of the police condemned De La Salle, who had refused to appear in court. The sentence read in part: “... and the court orders that in the Charity Schools only those children shall be admitted whose parents are truly poor [veritablement pauvres] and that they shall be taught only such matters as are in harmony with the condition of their parents” (Ravelet, 203).

At the same time, the Masters of the Little School had lodged another complaint, this one against the Brothers’ school in the Rue de Charonne. On February 14, 1704, De La Salle was condemned by the superintendent, told to close the school, ordered to pay a fine of 50 livres, and forced to forfeit the school furnishings. His appeal was denied, and on May 30, after a second condemnation, the authorities themselves closed the school. A month or so later, elated by these successes, the Masters moved against the Brothers’ schools in the parishes of Saint Sulpice, Saint Marcel, and Saint Hyppolyte.

Urged by the parish priests of Saint Marcel and Saint Hyppolyte, the Brothers on July 11 appealed. The appeal was denied and on August 29 a fourth and final decree enjoined the Brothers to “cease and desist from acting like a recognized religious community” until such time as they obtained from the King the letters patent conferring on them juridical existence. The decree informed the two parish priests that, although they could establish Charity Schools in their parishes, these institutions must be real Charity Schools, that is, strictly for the poor; furthermore, to prove that the schools were indeed for the poor, a list of the students was to be drawn up monthly and presented to the court and to the Writing Masters (Ravelet, 308). Under pain of fines, the judge even forbade the parents whose children were not “truly in need of the Charity Schools” to send them there to learn writing (Ravelet, 307). This sentence was carried out to the letter.

---

decided to intervene” (Battersby, 180). These rights, however, were fully recognized and protected by law.

23See the list of “bourgeois” whose sons frequented the Brothers’ schools in Rigault, 1:241 and Battersby, 181.
De La Salle appealed the verdict of the superintendent to the Parliament. In the final judgment issued on February 5, 1706, the Parliament upheld the condemnations and forbade the Brothers to "teach in Little Schools within the City of Paris and its Faubourgs" unless they were so authorized by the superintendent (Ravelet, 310-11; Battersby, 197). This prohibition, of course, left the Brothers free to continue teaching in the Charity Schools for the poor, such as those of Saint Sulpice. But to make sure that the students of the Brothers were actually poor, the Masters paid frequent visits, ferreting out alleged abuses and causing all sorts of disorder in the classes, until finally the Brothers, in exasperation, asked De La Salle himself to close the schools. He did, at first temporarily; but seeing that De La Chétardie, pastor of Saint Sulpice, took no effective steps to put an end to this petty persecution, he withdrew the Brothers a second time.

The parents besieged their parish priest with their complaints and urged him to reopen the schools. At first De La Chétardie tried to find other teachers, but failing in this effort he called on De La Salle to send the Brothers back (Battersby, 198). De La Salle demanded as a condition for the Brothers' return that De La Chétardie conclude some definite arrangement with the Masters which would permit the Brothers to do their work in peace.

By the time classes resumed in October, 1706, an agreement had been signed between the parish priest and M. Larcher, representative of the Writing Masters, which declared:

The aforesaid M. Larcher does not object to the aforesaid parish priest of Saint Sulpice's hiring teachers to instruct the poor children of his parish; but he [i.e., the parish priest] must draw up a list of the names of such poor children who are so taught, which list shall be turned over to the Lieutenant of Police, and by him transmitted to the Writing Masters; and the teachers [in the Charity Schools] must not admit any but poor children to these schools. . . . (Fosseyeux, 37; Battersby, 200)

In conformity with this directive,

M. De La Chétardie sent M. De Gergy, his vicar, to list the names of all the students, together with their ages, addresses, and the financial status of their parents, and it was agreed that thenceforth the Brothers should not admit any child to the
school unless he came provided with an admission slip issued by parish authorities. (Ravelet, 317)

From this time on, apparently, De La Salle and the Brothers suffered no further trouble in Paris from the schoolmasters (Rigault, 1:241-47).24

Conclusion

In France under Louis XIV, education was not financed by the state, and was essentially religious in content, inspiration, and direction. The modern concept of public education, supported by taxes and ostensibly divorced from all religious influence, simply did not exist. Most of the schools had been founded and were directed by the clergy, and clerics and religious formed a majority of the teaching personnel. Even in the few schools controlled and partly supported by the municipalities, religious instruction and training in the practice of faith were provided as a matter of course; furthermore, these institutions followed the curriculum common in schools entirely under ecclesiastical control (Rigault, 1:359, 367).25

Until the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, even the Protestants had been allowed schools of their own, but after 1685 their schools were closed. The Royal Declarations of 1698 and 1724 show that the French monarchy depended greatly upon Catholic education in the Protestant areas to bring about conversions both religious and political. The schools at Ales and Les Vans founded by De La Salle and the Brothers of the Christian Schools were established mainly with this intention.

24 But in Chartres difficulties developed about 1719. The account Rigault gives is not entirely clear (1:265-68).
25 What is said here about the Christian character of the schools in the seventeenth century should not, of course, make us overlook the fact that many of the Little Schools in particular were but nominally religious. In fact, it was dissatisfaction with the religious results achieved in these schools that contributed so much to the clergy's enthusiastic adoption of the Charity School formula. Blain, who was the friend and confidant of two religious founders, De La Salle and Grignion de Montfort, and who was the ecclesiastical superior of the Brothers in Routen from 1712 to 1725,
De La Salle accepted, as did everyone at the time, the practice, in vogue for at least 40 years, of providing gratuitous instruction for the indigent in free parish schools. In other schools of the Brothers that did not cater specifically to the poor, such as Saint Yon, no one expected that the instruction would also be gratuitous.

De La Salle established his society of Brothers primarily for indigent children because theirs was the sorriest plight of all. Since their families could pay nothing, he resolved that the education must be absolutely gratuitous, that no payments or gifts should ever be accepted, even from those children whose parents might not be paupers. De La Salle realized, and the history of the Little Schools proved, that a school in which some children paid fees while others did not would not long remain a place to which the poor would come willingly or where they would be welcome.

De La Salle broke with tradition, legislation, and current practice by freely admitting to his schools all the children who wanted to enroll, whether they belonged to the pauper class or not. He felt that he had a mission to all children and that no economic barriers should prevent him from giving a Christian education to any child who came to him asking for one. He never limited the Brothers' activity to the poor except when forced to do so by the Parisian courts after 1706.

He accepted into the schools of the Brothers children who were not paupers, though he knew he was inviting trouble by doing so. He was willing to teach the young Irish nobles, the well-to-do children of Rouen, the young workmen of Paris, the youths desirous of becoming rural schoolteachers, even wild, young incorrigibles from wealthy families. He did not turn away children who could afford to pay fees, but he did direct the Brothers to refuse "money or presents, however small, on any occasion whatsoever." A primary and the second founder of the Sisters of Ermenon and their superior for 24 years, speaks in vigorous terms of the Little Schools as "Places where the young come to learn, for a price, the arts of reading, writing and calculating . . . , where is imparted a secular and profane type of knowledge, mostly indifferent, or unimportant, and hardly necessary for salvation" (Blain, 1:34). Even allowing for Blain's uncritical use of language, one suspects that there must have been some truth in his strictures, and that the Masters were not models of zeal when it came to teaching religion.
reason for De La Salle’s establishing a rule of gratuity for the Institute may have been to insure that as many students as possible would come to the schools.

The presence in the Brothers’ schools of wealthier children who had no legal right to be there led to the lawsuits of the schoolmasters and furnished the evidence which led to De La Salle’s condemnation in 1706. Given the existing legislation, the sentence could not be faulted; the condemnation was actually a foregone conclusion. However, the Rule of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, requiring personal gratuity on the part of the Brothers, may have helped mitigate the legal seriousness of these cases. For if the schoolmasters could win their lawsuits simply by showing that some students in the Brothers’ schools could have paid fees, they certainly could have been successful had they been able to prove that the Brothers themselves could receive personal compensation. Such a possibility was precluded by the Institute’s Rule establishing gratuitous teaching as essential.

The troubles which De La Salle and the Brothers faced in their legal battles arose, not because of their work with the poor, but because their schools were open to all classes and income levels. Because De La Salle knew that the presence in his schools of children who were not paupers would anger the schoolmasters, the question arises of why he received them, when there were more than enough of the poor to educate.

Perhaps the parish priests, who were responsible for these schools, insisted that all children attend because of the close connection between school and parish. In fact, the agreement which ended the 1706 dispute in Paris was settled between the schoolmasters and the pastor, not De La Salle, and stipulated that it was the pastor who was to certify that the students were all from indigent families. Or perhaps the Brothers, who for the most part came from the poorer classes, helped De La Salle reject a concept of education by social class. He may have more or less subconsciously anticipated the role of the school as an instrument for social equality.

An evaluation of the work of De La Salle indicates that his genius lay in the areas of organizing the schools, in training and supervising teachers, in designing innovative methodologies, in providing for individual differences among students, in creating a valid and effective place for the laypeople and religious in the educational
ministry of the Church, and in filling the gap in French education between elementary instruction and the classical college.

De La Salle's outstanding success in the area of popular education consisted above all in doing well what was being done poorly by others and particularly in grasping the importance of the teacher in the educational enterprise. He provided the schools of France and of the world with the kind of teachers who, looking upon their work as a real mission, would exercise it as a true apostolate, a genuine and most important contribution to the well-being of the Church. The Church has fittingly proclaimed John Baptist de La Salle not the patron of elementary or charitable schools, but the Patron of all Teachers.

**Works Cited**


"A Grace and Sweetness of French"

The Vernacular
in the Secondary Schools of France
in the Seventeenth Century

Edward Davis, FSC

Introduction

One of the major contributions of John Baptist de La Salle, an innovation in the late seventeenth-century France which influenced the subsequent history of education in the West, was his insistence on the use of the vernacular rather than Latin in all the schools conducted by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In order to avoid confusion, however, De La Salle's contribution to the rise of the vernacular in education must be clarified.

Various schools existed, maintained for the most part by the Roman Catholic Church, in which boys under nine years of age were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, catechism, singing, and the rudiments of Latin grammar. These institutions may be considered primary schools. According to their nature, who taught in them, and the students they accepted, they were called Charity Schools, Little Schools, schools of the Writing Masters, or Christian schools, and were conducted by ecclesiastics and teaching orders of the Catholic Church.

At the age of ten or eleven, the boys who were to receive further education entered secondary schools, the collèges of the universities, and the schools conducted by various teaching organizations.

---

1 The Little Schools (petites écoles) should not be confused with the Little Schools of Port Royal. The Little Schools of Port Royal were Jansenist institutions. The Little Schools, or ordinary primary schools, served parishes throughout France.
In the secondary schools instruction began with the sixth form and continued upward until the first form (15 to 16 years of age). Following this level of instruction, these schools provided for a continuation of philosophy ending with the reception of the *Maitre des arts* at about the age of 19.  

