

French Charity Schools in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries— with Special Reference to the Case of Amiens*

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This article examines the development of charity education in France over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It first describes the different kinds of charity schools that existed and the frameworks in which they functioned, and then tries to determine the purposes ascribed to charity education, the reactions of contemporaries to different kinds of charitable instruction, which social groups and subgroups were expected to attend charity schools and where possible, who in fact did. It is argued that two distinct kinds of charity schools existed, and that the very poorest were excluded from them.

L'auteur traite ici de l'évolution de l'enseignement charitable en France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles. Après avoir décrit les divers types d'écoles de charité qui existaient alors et les paramètres dans lesquels elles s'inscrivaient, il tente de déterminer les fins assignées à ce genre d'enseignement et rend compte des réactions des contemporains vis-à-vis des choix offerts. S'appuyant sur l'exemple d'Amiens, il montre quels groupes sociaux étaient censés fréquenter les écoles de charité et quels sont ceux qui, de fait, s'en prévalaient. Il conclut à l'existence de deux types d'écoles charitables, dont les plus démunis étaient exclus en pratique.

The subject of charity education cannot well be separated from the larger issues of poverty, social control and attitudes toward the poor, and so is necessarily complex. To the authorities of pre-industrial societies, both spiritual and secular, the handling of the poor posed delicate problems. For royal and municipal officials the overriding concern was to assure order. For the Church the task was to provide the minimum of religious and moral instruction that was regarded as indispensable for every Christian. Frequently the two sets of concerns converged. But in the struggle to moralize and socialize the poor the Church took the leading role, for under the Old Regime the State and its officials did not regard the instruc-

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tion of the poor as within its competence or as its responsibility, while the Church emphatically did.¹ During the seventeenth century especially, part of the spiritual vigour that informed the French Church expressed itself in the founding of orders and other institutions to serve the poor, and often to offer them a measure of education. During the eighteenth century many of these orders continued to grow and develop, and in some cases to attract an extensive popular following.

In this article I intend to examine the development of the charity schools of Amiens over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, supplementing the account with information from other parts of the country where this serves to throw more light on the questions under investigation. I will first describe the kinds of charity schools that existed and the frameworks in which they functioned, and then try to determine the purposes ascribed to charity education, the reactions of contemporaries, rich and poor, to different kinds of charitable instruction, which social groups and subgroups were expected to frequent charity schools, and where possible, who in fact attended them. I will argue that in the towns—and charity education under the Old Regime was virtually an urban monopoly—the very poorest were written off and probably never expected to attend charity school classes at all and that these classes tended to serve not those whose need for charity was greatest, but those best placed to take advantage of them. I will further try to show that for contemporaries this was as it should have been.

Any large town in France under the Old Regime could reasonably be expected to have had a variety of schools and classes offering some kind of primary education. Broadly speaking they were of two main kinds: schools requiring fees and charity schools, and of both there were a number of variations.

Among schools charging fees we may include *petites écoles*, the classes of master scribes, small-scale boarding-schools known as *pensions*, and classes, often scarcely distinguishable from tutoring sessions, held by clerics. The *petite école* was the basic kind of primary school. It normally consisted of a single master, or perhaps a master and his wife, who would teach from twenty to one hundred pupils the rudiments of religion and the basic skills of literacy for a monthly fee, known as *écolage*. This fee was based not on attendance, but on the subjects the student was learning, writing costing more than reading, and arithmetic, where it was taught, more than writing. The scribes taught primarily the reading of abstruse scripts, a quality of writing suited to a copyist, and often weights and measures and commercial arithmetic. The *pensions* were boarding-schools which frequently taught Latin and often boasted advanced or innovative curricula far beyond what a *petite école* might hope to offer. Naturally *pensions* were restricted to those who could meet their substantial fees. It was common, too, for priests to tutor children by the

1. See the Declarations of 13 December 1698 and 14 May 1724 in François-André ISAMBERT et al., *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises depuis l'an 420 jusqu'à la Révolution de 1789*, 29 vols. (Paris, 1821-33), 20: 313-19, and 21: 261-70.

hour, an arrangement that provided a higher level of instruction than *petites écoles*, but was less costly than sending a child to a *pension*. While the teachers of these various schools and classes in some cases taught similar, in others quite different subjects, they all depended for their livelihoods on the fees they received for the instruction they offered although master scribes and priests who had other sources of income were less dependent on their students' fees than were the masters of *petites écoles* and *pensions*.²

Of charity schools there were three main kinds. The first includes schools established within the framework of existing institutions such as orphanages or municipal poorhouses, the *hôpitaux généraux*. Emphasis in such institutions was normally on discipline, religion and work, which was often intended to contribute to the maintenance of the inmates and which might or might not include training in a simple trade.³ A second kind was normally founded and directed by parish priests for their poorer parishioners. Philippe Ariès sees in this movement a separation of poor and rich who had formerly shared the same classrooms and teachers, and a manifestation of the spirit of order that demanded the separation of the elements of society into distinct categories, both by age and social standing.⁴ The greater number of these parish charity schools seem to have been founded in the seventeenth century, although there are examples

2. For general studies of primary education under the Old Regime see the relevant sections of the fine recent synthesis of R. CHARTIER, M.-M. COMPÈRE and D. JULIA, *L'Éducation en France du XVII^e au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: SÉDES, 1976); Philippe ARIÈS' older but still valuable *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. R. BALDICK (New York: Vintage, 1962); the first part of M. GONTARD's admirable *L'Enseignement primaire en France de la Révolution à la loi Guizot (1789-1833)* (Paris: Belles-Lettres, 1959); the introductory section of F. PONTEIL, *Histoire de l'enseignement en France: les grandes étapes, 1789-1964* (Paris: Sirey, 1966); M. BLANC, *Essai sur l'enseignement primaire avant 1789* (Forcalquier, 1954); G. CHIANÉA, "L'Enseignement primaire à Grenoble sous la Révolution", *Cahiers d'histoire*, XVII (1972): 121-60; and CHISICK, *L'Éducation élémentaire*. Among older works still well worth consulting are Albert BÉBEAU, *L'Instruction primaire dans les campagnes avant 1789* (Troyes: Dufour-Bouquot, 1875); Anatole de CHARMASSE, *État de l'instruction primaire dans l'ancien diocèse d'Autun pendant les XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Paris and Autun: Champion, 1878); and M. l'abbé Ernest ALLAIN, *L'Instruction primaire en France avant la Révolution* (Paris: Société bibliographique, 1881). On *petites écoles*, in addition to the relevant sections of the works cited above, one may consult Alix de ROHAN CHABOT, "Les écoles de campagne en Lorraine au XVIII^e siècle" (Thèse de troisième cycle, Université de Paris, 1967); Mireille LAGET, "Petites écoles en Languedoc au XVIII^e siècle", *Annales ESC*, XXVI, no. 6 (1971): 1398-418; and Harvey CHISICK, "School Attendance, Literacy and Acculturation: *Petites écoles* and Popular Education in Eighteenth-Century France", *Europa*, III (Spring-Summer 1980): 185-220. On *pensions* see Philippe MARCHAND, "Un modèle éducatif original à la veille de la Révolution: les maisons d'éducation particulières", *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* (hereafter *RHMC*), XXII (October-December 1975): 549-67, and CHISICK, *L'Éducation élémentaire*, pp. 22-27.

3. See for example C. C. FAIRCHILD, *Poverty and Charity in Aix-en-Provence, 1640-1789* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 90-91. Yves POUTET has pointed out that often classes in *hôpitaux* were less concerned with educating children of the poor than with simply occupying them so as to prevent idleness and to keep them off the streets. "L'Enseignement des pauvres dans la France du XVIII^e siècle", *XVIII^e siècle*, nos 90-91 (1971): 91.

