

## 50 YEARS, AND MORE, OF LASALLIAN STUDIES: CHRONICLE AND PERSPECTIVES

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### ABSTRACT

To make a presentation on fifty years of Lasallian Studies involves approaching the journey of an Institute that for over eight decades, participating in the cultural and ecclesial dynamics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was given the task of asking fundamental questions about its origins in order to better understand its present and, thus, better prepare itself to face the future. Brother Alain Houry, of the Archives in France, offers a description rich in names, biographical sources and data that we consider an indispensable reference for approaching the complexity of Lasallian research for the present and for the future.

**Key words:** La Salle - Lasallian Studies – origins – research.

### 1. Before the "Cahiers lasalliens"

**1.1** As a result of the note of Brother Maurice-Auguste Hermans (**CL 5**, 433-438) to the General Chapter of 1956, **Lasallian Studies** were set up in the Generalate in Rome: from 1959, a coordinated research plan dealing with the 1<sup>st</sup> Lasallian century (1651 – 1751) was presented to the Institute in each of the **Cahiers lasalliens (CL)**. What seemed to be a starting point was, in reality, the culmination of unsystematic attempts the traces of which can be found in the years preceding and following the Second World War. The **Rivista lasalliana** founded in 1934 in Turin by Brother Goffredo, Luigi Savore, offers us two prized instruments for scoping out that history: *75 ans de recherché lasallienne* (2008, No.4), and his *Bibliographia internationalis Lasalliana 1703-2000* (2001, Nos.1-2): recourse will be had to this last publication with the number attributed to the books which it retains.

**1.2** Let us cite here a few books, which have not aged too much because their approach to sources fulfils certain criteria of objectivity and historical exactitude, which seem to us to be indispensable today. Let us begin with works of an historical nature.

- Certainly, the huge work of Georges Rigault (**497, 509, 522, 529, 558,578, 587,650 and 681**) does not conform perfectly to our present day idea of an historical work; his *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes*, published by Plon from 1937 to 1953, sets in perspective, however, the evolution of the "Lasallian" work

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<sup>1</sup> In these lines, I would like to share my experience and expectations after a long association with Lasallian studies. Here, I am not referring to very short articles or, in spite of their quality, books dedicated to the history of the institute in a particular country (including the very comprehensive *Sembraron con amor* by Spanish Brother Saturnino Gallego **939** and the work of the Canadian Nive Voisine about the Brothers in Canada **1238, 1400**). I beg the indulgence of the reader for being unable to cite each time the full title of the works I mention; for the author I mention the nationality when he is not French. Each one will see that the *Bibliographia internationalis Lasalliana* is an indispensable tool when speaking of these 50 years (and more).

(and for him that means “what was initiated by M. de La Salle and the first Brothers”) together with the evolution of the societies in which it developed. This was not done, for example, by the *Précis d’Histoire de l’Institut* (471), which appeared in 1935.

- Again in 1937, *L’œuvre d’un siècle* (496) a group work published in Montreal for the *Centenaire des Frères au Canada*, owes a lot to the Canadian Brother Marie-Victorin, Conrad Kirouac, for this rereading of history and his composition.
- Published between 1954 and 1976, the solid works on the history of the Institute (685, 754, 842 and 916) by the Englishman William Battersby – Brother Clair Stanislaus – do not qualify in the light of the first “Études lasalliennes”; on the other hand his studies in 1949-1950 on the pedagogical work of John Baptist de La Salle (580)<sup>2</sup> and his spiritual writings (590) demonstrate a serious effort to update the approach of the Founder of the Brothers.

**1.3** With the publication in 1951 of the manuscript of the *Conduite des Écoles*, the Belgian Brother Anselme (Anselmus-Josef) d’Haese (617=638) was the first to undertake a critical edition of a writing of the Founder; the text of the *Lettres* established by Brother Félix-Paul Vandamme, appearing as a Circular in 1952 (662), was brought to completion by Georges Rigault after the premature death of the author; there would follow in 1956 for *Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité chrétienne* an edition which was too early, for Brother Albert-Valentin Leter did it before the discovery of a copy of the first printed edition. After giving a rather mixed up study of *Les premiers biographes de Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* (719), Brother Émile Lett published in 1957 the *Explication de la Méthode d’Oraison* (728), an annotated edition rather than a truly critical one. In 1962 will be found precious information about the *Explication* in the work of Brother Emiliano, an Italian (776).

**1.4** Two publications of 1954-1955 demonstrate the benefits of having recourse to the sources used by the Founder to deepen the original thought: *Pour une meilleure lecture des Règles communes* (629) – the fruit of lectures given to the Second Novitiate in Rome by Brother Maurice-Auguste Hermans and published, firstly, as articles between 1952 and 1954 in the review *Entre nous* – and *L’Oraison d’après S. J-B. de La Salle* (704) picked up again, by Brother Frédien-Charles Vermeulen, in his lectures to Brothers, emphasising especially the Teresian influence on M. de La Salle, and basing himself on the first edition then known of the *Explication de la Méthode d’oraison*.

**1.5 This flowering of studies** saluted by the General Chapter of 1956 (see below, 2.2) corresponds with several developments within the Institute. Firstly, some Lasallian study sessions, for Brothers, had been organised in France by the Secretary General, in 1937 and 1938, with the Institute historian Georges Rigault. Then, the resolve of the 1946 Chapter – and especially of Brother Superior Athanase-Émile - to put behind them what in their eyes the “secularisation” interlude of the French Brothers since 1904 represented, gave rise in several Brothers to a refusal to accept what we would call these days a ‘fundamentalist’ reading of our origins and the history of our Institute. And finally, increasing access of the Brothers to university studies led them to ask the same questions, about our Lasallian heritage, as they were meeting in studying the evolution of societies.

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<sup>2</sup> A *Pioneer of Modern Education* coming soon after the work of Brother Mélage, *Le créateur de l’école populaire*, 1948 (577).

**1.6** But a unifying element was still missing: Brother Emiliano Savino, in **Rivista lasalliana**, of which he had charge from 1940 until 1962, certainly published a series of articles on the *Civilité* (in 1956-1957) and on the *Explication de la Méthode d'Oraison* (1957-1963) already cited, but Italian is scarcely read except by 2% of the Brothers in the Institute; the French review **Entre nous**, begun in 1939 and revived after the war by Brother Guillaumin, did not provide a sufficiently firm framework to bring about dialogue among researchers working in French, the language that was destined to remain the language of first choice in Lasallian studies because it was the language of the Founder, and the official language of the Institute for a good half-century more. In the **Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique**, its Director, Father André Rayez, sj, published the basic article, *Études lasalliennes* (675) – which would be used as a reference for the work to be undertaken (see CL 5, 144) - and a study *L'abandon à Dieu dans la spiritualité de saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* (709), that **Rivista lasalliana** would re-publish in 1958.

## 2. Lasallian Studies and the General Chapter of 1956

**2.1** To avoid the suppression of **Rivista lasalliana** that he had founded in 1934, Brother Goffredo had had to take the decision, in 1938, not to publish any more historical studies on the Rule, and to promise “*not to make any criticism of the volumes of Rigault*” (cited in RL 2008, no.4, 482)! With the General Chapter of 1956, conditions for Lasallian research would change appreciably, above all, with the setting up of a Service, which still exist. In presenting the work of the 1956 Chapter (Circular **354**, dated 16 July, 1956, p. 52: *The cult of our Holy Founder*), the Brother Superior Nicet-Joseph reported, among the suggestions accepted,

“*–The pursuit of works of research on the life and writings of Saint John Baptist de La Salle by means of critical studies will constitute, as a whole, the Monumenta Lasalliana, the starting point for a future critical biography and a detailed study of the spirituality of the Saint*”. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Commission put forward the motion “*that a permanent Commission be established at the Generalate in view of promoting the cult of the holy Founder, to pursue and coordinate research and works connected with his story, his writings and his spirituality.*”

**2.2** The 9<sup>th</sup> Commission praised “*the widespread trend for publishing works about our Saint in various languages in the course of recent years. The Chapter has expressed its satisfaction for this fine effort, and desires to see it continue. What seems to be of the greatest importance and the most urgent is a publication of all the writing of the Holy Founder, following on from what has been done for the “Conduite des Écoles”, “Les Lettres” and “La Civilité Chrétienne”. To achieve this result, we urge that a permanent “Lasallian Commission” be formed, composed of a team of specialist Brothers with access to the Institute Archives*” (id., p. 96). And its first motion was: *That critical studies of all the writings of our Holy Founder be pursued, and that the publications and writings seeking to deepen and make known his spirituality be continued*” (id. p. 99).

**2.3** Lastly, let us recall the following decree regarding publications: “*On applying an article of the Rule of Government (XIX, 140) and as a commentary on it: 1<sup>st</sup> All studies which are of interest to the whole Institute will be submitted to the prior assessment of the Secretary General*” (id., p. 115).