A great difference existed between the use of the vernacular as a medium of instruction in the secondary schools and its use in the primary schools. At the beginning of the seventeenth century in the primary schools, the children were taught to read first in Latin, from a book written completely in that language. However, the instruction by the teacher and the answers of the students—that is, all discourse in class aside from the actual reading—was in the vernacular. In the secondary schools, the teaching of reading and other subjects was accomplished through the medium of Latin; furthermore, all discourse in class, all conversation during recreations, and all verbal communication in the school were in Latin.

De La Salle's innovation pertained to education in the primary schools. Here he departed completely from the traditional system of his day in the teaching of reading. For the first time the students were forbidden to read Latin until they could read French perfectly:

The first book which the students of the Christian Schools will learn to read will be composed of all sorts of French syllables of two, three, four, five, six, and seven letters and of some words to facilitate the pronunciation of the syllables. (La Fontainerie 1934, 74)

At the same time, a parallel and equally important movement was taking place in the secondary schools: French replacing Latin as the language of instruction and discourse, as both a result of and an influence upon the changing attitudes in Europe toward both languages.

---

2 There were, however, some inconsistencies in this arrangement. For example, the University of Paris was in charge of secondary education only. Nevertheless, some teachers of the university taught small boys reading, writing, and arithmetic. Therefore, the official in charge of the primary schools of Paris encouraged the teachers of the primary schools to retain boys beyond age nine and to teach grammar and rhetoric. See Adamson 1921, 200-201.
It is this revolutionary change in the secondary schools of seventeenth-century France that this essay will examine. Was De La Salle influenced by the work going on in the secondary schools? Were there interrelations? An understanding of the vernacular movement in the secondary schools will provide context and contrast for the contribution of De La Salle. 3

Nationalism and the Ascendancy of French

The seventeenth century was dominated by the Latin language. French was the langue vulgaire. Latin, on the contrary, formed the language of letters, the means for intellectual cultivation in France, and the common instrument which gave to Europe, notwithstanding geographic, historical, religious, and political diversities, a moral unity (Falcucci 1939, 11).

One must not forget that the mastery of Latin was the principal, one might almost say the unique, objective of the earliest schooling. Latine loqui, pie vivere, "Speak Latin, live devoutly," was the complete program of life. Piety opened heaven; Latin assured entrance into the divine science and human knowledge; it provided commerce with all that there was of goodness, of wisdom, and of nobility on earth (Brunot 1905, 7).

But well before the seventeenth century, nationalism was on the rise. France, Spain, and England were the first to evolve as nation-states out of the fabric of medieval Europe. When Louis XIII became king in 1610, France was already strong in agriculture and commerce. As his minister, Louis had chosen Cardinal Richelieu, who centralized the king's government. He subdued the great nobles and the Huguenots, two decentralizing factions; he improved and strengthened foreign relations.

3 There was no coeducation in France during this period. This essay concerns itself with the education of boys; therefore nothing that relates to the education of girls is discussed. In primary education (only) there were many congregations of women devoted to the schools: the Ursulines, founded in 1535; the Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine of The Congregation of Our Lady, founded by Saint Peter Fourier and Alix Le Clec in 1597; and the Daughters of Charity, founded by Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac in 1633—to mention only the most important.
In 1643, Louis XIV ascended to the throne and Cardinal Mazarin followed in Richelieu's footsteps. Powerful France became magnificent France. This age of the Grand Monarch was also the golden age of French art, the age of Mansard, Girardon, LeBrun, Lully, Corneille, Molière, Racine, Mme De Sévigné, La Fontaine, Bossuet. The domestic policy of Colbert and the military policy of Louvois combined to make France the foremost nation in Europe (Hayes 1932, 278–319).

Since the thirteenth century, much had happened to stimulate the growth of the European vernacular languages. The French language began its struggle for recognition early, despite the opposition of tradition. The New Testament was published in French as early as 1523 by Lefèvre d'Etaples, a Huguenot. Montaigne (1533–1592) believed that too much time was spent on learning the classical languages; to him even the other vernaculars were more useful to learn (Durkheim 1938, 2:62). Bodin, Mestre, Rabelais, Cordier, and Calvin praised the French tongue and urged its use. In the early years of the sixteenth century, the first grammars appeared, reflecting the rising interest in the study of the French language, and a significant event early in the seventeenth century was the publication of Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode*, in the author's native tongue.

Several factors in the development of the use of the French language in education merit consideration here.

**Peter Ramus**

Peter Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée) was born in 1515 at a time of great religious and educational turmoil. He became an ardent Huguenot and was a lecturer at the college of Navarre. After a rather violent life, he died August 26, 1572, a victim of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre (Graves 1912, 19–107).

---

4The first French grammars were published in England, Alexander Barclay's *Introductory to wyte and to pronounce frenche* (1521) and John Palsgrave's *L'esclaircissement de la langue francaische* (1530). Probably the first grammar published in France was the *Briefe doctrine pour decrement escrire selon la propriete du langage francais* (1533). See Monroe 1911–1913, 5:719.
Ramus closely examined the entire curriculum of French secondary education. Grammar was the object of his particular attention. In his plan for the reform of instruction, Ramus allowed three years to be given to grammar, during which the emphasis was to be on learning Latin through the examples of great authors. The grammar of Ramus exhibits marked contrasts with that of Jean Despautère, in common use in the schools of the day. The latter is a mass of complexity; exceptions and irregularities occur as often as the normal principles. True, the rules in Ramus' grammar were still in Latin, but the grammar had been simplified to an astonishing extent. It is the first book that, if translated into English, would resemble a Latin primer of today (H.C. Barnard 1911, 32).

More important, Ramus also produced a French grammar, the first edition of which was published in 1562. It was very popular, and a second edition followed in 1567, a third in 1572, and a fourth in 1587 (Waddington 1855, 461). The preface to his grammar, addressed to the then Queen of France, Catherine de Medici, presents Ramus' thoughts on his mother tongue:

It is by your persuasion that the king has commanded me to proceed with the treatise of the liberal arts, not only in Latin for the learned of all nations, but in French for France, where there is an infinity of good minds capable of all science and education, who are, however, deprived of this learning because of the difficulty of language. (Waddington, 417)

Ramus told the queen that his objective in writing the grammar was

to gather together all the noble minds given over to letters, and urge them to think of their country and to hold it worthy of their vigils and studies, and to communicate to it liberally the fruit of their labors, proposing before their eyes a grace and sweetness of French which may invite foreigners to study it as avidly as we in our schools study Greek and Latin. (Waddington, 420)

Ramus is indeed a figure of no small importance. His was the first successful attempt to break away from the medieval tradition in French secondary education. His published works enjoyed wide popularity; the influence of his French grammar in displacing Latin
as the medium of teaching and learning has been considerable. In several particulars Ramus anticipated the reforms of the Port Royalists, and his work was at the same time well-known, at least to some of them. Apparently, he contributed in some measure to the formation of the educational doctrine which was put into practice in the Little Schools associated with Port Royal.

The French Academy

Over half a century after Ramus' death, the French language became the object of serious study. In 1634 Cardinal Richelieu offered his protection to a group of literary men who were accustomed to meet and discuss literature and form. In 1635 he secured for them letters patent from Louis XIII, under the name L'Académie française (Falkiner 1891, 251). The principal function, aim, and object of the Academy according to its charter was "to work with all possible care and diligence for the advancement of the French language, to purify it from all the dross which might alloy it, to establish a certain use of words—in short, to render it eloquent, and capable of treating of the arts and sciences" (Falkiner, 254).

A letter (not notable for its humility) dated March 22, 1634, from the first academicians to their protector, Richelieu, stated that their objective was the reform of the French language:

The country which we inhabit . . . has always produced valiant men; but their valor has gone unrecognized in comparison with that of the Greeks and Romans because they have not known the art of making it illustrious by their writings. Today the Greeks and Romans are the slaves of other nations, and the tongues which they spoke are accounted among the things which are dead . . . . Our language is already the most perfect of living languages and would succeed to the place of the Latin, as that succeeded to the Greek, if we took more care than hitherto with the art of expression. (Vincent, 40-42)

Richelieu did not found the Academy; it was in existence already. See Vincent 1901, 55-56.

This letter is reproduced in the original French by Pellisson and D'Oliver 1858, 1:21-22.
Did the French Academy exert an appreciable influence on the French language? Probably the reverse is true: the growth and development of the language was reflected in the Academy. No evidence exists to suggest that the Academy had a direct influence on education. At no time did the Academy advocate replacing Latin in the schools. The academicians confined themselves to refining the French as it was already used.

The Universities

The schools were the last to capitulate to the increasing demands for the native language. In the universities, education was founded on the tongues and literature of antiquity. French was considered not only an uncultivated language but also one impossible of being cultivated. Indeed, the most formidable obstacle to the use of the vernacular was the tradition of the universities (Brumot, 14). Humanism in the universities came to mean a Greco-Latin culture. By a statute of Francois I (1660), renewed by Henry IV, the students of the universities and colleges were required to speak in Latin, even during recreation (H.C. Barnard 1913, 108). The Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris forbade the students to speak at all in French (Hodgson 1908, 54).

All evidence indicates that the Latin language completely dominated the colleges at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Collège des Bons Enfants in Reims, which De La Salle attended, was a model of the schools of the period:

---

7At least one person, Bude, considered French fit only to describe the art of hunting (H. Barnard 1880b, 459).
8The universities were composed of collèges, or houses of studies. There were separate secondary schools in various cities also called collèges, and sometimes academies. In this essay, collèges and academies have been used interchangeably.
9However, this university allowed the use of French instead of Latin for catechetical purposes in those lower classes where the students were insufficiently advanced to understand questions put into Latin. It also permitted substituting Greek for Latin.
Latin was the only language spoken during school hours. The professor delivered his lectures in Latin, and even during recreation and meals the students were obliged to converse in Latin. Of a total of six hours' schooling a day, one hour was occupied in learning grammatical rules and syntax, and the other five in studying authors and in writing translations. . . . There were, moreover, frequent recitations of Latin verse, as well as declamations and disputations by the more advanced students. (Battersby 1949, 15–16)

The Protestant Schools

In the Huguenot schools a similar situation existed. Although Mathurin Cordier had advocated the vernacular as an instrument of study as early as 1532, he liked to teach the children pure and correct Latin (H.C. Barnard 1911, 208; Chevriers 1884, 232).

In Geneva, however, Calvin and his followers preached, taught, and argued in the vernacular, French, and from there went to other countries, especially France, to preach in French. Calvin helped to make the vernacular tongues of western Europe literary, and there was no tongue and no people that he influenced more than the French (Hodgson, 57).