4. ARIÈS, *Centuries of Childhood*, pp. 301 and 309-14.

both earlier and later. An outstanding success for this kind of school was achieved between 1667 and 1689 in Lyon, where a cleric, Charles D emia, founded a network of sixteen parish charity schools controlled by a central Bureau des  coles.⁵ The third kind of charity school, that was administered by teaching orders, had its roots in the religious revival of the seventeenth century, but enjoyed its greatest success in the eighteenth.⁶ The most successful of the teaching orders devoted to the primary education of the working classes was the community of the Fr eres des  coles chr etiennes, who in outlook were close to the Jesuits. Founded in 1684 by Saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, the son of a wealthy merchant family of Reims who gave up his private fortune to found schools for the poor, La Salle's Fr eres had 35,000 students by the end of the eighteenth century.⁷ More localized, but hardly less successful, were the Jansenist Fr eres Tabourin who taught in Paris, primarily in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and had thirty-two schools, sixty teachers and some six to seven thousand students before the outbreak of the Revolution.⁸ There were, moreover, a large number of women's orders devoted to the instruction of the poor. Indeed, because of the influence of women in the capacity of nurses and servants, those engaged in founding charity schools tended to give precedence to classes for girls, so that charitable institutions offering free education to girls initially outnumbered those for boys.⁹

Before turning to Amiens, it is worthwhile to make a number of points about these various kinds of schools that are valid for most of France under the Old Regime and not just for Picardy. First and perhaps most fundamental, the distinctions between them were not sharply drawn. There was virtually no difference between the curricula of *petites  coles* and charity schools, for both taught the three R's and religion, and the schools of master scribes of course taught the same subjects, although usually without religious instruction. It follows, then, that there would inevitably be overlap among them, and conflict too. In the Statutes and Regulations of 1357 issued by the Cantor of Notre-Dame for the *petites  coles* of Paris, six of twenty-two items were intended to regulate competi-

5. CHARTIER, COMP ERE and JULIA, *L' ducation en France*, pp. 60-61.

6. There were of course many orders devoted to secondary or *coll ge* education. The best known are the Jesuits, the Oratorians and the Benedictines. The most important of these orders in the field of secondary education, the Jesuits, turned to teaching under the impetus of the Counter-Reformation and saw in their pedagogical functions a means of winning the minds and hearts of the  lites of France, and of assuring suitable recruits for their order. On this subject see  mile DURKHEIM, *L' volution p dagogique en France* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1969), and Georges SNYDERS, *La P dagogie en France aux XVIII^e et XVIII^e si cles* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965).

7. CHARTIER, COMP ERE and JULIA, *L' ducation en France*, p. 80. Map no. 8, p. 79, conveniently shows the geographical distribution of the Fr eres' schools in 1789. The basic work on the Fr eres is Georges RIGAULT, *Histoire g n rale de l'Institut des Fr eres des  coles Chr etiennes*, 9 vols (Paris: Plon, 1937-53).

8. Augustin GAZIER, " coles de charit  du faubourg Saint-Antoine", *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* (January-July 1906): 317, and Alfred REBELLIAU, "Un Enseignement primaire jans niste de 1711-1887", *Revue p dagogique*, XLIX (July-December 1906): 212-25.

9. POUTET, "L'Enseignement des pauvres", p. 88.

tion among teachers and schools.¹⁰ One would reasonably expect that when charity schools came into existence competition would increase and jurisdiction over the various kinds of schools become more contentious. In Amiens, as in most of France, the *écolâtre*, the canon of the cathedral chapter whose function it was to supervise primary education, initially enjoyed unchallenged authority over all primary schools in his jurisdiction. During the seventeenth century, however, the parish charity schools succeeded in asserting their independence from the *écolâtre*, while during the eighteenth century litigation among the various kinds of fee-charging and charity schools was common.¹¹

A second point to note about the charity schools of the Old Regime is that their purpose was constant. At times the emphasis fell on religious instruction, while at others the appeal was directly to social utility. But in general it is fair to say that one objective contained the other, so that religious instruction and social control remained the two poles around which most of the theory and practice of charity education revolved. In proposing to establish a charity school in his parish, Jacques Avisse, the parish priest of Saint-Jacques of Amiens, noted that the poor remained "errans et vagabons dans les rues, sans discipline", and in complete ignorance of the most basic truths of religion—a situation his school was intended to remedy.¹² The regulations of the parish charity school of Saint-Gervais in Paris stated: "La principale fin des Écoles de Charité, c'est de bien instruire les enfants des veritez de la Religion, & de leur inspirer l'amour de la piété..."¹³ Similarly, the regulations of the charity school of the parish of Saint-Eustache in Paris noted that the goal of the school was to provide "une éducation honnête & chétienne, qui remédie aux premières atteintes du mal, qui en prévient les effets, & qui en travaillant sur des sujets encore tendres & susceptibles de bonnes impressions, leur donne la forme & le pli qu'ils doivent avoir par rapport à Dieu, à eux-mêmes, au prochain, à l'Eglise, à l'Etat."¹⁴ More pointedly the author of the *Essai d'une école chrétienne*, a widely used manual of popular education of the period, observed:

10. Archives municipales d'Amiens (hereafter AM Amiens), GG 748¹, "Anciens status, Ordonnances et Règlements des Petites Ecoles de Grammaire, Lecture et Ecriture Escrit en Francois l'an 1357", 6 May 1672.

11. For the important case of the master scribes and masters of *petites écoles* of Paris against Jean-Baptiste de la Salle in 1704-05, see RIGAULT, *Histoire générale*, I, 230-41. On the litigation in Amiens later in the century see below.

12. AM Amiens, GG 758, *Factum Pour Maître Jacques Avisse, Prêtre Curé de la Paroisse de Saint Jacques de la Ville d'Amiens, Défendeur, & les Curés de Ladite Ville, intervenans. CONTRE Maître Jean Baptiste Picard, Prêtre Docteur en Théologie & Escolâtre, Demandeur* (n.p., n.d.), p. 1 (hereafter *Factum*). Original spelling and punctuation have been preserved in passages cited in French from printed sources. Adjustments have been made in manuscript sources.

13. *Règlement pour les Écoles de Charité de la Paroisse de Saint Gervais* (Paris, 1709), p. 60. (Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, 915 915).

14. *Règlements généraux de la Compagnie de Charité de la Paroisse de Saint-Eustache à Paris Pour le soulagement & assistance des Pauvres Honteux Malades, & pour l'instruction des Pauvres Enfants de l'un & de l'autre sexe* (Paris, 1723), p. 4. (Bibliothèque Mazarine [hereafter Bibl. Maz.], 43, 762.)

Il n'y a rien que de grand dans tout ce qui regarde les Ecoles Chrétiennes: ce qu'elles sont en elles-mêmes, les avantages qui s'y rencontrent, le besoin que l'Eglise et l'Etat en ont, sont des choses si visibles & si connues de tout le monde, qu'il seroit inutile de s'arrêter à exposer leur excellence, leur utilité, & leur nécessité.¹⁵

Elsewhere the same author stops to describe their excellence, utility and necessity in the following terms:

En assujettissant les enfans aux reglemens d'une Ecole, ils préparoient leurs cœurs à obéir à la loi de Dieu & à ceux qui sont revêtus de son autorité. Des hommes qui avoient portés le joug dès leurs plus tendres années se soumettoient sans peine aux ordres des Puissances légitimes: & l'Eglise & l'Etat se trouvoient des Sujets qui se rendoient sans résistance à tout ce qu'on leur commandoit parce qu'ils avoient appris de bonne heure le respect & la déférence ce qui est due aux Superieurs.¹⁶

Thus, charity schools were intended to teach the poor both the rudiments of their religion and obedience to the constituted authorities, and indeed were to do both at the same time. As the historian of the charity schools of Paris observed, "la moralisation du peuple ne se distingue pas de la propagande religieuse".¹⁷ In the struggle to moralize and to socialize the poor, the Church understandably took the leading role, the State acceding in this and endorsing it.