**2.4** Less than a year later, Circular **357** announced the creation of the *Institutum J sus Magister*, a Higher Institute of Religious and Apostolic Culture for Teaching Brothers. Among the recommendations that followed let us reproduce in its entirety the long page (p. 19-20) that bore the title:

3. Study of our Holy Founder and of the origins of the Institute

*It seems to be important for us to invite the mass of our Brothers to a better study of the Holy Founder and the origins of our Institute. As an introduction to this study, we are taking action to bring together **in the Generalate, the works that could be the most useful in giving direction to the research or documenting the labours undertaken for this purpose.** The following should have a place in this library:*

*1<sup>st</sup> all Lasallian publications: biographies of the saint, editions of his works, and studies dedicated to his achievements and his writings;*

*2<sup>nd</sup> works of the bibliographical, linguistic, historical or biographical order that can provide data related to the human milieu, the conditions of the time, to pedagogical and cultural problems and to the peculiarities of the spoken and written language of the century in which our saint lived and his work was organised (in theory, 1651-1751);*

*3<sup>rd</sup> works of theology, patristic, and spirituality to which the saint was – or could have been – indebted; so, special consideration would be given to editions which were contemporary with the years of formation and writing activities of the saint;*

*Such is our project; we count on you to bring it about. If therefore, in your house, some one of these works were to run the risk of remaining unused, you might instead think of sending it to us. If, on the other hand, such works were put to use in your community library, you should not miss out on informing us of its presence, as this single piece of information has already shown its value.*

*Rome, 29 June 1957, Br. Nicet-Joseph”*

**2.5** At the end of Circular **368** (06.01.1961), consecrated to fidelity to religious vocation, Brother Nicet-Joseph introduced the first volume of the “Cahiers Lasalliens”. *“Having been favourably received in the wider world, this publication has crossed the threshold of most of our communities as a goodly number of Brother Visitors have requested that a copy of each of the first six volumes be despatched to various houses under their obedience... All who can become acquainted with such works will be delighted at the meticulousness with which the work has been done”* (p. 55). That is how the false idea spread that the Centre of the Institute “without any consultation” sent the Cahiers lasalliens to communities.

### **3. The initiative of Brother Guillermo Felix of Spain from 1946 until 1966**

**3.1** Some valuable studies were to appear, without any link with the launching of *Lasallian Studies* in Rome. More particularly, it was the work of Spanish Brothers which Brother Assistant Guillermo Felix focussed, according to a clearly defined plan, onto higher studies in theology, scripture, spirituality, pedagogy, etc. in order to come out on top, in the conflict in which the Spanish episcopacy were in opposition to the teaching Brothers: without the formation proper to priests, said the hierarchy, Brothers cannot legitimately teach catechism

in their own schools. From that voluntary, unprecedented effort would come the San Pío X University centre in Salamanca then in Madrid.

**3.2** In Madrid, Saturnino Gallego (Hermano Saturnino Miguel) published, in 1958, *La teología de la educación en S. Juan Bautista de La Salle*, 296 p. (734) ; Carlos Alcalde Gómez (Hermano Esteban Bernardo) , in 1961, *El Maestro en la pedagogía de San Juan Bautista de La Salle*, 548 p. (765); Galindo Viola (Hermano Serafin Bertrán), in 1964, *Perfección y apostolado en la Espiritualidad lasaliana*, 276 p. (818). Let us add, in 1966, *Biblia y Espiritualidad*, 362 p. (852) the study of Scripture in the writings of John Baptist de La Salle, of Luis Varela (Hermano Augustin Damian), the first who was able to have access, in the Cahiers lasalliens, to the facsimile edition of the whole of his writings.

#### **4. Brother Maurice-Auguste, 1<sup>st</sup> Director of Lasallian Studies, from 1956 to 1987 (see CL 5, 143- 182)**

**4.1** The architect for the launching of the **Cahiers lasalliens** and the setting up of the Lasallian Library in the Generalate was Brother Maurice-Auguste Hermans (in addition, he was Director of the General Archives of the Institute and, at one time, Director of the student community of the Lasallianum). His work was often solitary, and dialogue with the few researchers who submitted their texts to him exacting: thanks to his meticulous exactitude and his concern to see that the conclusions did not exceed solidly established premises, what he published has a quality of completeness in its content while opening up fruitful leads for those who wish to follow them.

**4.2** The work plan is announced in each of the Cahier lasalliens: “*Texts, Studies, Documents: a non-periodic series; focussed on the person of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, his written works and the origins of the Congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools; in preparation for the publication of two definitive works: a critical biography and the corpus of his works*”. It is the unfolding of that plan that we are now going to follow.

A – Texts. With the **facsimile re-edition of the works of John Baptist de La Salle**, between 1962 and 1965, the work done by Brother Maurice-Auguste Hermans was of immense help in tackling those writings. Firstly, he set precisely the coordinates of the *princeps* edition or, lacking that, of the oldest edition known at that time. The circumstances under which it was written, the literary genre, and the intended readership were recalled as much as possible, supported by well argued hypotheses. With his customary modesty Brother Maurice-Auguste drew very measured conclusions, leaving to other researchers the development , if they so desired, of the points of view he had sketched. There followed a complete listing of the various editions known at that time, with a brief indication of the reprintings, of the modifications not to say the changes which marred fidelity to the original text, often also, tables of content and/or indexes which, without being exhaustive, offered, however, very useful entry points.

In comparing the composition of CA and CB, Brother Maurice-Auguste would have been able to make it apparent that there are too many differences between the two editions (and the date of publication of the oldest copy of CB) to be by the same “author”: Canadian Brother Gilles Beaudet has been able to demonstrate that we have here two editions in a long series of publications of *Cantiques spirituels* by abbé Pellegrin and, therefore, that CB does not have a place in the writings of John Baptist de La Salle.

It is much to be desired that the study of the sources of CA (John Baptist de La Salle is here the “editor” rather than the “author”) and of the “tones (=melodies) of the *Cantiques spirituels* (CA) may at last be revealed to the public, although this study has not yet succeeded in identifying the whole collection. Let us hope that Brother Gilles Beaudet will successfully complete this publication, or will allow it.

In the case of texts that merit **an edition of the manuscripts in parallel**, manuscripts which preceded the printed text – the *Conduite* (CL 24) or the *Règles communes* (CL 25) – or the rediscovered princeps edition of the *Civilité* (CL 19) the characters of which require transcription into our modern characters, the work is most painstaking even if a few minor faults remain to be corrected. Moreover, that is why Brother Maurice-Auguste went back to the facsimile reproduction for the first biographies of Bernard and Blain (CL 4, CL 7 and 8), whilst he offered in parallel the two texts of Maillefer (CL 6). The *Lettres* so well prepared by Brother Felix-Paul Vandamme (691), have not been the object of re-editing: there would be practically nothing to add. – They were translated into Spanish (778), by the Brothers of the Pío X Institute in 1962, and into English (1147) with a commentary by Brother Augustine Loes, in 1988.

A few special texts, already published by Brother Maurice-Auguste in CL 2 and CL 11, such as the vows of 1691 and 1694, were not the subject of a special Cahier lasallien. The same applies to texts he had prepared but not yet published, like the *Mémoire sur l’habit* – Brother Michel Sauvage would edit it in 1991 (CL 5 = 1212) in the Cahier lasallien dedicated to Brother Maurice-Auguste. When it comes to producing a computerised and printed edition of the *Œuvres complètes de Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* the essential work of establishing the texts will have been done.

**B – Documents.** Researching documents relating to the times of the Founder found a new dimension in **the remarkable work of erudition of the Spanish Brother Léon de Marie Aroz**<sup>3</sup>, who would end up signing himself Brother Louis-Marie Aroz, while writing perfect French. With the technical excellence of his copy and his analyses of archival documents not yet published in a scientific manner, he gave the *Cahiers lasalliens* assured access into university libraries but, as a “pernicious effect”, he **would soon put the Brothers off reading Cahiers lasalliens**. The string of deeds about the civil status of the de La Salle family (838) was already somewhat difficult to follow, but when, in 1967, in excess of 1000 double pages of the 5 volumes of the *guardianship accounts* were published (853 and 857), then in 1969 *Les titres de rente de la succession de Maître Louis de La Salle* (867), the Brothers lost courage; in certain community libraries the *Cahiers lasalliens* were found carefully preserved in their original packaging... sometimes not even opened!

It was almost impossible for me to make my Parisian brothers understand that there were, in other *Cahiers lasalliens*, **studies** that were quite readable and enriching, like the articles by Brother Yves Poutet re-printed in 1988 (CL 48) and 1999 (CL 43 and 44) or Brother Michel Sauvage’s magnificent commentary on the letter of the principal Brothers to M. de La Salle on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1714 (CL 57 on Parménie in collaboration with American Brother Leo Burkhardt). The remarkable work of popularisation of Canadian

<sup>3</sup> Brother Aroz showed his extraordinary ability at finding and transcribing documents at the time he was preparing his thesis on the missionary expansion of the Institute (706); the dossiers drawn up form a genuine collection available in the Archives of the Motherhouse.