But education generally remained impervious to this influence. In the Huguenot schools, divided into seven classes, the instruction included Latin reading, writing, and grammar (Chevriers, 232). In the seventh form the boys learned reading in Latin and in French. The sixth form advanced them to Latin writing; here they also learned the Greek characters. The rudiments of Latin grammar from the book of Despautère, the ability to converse in Latin by studying the Colloquies of Cordier and Vives, and the Dialogorum Sacrorum libri quattuor of Sébastien Chateillon were taught in the fifth form. Latin conversation was compulsory for all the students in the upper classes. Ovid, Terence, Cicero, Hesiod, Xenophon, and the Greek drama were read in the upper four forms, along with constant verse composition (H.C. Barnard 1911, 93).
The Jesuits

Originally the schools of the Society of Jesus were just as committed to the scholastic tradition as were those we have examined. However, by the end of the sixteenth century, the Jesuits could claim the distinction of allowing the use of French, although only in a very limited way. In the *Ratio Studiorum*, published in 1599, among the *Regulae rectoris*, this eighth rule was promulgated: "In the house, care should be taken to conserve most diligently the use of the Latin language among the scholastics: they shall not be exempted from this law of speaking Latin except on days of vacation and in hours of recreation." Instruction in all school subjects and all conversations during school hours were conducted in Latin. Thus the collèges, including those of the Jesuits, did not employ the vernacular as an instrument of teaching until well into the eighteenth century.

French secondary education, even in this golden age of French literature and letters, would have been totally without the vernacular had it not been for two notable exceptions: the Society of the Fathers of the Oratory of Jesus and the Little Schools of Port Royal.

The Oratory

Pierre de Bérulle (1575–1629) founded the Institute of the Oratory in 1611. The society received letters patent in 1612 and was approved by Papal Bull in 1613.

Bérulle originally forbade the Oratorians to conduct educational work for lay students. However, the pope ordered them to accept collèges, and the first collège under the direction of the Oratorians was that of Dieppe, which was opened in 1614. By 1629 the Oratorians were in charge of 50 collèges (H. C. Barnard 1911, 145–58).10

---

10 See also Cormack 1933, 115–16. For an account of the administration of the collèges of the Oratory, see H.C. Barnard 1911, 172. The sources for information on the education given by the Oratorians consist of the writings by members of the Congregation: Perraud, Lamy, Thomassin, Du Guet, Houbigant; various méthodes, or *Rationes Studiorum*, written under the auspices of De Condren, the superior; household accounts; *Arrêts de Parlement*; and various memoirs. Although they were secondary schools,
At the collèges of the Oratory the aim of teaching was religious, the formation of the Christian gentleman. The discipline was not severe; individual differences were respected. From this benign philosophy and from the labors and genius of the priests of the Oratory there arose a method of studies, the *Ratio Studiorum magistris et professoribus Congregationis Oratorii Domini Jesu observanda*, published in 1645. Father Bourgoing sent this document to all the collèges of the Oratorians with the instructions that they conform to it completely (Lallemand 1888, 231).

In the *Ratio Studiorum* a major departure from tradition was in the teaching of languages. The use of the Latin language was forbidden up to the fourth form; from this class on it became obligatory. However, the instruction in history was given in French from the sixth to the first form. Religion also was taught in the vernacular, except in the two highest forms (Lallemand, 226).

Awareness of the inconvenience and misuse of Latin led the Oratorians to bring about a revolution in the teaching of the classics. The Oratorians were really the first to teach Latin and Greek grammar in French. As early as 1640, the *Méthode Latine* of Father De Condren was printed and sent to all the Oratorian collèges. The Latin composition and the theme, that is, the translation of French into Latin or Greek, lost their importance and assumed a secondary rank. The principal exercise was the version or translation of Latin or Greek into French. To understand the text was the main objective of the teaching of Latin (Lallemand, 238).

The logic of the teaching of languages through the medium of the vernacular is explained with clarity by Lamy:

> The grammar books which are placed in the hands of children ought to be in the language that is known to them, that is to say, in French for the collèges of France, for to use grammars written in Latin to teach Latin is to undertake to sweep away shadows by shadows. A German who does not know French at all, and with whom I am able to discourse only by signs—ought he to instruct me in his language? Perhaps in convers-

---

in some Oratorian collèges there was a preparatory form below the regular six year course, the *chambre des abécédaires*, corresponding to the seventh and eighth form of the *petites écoles*. See H.C. Barnard 1911, 167.
ing a long time with him I would be able to guess what he wished to say to me; but finally, if I did not take pleasure in wasting my time, I should prefer to him those who would be able to instruct me more easily, using the French language which I know in order to teach me the German which I do not know.

(Lamy 1706, 134)

In addition to the use of the mother tongue to teach the languages, the Oratorian Ratio Studiorum prescribed its use in certain other instances, for example: "If tragedies are presented at the end of the year, they shall be in Latin; nevertheless the prologue, the choruses, or the interludes may be in French" (quoted in Lallemand, 233-34).

The Oratorians were probably the first to teach history, particularly the history of France; they were the first to use the vernacular as an instrument of instruction in the secondary school; and they reformed the teaching of the classical languages. Barnard describes their contribution:

In three respects, therefore, the teaching of Latin in the collèges of the Oratory far surpassed the methods in use in contemporary schools, with the possible exception of those of Port Royal. The emphasis is on the reading and explanation of authors, not on the writing of prose; Latin is used not so much as an end in itself but as an aid to the fullest use and appreciation of the vernacular and as the basis of a literary education; the employment of Latin as a teaching medium, if not entirely abolished, is at any rate restricted. (H. C. Barnard 1911, 162)

The Courtly Academy of Richelieu

The methods of the Oratorians were adopted in great part by Cardinal Richelieu. Profoundly nationalistic, passionately attached to a unified and powerful France, Richelieu naturally saw the advantages of the mother tongue. The foundation of the French Academy had been a concrete step toward the fulfillment of his ideals. Later, in 1640, he established a collège in the Ville de Richelieu in the Diocese of Tours.

In the preamble to his plan for the collège, Richelieu expressed his doubts about the efficacy of a classical formation for the great
majority of students. He foresaw instruction in French and in the living languages in place of Latin (Glatigny 1949, 63–64).

The program of the collège included (1) a profound study of the French language; (2) the instruction given in this language by all the teachers; (3) a study of Greek as complete as that of Latin; (4) the combined teaching of science and letters; (5) the comparison of the Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish languages; and (6) the study of chronology, history, and geography (H. Barnard 1880a, 711).

Thus, advancing further than the Oratory, the collège of Richelieu employed the vernacular throughout the curriculum.

**Port Royal**

Almost contemporaneous with the collèges of the Oratorians there flourished a few schools educating merely a handful of students in various locations in and around Paris, yet doing so with an influence out of proportion to their numbers and duration; these were the Little Schools of Port Royal.

An abbey of Cistercian nuns had been founded at Port Royal, about 18 miles southwest of Paris, in 1204. In the following centuries, the abbey underwent a period of extreme laxity followed by strict reform. By 1626, there were 80 nuns in the community. Because of the unhealthy climate of Port Royal, they moved to Paris to the Rue de la Bourbe. Into their original site entered a group of laymen who wished to dedicate their lives to prayer and study. These were the *solitaires* of Port Royal: Antoine Le Maître, Simon Le Maître de Sericourt, Claude Lancelot, and others.

In 1635, Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, Abbé de Saint-Cyran, became the spiritual director of the two communities, *Port-Royal de Paris* and *Port-Royal des Champs*. Under the influence of his powerful personality, the Little Schools of Port Royal and the theology of Jansenism made the lasting influence of Port Royal a certainty.

The Little Schools of Port Royal (not to be confused with the Little Schools—*petites écoles*—or primary schools already established throughout France, which had their origin in Church-related schools for young choirboys) had a formal existence of just 14 years. During their most flourishing period there were but four teachers, and
each had only five or six students. On March 10, 1660, the last school at Le Chesnai closed. A careful examination of the evidence indicates that about 250 students, possibly fewer, passed through the schools (H. C. Barnard 1913, 6-49, 66, 165-66).  

To the traditional curriculum the Port Royalists made few but important changes. The solitaires made the greatest advance, perhaps, in the teaching of reading. The unvarying custom had been, as we have already noted, to teach children to read in Latin. The solitaires saw this practice as a great mistake which had many deleterious consequences:

This process is so long and so painful that it not only sets the students against all other instruction by inspiring their minds from their tenderest years with an almost invincible disgust and hatred for books and study; but it also makes the masters impatient and ill-tempered.

... In Latin they have nothing whatever to help them; everything is new and strange to them; they cannot interest themselves in the letters or groups of letters which are shown to them. As a result, they can remember these only with extreme difficulty and after a long time, during which they have to repeat them hundreds of times before they can call them to mind once. (Guyot, Billets de Cicero, 1667; quoted in H. C. Barnard 1918, 150)

These statements almost surely reflect the actual experience of the classroom: the "impatient and ill-tempered" masters, the students' repetition "hundreds of times," the "disgust for books and study": all are poignantly recalled.

A very definite break with tradition was established: the boys of the Little Schools of Port Royal were taught to read first in French.

---

11There seems to be no doubt that this number is correct. Other authors (Cormack, Compyrè, and Battersby) cite the total number as 1000, an exaggeration. See, for example, Cormack, 110-11.

12The invaluable book for discovering the methods and curriculum of the Little Schools of Port Royal is Coustel 1687. This book undoubtedly describes the actual teaching in the schools, as is proved by H.C. Barnard 1913, 33.
The teachers of Port Royal did not forget the classics, but the problem was the same: Latin grammars were written in Latin. The most popular grammar was that by Despautère, the rules of which were written in barbarous Latin jingles. The absurdity of this method of teaching was perceived by the *solitaires*. In his *Règles*, Pierre Coustel presents the reply of Port Royal to the objections of the champions of the traditional methodology:

Some people maintain that we ought to employ the Latin rules of Despautère for teaching our pupils the genders, the declensions, etc. They give as their reason that because their ancestors learned them, this ancient custom has the force of a law binding on their consciences, as if in the education of children we should have any aims other than how we can best help them to progress in their studies! . . . If one were learning Spanish, Italian, or German, for example, it would be unheard of to use rules written in Spanish, Italian, or German; for this would argue that one both knew and did not know these languages at one and the same time—an obvious contradiction. For if, by means of these rules a man sets out to learn a language, he apparently does not know it already; and yet he must know it in order to understand the rules which are couched in this language. If then this method would never be used in the case of an adult whose mind and judgment are mature, what course should we adopt with the children whose minds are as yet quite undeveloped and who are often as little able to understand the rules of Despautère in their present form as Hebrew or Syriac? (Coustel 1687, 2:28–31; quoted in H. C. Barnard 1918, 157–58)

The similarity between this argument and that of Père Lamy of the Oratory is remarkable; however, Despautère was not rejected by the Oratorians (H. C. Barnard 1911, 159). The grammar used in the Little Schools was the *Nouvelle Mèthod pour apprendre facilement et en peu de tems la Langue Latine* by Claude Lancelot. Consistent with their methods in the teaching of Latin, the Port Royalists approached Greek also through French.

---

11 Nonetheless, Lamy, 157, does recommend the use of Lancelot’s *Méthode*, stating that the order of presentation is better, the manner easier, and the remarks more solid.
Although instruction in the modern languages is nowhere men-
tioned in the writings of the solitaires, Lancelot composed a Méthode Espagnole and a Méthode Italiene; Racine, upon leaving the Little Schools of Port Royal, knew both Spanish and Italian (Compayré 1885, 1:260).