The third preliminary point I wish to make concerns the clients of charity schools. They were, presumably, the poor. But this characterization immediately raises two problems. First, how is one to determine the threshold of poverty and to distinguish those who could be regarded as poor from those who could not? Secondly, the term "the poor" is too vague to be of much use in describing the problem of poverty under the Old Regime. Behind this simple term there existed a great diversity, as revealed by the vocabulary of poverty at the time: *pauvres*, to be sure, but also *pauvres valides et invalides*, *mauvais pauvres*, *pauvres honteux*, *indigents*, *nécessiteux*, *misérables*, *gueux*, *gens sans aveu*, *mendiants*, *vagabonds*, *gagne-deniers*, *petit peuple*, *canaille* and more.¹⁸ There was a whole gamut of degrees of poverty, a range of modes of suffering it, a broad spectrum of attitudes toward it. Were the charity schools open to

15. *Essai d'une école chrétienne ou manière d'instruire & d'élever chrétiennement les Enfants dans les Ecoles* (Paris, 1724), p. 2.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

17. Marcel FOSSEYEU, *Les Écoles de charité à Paris sous l'ancien régime et dans la première partie du XIX^e siècle* (Nogent-le-Rotrou: Daupeley-Gouverneur, 1912), p. 29. For a contemporary illustration of this point see Denis DIDEROT, "Les Deux amis de Bourbonne", in *Oeuvres Romanesques*, ed.: Henri BÉNAC (Paris: Garnier, 1962), p. 789.

18. On the highly variegated vocabulary of poverty under the Old Regime, see Jeffrey KAPLOW, *The Names of Kings: The Parisian Laboring Poor in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), chap. 2; Daniel ROCHE, *Le Peuple de Paris* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1981), chap. 2; OLWEN HUFTON, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), chap. 1; J. DEPAUW, "Pauvres, pauvres mendiants, mendiants valides ou vagabonds? Les Hésitations de la législation royale", *RHMC*, XXI (July-September 1974): 401-18; and Harvey CHISICK, *The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment: Attitudes toward the Education of the Lower Classes in Eighteenth Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), chaps 1 and 5.

all the poor? Were attempts made by those who were only marginally poor, or who might best have been classed outside this category, to avail themselves of charity education? As we will see in what follows, who could rightfully attend charity classes was a matter of contention among the competing primary schools of the Old Regime, and an integral part of the larger issues of how charity was conceived and of attitudes toward the poor.

Amiens, the capital of Picardy, had a population of between 30,000 to 35,000 in the seventeenth century. By the end of the following century the figure had grown to close to 40,000.¹⁹ The town contained representatives of all major trades and professions, but was above all a centre of textile production. Indeed, it was the chief producer of woollen cloth in France throughout the Old Regime.²⁰ The dominant classes of the town were formed by wealthy merchants, but also by a high proportion of administrative legal officials and office holders.²¹ However, there is no contradiction here, for it was common in Amiens, as elsewhere in France, the great commercial ports perhaps excepted, for the commercial and manufacturing bourgeoisie to seek social advancement by abandoning business to invest in office and land.²² There was also a significant clerical presence of between 800 to 1,000 souls, or about 2 percent of the total population.²³ Dependent workers were of course numerous. According to a detailed and perceptive recent study of poverty in Amiens in the last decades of the Old Regime, the poor accounted for between a quarter and a third of the total population, depending on the price of grain and availability of work.²⁴ Large though this proportion of the poor is, it is based on a narrow definition of poverty and thus may underestimate the true extent of indigence in Amiens. Charles Engrand makes it clear in his discussion of his sources that the poor included in the censuses and reports he used were those who admitted that they needed assistance. It does not take into account those who, because of the social stigma attached to doing so, refused to ask for assistance. Nor does it include the residents of poor-houses (*hospitaux*), those who failed to maintain a fixed residence or the large numbers who, for lack of resources, lived continuously on the threshold of indigence and by the merest accident might be thrust over it. The potential clientele of charity schools, then, extended to at least one quarter and perhaps a half or even more of the population.

19. On the population of Amiens in the eighteenth century see CHISICK, *L'Éducation élémentaire*, p. 6, n. 2 and Table 2; and Charles ENGRAND, "Paupérisme et condition ouvrière dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle: l'exemple amiénois", *RHMC*, XXIX (July-September 1982): 381-82.

20. Pierre GOUBERT, *L'Ancien Régime*, vol. 1: *La Société* (Paris: Colin, 1969), p. 73.

21. Pierre DEYON, *Amiens, capitale provinciale. Étude sur la société urbaine au 17^e siècle* (Paris and La Haye: Mouton, 1967), pp. 244-45.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 270-77.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 363-65.

24. ENGRAND, "Paupérisme et condition ouvrière", pp. 282-85.

I — THE FOUNDATION OF CHARITY SCHOOLS IN AMIENS

We find in Amiens the three main kinds of charity schools described above, but that each kind flourished at a different time, and that each found support in a different part of the community (see Appendix). The earliest charity schools of which we have evidence are those administered by existing charitable institutions. The classes of the Bureau des pauvres and the Orphanage, both municipal institutions, date from the 1620s. In 1676 a similar class was established in the Hôpital Général. But the 1670s are a turning point in the development of charity education in Amiens. During that decade the parish clergy took the initiative in founding charity classes, and in doing so came into conflict with the *écolâtre* of the town. The parish charity school of Saint-Rémy was apparently founded without opposition from the *écolâtre*, but that in Saint-Jacques resulted in a court case that denied the *écolâtre* jurisdiction over these classes.²⁵ A second charity school of the same type was founded for the parish of Saint-Jacques in 1690 on a substantial bequest of two pious laymen, the Delacourt brothers.

If during the seventeenth century secular municipal institutions and parish clergy took the lead in establishing charity schools, during the following century the charity school movement in Amiens was completely dominated by a number of teaching orders. Of the fifteen charity-school classes established in the capital of Picardy after 1700, four were taught by the Sœurs du Saint-Enfant-Jésus of the Père Barré of Rouen²⁶ and eight by the Frères des Écoles chrétiennes of Saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle. The rest were parish charity schools of the kind established in Saint-Jacques.

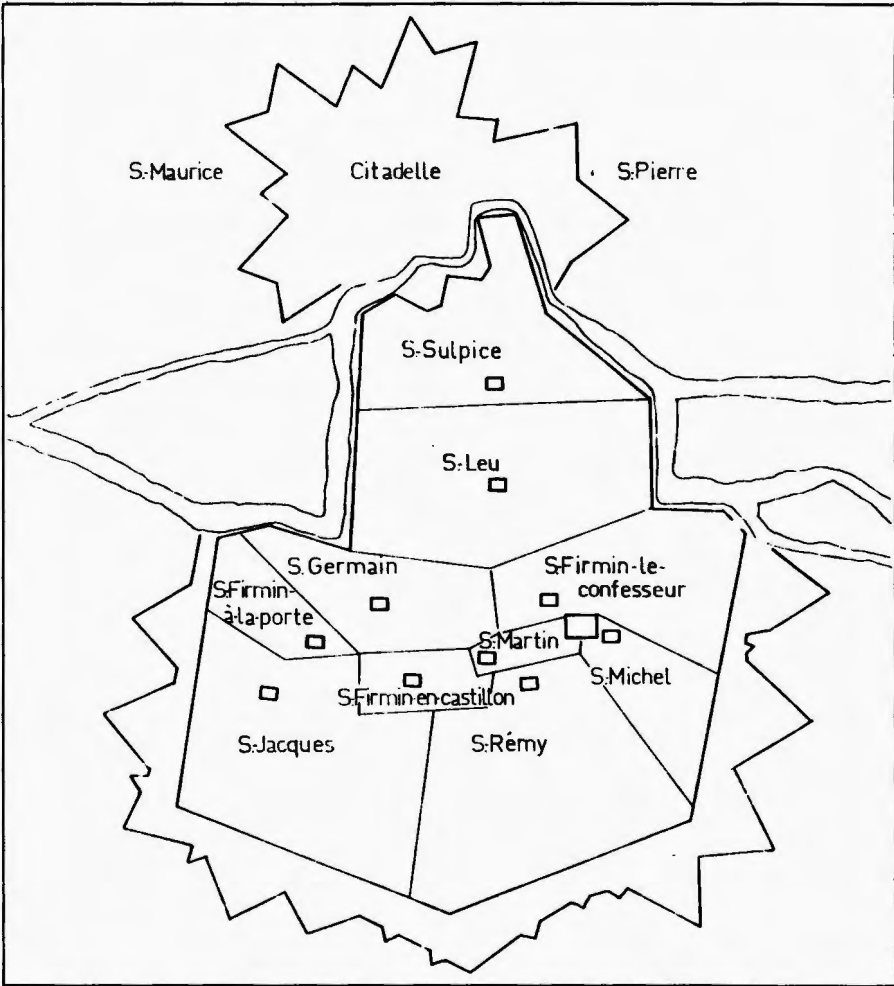
The Frères des Écoles chrétiennes were undoubtedly the most dynamic force in popular education in eighteenth-century Amiens. Although they were not established in the town until 1759, and then were represented by only three brothers and two classes, thirty years later there were eight brothers who taught between five and six hundred students. The Frères were established so late in Amiens largely because of the longevity of their earliest benefactor, J.-B. Pingré, who was also the most energetic *écolâtre* of the town during the eighteenth century. In his will of February 1744, Pingré left a legacy of almost 20,000 *livres*, producing a *rente* of 762 *livres* to support three Frères of La Salle's order. But he did not die, and the legacy did not take effect, until 1759.²⁷ In the interim A.-A. Vilmain, a canon of the cathedral, had acquired a house in which the Frères could live and teach. Vilmain's wish that he be seconded by pious persons who had informed him that they had the same intentions was not

25. AM Amiens, GG 758.

26. Moreau's 1713 foundation was absorbed by his later one so that Amiens had four, not seven, of Barré's Sœurs. Their annual pension was increased to 300 *livres* through further donations.