Brother Raymond Brisebois<sup>4</sup> – *Invitation – Initiation aux Cahiers lasalliens* – beginning in 1990, seems not to have touched many people, for these booklets (of 36 to 108 pages), even when once offered at 1 euro for a full set, found few takers.

There is another less visible aspect of the writings of Brother Aroz. Several times finding the same protagonists, wherever the documents being commented on took him, it is difficult for the reader to know if the full information is given about such a person and where one must go to find supplementary information. Above all, as for any good researcher, it happened that Brother Aroz uncovered elements that invalidated certain previous stances adopted, or which show that he had confused two persons with the same name. The problem is that Aroz does not point it out; it is left to the reader to compare his different publications and to draw conclusions from them. It is a pity he did not do what Georges Rigault did: the latter, in a volume of his *Histoire générale de l'Institut* sometimes indicated in a note that the document he had just been working on showed that what he had written in a preceding volume (with references given) was not fully exact, and he re-wrote the offending paragraph. Thus the attentive reader has only to apply to the reference indicated the coordinates of the improved version. That is how a real historian acts, one who is concerned about guiding his reader!

The researcher who has not compiled for himself a complete index, can consult the work, practically exhaustive at that time, published in 1986 by Spanish Brother Saturnino Gallego in the prestigious Spanish collection BAC: *Vida y pensamiento de San Juan Bautista de La Salle, Vida (1096)*. His notes enable all the published documents relative to the point in question to be found, an indispensable task in discerning the validity of the conclusions of Brother Saturnino, that cannot always be followed blindly: in particular for dating a writing, for he prefers the date at which the work formed in the mind of its author rather than the one on which the latter put the finishing touch to clarifying his thought (see, for example, the *Méditations pour le temps de la retraite*). And that dating has some importance if the intention is to sketch the evolution of a thought, not to say trying to explore the progressive release from the influences accepted during a stage of one's formation.

The *Chronologie lasallienne* of Spanish Brother José María Valladolid published in No. 31 of **Lasalliana (1308-1310)** and which gathers together all preceding works, is a very useful instrument available in 3 languages. Digitalised to facilitate looking for a name, this would be an indispensable tool.

C - Studies. The first study to appear, the one that opened the collection of the Cahiers lasalliens in 1959, was that of Brother Flavien-Marie, Michel Sauvage, *Les citations néotestamentaires dans les Méditations pour le Temps de la Retraite (CL 1 = 750)*. It was a meticulous work that retains its full value although the Amelotte edition of 1685 was missing. That was one that Brother Michel had been unable to find in spite of searching in specialised libraries (the Generalate, Chantilly) ... while it was lying in the General Archives of the Institute! That was the edition printed en masse at the request of Louis XIV who, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, had it distributed to the “new Catholics”.

With this edition I have come back to the work of Brother Michel. One passage of MTR certainly makes use of the 1685 translation of Amelotte, another could have the same provenance, but the masterful display of Michel remains intact. It is Amelotte 1707 that

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<sup>4</sup> Brother Ephrem, professor of statistics, to whom we owe an historical and almost futuristic study, *L'Institut en 1964*, published in Rome in April 1966.

was consistently used in the MTR, and so the definitive drafting of these Meditations could not have been before that date.

The Lasallian works of Brother Maurice-Auguste are not all found in the collection he designed. In 1962, he edited, under the title *Petite contribution à l'étude des origines lasalliennes* (781), an off-print of the well documented articles he had published in the Institute Bulletin. The thesis for his doctorate in canon law, by contrast, would take up three Cahiers lasalliens: in 1960, *Les vœux des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes avant la Bulle de Benoît XIII* (CL 2 and 3 = 760) and, in 1962 *L'Institut des Frères... à la recherche de son statut canonique* (CL 11 = 780). These works are remarkable for the quality of their documentation and their remarkable and demonstrative rigour. They were the subjects of a Spanish translation finished in 2009. In 1964, with Brother José Arturo, Brother Maurice published yet another *Contribution à l'étude des sources du Recueil* (CL 16 =814).

In 1988, an analogous work on the sources of the *Méditations pour les Fêtes* (CL 47) by Brother Jean-Guy Rodrigue<sup>5</sup>, also very convincing, is however marred by some printing mistakes in the Founder's text. Later on, Brother Jean Pungier on the *Civilité* (CL 58-60) in 1996 – 1999, and in 2010, on the *3<sup>e</sup> partie des Devoirs d'un chrétien* DC (CL 65), as well as Brother Léon Lauraire on *Conduite des Écoles* (CL 63) pursued texts the Founder used or from which he distanced himself – the comparative method already used by Brother Yves Poutet in his thesis (887) – to better appreciate the originality of his thought and approach. Further on, we shall see some analogous works which have not been published in the *Cahiers lasalliens* viz. those of Spanish Brother Fernandez Magaz on the *Devoirs d'un chrétien envers Dieu* (863) or of Brother Jean Pungier on *le catéchisme* by question and answer (DB) of John Baptist de La Salle (1084).

The work of Brother Miguel Campos (CL 45 and 46) is unique in its kind in the *Cahiers lasalliens* tackling *l'itinéraire évangélique* of the Founder of the Brothers through his “autobiographical” texts and his *use of Scripture in the Meditations for the time of retreat*. The reading thereof is sometimes taxing because, seeking a way between a theology that could be dubbed “eternal” and an excessively “historicist” approach, the author has to say twice what he is rejecting for conflicting reasons, before going ahead with his “incarnational” reading (the expressions are mine). It is a hermeneutic solidly based on knowledge of the foundational events. But the first biographers cannot be used without first pinpointing the interpretations they sometimes superimpose on the Founder's actions; as Lasallian studies has not yet done this critical work, Miguel Campos retained only those texts that can be considered “autobiographical”, to understand the events which elucidate their impact (and vice versa).

<sup>5</sup> Mention must be made here of an unpublished work, one that is unpublished in the form in which it was written, by Brother Joseph Le Bars on *la longueur des Méditations et le Nouveau Testament utilisé*. Brother Rodrigue had pointed out that the MF showed two distinct periods as regards the French New Testament generally used – September-January: the Mons of 1668 and, in February-August: the Amelotte of 1688 - . Brother Le Bars made the same remark (besides finding more of Huré than of Mons, both with Jansenist tendencies) about the New Testament used, but also about the length of the MD and MF of which the average varies from the straightforward to the complicated corresponding to the same periods. So it is natural to consider that the final writing of these Méditations was done at two distinct times; it is even possible to put forward the hypothesis that J-B de La Salle normally used Amelotte when he was home, and that Huré (or Mons) was probably used during his long stay at the Seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, when Brother Barthélemy had sent him to Paris in connection with the will of Rogier

In my opinion, that is a critical point for whoever wants to give an account of “Lasallian spirituality”, not so much the priestly spirituality that the Founder developed for himself in the course of his training, but the one he formulated for and with the first Brothers. The two “definitive” outcomes the Cahiers lasalliens wish to achieve – a critical Life and the corpus of the works of M. de La Salle – necessarily go *together* to avoid unilateral readings of his career. Many traits of his mentality bring him close to the “age of saints” (the first half of the XVIIth century) without it being possible to look upon him as a man oriented towards the past; and his educational activities with the youth of the lower classes in no way justifies comparing him to the revolutionaries of the following century. 10

**4.3** Here, let us draw attention to some **work tools for the study of the Lasallian vocabulary**. Some “Jesus Magister” students had carried out, for the review *Lasallianum*, a listing of the *Vocabulaire des Méditations pour le Temps de la Retraite* (831). With the collaboration of Brothers in the Second Novitiate, Brother Maurice- Auguste had drawn up in a systematic manner the huge card index of the *Vocabulaire lasallien*<sup>6</sup>, made up of half-pages of the Cahiers lasalliens reproducing the works of the Founder, and impossible to edit as they were; by retaining only the part of the sentence in which the word was used, 6 enormous volumes (1148) were tapped out on a typewriter and reproduced in Paris by photocopying in 1988. It was the first time that such a work was available for all the “writings”; by the use of headings all forms of the same verb could be found and the homonyms be distinguished – that has not ensured the electronic edition of the *Œuvres complètes* which will be spoken about further on, offering, on the other hand, all the words, numbers and biblical references in discrete units (a standardised division of the text intended to fit on to a computer screen). Brother Raymond Brisebois finished that Lasallian Vocabulary with *Étude des mots du vocabulaire lasallien* (1153) drawing attention to the meanings of words and rules of grammar that have varied since the XVIIIth century. The same thing is found for the *Méditations pour les Fêtes des Saints*, a glossary and rules of syntax, at the end of **CL 47** (1144) by Brother Jean-Guy Rodrigue, of which we have just spoken.

**4.4 On the periphery of the Cahiers lasalliens.** The thesis of Michel Sauvage (Brother Flavien Marie), defended in Lille – *La participation des Laïcs au ministère de la Parole ou la place du Frère-Enseignant dans l'Église* – would be published in 1962 by LIGEL under the title *Catéchèse et Laïcat* (784). This thesis made its mark in the theology of the laity and gave Lasallian Studies a solid historical and theological approach to the work (and works) of the Founder, before the Cahiers lasalliens could have provided the reference points. Firm and courteous exchanges between Michel and Maurice showed that, if that thesis were included in the Cahiers lasalliens project, it would have gone beyond its scope. Being published by LIGEL undoubtedly provided a wider circulation than that of the Brothers alone.