An innovation of the highest importance was the inclusion in
the curriculum of composition in the vernacular, a practice unknown
at the university level or among the Jesuits. A good French style
was regarded as of equal value with a polished Latin style (H. C.
Barnard 1913, 121). The students were drilled in writing in French;
they were set to compose little narratives and letters, the subjects
of which were borrowed from their recollections of what they had
read. The reason for teaching composition in French was the real
world into which these students would go:

Out of a 1000 people there will not be four who, on leaving
school, find it necessary to speak or write in Latin. But everyone
should know how to express himself in French; and it is
humiliating to be unable to do so in good society. Children
then must be particularly practiced in translation because the
application which must be employed in pondering the various
expressions and for finding the sense of a Latin author exer-
cises their intelligence and their judgment alike and makes them
realize the beauty of French as fully as that of Latin. (H. C.
Barnard 1918, 165; see Coustel, 2:184-89; 194-98)

The Little Schools of Port Royal closed after an existence of only
14 years, but their influence persisted. The textbooks of the
solitaires—the Port Royal Logic, the Latin grammar, the Grammaire
générale—retained their importance into the nineteenth century.
Among other ideas of Port Royal which have influenced later
pedagogy are the tutorial system, the appreciation of the dignity
and importance of teaching, and teaching based upon affection
between teachers and students (H. C. Barnard 1913, 231). In ad-
dition, their methods made a lasting impression on the French sec-
dary schools. The emphasis on the mother tongue, the teaching of
reading in the vernacular, the study of Latin and French
simultaneously, the recognition of the unique value of Latin transla-
tion for giving command over the vernacular, the employment of
the classics as literature to be read and enjoyed rather than as
linguistic material to be anatomized and labelled: all of these instructional methods to a large extent were initiated and promoted by the teaching *solitaires* (H. C. Barnard 1913, 230–33).

**Interrelations: Some Concluding Ideas**

By the end of the seventeenth century, French as the language of teaching had won its place in both the primary and secondary schools of France. After the pioneering efforts of Ramus came the substantial contributions of the Oratorians, Richelieu, and the *solitaires* of Port Royal in the secondary schools. At the same time, the work of such men as Claude Fleury and John Baptist de La Salle reformed and vitalized the primary schools. The universities held on to Latin, but in the eighteenth century, led by the heirs of the seventeenth-century innovators (Houbigant and Charles Rollin, for example), they too finally capitulated.

A question remains. Did these seventeenth-century educational movements depend on one another or were they isolated and independent? All of them saw the necessity of French in the schools; all of them saw Latin and Greek in a new light, that is, as literature and not as a practical skill for use in the world nor as mere linguistic drill. And the ideas of the reformers are often remarkably similar. For example, the ideas of Lamy (the Oratorians) and Coustel (Port Royal):

> I should prefer . . . those who would be able to instruct me more easily, using the French language which I know in order to teach me the German which I do not know. (Lamy, 134)

If one were learning Spanish, Italian, or German, for example, it would be an unheard of thing to use rules written in Spanish, Italian or German; for this would argue that one both knew and did not know these languages at one and the same time. . . . (Coustel, 2:28–31; quoted in H. C. Barnard 1918, 157–58)

Or, compare Vincent de Paul and De La Salle:

> . . . as a rule, it is of very little use for boys to begin the study of Latin when there is no opportunity of going on with it. (De Paul, Letter to Father Coglée; quoted in Leonard 1933, 278)
And of what use can the reading of Latin be to those who will have no purpose for it in their lives? What use, for instance, will those boys and girls who frequent the poor schools make of Latin? (Blain [1733] 1961, 375, so-called Memoir on the Vernacular; quoted in Battersby, 86)

Or, Guyot (of Port Royal) and De La Salle:

In Latin they have nothing whatever to help them; everything is new and strange to them; they cannot interest themselves in the letters or groups of letters that are shown to them. (Guyot, Billets de Ciceron; quoted in H. C. Barnard 1918, 150)

The reason why such a long time has to be spent learning to read Latin is that the words are strange to beginners and it is difficult to remember the syllables and spelling of words the meanings of which are unknown. (Blain, 375, so-called Memoir on the Vernacular; quoted in Battersby, 86)

School matters may sometimes have formed a topic of conversation between the solitaires and certain of the Oratorians, since the two societies were contemporaries. There is, however, a noticeable absence of references to the Oratorian schools in any of the Port Royal educational writings. This situation is the more remarkable because the solitaires habitually refer to those to whom they are indebted for ideas and suggestions. The similarities that do exist cannot be mere coincidence, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine how extensively each borrowed from the other or to what extent they were indebted to a common inspiration (H. C. Barnard 1913, 205-06).

The Port Royal solitaires called their institutions “Little Schools,” implying that they were not secondary (although they were) and that they would not compete with the university. They cannot, however, be classified as purely secondary. Some students entered at an early age; others—Racine, for example, who was 16—had already attended a collège (H. C. Barnard 1913, 28-29).

Did John Baptist de La Salle in his work with the primary schools follow the principles and example of Port Royal? Almost certainly not. A close study of De La Salle and his writings fails to establish any connection whatever between him and the Port Royalists. In fact, whether he had even heard of the Little Schools of Port Royal
is doubtful. In addition, De La Salle would have had little interest in what was done in these schools even if he had known about them because they were so different from his own. Coupled with this fact was De La Salle's distaste for Jansenism; he would have been loath to adopt the methods used at the very center of Jansenism.

Although he would have been sympathetic with both the methods and the educational philosophy of the Oratorians, no evidence has been found which links De La Salle with their prior work in school.

In his determination to break with the established usage of teaching little children to read in Latin, De La Salle followed his own good judgment. Not once in his treatise on the vernacular nor in Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes does he mention that other schools had successfully experimented with using French, surely a point he would have emphasized if he intended to support his practice with the experience of others (Battersby, 87). In primary education, we may conclude that De La Salle was the first actually to break with the established usage, the first to create a completely vernacular school.

Because they lived in the same world, all of these educational reformers fell under the same influences: the flourishing of French nationalism, the pride in all things French. This fact is quite clear from their writings. Along with sound judgment, common sense, and a deep concern for the education of the young, the spirit of the age impelled them. The movement from Latin to the vernacular was inevitable.

Works Cited


Lamy, Bernard. 1706. Entretien sur le sciences dans lesquels on apprend comme l’on doit étudier les sciences, & s’en servir pour se faire l’esprit juste & le coeur droit. 3rd. ed. rev. Lyon: Chez Jean Certet.


A Victory for Using French
in the Teaching of Reading

John Baptist de La Salle’s
French Spelling Book

Yves Poutet, FSC

In his essay, “A Grace and Sweetness of French,” Brother Edward Davis raises this question: When and by whom was the practice begun in France of teaching beginners to read using French syllables only? (School children had traditionally been taught to read Latin before they were introduced to texts in French.) Brother Edward very aptly remarks that too often historians of pedagogy or of language, when considering the seventeenth century, fail to make indispensable distinctions when they discuss teaching methods in the schools. They sometimes fail to distinguish among the collèges, the Little Schools (ordinary parish primary schools), schools run by religious orders, the Little Schools of Port Royal, educational establishments depending on the university, pay schools like those of the Writing Masters, parish schools, and Charity Schools. They also occasionally fail to differentiate between the programs adopted for boys and those intended for girls only.

Historians have often arbitrarily cited out of context the prescriptions of educational theoreticians such as Locke and Montaigne, the methods of private tutors such as Fénelon, the popular pedagogical strategies based on empirical principles, or the school regulations

drawn up by the diocesan administrators. These imprecise historical analyses result in considerable confusion. In addition, because clearly defined social classes were a basic reality of life in the seventeenth century, what determined the practice common in one milieu did not always apply to the others. Certainly, one of the principal merits of Brother Edward's essay is that it clarifies an involved issue. However, because other studies have shed new light on the question, it is perhaps worthwhile to reexamine the matter of teaching reading.

Ferdinand Brunot's famous *Histoire de la langue française* (1917) devotes chapter 5 of volume 5 to the teaching of French in the elementary schools of the seventeenth century. After mentioning the state of popular education under the ancien régime, the author makes passing reference to the Protestants, the Oratorians, Port Royal, Behourt, and John Baptist de La Salle as innovators who had few followers, and implies that, apart from their schools, children continued to be taught reading by first learning Latin syllables. Unfortunately, this assessment appears to confuse even further the question of the methods used in teaching reading. Behourt, an early seventeenth-century regent of the Collège des Bons-Enfants in Reims, certainly was not dealing with children of lower class families. The very title of his work, *Alphabets français, latin et grec* (1620), indicates clearly that this book is oriented toward classical culture, something which in the seventeenth century was available almost exclusively to the children of the upper classes. Port Royal schools dealt with only a small number of very select pupils. The Oratorians conducted highly reputable collèges but were not concerned with primary schools. Thus, in his history Brunot suggests that the only institutions which educated the children of the common people were those of the Protestants on the one hand and those of John Baptist de La Salle on the other. Brother Anselme, FSC, in his commentary on De La Salle's *Conduite*, asserts that the appearance of the Lasallian spelling book brought about "a Copernican revolution" in the teaching of reading in France (De La Salle [1706] 1951, 324). What are the facts?

No doubt, in the seventeenth century Latin was indispensable in good society if one wished to hold an honorable rank or claim to be a person of some culture, but knowledge of Latin was of no real use to ordinary people. Catholics needed Latin merely to read
and to sing the liturgical texts, while Protestants celebrated their religious services in French. Consequently, among those responsible for the instruction of children—parents, pastors, and parish priests—some favored the Church’s official tongue and others the child’s mother tongue. Partisans on both sides came to push their positions to extremes, all the more so as opposition furnished them with favorable opportunities for displaying their hostility.

Beginning with Calvin’s *Institution chrétienne*, originally published in French, and until 1680, French Protestants taught their children to read without using Latin as an intermediate stage. After Louis XIV’s accession to the throne, however, the French government’s strategies to convert Protestants to Catholicism seriously hampered the Protestants’ efforts to teach their children. In 1680, five years prior to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, a royal decree closed all the schools of the Protestants; and after 1685 the decree left them only two alternatives, to leave the country or to go underground. Thus, for the children of the people, there remained no other authorized manner of learning to read except that used by the Catholics. The diocesan superintendent of schools (école), and the priest in the parish were officially responsible for everything that went on in the elementary schools.

From 1654 on the handbook on which the teachers in popular schools relied most was *L’Escole paroissiale* of Jacques de Bathencourt. This work summarized the most general method for teaching reading: “Hence, to proceed in an orderly fashion . . . one must read the words so as to make of them Latin sentences, and then learn to read in French” (Bathencourt 1654, 254). This work, widely read, went through several editions.

Meanwhile, various new congregations had been founded or developed for the instruction of girls; among them were the Ursulines, the Daughters of the Cross, the Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence, the Sisters of Saint Charles, and the Canonesses Regular of St. Augustine of the Congregation of Our Lady, founded by Saint Peter Fourier and Alix Le Clerc. But most dioceses at this time preferred to entrust the education of girls to religious belonging to diocesan institutes.

A careful examination of the methods used by these congregations of women and a study of the earliest of their regulations which have survived in manuscript form show that all of them started their
young pupils reading Latin before putting into their hands any French books. Although his biographer Gabriel Compayré shows him to have been an innovator in many areas, Charles Derna himself did not change the traditional order established in L’Ecole paroissiale: Latin first, then French.