27. AM Amiens, GG 760.

Figure 1 The Parishes of Amiens in the Eighteenth Century



Source: *Plan de la Ville et Citadelle d'Amiens* by de Fer (Paris, 1716). The limits of the parishes are not indicated in the original. Drawn by M.-M. Compère.

disappointed.²⁸ The three Frères were joined by a fourth in 1762 when the will of Pierre de Châteauneuf, a *trésorier extraordinaire des guerres*, was executed. Observing that the classes already established were inadequate and referring to the large number of children of the poor and of artisans who cannot be admitted to them, de Châteauneuf provided an annuity of 518 *livres* for the fourth Frère.²⁹ A fifth Frère was brought to Amiens in 1773 when an army officer, René Tartasse de Romainville, and his wife constituted an annuity of 300 *livres* for the purpose. This foundation was made for the benefit of the parishes of Saint-Leu and Saint-Sulpice only. The vestry boards of these two parishes were to supply and furnish the schoolhouse in the parish of Saint-Leu, and only children from that parish and from Saint-Sulpice could be admitted to it.³⁰ Two years later P.-A. de l'Estocq, a canon of the cathedral, and P.-J. Pingré de Fieffes, the *écolâtre*, together contributed a *rente* of 300 *livres* and provided a further 500 in expenses for a sixth Frère.³¹ In 1788 Mgr Machault, the Bishop of Amiens, contributed an annuity of 600 *livres* to bring two more of La Salle's disciples to the town. This foundation was somewhat complicated as it incorporated the house and annuities left by the Delacourts. The school was to be located in the parish of Saint-Jacques, but was also to admit children from Saint-Germain and Saint-Firmin-à-la-Porte.³² It thus appears that by the end of 1788 there were eight members of La Salle's order in Amiens, three of them teaching in various parishes, and four, though possibly only three, teaching at their residence.³³

Although the spread of the Frères in Amiens is impressive, and although they seem to have enjoyed wide support, they do not appear to have satisfied the need for free education for the poor completely. The records of the *écolâtre* incidentally reveal that a parish charity school existed in Saint-Germain in 1761,³⁴ while in 1788 the parish priest of Saint-Michel, A.-V. Duminy, acquired a house with the intention of using it as a charity school for boys. In observing that lack of education may cause children to become bad citizens, Duminy shows that if the rhetoric used to describe popular education or the lack of it had changed, basic concerns about the issue had not.³⁵

To each of these kinds of charity schools correspond a different set of founders and administrators. The classes in the Hôpital were, as Avisse

28. AM Amiens, GG 759, 15 March 1748.

29. AM Amiens, GG 761. This document refers to the founding of a fourth class. However, as one brother was normally engaged in domestic duties, four brothers in the town would have allowed for three, and not four, classes.

30. AM Amiens, GG 761.

31. AM Amiens, GG 763.

32. AM Amiens, GG 766.

33. There would have been four classes in the central school only if one brother were engaged in domestic and menial duties, but only three if the superior did not teach. In principle the superior or director did not teach when a town had six or more classes. AM Amiens, GG 757, *Prospectus d'un établissement des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes* (n.p., 1783) (hereafter *Prospectus*).

34. AM Amiens, GG 753.

35. AM Amiens, GG 767.

forcefully observed in his *Factum*, under the jurisdiction of "de simples Particuliers Laïcs".³⁶ Both the parish charity schools and those run by the teaching orders were for the most part financed, founded and staffed by clerics—but by clerics of different sorts. With the exception of the Delacourt brothers in 1689, all the parish schools were founded by parish clergy who in the administration of these schools found it desirable to assert their independence from the *écolâtre*. By contrast, the teaching orders were introduced into Amiens and supported by all three *écolâtres* who held the office over the century. Indeed, it would appear that the *écolâtres* intentionally used the orders to reassert their control of charity education, for the acts establishing the orders in the town stipulate that they are to come under the authority of the *écolâtre*.³⁷ The four sisters of Barré's order and four of the Frères des Écoles chrétiennes were founded by *écolâtres*. The house of the Frères in Amiens was donated by a canon of the cathedral, and a vicar general collaborated with an *écolâtre* to endow another Frère, while a bishop provided for the foundation of two more. The remaining two Frères were brought to Amiens through the substantial legacies of two laymen. Thus the parish charity schools drew support from one level of the clergy, the schools of the teaching orders from another. And while both benefitted from generous lay donations, in both cases clerics provided most funds and initiative.

Although information on the financing of the institutional and parish schools is sketchy, in the case of the Frères we are more fortunate. For each foundation on behalf of the Frères of Amiens made between 1759 and the outbreak of the Revolution, we have either the figure for the total donation or the annuity it produced, and in most cases both. By 1789 some 62,000 *livres* and a house had been donated directly to the Frères. About 42,000 *livres* of this money had come from clerics, and the remainder from laymen. In contrast to Reims, where a large number of lay donors provided only a small proportion of funds for the Frères, in Amiens a few laymen supplied almost a third of the total endowment.³⁸ Indeed, if we include the foundation of the Delacourts for the parish of Saint-Jacques which was converted to the use of the Frères by the bishop in 1788, laymen had provided 26,000 of 68,000 *livres*, or about forty percent of the funds at the disposal of La Salle's order in Amiens.³⁹

These 68,000 *livres*, producing an annuity of 2,780 *livres*, had to support eight members of the order. To be sure, these bequests were untaxed, and the Frères were accommodated in houses which had been donated to them; but they were still left with only 335 *livres* a year each

36. *Factum*, p. 9.

37. J.-B. Pingré in establishing the Frères in Amiens stipulated, "... les dits frères seront toujours soumis à la juridiction des seigneurs Evêques, et des sieurs Écolâtres d'Amiens ..." AM Amiens, GG 760.

38. CHARTIER, COMPÈRE and JULIA, *L'Éducation en France*, p. 64.

39. It is perhaps worth noting here that the abbé Diderot, brother of the encyclopaedist, provided 13,000 *livres* to help establish La Salle's Frères in Langres, and that in doing so it is likely that he did more to further popular education than his illustrious brother. RIGAULT, *Histoire générale*, II: 515; and Daniel MORNET, *Les Origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française* (Paris: Colin, 1967), p. 421.

for food, heating and other necessities. In 1783 a *Prospectus* printed by the Frères to provide general information about their order put the minimal *pension alimentaire* at 400-500 *livres* for each Frère, according to the towns and the price of food.⁴⁰ The foundations for the Frères were not deficient in theory only. In 1788 Frère Chérubin, the Director of the order in Amiens, wrote to the municipal council explaining that "ils [les Frères] ont un revenu alimentaire si modique, que malgré vos bienfaits, cinq de leurs confrères ont été obligés depuis peu de jours, pour rétablir leur santé ruinée, de passer dans d'autres maisons à défaut de nourriture proportionnée aux fatigues de leur état".⁴¹ If it seems that the enthusiasm of the Amiénois for the Frères of La Salle's order exceeded their generosity toward them, it should be remembered that the rapid rise in prices during the second half of the eighteenth century, and especially after 1770, undercut the value of the foundations. Notwithstanding, the Frères continued to teach in Amiens, and received both the sympathy and the material support of the townsmen.