From 1963, the book was translated in its entirety into Spanish (803), but in 1991 the English translation (1235) selected only the specifically Lasallian part, omitting the whole of the Italian and French catechetical movement which was in line with the

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<sup>6</sup> At the time of the General Chapter of 1976, a long debate pitted those who gave major importance to the consecration of the Brother against those who affirmed the priority of their mission. Making use of a free day, Brother Michel Sauvage consulted all the cards with the words “consecration” and “consecrated” and found that in every case the term was followed by the word “for”. Thus was it shown that, for John Baptist de La Salle, the priority was for neither consecration nor mission but for their integration. Thanks to the unacknowledged labour of the *Vocabulaire lasallien* such an answer could be given, and received without contention.

Founder's initiative, as well as the various trials of new forms of consecrated life in Europe in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries.

Other publications deserve a mention, even though they do not figure in the *Bibliographia internationalis Lasalliana*. The fact that it may have been a joint, semi-official work does not lessen the soundness of the studies summarised.

- Circular **371**, of 6 February 1962, on *Notre vocation de catéchistes*, requested by Brother Superior Nicet-Joseph of the team of the review *Catéchistes*, and in particular its director, Brother Vincent Ayel, would be extolled by the Spaniard, Brother José María Pérez Navarro in *La catequesis lasaliana en los últimos años*, Saint Pius X, Madrid, 2003, (p. 174-178). Below, we shall mention the interest and the limits of these re-readings of the history of the Institute through a key dimension of its educational and spiritual practice.

- Circular **406**, of 25 December 1977, *Notre Vie Consacrée*, offers, in chapter 4, *Quelques jalons pour une histoire des vœux dans l'Institut des Frères des Écoles chrétiennes*. It can be recognised as the work of Brothers Michel Sauvage and Maurice-Auguste. Its official character means that it can be read in the principal languages of the Institute,

- **Communication aux Frères** is a minor work, which appeared in September 1969 and remained little known even in France. In it, four francophone Brother Assistants – Michel Sauvage, Patrice Marey, Maurice-Auguste Hermans and Arthur Bonenfant – defended Brother Superior Charles Henry Buttimer against some criticisms which his conferences to CIEL had received from the traditionalist French group; the study of *L'arrière-fond conciliaire et capitulaire* is seemingly the development of a response that Brother Michel Sauvage had begun, at the time of a session, to the question of a Brother: “We were told in the novitiate, that we must leave the world; today we are told we must engage with the world. What concept do the Church and the Institute have of this world, so that we are now required to mix with?”

## **5. The Impact of Brother Michel Sauvage, Director of Lasallian Studies from 1987 to 1991**

**5.1 The International Council for Lasallian Studies (CIEL).** The rather sudden death, on 12 July 1987, of Brother Maurice-Auguste caused Brother Michel Sauvage to take on the direction of Lasallian Studies. After wide consultation with the various sectors of the Institute, in 1988, Brother Michel launched research and publications in new directions. From the moment he took over the post Brother Michel had expressed the desire to be surrounded by advisers from the various Regions of the Institute. These especially competent Brothers would meet once a year in Rome. The CIEL studied the directions to be given to the 1988 survey. Thus long-term works were launched and their culmination stretched far beyond the time when Brother Michel was directing the Lasallian Studies. In particular, the CIEL unanimously wanted the computerisation of the Founder's writings. To follow the stages of this long process of computerisation (see 5.5), I am led to by-pass, to a large extent, the four years Brother Michel Sauvage directed Lasallian Studies.

**5.2** In 1970, Brother Yves Poutet had published at the author's expense his doctoral thesis (887) *Le XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle et les origines lasalliennes. Recherches sur la genèse de l'œuvre scolaire et religieuse de J-B de La Salle (1651-1719)*. In 1987, he published in Paris at Seuil's, *Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, un saint du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle (1117=1254)*, but for most

researchers, a number of his articles, appearing previously in specialised reviews were untraceable and deserved to be published in Cahiers lasalliens. In 1988, CL 48 gathered together various articles under the title *Jean-Baptiste de La Salle aux prises avec son temps*<sup>7</sup> (1139). Among them is the masterly display that led to the identification of the author of the École Paroissale. Other articles would be republished later (see 7.2)

**5.3 The period of the "Secularisation" 1904-1914 (EL 1=1232).** Brother Michel Sauvage had found in the Generalate Archives the manuscript of the unpublished volume of Georges Rigault on the *Sécularisation* and it bore the instruction "Not to be read without the permission of Brother Superior". In fact the author had confined himself to that period – "secularisation" for the period 1904-1914 – and made judgements on what the various Superiors would have had to do. In retrospect and with the supplementary benefit of a volume of notes and witnesses (EL 2=1233), Brother Michel, in 1991, gained permission to launch a second series, *Études lasalliennes*, to publish historical or thematic studies on the times that followed the Lasallian century. There would follow the study (EL 3 = 1259) of Brother Raymond Robert Tronchot on *La Liquidation* of the goods of the Brothers' Congregation (1992, 272 p.) revealing the unbridled plundering of those goods by the liquidators, the main one of whom, Duez, would be condemned to hard labour. It is a precious source of knowledge of what became of the houses of the Institute in each of the French *départements*. This series will facilitate the publication of many other historical studies, including a compendium of those of Brother Michel Sauvage. All this will be spoken about again below.

**5.4 The launching of "Thèmes lasalliens".** The CIEL also gave its consent to launching another series, intended to facilitate entrance into the thinking of John Baptist de La Salle, bearing in mind the cultural distance that separates us from his epoch. The objective is to clarify 100 of the Founder's words: what each meant in his time, and in his thinking, and what it could mean today. About twenty volunteer collaborators were called upon for each volume. The first two (1283 and 1284), which appeared in 1993 and were released in 3 languages, concerned 33 words each. This was a Lasallian undertaking at popularisation, at a high level, with original studies. The European A4 format was retained to allow photocopying with a view to using these short studies in a collective work.

Originally a kind of dictionary was envisaged, thus without reproducing the texts of the Founder but giving only the reference (something the American Brothers scrupulously respected); but some high quality and decidedly fuller studies, with numerous citations, were also kept; this meant that there was little uniformity in the whole – another difficulty was that the references were to the Cahiers lasalliens in the first volumes, after that it would adopt those of the *Œuvres complètes*. A third volume would appear in 1996 (1341) but a 4<sup>th</sup> volume is a long time coming, because new words have been added to the 100 kept at the start and collaborators are still being sought to write up certain themes. So, to sum it up, it is a composite work, but one that is very useful. Studies of the same kind, but only in French, can be found [on the website of the French-speaking Brothers in Canada](#), following the text of the *Œuvres complètes* (which copies the printed book, without either the corrections or the annotations written subsequently).

<sup>7</sup> Not to be confused with a very pedagogical booklet, written with Brother Léon Lauraire and translated into 4 languages between 1980 and 1995, *Un éducateur et un saint aux prises avec la société de son temps, Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* (1018).

**5.5 Computerisation of the writings of John Baptist de La Salle.** In an agreement with the *computer and Bible* service of the Belgian abbey of Maredsous (MBIBEL programme, Micro Bible Études Lasalliennes), Brother Michel Sauvage, with the unanimous support of CIEL, set in train the computerisation of the writings of the Founder of the Brothers, in spite of the refusal of the General Council of the Institute to subsidise the operation. This led to having recourse to the French and francophone Districts (Canada, Belgium South and, let it be emphasised, Belgium North) to finance (in the beginning, at a loss) the keyboarding of the works of the Founder in their entirety, then the joint publication of the electronic edition (in the original language, XVIIIth century French) and the printed one of his *Œuvres complètes* (1334). The joint publication was to be paid off at 80% of the sales.

His assistant, the Canadian Brother Jean-Guy Rodrigue, carefully followed the work. Unfortunately, Brother Michel, before long, had to leave Rome (and the Études lasalliennes) for health reasons. Brother Léon Lauraire succeeded him. Brother Rodrigue was also affected by illness, which would only be detected later on, and the quality of his work suffered because of it.

The proofreading of the work of Maredsous, on a computer listing, left about a hundred important mistakes which could be misleading (they would be corrected in the electronic version, and only pointed out in an insert in the printed edition); there were also a good thousand mistakes that the reader could correct himself, without counting the punctuation which would have to be modernised. Above all, it was a working text, unadorned, with neither introduction nor notes. And yet, some notes were indispensable at least for the text of the *Conduite*, which reproduced a manuscript that was often faulty. The Cahiers lasalliens edition of the *Conduite* (CL 24 = 823) placed in a parallel column the text of the *princeps edition* of 1720, which enabled adjustments to be made. Failure to take this text into account left some phrases incomprehensible, “*Insults offered to M. de La Salle*” was Canadian Brother Gilles Beaudet’s headline in the periodical **Reflets lasalliens** of the French-speaking Canadian Districts.