Claude Joly, the superintendent of schools in Paris, prescribed the traditional method of teaching reading and insisted on the importance of making children learn to read Latin syllables first. The Bishop of Chartres, although a friend, questioned De La Salle’s innovation of teaching children to read French first (Rigault 1937, 1:262). Scipion Roux, a Doctor of Laws and schoolteacher in Paris, systematically criticized the new method in a work which, so as not to appear too much out of date, he entitled Méthode nouvelle pour apprendre aux enfants à lire parfaitement bien le Latin et le Français (1694). “Certain teachers,” he states, “make the children read French before Latin.” He then launches into a long defense of his thesis, at the end of which he declares:

I say, therefore, that it is incomparably easier for a child to learn to spell Latin rather than French, because to spell a Latin syllable all he has to do is to name the letters forming the syllable and put them together . . . whereas to spell a French syllable he must not only name the letters in the syllable, as he would do in Latin, but in addition join these letters in a manner which as a rule is entirely contrary to what he sees written. (Roux 1694, 21ff)

About this time De La Salle composed for Bishop Godet des Marais a treatise defending his innovative method. The great stimulus for acquiring new knowledge, namely interest fed by curiosity, had escaped Scipion Roux and all the other adherents of the traditional method. That this principle played any role in the choice made by the Protestants is not at all certain, for their pedagogy, like that of the Catholics, rested on ecclesial rather than on practical considerations. From the start, however, De La Salle approached the problem from the practical point of view of the student. “The French language,” he wrote, “being the child’s natural tongue, is incomparably easier for him to learn than Latin, for he understands the former and does not understand the latter” (Blain [1733] 1961, 1:375). Concern for preparing the students for the life that lay ahead
as well as regard for the law of social utility also influenced De La Salle.

Experience teaches us that those who attend the Christian Schools do not continue to frequent them for very long and do not spend enough time there to learn how to read both Latin and French well. As soon as they are old enough to work they are withdrawn from school. . . . If they are made to begin with reading Latin . . . they leave before they learn to read French, or at least to read it well. . . . When we begin by teaching children to read French, they can at least read it satisfactorily by the time they leave school. (Blain 1:375)

All these reasonable principles, however, would have remained simply theoretical if De La Salle had not given his teachers, the Brothers of the Christian Schools, a new spelling book for use in the schools. This text, *Syllabaire français*, was published at Paris in 1698 by Antoine Chretien with no official authorization. The reason for the absence of this approbation is easy to determine. Not only had Claude Joly approved the book by Scipion Roux, arguing against the new method, but he had also warmly recommended the book to all the teachers subject to his authority. "I exhort," he wrote, "men and women teachers in my jurisdiction, and all others likewise, to make use of it [Roux's book] in their schools. Done at Paris, July 31, 1694, Claude Joly." (Roux, 11).

After Joly's death, the Lasallian speller was reprinted, this time with due authorization, in 1700, and again in 1703 and 1705. On August 6, 1706, copies were deposited in the Royal Library according to law. Other editions appeared subsequently, sometimes under different titles. The catalogue by Douillier, bookseller at Dijon, mentions one of these editions as late as 1855. These later editions contained modifications of the primitive text, no doubt demanded by the phonetic evolution of the language.

The original *Syllabaire français* of De La Salle contained 72 pages. The first pages included "all sorts of French syllables with from two to seven letters." Next came "some words to facilitate the pronunciation of the syllables" (De La Salle, 34). In a departure from custom, prayers such as the *Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria*, and *Credo*, which made up the bulk of the older spellers, did not appear in De La Salle's little book. To do so would have been redundant,
because the prayers already were contained in a booklet which he had published two years earlier with the title *Exercices de piété* (Rigault, 1:543).

What role did this new spelling book play in the schools? How much time did it take the students who followed this new system to learn to read perfectly? These are questions which De La Salle's *Conduite des Écoles chrétiennes* answered with precision. The better pupils "should not be changed from using the alphabet chart until they have been reading from it for two months"; they were "not to be changed from the chart of syllables before having read from it for a month." Next, for five months they applied themselves to deciphering "all sorts of syllables" (De La Salle, 266).

Once these fundamental mechanisms had been mastered, thanks to the *Syllabaire français*, the students were given their first reader, with which they spent three more months spelling out the text. When they were capable of spelling "perfectly, without ever being obliged to guess or to hunt for the syllables," they were "to begin to read with pauses" (according to the sense of the paragraphs) and had to apply themselves so as "not to make any more mistakes because of punctuation" and to "read distinctly and intelligibly," taking care to "pronounce the words very correctly" (De La Salle, 269).

Because the school year began on October 1 and ended on August 31, we know that the better students learned their letters, both upper and lower case, as well as the most important syllables, during the first three months they spent in school. By the beginning of the new year, they began to read syllables, an activity that continued until the end of May. In early June they gave up the spelling book and began using their first reader, which they finished by the time vacation started. At the outset of the next school year they received their second reader. This book initiated what teachers today would call fluent reading but which the seventeenth century, with greater prudence and less impulsiveness, named "reading with proper pauses." Only after this activity were the students introduced to reading Latin.

Such was the method followed at least in the gratuitous schools for boys in the parish of Saint Sulpice in Paris about 1698. Does this fact mean that a "Copernican revolution" had taken place in the teaching of reading? In any case, it is certain that the new method
did not spread rapidly to all the popular schools in France. Even after 1750, as they had done before 1698, most of the women religious teachers continued to follow the traditional method. The pedagogical directories which some of these congregations have preserved from the middle of the eighteenth century provide evidence for this conclusion.

In rural areas where education was closely controlled by the parish officials, the clerical assistant in charge of instruction, the sacristans, and superintendent of schools, all of whom doubled as teachers, felt too much attachment to the old method and too much personal involvement to give it up willingly. Latin was still necessary for future priests and very useful during Mass for the servers and chanters in the parish choir. However, one should not overemphasize this explanation, for, while after the Revolution of 1789 many elementary schools no longer depended on the parish priests, many teachers, especially in smaller towns, continued the older practice and first taught reading Latin syllables before teaching French.

In the cities, however, it was a different story. Reims, Paris, Chartres, Calais, Rouen, Marseilles, Grenoble, and Dijon had used the new method prior to 1720. After 1713 (some claim after 1709: see Gazier 1906), the disciples of the Jansenist Taboutin adapted for the poor children of the Faubourg Saint Antoine in Paris the pedagogical techniques formerly recommended by the teachers of Port Royal. They not only taught reading in French before Latin but also adopted a new way of spelling, giving the letters of the alphabet a truly phonetic sound.

About 1709 or 1710, an anonymous work, Règlement et méthode pour les écoles, adopted most of the features of the Lasallian system. Py-Poulain Delaunay in 1719, Vallange also in 1719, and Dumas in 1733, along with other reformers of education, considered the new order for reading, French first, then Latin, as something required by common sense. However, such was not the opinion of the publishers, who continued to edit spelling books in Latin. The Nouveau Syllabaire latin et français by Nyon (Paris, 1789) had 106 pages, 51 of which were entirely in Latin. Under the reference number X 19-675, the National Library of Paris has over 300 spelling books published between 1806 and 1875, among which are many Latin spellers. In nearly all of these works, after one or two pages of syllables, the student is presented with religious texts such as the
So Favored By Grace

*Pater Noster, Ave Maria, Credo,* and *Psalms,* either in French or in Latin, depending on the manuals. At Troyes in the middle of the nineteenth century, Mme Garnier did not hesitate to publish a Latin spelling book entitled *Alphabet et instruction Chrétienne pour les petits enfants selon l’ancien usage de l’Église catholique.*

In view of these facts, it would seem correct to say that the replacing of Latin by French took place only gradually in the popular schools. If the differing objectives they pursued make it impossible for us to view the Oratorians and the professors at Port Royal as reformers who influenced teachers in the Charity Schools, nonetheless it is certain that their ideas agreed perfectly with that intellectual movement which championed the excellence and the utility of the French language. This movement, which had begun as early as the time of Du Bellay in the sixteenth century, kept gaining strength through the seventeenth century and, in the end, made its influence felt throughout the various levels of society.

The creation of the French Academy, the publication of the *Advantages de la langue française sur la langue latine* in 1669 by Le Laboureur, and the publication of *L’Excellence de la langue française* in 1683 by Charpentier, illustrate some of the gains made by the movement. Little by little even the most adamant opponents had to yield to the conviction that French might some day possess a fixed and definitive pronunciation and a regular spelling, the conditions *sine qua non* for a methodical teaching of reading beginning with the mother tongue. *When the Dictionnaire de l’Académie finally appeared in 1694, it was possible to define officially the pronunciation and the spelling of French words.*

The genial, good, and practical sense of De La Salle helped the common people to profit by this general circulation of ideas which favored the abandonment of Latin. While the traditional spelling book, *La Croix de Jésus,* aimed at teaching the language of the Church and the prayers proper to Christians, the *Syllabaire français* of De La Salle aimed rather at immediate utility on the social level. The child learned the mother tongue, and, without being involved in the special requirements for participating in religious offices, learned how to pronounce and read ordinary words. That an educator who was to be declared a saint of the Catholic Church should have been the one to introduce this sort of secularization in elementary reading methods and that his group of religious Brothers should
have spearheaded the implementation of this abandonment of Latin are two facts which together are perhaps even more surprising than the pure and simple substitution of French for Latin.