II — THE FRÈRES: PUBLIC OPINION AND PROFESSIONAL RIVALRIES

In 1787 Jacques Sellier, an architect, a member of the Academy of Amiens and the master of the École des Arts of the town, referred to the numerous and useful schools of the Frères des Écoles chrétiennes.⁴² That the schools of the Frères were numerous, none could deny. Whether they were useful or not was a matter of heated debate among contemporaries.

A forceful and well-known criticism of the Frères is found in an exchange of letters between the Breton magistrate La Chalotais and Voltaire. La Chalotais condemned La Salle's order for teaching the skills of literacy to people who should have been trained only in their trades, thus making them dissatisfied with their lot. Voltaire replied that he agreed heartily and that peasants did not need to know to read or write.⁴³ In a lengthy memoir on popular instruction Granet, a legal officer of the *sénéchaussée* of Toulon, cited La Chalotais' views on the Frères approvingly, even expanding on them.⁴⁴ Similarly Langourla, a contemporary of La Chalotais, said disapprovingly of the Frères that "ces drôles apprenaient au peuple à manier la plume, outil si dangereux dans certaines mains",⁴⁵ and in Provence a lawyer named Mezard complained that the Frères "enlèvent une infinité de cultivateurs . . . Ils forment une légion de

40. *Prospectus*.

41. AM Amiens, GG 757, 17 September 1778.

42. Archives départementales de la Somme (hereafter AD Somme), C 2074⁷, Jacques Sellier, "Lettre adressée à Mgr l'évêque d'Amiens sur l'éducation de la jeunesse de tous états".

43. The precise quotations can be found in GONTARD, *L'Enseignement primaire*, pp. 54-55, and in almost any other study of popular education during the period.

44. CHISICK, *Limits of Reform*, pp. 109-10.

45. RIGAULT, *Histoire générale*, II: 418-19.

bas artisans qui ne pourront gagner leur vie".⁴⁶ For the well-off citizens of Angers, La Salle's community was dangerous and useless.⁴⁷ Such reservations about and hostility toward popular education were common among the wealthier and more cultivated levels of society, while support for instructing the people tended to come from the clergy.⁴⁸

Contemporary criticisms of the Frères frequently found practical application. In 1762 in Brest the Intendant refused to permit an annual payment of 400 *livres* for the establishment of two Frères lest they interfere with the supply of sailors for the port, and eleven years later his successor made the same decision for the same reason.⁴⁹ In 1777 the Intendant of Provence forced the closure of the school of the Frères in Cannes, while in 1780 the Intendant of Dauphiné at first refused to allow the establishment of a third frère in Montélimar, but then reversed his decision.⁵⁰ In its deliberation of 16 June 1784, the municipal council of Apt observed that charity schools tended to drain manpower from agriculture and decided to suppress the school of the Frères in the town.⁵¹

The attitude of the municipal council of Amiens toward La Salle's order was very different from those of the administrative and municipal authorities just cited. The mayor and aldermen of Amiens stated that in their view the Frères des Écoles chrétiennes rendered essential services to the lower classes (*peuple*) of the town in teaching the children to read and write without charge.⁵² Moreover, the Council showed its appreciation to the Frères by making them substantial grants on at least two occasions.⁵³ It is perhaps worth noting here too that the Frères were greatly appreciated by those who attended their schools, for such was not always the case with charity schools. This is a point to which we will return later. At present the difference in attitude between the authorities who condemned the Frères and those who supported them—of which the municipal council of Amiens is only one example—calls for explanation.

There is, first, a distinction to be made between town and country, for many of the criticisms of popular education referred specifically to peasants. In the countryside the ignorance of the labouring population may have been undesirable from the point of view of religion, but it was scarcely a social threat. It was precisely this threat to order and the potential danger of leaving children to their own devices and without discipline that was everywhere foremost among the reasons advanced for founding charity schools in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centu-

46. *Ibid.*, p. 429.

47. PONTEIL, *Histoire de l'enseignement*, p. 15.

48. RIGAULT, *Histoire générale*, II: 398-432; CHARTIER, COMPÈRE and JULIA, *L'Éducation en France*, pp. 38-39; CHISICK, *Limits of Reform*, chaps 2 and 3.

49. RIGAULT, *Histoire générale*, II: 429.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 430.

51. BLANC, *Essai sur l'enseignement primaire*, p. 64.

52. AM Amiens, GG 757, 12 April 1787.

53. The first grant was for 400 *livres*, the second for 600. AM Amiens, GG 757, 12 April and 28 June 1787.

ries.⁵⁴ Seen as an instrument of social control, education for the labouring population of the towns was regarded as desirable by the comfortable burghers who made up the municipal council.

Secondly, there is a distinction to be made between the kinds of towns considered here. Amiens, as noted above, was a great commercial and manufacturing centre. The same cannot be said of Angers, Apt, Cannes or Montélimar.⁵⁵ The ability to read, write and do basic arithmetic was obviously necessary to the skilled artisans, or workers, upon whom the success of the textile and other trades of Amiens depended. The same cannot be said of porters in market towns or the working populations of towns that remained ecclesiastical or administrative centres. Though it may be only coincidence, the instances of opposition to the Frères and popular education cited here almost all came from the south of France, that portion of the country below the Saint-Malo-Geneva line which traditionally had significantly lower literacy rates than the north.⁵⁶ Here the attempt to extend formal instruction may have appeared more innovative, and hence met with more opposition. Finally, a small but important point in determining the attitude of the Municipal Council of Amiens towards the Frères' schools in the town was that the council had effective control of admissions to their classes, and thus a direct interest in them.

Although the Frères were appreciated by the working population of Amiens and favoured by many clerics and the municipal magistrates, they aroused the hostility of masters of *petites écoles* and scribes. These other teachers and writing masters felt themselves to be unfairly threatened by the Frères and in Amiens, as elsewhere, brought lawsuits against them. The issue was whom the Frères had the right to teach. If they received only the poor, who in any case could not have afforded to attend schools requiring fees, there would have been no conflict. However, the clientele of the Frères was a matter of intense debate, the schoolmasters and scribes maintaining that the Ignorantins (as the Frères were also called) could receive only the indigent in their schools, the Frères arguing that they were not so restricted. Formally, the debate centred on the question of whether the order was established to teach the children of the poor and artisans or only of the poor.

54. We have seen that Avisse was troubled by the prospect of poor children growing up without discipline. The constitution of La Salle's order spoke in terms of remedying the "disorder" among the poor. See AM Amiens, GG 757, "Mémoire sur l'établissement des frères des Écoles chrétiennes en la Ville d'Amiens", 1766, p. 1 (hereafter "Mémoire sur l'établissement"). Charles Déma, in establishing a charity school system in Lyon, expressed similar concerns (CHARTIER, COMPÈRE and JULIA, *L'Éducation en France*, p. 82).

55. The instances of Brest and Toulon suggest, however, that centres of maritime commerce were often hostile to popular education.

56. The seminal article here is that of Michel FLEURY and Pierre VALMARY, "Les Progrès de l'instruction élémentaire de Louis XIV à Napoléon III d'après l'enquête de Louis Maggiolo", *Population*, XII (January-March 1957): 71-92. The most comprehensive recent treatment is François FURET, Jacques OZOUF et al., *Lire et écrire: l'alphabétisation des Français de Calvin à Jules Ferry*, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977).

It should be said in defence of the schoolmasters and scribes that they were not simply exhibiting the litigious spirit typical of the corporations of the time, but felt themselves genuinely threatened by the Frères. On the whole the schoolmasters of Amiens paid only the minimal imposition for the *capitation*, and were among the town's low income earners. Their position moreover was precarious, for they lived primarily from their *écolage*. They may have needed to lose only 10 or 15 per cent of their students to render a bad situation impossible. Thus it was not by emptying their schools, but by siphoning off those least able to pay—but who nevertheless did or might pay—that the Frères threatened the other elementary pedagogues of the town. Schoolmasters and scribes were also faced with the prospect of seeing children admitted to charity schools during a bad year or a period of misfortune for the family, and having been admitted, remain once the situation improved. Little wonder, then, that they sought to control access to the schools of the Frères.