That is why Brother Alain Houry, successor, in 1993, to Brother Léon Lauraire in the management of the Études lasalliennes, soon felt that he had to draw up a new electronic edition, corrected, annotated, provided with Lasallian parallels and a supplement of biblical references; above all, there was to be a general introduction and introductions to each of the writings, giving also some texts not kept in the edition of the **Œuvres complètes** and which could be used as supplementary documents. In 2005, this led to a presentation, which was inspired by that of Catholic Bibles, with this minor difference, that, in each introduction, it was not possible to offer a theological synthesis of the thinking of the author.

It is to be hoped that this theological synthesis will some day be the fruit of the patient work, begun especially by Brother Jean Pungier for the “*Catéchismes de M. de La Salle*” (1084), in 1985, and his *Civilité* (CL 58-60=1338, 1360 and 1395) in 1996-1999 (see also the work being done today on the *Conduite*), which enables the personal thought of the Founder of the Brothers to be separated out by relying on the way in which he borrowed a good part of his writings from one or other of his predecessors, or modified the expression when he did not follow the whole thought.

**5.6 The publication of the Œuvres complètes and the question of languages.** Let us put some markers on the publications: the simultaneous publication of computer discs and of the printed book of the *Œuvres complètes* in French dates from 1993; beginning in 2000, it

became progressively impossible to use discs in new computers, because the anti-copying system of Maredsous prevents their installation when the frequency of the computer used is higher than that of the computer from which it originated. The annotated publication in Word has been ready since 2005, and accessible on the Web since 2007, but a suitable search engine has not yet been secured.

-The Spanish translation of Spanish Brother José Maria Valladolid took account of all those corrections (as well as of the reference system of the French edition of the *Œuvres complètes*); Columbian Brothers Edwin Arteaga and Bernardo Montes have reworked this translation and adapted it for South American readers (the *Méditations* appeared in 2010).

-The Portuguese translation that Brazilian Brother Edgard Hengemüle completed also made use of that annotated edition.

-Let us point out that Italian Brother Serafino Bargaglia made great use of the *Études lasalliennes* without always steering clear of Italianisms that sometimes intensify and inflect the meaning of one expression or another; he also expanded the notes according to the Italian academic habit which looks for the first appearance of a theme in the history of the thought rather than the texts of the period that could have made M. de La Salle aware of it.

-Different translators carried out the original English translation over a rather long period of time. The American Brother Paul Grass has begun to revise it. There are still differences regarding the choice of the texts, more particularly that of the printed edition of 1720 of the *Conduite des Écoles chrétiennes* rather than of the manuscript said to be of 1706.

Let us point out that the numbering of the *Lettres*, different in English and Italian, is not the one established by Brother Jean-Guy Rodrigue and the CIB of Maredsous for the edition of the *Œuvres complètes*; besides, the translations into those two languages have not retained that referencing system. So, the translation of studies citing some of the writings of the Founder become more difficult because of that, certain translators preferring to translate the citations without referring to the text used in the other language, and the reader being unable to refer to it without acrobatics.

**The question of the translations is important.** You do not have to be utterly francophone to study texts of the Founder, but you have to be able to go back to the original text to be sure that you understand exactly the terms he employs: a translation is never a carbon copy of the original. This remark applies also to present day francophone's who risk being mistaken about an expression like "sans doute" (without doubt) which nowadays means "probablement" (probably) but which in the Founder's time meant "sans aucun doute", "certinement" (without any doubt whatsoever, certainly).

**5.7** It is convenient to examine separately the literary genre of two essays that Brother Michel Sauvage and the Cuban-American Brother Miguel Campos co-authored, and which have been translated into the principal languages of the Institute. It was not a matter of doing an authoritative commentary on the writings of the Founder but of opening up theological and spiritual perspectives starting from his life journey and his thinking, like milestones in view of the synthesis of his spirituality.

In 1997, **Annoncer l'Évangile aux pauvres – expérience et enseignements spirituels (933)** was written by Brothers Michel Sauvage and Miguel Campos. The origin of this book was the very long article that Brother Michel had prepared for the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*. Developed in collaboration with Brother Miguel, that work gave rise to a book edited by Beauchesne. The Trinitarian approach of the whole gave undreamed of breadth to the Lasallian thought. Some have wondered whether the Trinitarian theme came from M. de La Salle or rather from the Thomistic training of Brother Michel. A computer search on the Lasallian Corpus showed on the evidence that the Trinitarian approach to the History of Salvation was that of the Founder; it was possible to turn up more than 100 Trinitarian passages in his writings

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In 1989, the **CL 50**, commentary on the **Explication de la Méthode d'Oraison**, written by Brothers Miguel Campos and Michel Sauvage, was not a critical edition of that document of the Founder but appeared modestly as a *working instrument (1155)*. Starting with a minute division of the text into meaningful small units, it is an attempt at updating a text which however inspiring it may be in its beginnings, is continually asking questions about the shrinking of perspectives on the maxim *What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he happens to lose his soul?* By bringing to light the biblical citations underlying the text in question, the authors make it acceptable. Nevertheless, the question remains on the table: Is the last part of the *Explication* from the pen of M. de La Salle or, starting from the outlined plan, is it the work of an unfamiliar hand, maybe that of Brother Irénée.

## 6. Brother Léon Lauraire, Director of Études lasalliennes from 1991 to 1993

Called to the management of the Études lasalliennes, Brother Léon Lauraire continued the works launched by his predecessor. Thus it was, that with a reading committee, he brought to a successful conclusion the publication in three languages of the first two volumes of the **Thèmes lasalliens (1282-1284)**; he contacted the Brothers who were doing the Session Internationale d'Études Lasalliennes (SIEL) to find new writers in view of the 3<sup>rd</sup> volume.

A demand was being felt for a History of the Institute that was more frank about developments in societies than the *Précis* of 1935, and less extensive than Rigault's. Brother Henri Bédel, sought out in spite of his age for that rather long task, accepted it from the angle of training in the study of documents, hence the general title he gave to the volumes he wrote perseveringly for the series *Études lasalliennes*, **Initiation à l'Histoire de l'Institut**. His labours can be classified under the works of research because, by teaching how to read documents, he coaches the reader to ask questions about the conditions under which they were produced and thereby about their validity: learning to "doubt" as a method is a salutary exercise! In addition, each chapter is followed by an original study drawing on quality works, many of which had not yet been the subject of publication, on a particular historical point.

In 1991, Brother Bruno Alpago, from Argentina, was asked to find what assistance the Institute gave to the poor throughout its history. After several periods of intensive work in the Archives in Rome, taken, with the agreement of his Brother Visitor, during his holidays, in 1998, Brother Bruno finished the Spanish text of **The institute at the educational service of the poor (Études lasalliennes No. 7)** the edition of which in 3 languages, would be offered to the members of the 43rd General Chapter (**1402**) in May 2000. There was an unforeseen consequence: the Brother Visitors with the book in their own hands often forgot to order some for the Brothers of their Districts. It is one of the books of this series that is least well

known! It consists, in essence, in a thoroughgoing search of the documents in the Archives of the Generalate, the components of which are found in the developments of society, the Church and the Institute; unfortunately, time was lacking for the author to draw up a synthesis across a clearly articulated issue. Let us hope that someone will take on this indispensable work to draw from it the expected profit.

In his turn, the Spanish Brother Pedro Maria Gil embarked on an essay on the Lasallian identity over the course of the ages, by means of an historical reading that owed much to a reading of the appearance of modernity. His original text was published in 1994 (*Études lasalliennes* No.4), **Tres siglos de identidad lasaliana: La relación misión-espiritualidad a lo largo de la historia de los Hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas (1298)**. Though Brother Pedro is an excellent lecturer, his writing style is difficult, and it is tricky to make translations. In trying to convey his thought, it is sometimes necessary to be content, especially in French, with expressions, which are not always felicitous (into English, in 1998: **1370**; into French, in 1999: **1388**).

## 7. Brother Alain Houry, Director of the *Études lasalliennes* from 1993 to 2004

**7.1** Br. Léon Lauraire was replaced before being able to show his true worth as Director of the *Études lasalliennes*. On the other hand, his return to France would give him more time to bring to a successful conclusion the ambitious project of making an in-depth study of the **Conduite des Écoles chrétiennes**, first of all adopting a *contextual approach* (**CL 61**, in 2001), then adopting a *pedagogical approach* (**CL 62**, in 2006) and a *comparative approach* (**CL 63**, in the press) while waiting for a *diachronic approach*, a study of the editions from 1720 to 1903.