Works Cited

Index

A
Académie Française. See French Academy
Admission of students to school: Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes, 59-61; L’Escole paroissiale, 59-61
Alphabets françois, latin et grec. See Behourt, M.
André, Marguerite. See Fourier, Peter
Avis important, 22-23
Avis pour faire le catéchisme utilement, 27n
Avis touchant les petites écoles: and criticism of teacher professionalism, 3; and public examinations, 4n

B
Barré Nicolas: Avis pour faire le catéchisme utilement by, 27n; and Brothers of the Christian and Charity Schools, 26-29; and Madame Jeanne Dubois Mailléfer, 30; Maximes of, 26, 26-27n; and Adrien Nyel, 30; and Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence, 15, 81, 107, 134; as spiritual advisor to John Baptist de La Salle, 15; Statutes by, 26-27, and teacher preparation, 15-16, 26-29, 136
Bathencourt, Jacques de, 6n, 53; and L’Escole paroissiale, 6, 53-78, 167; as pastor of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, 5, 53; on teacher preparation, 52-78. See also L’Escole paroissiale
Béates de Le Puy-en-Velay, 14
Behourt, M.: Alphabets françois, latin et grec, 166; as Regent of the Collège des Bons-Enfants, 166
Bérulle, Pierre de: establishment of seminaries by, 104; and Oratorians, 153
Bible in French, 148
Bimorel, Laurent de, 128
Blaine, Canon Jean-Baptiste: and Sisters of Ernement, 134
Borromeo, Charles: and free schools according to Trent, 123; and Schools of Christian Doctrine, 35
Bourdoise, Adrien: and League of Prayer, 82; and Seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, 82, 104; and Vincent de Paul, 82
Brother as teacher, 26-32
Brothers of the Christian and Charity Schools: Nicolas Barré (founder), 26-29; confused with the Brothers of the Christian Schools,
27–29. See also Démia, Charles
Brothers of the Christian Schools: as catechists, 94–96; and Charity Schools; 128–32; confused with the Brothers of the Charity Schools, 27–29; foundation of, by John Baptist de La Salle, 91–94; and funding of schools, 131–32; as models of virtue, 97; salaries of, 131–32; vocation of, 92–94. See also Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes; La Salle, John Baptist de
Brothers of the Christian Schools of the Faubourg Saint Antoine. See Frères Tabourin
Brouillet, Nicole Moët de, mother of John Baptist de La Salle, 79
Brunot, Ferdinand, 166

8–11. See also Congregation of Our Lady
Canons Regular of Our Savior: and Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, 39; and Peter Fourier, 39–40
Canons Regular of Saint Augustine: and Peter Fourier, 38–39; and Jean de Maillane, 39
Catholic Counter Reformation: and Biblical studies, 89; impact on teacher preparation, 1–2; effect on service to needy, 35
Cauvenel, Claudia. See Fourier, Peter
Champvallon, François de Harlay de, 121
Chantal, Jane Frances de: and foundation of Visitandines, 35, 80
Charity Schools: and Brothers of the Christian Schools, 128–32; and Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, 119, 126; and Charles Démia, 120, 126; and Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, 118; dispute with the Guild of Writing Masters and the Masters of the Little Schools over, 108, 118–19, 137–40; in England, 122n; funding of, 130–32; and Claude Joly, 119–21; and John Baptist de La Salle, 128–32; and Adrien Nyel, 128; and Jean-Jacques Olier, 126; in Parish of Saint Sulpice,
125-26, as primary schools, 145; as schools for the poor, 3, 105; Sisters’ right to teach writing in, 107; and Frères Tabourin, 136; teacher salaries in, 131-32; quality of teachers in, 135. See also Poor, education of the; Gravītus instruction
Charles IX, King: and the foundation of schools, 104; and Guild of the Writing Masters, 105-06, 107
Chateillon, Sébastien: Dialogorum Sacrorum libri quatuor, 152
Chennevières, M.: and teacher preparation, 23-26
Chretien, Antoine: and Syllabaire français, 169
Christian Brothers. See Brothers of the Christian Schools
Christian formation of children: Peter Fourier on, 40, 42, 43, 46; and Jesuits and Oratorians, 84-85; John Baptist de la Salle on, 94-96; and the Little Schools, 117
Cistercian Nuns at Port Royal, 82, 156
Classroom management, John Baptist de la Salle on, 96-98
Collection of various short treatises, 92
Collège des Bons-Enfants, 151-52

Colloquies. See Cordier, Mathurin
Common Rule, in elementary schools primarily, 90; educational change by, 86; of John Baptist de La Salle, 92; school schedule in, 133; and student development, 72
Compagnie de Saint-Sacrement: and Charity School, 119; financial support for the Charity Schools by, 126
Condren, Charles de: and education of teachers, 104; and Méthode Latine, 154
Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes: on admission of students, 61; and Jacques de Bathencourt, 52-78; compared and contrasted with L’Ecole paroissiale, 52-78; three parts of, 53; and John Baptist de La Salle, 92; on management of schools, 132-34; on the poor, 123; practical education in, 46; and qualities of the Christian teacher, 56; on rewards and punishments, 56-57; schedule in, 76; on school and furnishings, 59; on spelling, 72, 170; on student officers, 64, 66; on teaching French, 73, 162; on teacher preparation, 52-78, 116; on teaching
reading, 72; on teaching
religion, 68-69, 70; on
teaching writing, 72

Congregation of Our Lady:
Peter Fourier, founder,
40-41; and Guild of the
Writing Masters, 107. See
also Canonesses Regular of
Saint Augustine of the
Congregation of Our Lady
Congregation of the Missions.
See Lazarists

Cordier, Mathurin: and use of
vernacular, 152; Colloquies
by, 152

Coutel, Pierre: and Les Règles
de l'éducation des enfants,
158; and teaching French,
160

Craftsman teacher, 2-4

Croyère, Mme de: and parish
school of Saint Jacques, 132

Curriculum development: and
Peter Fourier, 44, 46; and
Guild of the Writing
Masters, 105; by John
Baptist de La Salle, 86; in
the Little Schools, 107, 110,
117; in Little Schools of
Port Royal, 83

Daughters of Charity:
and Charity Schools, 134; and
Louise de Marillac, 11, 35,
81, 134; and Vincent de
Paul, 11, 35, 81, 134; as
uncloistered Sisters, 135

Daughters of Charity and
Christian Instruction of
Nevers, 134

Daughters of Saint Genevieve,
14

Declaration of 1688 of Louis
XIV, 22

Déma, Charles: Avis
important by, 22-23; and
Charity Schools, 120, 126;
and Christian formation of
children, 84; as predecessor
of John Baptist de La Salle,
17n, 20-21, 22; and
primary schools for poor
boys, 81, 82; Remonstrances
by, 17-18; as seminarian
teacher, 17-26; at Seminary
of Saint Charles, 19-22;
and Sisters of Saint Charles,
22, 135; on teacher
preparation, 17-26, 116,
135-36; and teaching in
French, 168

Descartes, René, 148

Despautère, Jean, 149

Dialogorum Sacrorum libri
quattuor: and teaching in
latin, 152

Dictionnaire de l'Académie:
influence of, 172

Diocesan Superintendent:
of Schools: or le grand
chantre, écolâtre, 2, 81,
117-19; and Charity
Schools, 118; commission
of, 117; conflicts of with
pastors, 3; direction of
primary school teachers by, 23; and Little Schools, 109, 118-19; and teachers in the schools for the poor, 119-20; and the Writing Masters Guild, 106. See also Joly, Claude
Discours de la Méthode. See Descartes, René

E
Ecoleaire. See Diocesan Superintendent of Schools
Ecoles buissonnières, 117
Edict of Nantes, 22, 85, 167
Etaples, Lefèvre d': and French New Testament, 148
Étiquette, teaching of: in Conduite des Écoles chrétiennes, 133; in L’Ecole paroissiale, 75; Peter Fourier on, 46
Eudes, John: and the education of teachers, 104
Evreux, Synod of: and establishment of Catholic schools, 103; and financial support of the Little Schools, 111
Exercices de Pitié, 96, 170
Explication de la Méthode d’oraison, 92

F
Fenelon, François, 165
Les Filles de Notre Dame. See Congregation of Our Lady
Filles Régentes. See Teaching Daughters
Fleury, Claude: and school reform, 160
Fourier, Peter: and Marguerite André, 40; and foundation of Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine of Our Lady, 8-11, 41-42, 80, 167; Canons Regular of Our Saviors, superior general and novice master of, 39-40, 41; and Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, 38, 39; on Christian formation of children, 40, 42, 43, 46; and Claudia Cauvenel, 40; Congregation of Our Lady (Les Filles de Notre Dame) founder of, 40-41; on curriculum development, 44, 46; and Jean Fourier, S.J., 38; on étiquette, teaching of, 46; Grandes Constitutions by, 41; on gratuitous instruction, 41, 42-44; and John Baptist de La Salle, 11n, 42, 46, 48-50; and Alix Le Clerc, co-founder 8, 40; and Isabelle de Louvois, 40; and nun teachers, 8-11; parents of, 37; at parish in Marnixcourt, 38; and Bishop Jean de Porcellet de Maillane, 39; on practical education, 46; and priest teachers, 26; on role of parents in education, 43, 45; and School Sisters of
Notre Dame, 41; and simultaneous method of instruction, 44–45; on teacher preparation, 42–48, 46–47; 116, 136; at University at Pont-à-Mousson, 37–48; and Pope Urban VIII, 40, 41, 42; on visual instruction, 45; *Vrayes Constitutions* by, 476

France, Collège de, 104

Francis I, King, 151

French Academy: *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, 172; influence of, on teaching French, 150–51; origin and goals of, 150–51.

French, Teaching in:

*Advantages de la langue française sur la langue latine*, 172; the ascendancy of French, 147–48; and John Calvin, 152; and *Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes*, 152; and Pierre Coustel, 158, 160; and Charles Démia, 168; and Jean Despautère, 149; *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, 172; and *Discours de la Méthode*, 148; and French Academy, 150–51; on French as a medium of instruction, 146–47; grammars for, 148, 148n, 149; and Huguenot Schools, 152; and Jesuits, 153; Claude Joly on, 168–69; Bernard Lamy on, 158, 160; in *L'Excellence de la langue française* by Charpentier 172; in Little Schools of Port Royal, 156–60; John Baptist de La Salle on, 88–89, 145–47, 160–62, 168–73; *Méthode nouvelle pour apprendre . . . lire . . . le Latin et la Française*: author of, 168; and Michel de Montaigne, 148; and *Nouvelle Syllabaire latin et français* (Nyon, author), 171; and Oratorians, 153–55, 153n; at Port Royal, 88–89; Peter Ramus, on, 148–50; and *Ratio Studiorum magistris et professoribus* of Oratorians, 154–55; *Règlement et méthode pour les écoles*, 171; and Cardinal Richelieu, 155–56; and nationalism, 147–48; and role of the Universities, 151–52, 151n; spread of, 145–62, 165–73; and *Syllabaire française* of de La Salle, 169–73; and Frères Tabourin, 171; and teaching Latin, 146–62, 165–73

Frères Tabourin: and Charity Schools, 136; and Jansenism, 136; on teaching in French, 171
Index ♦ 181

**G**

General Assembly of the Clergy, 4

General Hospice of Rouen: and Brothers of the Christian Schools, 132; and the governing bureau, 108; and Adrien Nyel, 29–30, 128; and the Writing Masters, 108

Gerhardinger, Theresa of Jesus: and the School Sisters of Notre Dame, 41

Girls, Education of, 8n, 8–17, 18, 40, 46, 83–86, 107, 108, 125, 128, 134, 135n, 147n, 167

Giustiniani, Marino: and schools for the poor, 103

**Grand chantre.** See Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, **Grand Choatre**

**Grand Constitutions.** 41

Gratuitous instruction: in Charity Schools, 121; for the poor, 119–34; Peter Fourier on, 42–44; and the Little Schools, 112–13. See also Charity Schools; the poor, education of; La Salle, John Baptist de

Gregory XIII, Pope, 37

**H**

Hauranne, Jean Duvergier de: Abbé of Saint-Cyran, 83, 156; on Christian formation of children, 84–85; and secondary education, 83

Hedgerow schools. See Écoles buissonnières

Henry III, King, 104

Henry IV, King, 151

Huguenot schools, 152

**I**

Ignatius of Loyola, 37, 42, 82–83, 84, 104, 104n, 153

Institute of the Daughters of the Cross, 14

Institute of the Oratory. See Oratorians

**Instructions et Prières pour la Sainte Messe,** 69

**J**

James II, King, and school for Irish youth, 90

Jansenism: of Frères Tabourin, 136, 171; at Port Royal, 156; and Sisters of St. Martha, 135; and solitaires, 83