To judge by formal legal criteria, it would seem that the Frères were justified in maintaining that they were not restricted to receiving only the indigent into their schools. The Letters Patent of 28 February 1724, which granted the order official status, stated that their purpose was "l'instruction de la jeunesse . . . [du] Royaume surtout des artisans et des pauvres".⁵⁷ The constitution of the order similarly asserts that its schools are open to "les Artisans et les pauvres".⁵⁸ Moreover, it enjoins the Frères to show "une égale affection pour tous leurs Écoliers, plus même pour les pauvres que pour les riches", from which one might reasonably conclude that they were originally intended to have well-off as well as poor students.⁵⁹ Further, the *Conduite des écoles chrétiennes*, the manual composed by La Salle for the Frères, directs that students who have more bread than they want for their breakfast or snack are to place what they have left over in a basket designated for the purpose, and that this be distributed to the poor students.⁶⁰ Since under the conditions of the Old Regime a family which could buy more bread than it consumed could not be regarded as poor, La Salle himself clearly took it for granted that his schools would not be restricted to the indigent. On the other hand, the homologation of the act establishing the Frères in Amiens in January 1760 gave them the right only to "apprendre à lire, à écrire, l'arithmétique et la Religion gratuitement aux pauvres Enfants ainsi qu'il est universellement pratiqué par ceux d'entre eux dans les endroits où ils sont établis".⁶¹ However, the homologation of the act founding a third class in the town in 1762 referred explicitly and repeatedly to the two initial classes teaching "des Enfants des pauvres et des artisans".⁶² Thus there seems to have been little doubt in law that the Frères could

57. "Mémoire sur l'établissement", p. 1.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

59. *Ibid.*

60. Saint Jean-Baptiste DE LA SALLE, *Conduite des écoles chrétiennes* (Lyon: Mistral, 1811), pp. 29-30.

61. "Mémoire sur l'établissement", p. 2.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

teach the children of artisans as well as the poor. Still, the prospect of a charitable order attracting children from the schools of respectable schoolmasters or master scribes did not appear just. Virtually as soon as the Frères were established in Amiens, the schoolmasters and scribes attempted to have the bishop and *écolâtre* control the students to be received by the Ignorantins by making them obtain a certificate attesting their poverty from local authorities.⁶³ This request was refused, and the professional schoolmasters had no further recourse at the time.

In 1766 a decision rendered by the Parlement of Paris against the Frères of Abbeville reopened the question. The schoolmasters and scribes of Abbeville were successful in having formal restrictions placed on the students the Frères could receive. The court forbade them to:

enseigner [ou] recevoir dans leurs Écoles sous quelque prétexte que ce puisse être autres que les enfans des pauvres gens sur un Certificat d'indigence et de pauvreté de leur père et mère, attestés, par les Curés des paroisses de leur demeure, ou des Maires et Échevins de la dite Ville.⁶⁴

The judgment of the court also required the Frères to keep a register of their students and to submit lists of their students to the municipal authorities twice a year. Moreover, the scribes were also given the right to inspect their schools so as to assure themselves that only the indigent were being admitted there.⁶⁵

This judgment was rendered on 12 July 1766. On 9 October the scribes of Amiens prepared a report in which they asserted that their profession has suffered greatly since the Frères were established in the town, and that they had lost many of their students to them.⁶⁶ The Frères, they alleged, taught writing to all the young people of this town who thought it proper to go to them, whether they were poor or well-off.⁶⁷ According to the report only 40 of the 300 students of the Frères were truly indigent. The scribes did not object to the Ignorantins teaching religion, but they complained bitterly of their teaching writing which, they maintained, was properly their prerogative. Their concrete demands, however, were based for the most part on the earlier ruling concerning the Frères of Abbeville; they asked that admission to the Frères' schools be on a certificate of indigence and that they be allowed to inspect the schools. They also suggested that a sign indicating that these classes were only for the poor be posted above the doors of the Frères' schools.

On 29 October the schoolmasters also prepared a *procès-verbal* against the Frères. This document again claimed that the Frères were teaching "les riches comme les pauvres" and made the same demands

63. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

64. AM Amiens, GG 762, "Arrêt du Parlement contre les Frères d'Abbeville", 12 July 1766.

65. *Ibid.*

66. AM Amiens, GG 762, *procès-verbal* of the Master scribes of Amiens concerning the Frères des Écoles chrétiennes of the town, 9 October 1766.

67. *Ibid.*

about regulating access to the schools of the Frères as had the scribes. ⁶⁸ Indeed, it seems likely that the schoolmasters had co-ordinated their demands with the scribes, for they formally joined the latter in their suit against the Frères.

In memoirs dated 5 and 6 November, the Frères of Amiens asked the master scribes to provide proof of their extravagant claim that they had the exclusive right to teach writing, and pointed out that the schoolmasters did not form a corporation, and lacking legal status could not bring a collective case in law. They denied that they taught the rich, asserting that their students were drawn from families of poor artisans, and pointed out that they were subject only to the authority of the *écolâtre*. ⁶⁹ Though the points they raised were not without merit, in light of the recent ruling concerning their colleagues in Abbeville, the Frères in Amiens must have been apprehensive about the outcome of the case. They continued to exchange charges and countercharges with the schoolmasters and scribes in numerous memoirs and reports throughout the winter of 1766 and the spring of 1767. But when the Parlement finally rendered its decision, the Frères received only the shadow of victory, their adversaries the substance.

In its ruling of 18 March 1767, the Parlement of Paris ordered that the foundations on behalf of the Frères of Amiens be duly registered, and affirmed that they were allowed to receive both "poor and artisans" into their schools. However, it was stipulated that the families of their students be unable to pay for regular schools, and the use of certificates of indigence, to be delivered by either the parish priests or officers of the municipal council, was imposed. ⁷⁰ There was no mention of a sign designating the schools of the Frères being exclusively for the poor, nor were the scribes granted the right to inspect them. However, the Frères were ordered to draw up a complete list of their students together with the professions of their fathers, to be examined by the *gens du roi*, who were empowered to remove any children able to pay regular fees from the school. Thus the principle that the Frères should receive only the poor in their schools was established, and a method to assure that this principle be observed was imposed. In law the scribes and the schoolmasters of Amiens received satisfaction. It remains to be seen whether or not they did so in fact.

III — THE FRÈRES AND THEIR STUDENTS

In order to gain an insight into the education the Frères offered and its effect we would like to know the age at which pupils entered these schools, the duration of their studies, the economic value of a place in the schools of the Frères, the social groups from which the students

68. AM Amiens, GG 762, procès-verbal of the Schoolmasters of Amiens concerning the Frères des Écoles chrétiennes of the town, 29 October 1766.

69. AM Amiens, GG 762, 6 November 1766.

70. AM Amiens, GG 762, Arrêt du Parlement de Paris, 18 March 1767.

came, and finally, the benefit they derived from their attendance at the *écoles chrétiennes*. Although the evidence at our disposal does not allow a definitive treatment of all of these questions, it will provide us with tentative answers in some cases, more complete ones in others.

With respect to the age of students at the time of entry to the classes of the Frères there is little difficulty. Admission slips issued by the municipal council, a fragment of the council's register of students and a list of students granted places by the intendant, all of which give the students' ages, show that the average age of admission to the *écoles chrétiennes* of Amiens varied from 8.4 to 9.2 years (see Table 1). Despite the fact that the official minimum age at which the Frères admitted students to their schools was seven, it is not uncommon to find children of six being admitted.⁷¹ At the other extreme, some boys reached fourteen or fifteen before receiving a place in the schools.

Table 1 Age on Admission of Students of the Frères des Écoles chrétiennes of Amiens

Document	Date	Number of Students	Youngest	Oldest	Average Age on Admission
Admission slips	1772	14	6	14	9.2
Admission slips	1773-75	7	6	10	8.4
Admission slips	Undated	13	7	12	9.2
Register of the Municipal Council (fragment)	Undated	45	6	14	9.0
List of students named by the intendant	Undated	22	7	15	9.0

Source: Archives municipales d'Amiens (hereafter AM Amiens), GG 768.