Following Brother Léon's suggestion, Brother Alain Houry gained permission to modify the Conseil international des *Études lasalliennes*: henceforth, the CIEL is to be composed of members mainly from the Generalate whose work is directly interested in what is produced by the *Études lasalliennes*. The Commission on Formation, the Secretary General and those assigned to publications want more applied research, without denying the need to pursue fundamental research on the origins and the writings of the Founder. **Circular 437** gave an account, on 8 December 1993, of the organisation set up after the General Chapter of 1993: *Vers l'Année 2000* explained in these words the **objectives** set for the Commission des *Études lasalliennes*:

- *“to launch and support fundamental research;*
- *promote reference tools for Lasallian formation;*
- *draw up an inventory of reliable tools for communication, including translations and publications.”*

*“Means. Among the 27 different works in progress, special attention be given to bringing to a conclusion, between Christmas 1993 and Easter 1994, the work of putting on to computer discs the whole of the writings of John Baptist de La Salle [...]. The preparation of a short History of the Institute, as requested by the Secretariat for Formation, goes ahead as planned [...]. The commission notes with satisfaction the increase in references to the Cahiers lasalliens in scientific journals.”* (p. 23-24)

After the Chapter of 2000, the composition of the Conseil des *Études Lasalliennes* again reflected the diversity of the Regions to be better able to take into account their achievements

and expectations. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001, the **Circular 448**, *Towards the year 2007*, gave the Commission “Formation”, as 7<sup>th</sup> objective: “*Encourage studies on Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the history of the Institute and the educational and spiritual practices of the Institute today*”. The main objective of the Conseil International des Études Lasalliennes (CIEL) “*will be (a) to establish a programme of research (b) to proceed to the evaluation of the publications edited by the Districts [...] in order to study if it would be appropriate to give them wider circulation*”. “*The Secretariat for Lasallian Studies will publish works on the Lasallian charism, for use in the initial and on-going formation of the Brothers and Partners*” (p. 20-21).

**7.2 The publication of works on the Founder and his period.** Mention was made above (see 5.4) of the parallel edition, both computer and hard copy, of the *Œuvres complètes* (in 1993), of the great interest and the limits of that edition the size of which is a little bigger than that of a Bible. Brother Alain, in view of the difficulties soon encountered with the Maredsous programme, took in hand the preparation of a new electronic edition; and this will take about ten years.

For want of any Acts of the Congress held in Parménie on the significance of this step in the life and work of John Baptist de La Salle, there came out, in 1994, *Parménie: la crise de Jean-Baptiste de La Salle et de son Institut (1712-1714)* (CL 57 =1293) written in French by the American Brother Leo Charles Burkhard, in collaboration with Brother Michel Sauvage. The few inaccuracies in the work of Brother Leo were happily corrected in the Spanish translation done by Brother Edwin Arteaga from Columbia; as for the commentary on the letter of 1<sup>st</sup> April 1714, the work of Brother Michel, I consider it a model in its kind, at the same time rigorous in its analysis and profound in its understanding of the approach of the Founder<sup>8</sup>.

In 1994, the CL 56 (1302) published Brother Yves Poutet’s *Charles Démia (1637-1689). Journal 1685-1689, présenté, transcrit et annoté*. 439 pages. In 1995, there were the Don Bosco editions, in Paris, which inaugurated a new series with another book by Brother Poutet (1326), *Genèse et caractéristiques de la pédagogie lasallienne* (241 p.). The work was translated into English and published by the Brothers in Manilla in 1997 (1358). In 1999, the CL 43 and 44 appeared. They were collections of articles by Brother Poutet on John Baptist de La Salle and his times (1394) following some features through to the XIX<sup>th</sup> century and even to 1966 (les Provinces dans l’Institut des FEC).

**7.3 The evolution of the *Études lasalliennes* and a new series, *Essais lasalliens*.** Brother Henri Bédél’s volumes of *Initiation à l’Histoire de l’Institut* (see 6) did not follow a continuous numbering system, but fitted in with the chronological order of publications of the **Études lasalliennes**. In addition to the “re-readings” of the History of the Brothers, which will be treated later on (7.5), there appeared in this series some articles by Brother Michel Sauvage (EL 8 and 10, in 2001 and 2002) that did not fit into the framework of the “Lasallian century”; others, gathered together under the title *Jean Baptiste de La Salle et la fondation de son Institut* gave rise to CL 55 (in 2001)

<sup>8</sup> There is one regret that in no way invalidates the work. Brother Michel saw only that the text received by M. de La Salle told him “we beg you to return”, without specifying that it was to “take over straight away control of the general government of our Society” – Compare CL 8, 118 and CL 8 ab, 19 (*Abrégé de la Vie du Frère Barthélemy*). That would explain better the reaction of the Grenoble friends of the Founder and the declaration of the latter on his arrival in Paris, “Here I am. What do you want of me?” (Blain CL 8, 120)

Certain studies did not have the breadth (either in the subject matter or in their development) to justify a number of the **Études lasalliennes**. With the agreement of the CIEL, the study of Brother Jean-Louis Schneider, *Un certain air d'élévation et de grandeur* (in 2004), would remain for a long time the only number of the **Essais lasalliens**. 18

**7.4** Numerous publications were produced **in the various Regions** to expound **le Projet éducatif lasallien**, as Lasallian networks are determined to cope with it, networks for which an increasing number of lay persons are responsible with the number of Brothers in rapid decline. This kind of applied research depends both on an analysis of present day situations and on a re-reading of the educational journey of the Brothers in view of updating the *Conduite des Écoles*. Certain people have even hoped to be able some day to “re-write the *Conduite for our times*” but the wide diversity of situations undoubtedly renders illusory these days the production of a text valid for the whole Institute. This has led most Regions to open up to a wider public the fundamental source-texts of the pedagogy and spirituality of the Lasallian educator. In the U.S.A., the Brothers published, with a substantial introduction, a **collection of the texts of the Founder** in a prestigious collection. In France, Éveline Geoffroy has done a similar work with Brother Jean-Louis Schneider which retraces the human and spiritual journey of the Founder: *Les sources de la pédagogie chrétienne: Anthologie des textes de Jean-Baptiste de La Salle*, Paris, Salvator, 2007, 374 p.

**7.5 The re-reading of the History of the Institute from various points of view.** It is time to go beyond the period of the origins to see what fruits the original sowings have borne; that develops the fundamental dynamisms, which characterise the Lasallian works.

We have already met some re-readings of the history of the Institute, more or less restricted because dealing with only one or other aspect. Here I cite those which have a certain scope:

-technical teaching in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Prévot **802**) and the orthopedagogy elaborated in Saint-Yon (Würth **897**, translated into English **1149**);

-the connection between spirituality and mission (P. Gil **1298**) and the educational service of the poor (Alpago **1401**);

-the body and Saint John Baptist de La Salle, which the author Pascal Forest, completed with an analogous research for the century that followed him; it would be interesting to extend this anthropological dimension by the attitude of M. de La Salle to sexuality (in **Thèmes lasalliens** 3, the article *Chastity*, by Brother Jaume Pujol).

There are probably some theses covering analogous work that I have not read; without doubt, they have not gone beyond the sector in which they were written. There is still one more little known thesis, that of Spanish Brother Abelardo Arribas González, *El laico en la obra de S.J.B. de La Salle y la Misión compartida*, Rome, 1997, 146 p. (**1343**). Perhaps this is due to the fact that it was not edited in an Institute collection, since Brother Abelardo worked and published in Rome without any contact with the *Études lasalliennes* service.

**This genre of studies is of great interest** for it enables us to situate in history the thrust given by John Baptist de La Salle to one aspect of the life and ministry of the Brothers. In this way is revealed his quality, not only of initiator but also of Founder, endowing his disciples with a creativity to extend, often in unforeseen ways, an intuition from the times of the origins. **The risk** is to seek, at all costs, continuities there where changes in the state of

affairs predominate or rather, when dealing with an area of activity, to isolate it from the harmonious life of the Brothers as a whole; finally, the interpretative model, necessarily adopted in a given intellectual context, would one day be challenged when the historical reading of an epoch is altered. I am not saying that the various readings of that kind are invalidated by that fact, but it is conceivable that one day they would have to be looked at again with renewed efforts.

I take the example of a piece of research, which has not yet been the subject of university-type work: *the activity of the Brothers with young deaf-mutes*. In the West of France, the Saint Gabriel Brothers were called. What, then, were the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Chambéry in particular doing for the authorities to request them, in 1884, to take charge of such a work? There was no precedent from the time of the beginnings. Teaching the rudiments to that doubly disadvantaged population (poor and struck with a sensory handicap) called for a long term boarding school, even for a lifetime, while extending the years of training for a professional apprenticeship, and, for certain ones, work on the spot, as in a “protected workshop”, continuing into old age. Because of this, contact with the family is reduced to a minimum. Now, Lasallian education values cooperation with the family in the education of the young person. It was probably for that reason that M. de La Salle told the young Clément that his initial project – to bring up young people in a boarding school from the age of 7 to 20 – was not within the ambit of the Institute (CL 8, 73).