Jesuits: and Christian formation of children, 84; impact of, on religious education, 104; and secondary schools, 82–83, 104; number of students and colleges of, 104n; teaching in French by, 153

Jogues, François: and teacher preparation and formation, 116

Joly, Claude: and Charity Schools, 119–21; and conflicts with the pastors in Paris, 3; as écolâtre, 2,
117–19; and education of
the poor, 124; and Guild of
the Writing Masters, 110; as
Superintendent of Paris,
3–4; on teaching French,
168–69; *Traité Historique
des Ecoles* by, 119–20

L
LaBarmondière, Claude de:
pastor of Saint Sulpice, 131
LaChétardie, Joachim Trotti:
pastor of Saint Sulpice,
139–40
Ladies of Instruction, 14
Lamy, Père Bernard: on
teaching in French, 158,
160
Lancelot, Claude: *Méthode
Espagnole* by, 159;
*Méthode Italienne* by, 159;
as solitaire of Port Royal,
156; and language teaching,
158, 159; *Nouvelle
Méthode* by, 158
La Salle, John Baptist de:
—and the Brothers: as
catechists, 94–96; in the
Christian school, 92; as
models for their pupils, 97;
on the vocation of, 92–94
—and difficulties with: Guild
of the Writing Masters, and
Masters of the Little
Schools, 121–22, 133,
137–40, 137n
—and education of: at Collège des
Bons-Enfants, 51–52; at
Seminary of Saint Sulpice,
79; at University of Reims,
79
—and educational heritage and
legacy of, 79–85; on
classroom management,
96–98; on curriculum, 86;
on rewards and
punishment, 96–97; and
simultaneous instruction,
86–88
—and foundation of the
Brothers of the Christian
Schools, 91–94
—influence on, by: Nicolas
Barré, 15; Charles Démia,
17, 21, 22; Peter Fourier,
10, 42, 46, 48, 50; Adrien
Nyel, 29–32; 31n, 42, 86
—institutions established by:
for the poor, 128–32, 166;
for delinquents, 91; in the
Rue Princess, 121–22, 129;
for secondary education,
90–91; for Irish youth, 90;
for teacher preparation,
52–78, 91, 116; for lay
teachers, 91
—and *l’Ecole paroissiale*,
52–78
—and teaching: in French,
88–89; 145–47; 160–62;
168–73; of Latin 146–62,
165–72; of Scripture,
89–90, 96
—Writings of: *Conduite des
Ecoles chrétiennes*, 46, 92;
*Exercices de piété*, 96, 170;
*Explications de la Méthode
d’oraison*, 92; *Instructions
et Prières pour la Sainte Messe, la Confession et la Communion, 69; Meditations pour le temps de la Retraite, 92; Meditations pour les Demanches et les principes fêtes de l'année, 92; Recueil de différents petits traités a l'usage de Frères, 72, 92; Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility, 46; Syllabaire français, 169-73; Treatise on the Teaching of French, 89

La Salle, Louis de: father of John Baptist de La Salle, 79
Lateran Council: and office of the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, 2-3; and free schools, 123; and parish schools, 103
Latin, teaching of: in L'Ecole paroissiale, 72; and teaching in French, 142-62, 165-73
Lazarists (Congregation of the Missions): as spiritual advisors to the Daughters of Charity, 134; foundation of, by Vincent de Paul, 35, 80
League of Prayer, 82
Le Clerc, Alix: foundress of the Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine of the Congregation of Our Lady, 8, 167; and Peter Fourier, co-founder, 8, 40. See also Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine of the Congregation of Our Lady
Le Laboureur, on teaching in French, 172
Le Maître, Antoine: solitaire of Port Royal, 156
Le Masle, Michel, Superintendent of the Schools of Paris, 110
L'Ecole paroissiale: on admission of students, 59-61; Jacques de Bathencourt, author of, 5, 6, 6a, 52-78, 167; compared and contrasted with Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes, 52-78; divisions of, 52-53; and education of the poor, 123-24; as handbook for teachers, 167; and John Baptist de La Salle, 69, 52-78; and qualities of good students, 74; and qualities of the teacher, 54-57; rewards and punishment in, 56-57, 61, 62; on role of parents, 73-74; on school and school furnishings, 58-59; and student development, 71-72; on student officers, 61-66; Pierre Targe, printer of, 52; and teacher preparation, 6-7, 52-78; on teaching arithmetic, 73; on teaching etiquette, 75; on teaching Latin, 72; and teaching patriotism, 55; on
teaching religion, 66-71; on teaching spelling, 72; on teaching writing, 72; time and schedules in, 74-76
Les Filles de Notre Dame. See Canonesses Regular of Saint Augustine of the Congregation of Our Lady Lestonnac, Jeanne de: and education of the poor, 125
Levasseur, François: and Adrien Nyel, 30; as schoolteacher at Rouen, 30
Little Schools (parish primary schools): and Christian formation of children, 117; curriculum of, 110, 117; and Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, 118-19; and education of the upper classes, 82; and education of the poor, 105, 109, 120, 124-25; funding of, 111-14; furniture and instructional materials in, 113; history and development of, 109-11; and Little Schools of Port Royal, 145; schedules in, 113-14; and teacher preparation, 2, 116-17; teaching of reading, in, 72; See also Little Schools, Masters of the Little Schools, Masters of the: and Charity Schools, 118-19; corporations of, 109; dispute by, with the Guild of the Writing Masters, 110; dispute by, with John Baptist de La Salle, 121-22, 129, 133, 137-40; and profession of teaching, 114-15; sources of income of, 111-13, 131, 135. See also Little Schools; Parish schools; Little Schools of Port Royal
Little Schools of Port Royal: distinction from Little Schools or parish primary schools, 145; the teaching in French by, 156-60. See also Port Royal
Locke, John, as educational theoretician, 165
Louis XIII, King, 147, 150
Louis XIV, King: ascension to the throne, 148; Declaration of 1688, 22; educational activities during the reign of, 80-101; exemption of teachers from military service by, 115; and founding of parish primary schools, 85
Louvroir, Isabelle de: and Peter Fourier, 40

M
Maillane, Jean de Porcelets de: ecclesiastical superior of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine, 39
Maillefer, Madame Jeanne Dubois: and Nicolas Barré, 30, 107, 131; and Adrien Nyel, 30; and Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence, 134
Maintenon, Madame de: and school for girls at Saint-Cyr, 83
Marais, Paul Godet des: on De La Salle and teaching French, 89; as protector of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Chartres, 132
Marillac, Louise de: foundress of the Daughters of Charity, 11, 35, 134; and Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, 118; and Vincent de Paul, 11, 35, 81, 134. See also Daughters of Charity; Paul, Vincent de Marie, Queen of Scots, 38
Maitres Ecrivains jurés. See Writing Masters, Guild of the Management of Schools. See Conduite des Ecoles Chrétienes
Maximes and Statues. See Barré Nicolas
Medici, Catherine de Queen of France, 149
Meditations pour les Demanches et les principes fêtes de l’année, 92
Meditations pour le temps de la Retraite, 92
Merici, Angela: foundress of the Ursulines, 35. See also Ursulines.
Monetary units in France, 112n
Montaigne, Michel de: cousin of Jeanne de Lestonnac, 125n; as educational theoretician, 165; on teaching vernacular, 148
Montfort, Grignon de: apostle to the peasants in the Vendée, 81

N
Naquatt, Anne: mother of Peter Fourier, 37
Neri, Philip, founder of the Oratorians, 35. See also Oratorians
Noailles, Cardinal de, and school for Irish youth, 90
Normandy, Parliament of: and Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, 117
Nun teacher, 8–11
Nyel, Adrien: and Nicolas Barré, 30; and Charity Schools, 128; at General Hospice in Rouen, 29–30; and John Baptist de La Salle, 29–32, 31n, 32n, 42, 86; and François Levasseur, 30; and Madame Jeanne Dubois Maillefer, 30, 131; and teacher preparation, 29–32

O
Olier, Jean-Jacques: and Charity Schools, 125, 126; and school in the Rue Princesse, 129; as founder of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice, 81, 104
Oratorians: and Pierre de Bérulle, 153; and Christian formation of children, 84; impact of, on religious education, 104; and Bernard Lamy, 158, 160; and Philip Neri, 35; Ratio Studiorum of, 154–55; secondary schools conducted by, 82–83, 104; and teaching the classics, 154–55; and teaching French, 88, 153–55, 153n, 160, 166

Parents, role of, in education: Peter Fourier on, 43, 45; John Baptist de La Salle on, 93; in L’Ecole paroissiale, 73–74

Paris, Parliament of: and the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, 117

Paris, Université de, 104

The Parish School. See L’Ecole paroissiale

Pastors: and the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, 3, 81

Patriotism, Education in: L’Ecole paroissiale and, 55

Paul, Vincent de: and Adrien Bourdoise, 82; and Charity Schools, 125; and Daughters of Charity, 11, 35, 81, 134; establishment of seminaries by, 104; foundation of Lazarists, 35, 80; and Louise de Marillac, foundress of the Daughters of Charity, 11, 35, 134; and Nicolas Roland, 82; teacher preparation by, 82; on teaching Latin, 160. See also Daughters of Charity; Marillac, Louise de

Petites écoles. See Little Schools

Policies, church and state, 32–34

Poor, education of the: in Charity Schools, 118–19, 119–21, 122–34; by Charles Démia, 120; by congregations of women, 130; disputes over, 119–34; in L’Ecole paroissiale, 123–24; funding of, 130–32; and Claude Joly, 81, 119–21, 124; John Baptist de La Salle, on, 121–22; Jeanne de Lestonnac, on, 125; in the Little Schools, 120, 124–25; in parish schools, 80–82; for paupers, 118n–19n. See also the Charity Schools; Gratuitous instruction

Port Royal: selection of students at, 166; and Cistercian nuns, 82, 156; and Pierre Coustel, 158, 160; as educational pioneer, 83; and Jansenism, 156; and Peter Ramus, 150; the solitaires of, 83; school for girls at 83; secondary education at, 82–83; the teaching of French at, 88,
89, 150, 156-60. See also
the Little Schools of Port Royal
Practical education: by Peter Fourier, 46; by the Little Schools of Port Royal, 85
Priest teachers, 4–7
Prévôt, 106
Protestant Reformation, 35

R
Ramus, Peter: curriculum of French secondary education by, 148–50; on teaching in French, 160.
Ratio Studiorum magistri et professoribus Congregationis Oratorii, 154–55
Reading, Teaching of:
Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes on, 72; by the Little Schools, 72; in French and Latin, 145–62, 165–73
Reformed Carmelites (Teresa of Avila), 35
Règles communes de l’Institut des Frères: See Common Rule
Les Règles de l’education des enfants, 158
Reims, University of, 79
Religion, Teaching of: in Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes, 68–69; John Baptist de La Salle on, 90, 94–96; L’Ecole paroissiale on, 66–71
Remonstrances. See Démia, Charles
Rewards and Punishment:
Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes on, 56–57; and cruelty characteristic of historic period, 7n; John Baptist de La Salle on, 96–97; in L’Ecole paroissiale, 56–57
Richelieu, Cardinal: chief minister of King Louis XIII, 147; and the French Academy, 150, 150n; interest of, in education, 84; and schools for the poor, 81; on teaching in French, 155–56, 160
Roland, Nicolas: advisor to John Baptist de La Salle, 16, 16n, 42, 85; and Vincent de Paul, 82; and Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Reims, 16, 81; on teacher preparation 16–17
Roux, Scipion, author of Méthodes nouvelle pour apprendre, 168.
Royal Library, 169