Determining the average duration of attendance at the *écoles chrétiennes* is less straightforward. We are well informed on the number of students admitted annually to the schools by the municipal council. A list of students drawn up in 1779 has the date at which each student was admitted, and shows three for 1770, two in 1771, three in 1772, nine in 1773, twenty-six in 1774, forty-four in 1775, thirty in 1776, forty-eight in 1777, forty-four in 1778 and forty-two in 1779.⁷² A fragmentary unbound register of the municipal council covering the years 1782 to 1789 and containing students' numbers and dates of entry, but not their names or any other information, yields an average of 47.1 students entering the *écoles chrétiennes* annually, with a maximum of fifty-seven new students in 1787 and a minimum of thirty-three the following year.⁷³ But on the question of how many of the original 210 places in the first three classes established in

71. *Prospectus*.

72. AM Amiens, GG 768, "Liste des Enfants admis aux Ecoles Chrétiennes par les Officiers Municipaux de l'hôtel de la Ville [*sic*] D'Amiens", 1779.

73. AM Amiens, GG 768, 1781-89.

the town were controlled by the municipal council, we are on less firm ground. The *substitut du bailli* had the right to name to ten places, and a number of places in the Châteauneuf foundation were reserved for members of that family. A list of students drawn up in 1769 shows seventeen students named by Mme de Châteauneuf, and a preamble to the 1779 list states that Mme Morgan de Maricourt controlled twelve places, "comme cofondatrice de l'École de la feu[e] Dame de Châteauneuf",⁷⁴ though the 1779 list makes it clear that Mme Morgan controlled these places in place of, and not in addition to, Mme de Châteauneuf. Other officials of Amiens who had the right to name children to places in the Frères' schools include the Lieutenant du Roi de la Citadelle, the Avocat du Roi and the Intendant, and there may have been others. Assuming these officials to have controlled thirty places, and those named above to have controlled forty, the municipal council would have been left with about 150 or 160 places in its gift.⁷⁵ Such a figure would make for an average duration of somewhere over three years for each student.⁷⁶

The value of a place held for three years in the Frères' schools would have been considerable. Toward the end of the eighteenth century in Amiens schoolmasters usually asked fifteen to twenty *sous* a month for reading lessons and thirty for writing.⁷⁷ Thus a place held for three years would have saved a direct outlay of 50 to 75 *livres* and represented a real advantage for a working-class family.

Some fragmentary lists of students of the *écoles chrétiennes* indicate that following the ruling of 18 March 1767 by the Parlement of Paris, not only the Frères but also the municipal council kept a register of students.⁷⁸ Unfortunately neither of these registers has been preserved, but we do have a list of all the students in the school for 1769. This list contains the names of students, the names and occupations of their fathers and their addresses and parishes of residence. A similar list was drawn up ten years later by the municipal council. Although it contains basically the same information as the earlier one, this list includes only students named by the council, and covers the years 1770 to 1779. The 1769 list shows 241 students, the 1779 one 254. In some ways the second list complements the first, and together they allow us to form a fairly clear idea of the students who frequented the *écoles chrétiennes*, both in terms of the *quartiers* and the social groups from which they came.

To judge by the two lists, it appears that those parishes which most needed the services of La Salle's order received them (see Table 2). The largest parishes, which also had the highest rates of illiteracy,⁷⁹ received

74. AM Amiens, GG 768, "État des Écoliers qui Sont aux Ecoles Chrétiennes d'Amiens", 1769.

75. Places in the schools established in various parishes were reserved for and named by the parish priest and other notables of those parishes.

76. According to Fosseyeux, *Les Écoles de charité à Paris*, p. 68, the average duration of studies for the Frères' students in Paris was two years.

77. AM Amiens, GG 748.

78. AM Amiens, GG 768. Each student in these lists has two numbers, which suggests two sets of records.

79. See CHISICK, *L'Éducation élémentaire*, chap. 3.

Table 2 Geographical Distribution of the Students of the Frères des Écoles chrétiennes of Amiens at the End of the Eighteenth Century

Parish of residence	1769		1779	
	N	%	N	%
Saint-Firmin-en-Castillon	75	6.2	5	2.0
Saint-Firmin-le-Confesseur	38	15.8	34	13.4
Saint-Firmin-à-la-Porte	7	2.9	10	3.9
Saint-Germain	22	9.1	25	9.8
Saint-Jacques	27	11.2	50	19.7
Saint-Leu	33	13.7	1	0.4
Saint-Martin	1	0.4	3	1.2
Saint-Michel	25	10.4	29	11.4
Saint-Rémy	47	19.5	60	23.6
Saint-Sulpice	11	4.6	2	0.8
Notre-Dame	11	4.6	4	1.6
Saint-Maurice	1	0.4	—	—
Saint-Pierre	1	0.4	—	—
Undetermined	2	0.8	31	12.2
Total	241	100.0	254	100.0

Source: AM Amiens, GG 768, "État des Écoliers qui sont aux Écoles chrétiennes d'Amiens" (1769), "Liste des Enfants admis aux Écoles Chrétiennes par les officiers Municipaux de l'hôtel de la Ville d'Amiens" (1779).

the lion's share of places in the *écoles chrétiennes*. The three parishes in the 1769 list with thirty or more places in the schools, Saint-Firmin-le-Confesseur, Saint-Leu and Saint-Rémy, all had 5,000 or more parishioners and high rates of illiteracy. The three parishes with twenty or more places, Saint-Germain, Saint-Jacques and Saint-Michel, had at least 3,000 parishioners, and comparably high illiteracy rates. By contrast, the *faubourgs*, though their rates of illiteracy were extremely high, benefitted from only two places in the 1769 list, and were entirely absent from that drawn up by the municipal authorities.

The 1779 list gives the same general impression as the earlier one, but reflects the fact that several more foundations had been made on behalf of the Frères during the 1770s. That Saint-Leu had thirty-three places in 1769 but only one in 1779 is a direct result of the Tartasse de Romainville foundation of 1773 for that parish. A brother holding classes there would have taught between sixty and eighty children. The decline in the number of students from Saint-Sulpice from the first to the second list may also be attributable to the Romainville foundation. Since this parish was contiguous with Saint-Leu and even further from the centre of the town, it may have been more convenient for children from that parish to attend the newly formed class rather than the central ones. It is possible, too, that De l'Estocq and Pingré particularly favoured Saint-Sulpice in naming students to places which they controlled, so that fewer places within the jurisdiction of the municipal council had to go to that parish. Be that as it may, the parishes that indirectly benefitted most from the new foundations were those that most needed the places. The municipal council admitted fifty students from Saint-Jacques and sixty from

Saint-Rémy to the schools of the Frères. And while the large parishes with high rates of illiteracy received a considerable proportion of the places in the schools of the Frères, the small and highly literate central parishes of Saint-Firmin-en-Castillon, Saint-Martin and Notre-Dame together had only twenty-six places in the earlier list, and as few as twelve in the later one. Thus, from the point of view of urban geography, it would appear that the schools of the Frères were being frequented by those for whom they were originally intended. However, an analysis of the social origins of the students will call for some qualification of this view.

To determine the relative social standing of the Frères' students we have employed a classification that recognizes three main groups in society, each of which is divided into a number of occupational sub-groups. The first includes those comfortable élites, both urban and rural, which together dominated the society of the Old Regime. In it we find social groups ranging from noble *seigneurs* to comfortable *fermiers* and *laboureurs*, and from *officiers*, doctors and lawyers to merchants. The second and intermediary group is composed largely of skilled workers and artisans, both in textiles and other trades, but also includes innkeepers, shopkeepers, millers and the middling peasantry. Neither dominant nor subservient, members of this group enjoyed relative independence. At the bottom of the social scale is a third group, composed largely of cloth workers, artisans who worked for others, and unskilled workers who lived in dependence and poverty.

This classification, which is meant only as a rough analytical tool, has a number of shortcomings. First, the criterion of classification is entirely occupational, and, moreover, is determined by the function performed within the occupation. This necessarily makes for a degree of fluidity between the main occupational groups. A *marchand boucher*, for example, has been placed in Group 1 under "merchant", while a *maître boucher* has been entered in Group 2 under "food trades". Similarly, a *maître menuisier* and a *menuisier* have been treated as independent and classed in Group 2, whereas it has been assumed that a *compagnon menuisier* or an *ouvrier menuisier* were dependent and placed in Group 3. Nor are we able to discern in this classification those cases in which a master artisan becomes in all but name a merchant, or falls to the level of a salaried worker. Fluidity of this sort inevitably escapes any static schema of the kind we are using. Nevertheless, we assume that occupational designations, while not in every instance precise, do in sum reflect a social reality.