With “sign language” (inherited from abbé de l’Épée), then “the purely oral method” adopted progressively after the Congress of Milan (1880) the teaching of young deaf-mutes necessitated a specialisation which significantly reduced the mobility of the Brothers who devoted themselves to it. To put the evolving methodology at the service of those young people, training courses had to be followed, and congresses attended, often overseas. Finally, the lack of holidays without their boarders isolated them also from the Brothers of their District gathered for the annual retreat. How, with such infringements of the usual rules, could the Superiors have handled this sector of activity? What impact did that have on the commitment of the Brothers to at-risk groups in the same period, such as orphans, prisoners and, in a certain way, young apprentices? Later, did the commitment of Brothers to the blind or mutilated benefit from those pedagogical and educational advances?

Above all, what impact did it have on the methodology; social action and the spiritual life of the other Brothers engaged in primary, technical, secondary or university teaching? That presents a fairly heavy list of the responsibilities for systematic research, alone capable, in my eyes, of taking account of what it means for the Institute.

## 8. Brother Jean-Louis Schneider, Director of Lasallian Studies 2004-2009

With Brother Alain Houry’s appointment to the Lasallian Archives, Brother Jean-Louis Schneider took over the management of Lasallian studies. Brother Jean-Louis Schneider, with a research base and a growth of evidence from Brothers and Lay People, published, in 2004, *Le charisme lasallien* (EL 13). This had been asked for in Circular 448. In 2007, he edited, in succession, the latest work of Brother Jean Pungier *Le Catéchisme des Mystères et des Fêtes* (CL 64 in 2007); various studies of the Spanish Brother Josean Villalabeitia: in the series *Études lasalliennes*, No. 14, straight into Spanish, *Consagración y audacia: La Comisión Internacional de los Votos (1971-1976)*; and in the series *Essais lasalliens*, No. 2, likewise in Spanish *No hagáis diferencia... Consagración y tareas apostólicas en los*

*primeros tiempos del Instituto*<sup>9</sup>. In 2008, there appeared in 3 languages two booklets by Spanish Brother Antonio Botana which made their mark: *Vocabulaire Thématique de l'Association Lasallienne* and *Fondements pour un modèle actuel de Famille Lasallienne* **Nos.3 and 4 of the Essais lasalliens**. 20

For his part, Brother Louis-Marie Aroz published in French in Madrid 3 volumes on *Les De La Salle de Reims*, with the sub-title, *Documents probants*, which signalled his desire to distance himself from any assertion of being unverifiable.

## 9. Brothers Mario Presciuttini 2009 and Edgard Hengemüle, Directors of the Lasallian Research Service

Following on from a new blue-print for the Secretariats and Generalate Services, the Lasallian Studies Service was integrated into a larger Secretariat, *Recherches et Ressources lasalliennes*, which also included the Archives, the central Library and the Lasallian Museum, under the direction of Brother Diego Muñoz from Venezuela. There was some difficulty in setting things up; Brother Jean-Louis Schneider was replaced by Italian Brother Mario Presciuttini who, hardly installed, had to undergo a brain operation and in spite of his courage in trying to continue his work, soon had to give it up, and died within a few months. The Brazilian Brother Edgard Hengemüle came to take over (it has been noted that he translated the writings of John Baptist de La Salle into Portuguese). It is too early to know if the launching of a *Digital Review* by Brother Diego Muñoz will initiate a lasting dialogue with some universities and if some of them will engage in the research in the years to come.

## 10. Some admissions and some tasks still to be started

**10.1** I am very much aware that my presentation of these 50 years (and more) of Lasallian research is stamped by the fact that I am French and that, apart from that language, I can read only works written in English, Italian and Spanish. Being French, I am especially sensitive about the accuracy of the fundamental studies successfully handled on the Founder, to the surroundings in which he developed and to attention to conveying his language<sup>10</sup> unambiguously. All applied research, to be worthwhile, in my opinion, must be able to be supported by a solid knowledge of the origins of the Institute and be part and parcel of a questioning capable of understanding the cultural change between the time of the Founder and our own. The articles of Brother Antonio Botana in **Thèmes lasalliens** 3 are for me an illustration of this hermeneutical approach (notably *Imitation du Christ*).

Within the limits we have just raised, it is, however, possible to outline a schematic assessment of the gains and gaps over those years of Lasallian research. Let us begin with **a few significant details**, intended for those who have not followed in detail the support for one or the other.

<sup>9</sup>. The thesis of Brother Villalabeitia would finally be published in 2 volumes, Nos.22 and 23 of the *Cuadernos Lasallianos*, by the Éditions San Pío X, Madrid, 2008: a study of the General Chapter of 1966-1967 within the perspective announced by the title, *Una consagración apostólica, una vida integrada*.

<sup>10</sup>. For the language of John Baptist de La Salle, the most useful Dictionary for French speakers is that of Trévoux of 1746, appearing, therefore, many years after his death. That is due to the time needed for the language spoken at the beginning of the age to make its way into printed books, and to the delay in bringing out a Dictionary without the means at our disposal today.

**10.2 We have acquired a better knowledge of the origins of the Institute and especially the family of John Baptist de La Salle, thanks to the labours of Brothers Yves Poutet and Louis-Marie Aroz:** 21

- his brother-in-law Jean Maillefer, who married his sister Marie in 1679, requested in January 1681
- to get out of the joint-ownership in the estate of Louis de La Salle, which led to putting the Hôtel in rue Saint-Marguerite up for sale, and the decision of the Founder to go and live with the masters in a poor house (Aroz, **CL 52, 58** *Les années de prétoire*);
- the choice of the date the 24<sup>th</sup> June for this change of residence was not, in the first place, devotion to his patron saint (as Blain affirms), but was linked to the Vermandois custom which set that as the date for leases (renting out of houses), as Brother Maurice-Auguste showed in the *Bulletin de l'Institut* (**781**);
- his brother Jean-Louis and several of his nephews (Jean-François and François-Héyle Maillefer, sons of his sister Marie; Jean-Baptiste-Louis de La Salle, son of his brother Pierre) were opposed to the Bull *Unigenitus* (appellants): this raises questions about a number of friends of the Founder who became Jansenists. A veritable collection on Augustinianism and Jansenism in the XVII<sup>th</sup> and XVIII<sup>th</sup> centuries has been put together by Brother Clément-Marcel Martinais and is still waiting for researchers to exploit it;

**We have solid information about the years of training in the Saint-Sulpice Seminary**, the courses followed, the fellow students of the young canon from Rheims and the relationships he kept up with some of them (Poutet **887**). Rigault introduced us to Grandet, who in sketching the lives of eminent priests who came from the Seminary, stressed the zeal of Monsieur de la Chétardie for the schools in his parish and haughtily ignored Monsieur de La Salle and his Brothers. There is still some doubt about the one Blain called “*the enemy of M. de La Salle*”. Was it De la Chétardie<sup>11</sup> or Brenier, a fellow student of de La Salle at Saint-Sulpice? The Brothers whose “memoirs” were used as documents for the Life of their Founder had only a partial view of the situation and could not identify that “enemy”.

**We are better acquainted with the life and activity of Madame Maillefer and Adrien Nyel.** It was Madame de Maillefer’s son who was ennobled; she did not belong to the nobility, nor did her husband; moreover, the cross-checking we have been able to do with the text of Blain (CL 7, 147-160) obviously demonstrated that the biographer was more reliable when he cited the “memoirs” of the Brothers than when he trusted the statements of an old lady of almost 90!

As for Adrien Nyel, he was not the “aimless wanderer” about whom people sometimes spoke. His mission was to set up schools for boys in Rheims and, on the recommendation of canon de La Salle, he did so within the parish framework, as he had done in Rouen in the General Hospital. After some attempts in Rethel and Guise, he returned to the General Hospital in Rouen to which he had made a gift of his person (Poutet and Vermeulen **783**);

We can better appreciate **the reluctance of M. de La Salle to share the life of the masters**

<sup>11</sup> .An ancient letter of the parish priest of Villiers-de-Bel to the doyen Pierre Guyard of Laon expressly named “Monsieur de Saint-Sulpice” as the one who got Cardinal de Noailles to agree that Monsieur de La Salle should no longer be the “Superior of the Brothers”. But who produced that copy? It differs slightly from the text that Blain cited...

recruited by Nyel; the small garden spoken about by Blain (CL 7, 182), rented for his relaxation according to the conditions of the lease, was also the witness of his mortifications so that his personal resistance would not be an obstacle to the will of God which was being revealed.