S
Saint-Cyran: Jean Duvergier Hauranne, Abbé of, 83; and Madame de Maintenon’s school for girls, 83; school for boys at, 83
Saint Nicolas de Chardonnet, Seminary of: Adrien
Bourdoise and, 82; teacher preparation at, 5

Saint Sulpice, Parish of: and Charity Schools, 126, 129, 130n, 139; and Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence, 134; and Sunday school founded by John Baptist de La Salle, 90; teaching in French at Saint Sulpice, Seminary of: and John Baptist de La Salle, 79, 85; Jean-Jacques Olier, founder of, 81; teacher preparation at, 4-5

Saint Yon: correctional education at, 91; foundation of, by John Baptist de La Salle, 90-91; secondary education at, 90-91

Sales, Francis de: and Jane Frances de Chantal, foundation of Visitandines, 35, 80

Schools and school furnishings: in Conduite des Ecoles chretiennes, 59; in L'Ecole paroissiale, 58-59

School Sisters of Notre Dame: and Peter Fourier, 41; and Mother Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, founder by, 41

Schools of Christian Doctrine of Charles Borromeo, 35

Secondary education: by Brothers of the Christian Schools, 90; by Jean Duvergier Hauranne at Saint-Cyran, 83; by Jesuits, 82-83; at John Baptist de La Salle's school for Irish youth, 90; at John Baptist de La Salle's Sunday school in the Parish of Saint Sulpice, 90; by Oratorians, 82-83, 104; at Port Royal, 82-83; and Peter Ramus, 148-50 by solitaires of Saint-Cyran, 83

Seminarian as teacher, 17-26, 116n

Séricourt, Simon Le Maître de, solitaire of Port Royal, 156

Simultaneous method of instruction: by Brothers of the Christian Schools, 86-88, 133; by Peter Fourier, 44-45; John Baptist de La Salle on, 86-88, 133

Sister teacher: 11-17, 134-35. See also Nun teacher

Sisters of Erнемонт, 134

Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence: Nicolas Barré founder of, 15, 81, 134; in education of girls, 167; in education of the poor, 30; first Sisters for rural schools, 15-16; and Guild of the Writing Masters, 107-8; and Madame Maillefer, 134. See also Nicolas Barré

Sisters of the Infant Jesus of Reims: in Charity Schools, 16-17; Nicolas Roland,
founder of, 16, 81; John Baptist de La Salle and, 17, 42. See also Nicolas Roland

Sisters of Saint Charles:
Charles Démia, founder of, 22, 134; and education of girls, 167. See also Démia, Charles

Sisters of Saint Joseph. See
Tour, Henri de

Sisters of the Saint Martha:
cessation of, 135; and education of girls, 134-35; and Jansenism, 135

Sisters of Saint Maur. See
Sisters of the Holy Infant
Jesus of Providence
Society of Jesus. See Jesuits

Solitaires: Jansenism of, 83; of Port Royal, 84, 156-57, 159, 161; of Saint-Cyran, 83; and secondary education, 83. See also Port Royal; Little Schools of Port Royal; Saint-Cyran

Spelling: teaching of, 72-73; texts in Paris library, 171

Statutes and Maximes. See
Barré, Nicolas

Student officers: in Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes, 64, 66; in L'Ecole paroissiale, 61-66

Sunday schools, 90

Syllabaire français, 169-73

Teacher preparation: in
Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes, 52-78, 116;
Nicolas Barré on, 15-16, 26-29; Jacques de Bathencourt on, 52-78; M. Chennevières on, 23-26; by Daughters of the Cross, 15; Charles Démia on, 17-23, 116, 135-36; for elementary schools, 1-32; Peter Fourier on, 8-11, 46-47, 116, 136; François Jocque on, 116; Claude Joly on, 3-4; and lack of educated teachers, 135; John Baptist de La Salle on, 52-78, 91, 116; in L'Ecole paroissiale, 6-7, 52-78; in Little Schools, 116-17; Adrien Nyel on, 29-32; Vincent de Paul on, 82; Nicolas Roland on, 16-17; at Seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, 5-6; at Seminary of Saint Sulpice, 4-5

Teachers, Elementary school:
training for, 3; Brothers as, 26-32; and craftsman teachers, 2-4; nun teachers, 8-11; priest teachers, 4-7; seminarian teachers, 17-26; Sister teachers, 11-17.

Teaching Daughters (Filles Régentes): preparation of teachers for rural schools by, 14-15; Félix de Vialart founder of, 14

Teresa of Avila, 35

Tour, Henri de Maupas de:
founder of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, 134
Trent, Council of:
decentralization of elementary education by, 3; and education, 1, 36; and free schools, 123; and parish schools, 103; and preparation of priest teachers, 4; response to the challenge of, 35–36

U
Urban VIII, 40, 41, 42
Ursulines: in education of girls, 167; and Guild of the Writing Masters, 107; Angela Merici, foundress of, 35; and teaching nuns, 8

V
Vernacular, teaching of the.
See French, Teaching in Vincent de Paul. See Paul, Vincent de
Vialart, Félix de: founder of the Teaching Daughters, 14
Visitandines: Jane Frances de Chantal, foundress of, 35, 80; in education of the poor, 80; and Francis de Sales and teaching nuns, 8. See also Chantal, Jane Frances de; Sales, Francis de
Visual instruction: in Peter Fourier, 45; by wall charts, 72–73.

W
Writing Masters, Guild of the:
and Charity Schools, 118–19; complaints of, against the Brothers of the Christian Schools, 108; and Congregation of Our Lady, 107; disappearance of, 109; disputes with John Baptist de La Salle, 121–22, 129, 133, 137–40, 137n; in elementary education, 105–9, 145; and Claude Joly, 110; lawsuits by, against the Masters of the Little Schools, 106, 107; monopoly by, in elementary education, 81, 106; origins of, 105; and Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus of Providence, 107–8; as specialists in handwriting, 105; and Ursulines, 107
Writing, teaching of: in Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes, 72; in L’Escole paroissiale, 72. See also Writing Masters, Guild of the

X
Xainctonge, Anne and Françoise de: on education of poor girls, 81; foundresses of a congregation of teaching Sisters, 81.
Biographical Notes

Brother Richard Arnandez, FSC, was born in New Iberia, Louisiana, where he attended schools conducted by the Christian Brothers. He received his bachelor's degree from Manhattan College in New York. From 1933 to 1936, he taught at the Brothers' boarding school in Passy-Froyennes, Belgium. In 1937 he received a Licence des Lettres from the University of Lille in France. After serving as both teacher and administrator in the schools of the New Orleans-Santa Fe District of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Brother Richard was appointed Visitor of the District in 1949. From 1969 to 1972 he served as the Secretary General and the Vice-Procurator General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rome. An author of several books and journal articles, he has also served as a translator for the Christian Brothers, the Franciscans, and the Jesuits.

Brother Lawrence J. Colhocker, FSC, a member of the District of Baltimore, was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He received his B.A. in English and M.A. in theology from La Salle University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In 1970, he earned an M.A. in English from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and, in 1973, an M.S. in Library Science from Drexel University in Philadelphia. In 1984, he received his doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of Pennsylvania. Brother Lawrence has served as teacher and department chairman at St. John's College, Washington, D.C.; as the principal of Bishop Walsh High School, Cumberland, Maryland; as the Director of Media Services at West Catholic High School, Philadelphia; and as the Director of Curriculum for the St. Gabriel's Hall System, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. Currently at La Salle University in Philadelphia, he is an assistant professor and Chairman of the Department of Education.

Brother Edward Davis, FSC, was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1929. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Loyola College of Maryland in Baltimore, a master of arts from La Salle University, Philadelphia, and a doctorate in religion and religious education from the Catholic University of America, Washington,
D.C. He has also pursued studies at Hebrew Union College, Jerusalem, and at Princeton Theological Seminary. Brother Edward has taught on the high school level in Baltimore and Washington, and on the college level at La Salle University, Philadelphia, and at Christ's College, Liverpool, England. He is a member of the Catholic Biblical Association, the Society for Biblical Literature, and the Jane Austen Society of North America.

Brother Dominic E. Everett, FSC, is a member of the Chicago Province of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He is presently teaching in the Education Department of Christian Brothers College, Memphis, Tennessee. He earned his B.A. and M.A.T. degrees at St. Mary's College, Winona, Minnesota, where he was recently Chair of the Education Department. He holds an M.A. in philosophy and a Ph.D. in the foundations of education from Loyola University of Chicago. His doctoral dissertation deals with John Baptist de La Salle's work in teacher education. Brother Dominic has been a teacher and administrator in Christian Brothers' high schools throughout the Midwest. He has served overseas as the principal of St. John's International School at Waterloo, Belgium, and has been an adjunct faculty member in the Education Department at Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois. He is the author of the introduction to the new translation of *Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes*, to be published by Lasallian Publications.

Brother William Mann, FSC, is International Secretary for Formation for the Brothers of the Christian Schools. A member of the Advisory Board of the Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies and of the Editorial Board of Lasallian Publications, he is currently editing a new translation of John Baptist de La Salle's *Conduite des Ecoles chrétiennes*. Brother has served as English teacher, dormitory supervisor, school administrator, youth retreat director, campus minister, and auxiliary Visitor in the Long Island-New England District of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Most recently he has served as director of novices for the Brothers in the United States and Toronto. He holds a B.A. in English literature from the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., an M.A. in liberal studies from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, an M.A. in human development from Salve Regina College, Rhode Island, and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Colgate Rochester Divinity School.
Brother Yves Poutet, FSC, was born in 1920 and attended L'Ecole Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle in Reims, the first independent school established by De La Salle. He has served as a teacher and a catechist, as well as the director of a school in the District of Nantes. Brother Yves received a Doctor of Letters degree in 1970 from the University of Bordeaux and holds a Licentiate in Theology. He worked for three years as a research assistant in the historical section of the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique. His publications include Le XVIIe siècle et les origines lasaliennes; the chapter on the Brothers of the Christian Schools in the Editions Flammarion publication Les grands ordres religieux; “Histoire de la sainteté” in the Encyclopédie Hachette; and numerous articles appearing in the journals of various historical societies. His most recent publication is volume 48 of Cahiers lasaliens. He is currently serving as a director of research in the Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Rome.

Brother Gregory Wright, FSC, is a professor at De La Salle University, Manila. He had been a faculty member at the College of Santa Fe for 30 years. He holds a master's degree and doctorate in history from the University of New Mexico. His doctoral dissertation is a study of John Baptist de La Salle's writings and selected aspects of his religious teachings. Brother Gregory is a member of the Editorial Board of Lasallian Publications and editor of John Baptist de La Salle's The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility, 1990.