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## ANNOTATION

Cantwell, FSC, John. "A 'History of Influence' Study of John Baptist de La Salle's Recourse to the Bible, with Particular Reference to the Gospel of Matthew 4:23-10:8." Ph.D. dissertation, Flinders University, Australia, 2015.

In this thesis, Cantwell focuses on the Gospel of Matthew 4:23-10:8 as interpreted by De La Salle (vi, 121-308): the ministry of Jesus/Emmanuel and the interrelated themes of kingdom, teaching, healing, presence, salvation (iii, 121-122, 124, 127, 274, 309-310). The "overarching theme" of the Gospel of Matthew is, asserts Cantwell, "the presence of God in Jesus, which accords with a fundamental Lasallian consciousness of the presence of God" (121, 132-135).

He proposes "a history of influence" hermeneutic [expounded by Ulrich Luz], in "fruitful relationship" with "historical-critical exegesis," as the "framework within which to appreciate De La Salle's recourse to the Bible" (vi, 6, 84, 140) and hopes this "contemporary hermeneutical perspective may provide a ... modest contribution to our appreciation of the Founder" (7, 66-68). A "text can be *explained* by historical-critical exegesis, but that does not, in Luz' view, guarantee that it is *understood*" (69). "Historical-critical exegesis has a value as a *control* in the discernment of new meanings, such that a newly discerned 'significance' in a text must in some degree be related to and consistent with its original 'meaning,' its 'literal sense'" (82).

For Luz, understanding the text is restoring it back to life (97); and so this approach to biblical interpretation is presented as one of actualizing [updating and making current] and "of reflecting on the original meaning of a text and determining its significance in the present ... an interpretation valid for contemporary times" (4, 289).

Cantwell notes that it was De La Salle's "own education which enabled and encouraged him to express himself with constant reference to the Bible, interpreted for his Brother-teachers in a way that engaged them in fruitful reflection on its empowering role in their lives and work" (7). His "immersion in the Bible and the Church Fathers was not only academic; it was an essential component of his daily prayer" (19, 20). Furthermore, this "integrated spirituality," which combined education and prayer, inspired him along a path that included "the development of a way of actualizing the Bible for himself and others in such a way that the provision of schooling for poor children was seen as a ministry continuous with that of Jesus" (22, 103-104, 173).

Cantwell, using De La Salle's meditations #170 (Jerome) and #192 (Catherine of Alexandria), identifies nine "principles" (39-42) that reflect De La Salle's appreciation of the Bible as a means of communion with God and a living word to be actualized in the lives and ministry of his Brother-teachers" (vi, 25, 30, 34, 37). Cantwell notes that "it is quite likely that De La Salle was aware of and guided by Augustine's work on the interpretation of the Bible" (44-46); and in this and in his habit of frequently "citing the Church Fathers," De La Salle demonstrates "his

adherence to the injunction of the Council of Trent ‘to let no one dare interpret the Scriptures in a way contrary to the general agreement of the Fathers’” (107, 225, 272, 307).

The first Brother-teachers were urged by De La Salle “to read the Bible, listen to it read, practice what it preaches, and teach it to young people” (50, 103). “Here we see De La Salle’s habitual emphasis on biblical reflection leading to practice” (51, 96, 126, 173, 181, 272).

One of the characteristic ways in which De La Salle referenced biblical citations was that of “words being spoken by a person rather than as a text to be read.” He presents Jesus “as one who relates to contemporary educators through the biblical word” (104). De La Salle reinforces this perspective by frequently telling his “hearer/reader” that “the words of Scripture are to be heard as being addressed directly to ‘him.’” An example of this is when he writes, “Apply these words to yourselves and persuade yourselves that Jesus Christ is addressing them to you yourselves” (108, 273). “De La Salle is keenly aware not only of being affected by the biblical word, but that he and his Brother-teachers are part of its ongoing story [a “virtual lineage”]: they are ‘participating in the ministry of the holy apostles, and principal bishops and pastors of the Church’” (116, 128).

Cantwell suggests this section of Matthew’s Gospel [4:23-10:8] “as a potential paradigm for a contemporary understanding of [the Lasallian shared mission of] ‘human and Christian education’”; it “has the potential to affirm the work of contemporary educators” (vi, 121, 309-310, 311). The “interrelated themes” of kingdom, teaching, healing, presence, and salvation “are fundamental to a contemporary appreciation of the Lasallian ministry of education” (134).

In the fifth to eighth chapters of this thesis (139-308), Cantwell discusses “De La Salle’s engagement with the texts of this section of [Matthew 4:23-10:8] from the point of view of a ‘history of influence’ hermeneutic, but keeping in mind the potential for its interrelated themes for an enriched actualization in the present” (138, 273, 308, 310). He identifies six principles of Luz’ “history of influence” hermeneutic (141, 222) as the lens to guide this analysis; and he masterfully weaves references to quite a number of De La Salle’s writings, to the Fathers of the Church, and to the principal seventeenth-century French-language editions of the Bible available to De La Salle with his careful analysis of biblical texts. A backdrop to this analysis is Cantwell’s assertion of “De La Salle’s consciousness of being part of a vital heritage of biblical interpretation” (198, 309).

In the concluding chapter (308-317), Cantwell suggests “one direction in which further study might profitably continue [the] process” by which “a history of influence” hermeneutic might be used to “enrich our understanding of a ‘kingdom’ perspective [education as “a sign of the kingdom and a means of salvation”] on what it means to provide ‘young people, especially the poor, with a human and Christian education’” (311). As he observes, “If De La Salle’s own place within a history of influence is recognized, his Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu followers within a global network of educational establishments, as well as many others of different faiths or none, will be well placed to continue to actualize both the biblical texts themselves and his biblically-animated insights, within their own diverse educational and community contexts” (311).