We understand better the various attempts at setting up a **Training College for teachers for the countryside**, teachers who were not destined to keep any links with the Institute of Brothers: the aborted efforts with the Duke de Mazarin in Rethel, the causes of the closure of the one in Rheims, the reasons for the suppression of the one in the parish of Saint-Marcel, subsequently included in the opening of that Training College in Paris; and we shall soon be able to place the fate of the one in Saint-Denis within the framework of the Clément affair (see 7.3)

We do not know for certain the contents of **the library that M. de La Salle bequeathed** to Brother Barthélemy before he died (CL 26, 306). But we know the books the young canon de La Salle bought at the time of the break up of his father's estate (CL 51) and of that of Nicolas Roland. He used to correspond with Charles Démia who sent him his *Trésor clerical* (Poutet **CL 56**). When John Baptist de La Salle distributed his fortune to the poor he kept, on the advice of his spiritual director, an annuity of 200 livres that he dedicated to completing his personal library and furnishing the chapel in his residence with adornments for the altar. A study of the sources of several of his writings enables us to know the works he used extensively and which he probably bought for this purpose (see the introductions in the French annotated electronic edition)

Acquaintance with the laws and regulations concerning new Communities, Institutes and other recognised groupings (edict of December 1666) undoubtedly explains why, in order to give a solid internal structure to the group of Brothers, Monsieur de La Salle did not have recourse to the vows of religion but to private vows of association and union (and not a notarised act as Monsieur Olier had done to set up the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice). What would the Founder have done if he had been freer in his movements? As he has not told us that, we are reduced to some conjectures; **Circular 406** (p. 64) thinks that subsequent canonical forms such as a Congregation with simple vows, or a Society of common life without public vows, could have suited the directions in which he had gone. Still, it is a fact that the Bull of Approbation, the pontifical recognition granted through the Roman body with responsibility for applying the Council of Trent, did not, despite what Blain wrote (CL 8,191), list the Brothers among the Religious Orders. It was only much later that the interpretation of the Bull would be requested of the Congregation for Religious.

We know better **in what respect John Baptist de La Salle was the Founder of the Brothers**. It was not he who decided according to a pre-arranged plan to open schools; he responded to the requests of ecclesiastics or notable persons in a town or region and obtained a regularly signed contract – Rome was certainly an exception, Darnétal and Rouen, perhaps, another. It was not he who “founded” financially<sup>12</sup> (investing a sum of money the income of which assured the functioning of a work) the schools or the Community of the Brothers (which *is founded, at the present time, only on Providence (MH 0, 0, 2)*). But it was from within, by living for 40 years with the Brothers that he trained them in the spirit of their state;

<sup>12</sup> . Without doubt, it was the title of Founder, appearing in the *Supplique*, which deceived the Roman officials responsible for drawing up Bull of Approbation; let the beginning of the Bull be reread! Quite rightly, Blain called Monsieur de La Salle “the Founder of the Brothers” and this allowed Fernand Laudet to call his small book *L'Instituteur des Instituteurs (The Instructor of Teachers)*.

thus he could draw up their Rules with them, and not as Blain had done for the Sisters of Rouen for whom he was responsible, sitting in his canon's office.

### 10.3 So, where are we in the preparation of a critical Life of John Baptist de La Salle ?

Several solid studies have set out the **personal life-journey of M. de La Salle, the chronology of his activities, the institutions and salient facts of his times** (Gallego 1096 and, beyond the Lasallian circle, let us draw attention to Lachiver's *Les années de misère. La famine au temps du Grand Roi*). Most of the important points now seem to have been clarified, but there still remain some shadowy zones which, it can be hoped, can be cleared up in the next few years:

- We should soon have a better understanding of the **wrangles of Monsieur de La Salle with the school masters in Paris** (the teachers in the Little Schools under the authority of the Grand Chantre, and the writing masters combined in a powerful "community") and **the Clément Affair**; the dossiers on each of these two subjects assembled by Brother Louis-Marie Aroz and fortunately kept by Brother José Maria Valladolid, are going to be the subject of an in-depth study, under the direction of Brother Jean-Louis Schneider. From then on it will be possible to have a better understanding of the difficulties met with by the Christian Schools<sup>13</sup> in a milieu in which painfully negotiated rules were turned upside down; as also of the relentless treatment of the judges towards the person of the Founder of the Brothers.
- **The question of the Jansenist friends of Monsieur de La Salle** has already received some clarification concerning the personality of the Count du Charmel and of Cardinal de Noailles, more particularly. Thanks to the research of Brother Martinais, we also know that Brother Bernard Dauge, the first biographer of M. de La Salle had Jansenist leanings (see EL 6, 25). The question will be difficult to treat at greater depth because a good expert on that spiritual movement has yet to be found (in France it is always inclined to veer towards the political aspect) who agrees to put aside his usual work and devote himself to that research. The Martinais collection, which we have just spoken about, is in Rome and, in twenty years, no one has come to study it. Would it be better to take it to France?
- A preliminary piece of work has been started, the preparation of **an electronic annotated edition of Blain**. That prolific biographer, whom an author formerly described as *unbearable* and *indispensable*, has compiled such a great heap of documents ("memoirs") – often ineptly – that it is possible to pinpoint and, perhaps, separate questionable interpretations with which this hagiographical biography teams.
- It still remains to **have a better knowledge of the principal Brothers** whose activity is inseparable from that of the Founder. We now know a little of the milieu from which the "the principal Brothers" came (Loes 1392), notably those who had done some Latin, and the stages of their lives in the Institute (Félix-Paul, *Lettres*, 691),

<sup>13</sup> . Blain's insistence is curious; he speaks of the "Christian and Gratuitous Schools", not only in his historical essay on their founding (which is logical), but frequently about the schools that the Brothers took over, whilst the Founder never added the adjective 'gratuitous' although they practised scrupulous gratuity in regard to all their schools. Is there a need to recall that in 1720, Hélyot published in Paris the 8<sup>th</sup> and last volume of his introductions to some *Ordres Militaires, Hospitaliers* ...in which the Brothers of the Christian and gratuitous Schools are introduced – their Founder is Father Nicolas Barré! (p. 235).

even those who do not figure in the catalogue of Brothers (**CL 3**) such as Brother Albert: “in the first six months, he would do marvels” (Letter 19,20 to Brother Gabriel Drolin, 4 September 1705). The card indexes produced in the Archives in the Motherhouse on those who were Brothers before the Revolution have not been sufficiently mined; it should be possible to find there material to paint a picture of the characteristics of the Brothers whom John Baptist de La Salle knew. 24

- It is admitted that it is time to **review the traditional iconography**, to go further than Brother Émile Rousset and his collection of plates (**958**), to reveal new documents, less hagiographical, and which fit in better with the requirements of a great biography – or at least knowing how to present documents by drawing attention to circumstances and the objectives of their production.
- It is even more necessary – and it is the key to the operation envisaged by the District of France – to gain the **agreement of a renowned historian to write this Critical Life** and give it the repute it deserves, first of all among the experts but also among the enlightened public, notably among those who work in Lasallian schools and do not balk at a quality biography; such a name should ensure the publication of the Life in a great series.

If these preliminaries are completed in time, it is possible to hope for the main ‘definitive’ work – if that is ever humanly possible – foreseen by the initial plan for the Cahiers lasalliens, **for the tercentenary of the death of the Founder, in 2019.**

What is the situation for a similarly rigorous presentation of the **writings of John Baptist de La Salle?**

-With the perfecting (and it seems imminent) of a good search engine for the **second annotated electronic edition** of the works of the Founder (see 5.4) a good work basis will be available for establishing the text, understanding the terms, Lasallian parallels and the introductions.

-In connection with **where each of these writings stands in comparison with the currents and circumstances of his times**, we already have some solid studies published on the *Lettres* (Félix-Paul **621** and **691**), the *Formules des vœux* (Maurice-Auguste **CL 2**), the *Mémoire sur l’enseignement en français* (Schneider, **Thèmes lasalliens 3**), the *Méditations* (MR and MF), the *Catéchismes* (Magaz **863**, Pungier **1084** and **CL64**), the *Civilité* (Pungier **CL 58-60**) the *Conduite* (Lauraire **CL 61-63**), the *Recueil* (Maurice-Auguste and José Arturo **814**) and, partially, the *Règles* (especially Maurice-Auguste, **CL 5**).

-It can possibly be hoped that the other texts will be the objects of studies or they will find supplementary enlightenment<sup>14</sup> perhaps, in theses not yet ransacked.

-The edition will gain coverage from being in the electronic medium but, if Brother Michel Sauvage’s intuition is correct, a linked hard copy edition will become necessary for a profound study of the texts; the electronic Bible is very useful for researching a passage and citations, but pondering it still requires the printed one. And the objective of the edition of the

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<sup>14</sup> . For example, as Brother Jean Pungier has shown, *Instructions et Prières pour la sainte Messe* makes use of a text by Saint-Cyran who introduced Jansenism into France.

Founder's writings is not only to provide an efficient instrument for the erudite; it is addressed, and as a priority, to those who wish to be inspired by it in their ministry.

It is too soon to select the necessary work tools. I bring this over-long article to a close by drawing attention to a huge inventory, embarked on by Canadian Brother Paul Aubin. In a scientific way, he is drawing up a list of school manuals, or more exactly, **the books published by the Brothers for their pupils** in various countries. The work is far from finished, for he has "only" gone through the archives of the Brothers in French-speaking Canada, Belgium, France and the Motherhouse in Rome. This has enabled him in 2009 to make up a list on <http://www.bibl.ulaval.ca/ress/manscol/> of 11319 titles! Already some trends are appearing; firstly for countries: France (5003 titles), Canada (2235), Belgium (1864) and Italy (903); then languages: French (7993), Spanish (1337), Italian (891) and Flemish (576).