A second main difficulty of this classification is its narrowness. It is tenuous, to say the least, to attempt to determine social standing on the criterion of occupation alone. Without additional information on wealth and life style, one can carry out no very sophisticated analysis of social structure. Still, it does seem fair to assume that merchants and day-labourers, lawyers and skilled artisans, landowners and cloth workers have widely different socio-economic standings and cultural orientations; and these differences form a sufficient basis for our admittedly rough analysis.

Table 3
Social Distribution of Students of the Frères des
Écoles chrétiennes based on Father's Occupation

Father's Occupation	1769		1779	
	N	%	N	%
Group 1				
Seigneur	—	—	—	—
Professions libérales	1	—	—	—
Officier supérieur	—	—	—	—
Bas officier	6	—	3	—
Officier dans l'armée	—	—	—	—
Négociant, marchand, fabricant	12	—	—	—
Fermier, laboureur	1	—	1	—
Subtotal	20	8.6	4	3.6
Group 2				
Maitre artisan	30	—	1	—
Artisan—indéterminé	25	—	30	—
Aubergiste	10	—	8	—
Sous-officier	1	—	—	—
Détaillant en alimentation	21	—	8	—
Meunier	3	—	1	—
Jardinier, hortillon	3	—	3	—
Magister	—	—	—	—
Maitre saiteur	24	—	—	—
Subtotal	117	50.0	51	45.1
Group 3				
Artisan—compagnon, garçon	1	—	—	—
Artisan—ouvrier	13	—	10	—
Saiteur	4	—	6	—
Ouvrier saiteur	40	—	18	—
Employé	11	—	6	—
Domestique	9	—	4	—
Journalier, manouvrier	2	—	5	—
Portefaix, batelier	7	—	2	—
Miscellaneous	10	—	7	—
Subtotal	97	41.5	58	51.3
Total of known cases	234	100.0	113	100.0
Undesignated	7	—	141	—
Grand total	241	—	254	—

Source: See Table 2.

Table 3 shows, as one would have expected, that the wealthiest members of the community did not seek to send their children to the schools of the Frères. Only one child of a family engaged in the liberal professions appears in either list, and he was the son of a "veuve [de] médecin". The 1769 list, however, shows twelve sons of *marchands* or *fabricants*; this category disappears from the 1779 list. Not surprisingly, in both lists the rural élites are almost unrepresented.

Yet with 58 percent of all students in the 1769 list and 49 percent of those in the later one, the independent sections of the population (Groups 1 and 2) predominated in the *écoles chrétiennes* of the town. A number of

huissiers, fabricants and *marchands* account for the greater part of the contingent from Group 1 in the charity schools of the Frères, while Group 2 is represented primarily by master artisans, but also by *maîtres saiteurs* (clothworkers) and members of the food trades. The dependent population, or Group 3, accounts for 41 percent of the students in 1769, and 51 percent of those in the later list. As one would expect in a great textile town, clothworkers dominate this category. The only other occupations represented to a significant degree here are those of dependent artisan, servant and unskilled labourer (*journalier, portefaix*).

The preceding analysis suggests two conclusions. First, the schools of the Frères did not contain a clear majority of those immediately identifiable as the poor. Indeed, the sons of domestics, porters, *ouvriers saiteurs*, and day-labourers form a surprisingly small proportion of the Frères' students. In that after 1767 admission to the schools required a certificate attesting poverty, or its equivalent, this seems anomalous. It can of course be argued that master artisans, merchants and bakers may also be poor; but in the normal course of things one would expect day-labourers and *gagne-deniers* to be even worse off.

Secondly, a comparison of the two lists suggests that the social standing of the students of the *écoles chrétiennes* had declined. The earlier list shows that almost a quarter of the schools' students were sons of either merchants, master artisans or *maîtres saiteurs*. In the later list only one student falls into any of these categories. It is possible of course, that the Frères in fact received more humble students from 1770 to 1779 than they had done up to then. But if this were the case, it is not clear why this shift had not been made shortly after the 1767 ruling of the Parlement. Moreover, there is reason to think that the lower status of the Frères' students represents a clerical bias rather than a true shift.

A comparison of the occupations of the fathers of the students in the 1769 list with those indicated in the parish registers at the time of the students' marriages reveals a suspiciously high rate of upward mobility. The acts of marriage of thirty-eight students have been identified with certainty in the parish registers of Amiens. In eighteen cases the registers failed to indicate the occupation of the grooms' fathers. In the remaining twenty cases, the father was shown to exercise the same occupation he had exercised while his son was a student of the Frères seven times, and to have bettered himself in thirteen instances.⁸⁰ There was not a single case of downward mobility. There is of course no reason why a man should not improve his position in the world over a period of ten or fifteen years. But neither is there any reason why his affairs should not deteriorate over such a period, and one might reasonably expect the one to happen as frequently as the other. That this does not occur in our sample is the

80. Archives de l'Hôtel de Ville d'Amiens, series E². Five men who appeared as *maîtres bouchers* in the list are described in the parish registers as *marchands bouchers*; four *maîtres saiteurs* became *marchands fabricants*; two *ouvriers saiteurs* became *maîtres saiteurs*; a *boutonnier* became a *marchand boutonnier*; and a *tonnelier* appeared as a *maître tonnelier*.

result, I suggest, not of the unusual enterprise and ability of men who sent their children to charity schools, but of the fact that the administrators of these schools were loathe to admit that their classes were attended by the sons of those whose need for charity was perhaps not so great as that of their fellows.⁸¹

Though the 1779 list does appear to show a somewhat humbler clientele in the *écoles chrétiennes* than did the earlier one, the more fundamental point to be made about both of them remains that independent artisans, *maîtres saiteurs*, innkeepers and those engaged in the food trades enjoyed so large a share of the places in the schools, and that the poorest sections of the labouring population remained a minority in the earlier list, and achieved a majority of only 51 percent in the second.

Charles Engrand's study of poverty in Amiens in the eighteenth century makes it possible to gauge more precisely how typical of the town's poor the students of the Frères were. A document of 1778 showing the occupations of several hundred poor shows that 78 percent of the men worked in the textile trades, and that 69 percent of the total were *ouvriers saiteurs*. Of women appearing in the same source 82 percent were employed in the manufacture of cloth.⁸² This shows clearly that the main focus of poverty in Amiens was among textile workers. Yet in the 1769 list of the Frères' students only 29 percent were the sons of textile workers, of whom 17 percent were the sons of *ouvriers saiteurs*. In the 1779 list the corresponding figures are 21 and 16 percent. Engrand's findings thus reinforce our own and indicate that the students of the Frères of Amiens did not for the most part come from the poorest levels of the working population. Nor does this situation seem to have been unique to Amiens. F. Léon de Marie Aroz, has shown that in Reims in 1776 and 1779 more than 70 percent of the parents of children attending the Frères' classes paid a capitation of 5 *livres* or less.⁸³ This still leaves nearly 30 percent who can be regarded as living in relative comfort. But the relative economic well-being of the Frères' students only becomes fully apparent when one considers that those exempted from paying the capitation because of poverty could sometimes include a significant proportion of the population, as it did in Amiens in 1776.⁸⁴ Payment of the minimal imposition is not proof of direst poverty, but the opposite, proof that one succeeded in avoiding it. Beneath those who paid the lowest rate were those exempted because of indigence and others who failed even to maintain a permanent residence and so to appear in the tax rolls at all. Thus the fiscal records of Reims, like our rough occupational analysis for Amiens, lead us to believe that the independent and relatively well-off enjoyed a considerable number of

81. Richard COBB, *The Police and the People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 65, has shown that men described their occupations differently according to circumstances during the revolutionary period. Although the circumstances were of course very different, the principle remains the same.

82. ENGRAND, "Paupérisme et condition ouvrière", pp. 389-90.

83. CHARTIER, COMPÈRE and JULIA, *L'Éducation en France*, p. 81.

84. AD Somme, C 1114, capitation of Amiens for 1776. Whole pages in this document are filled with working-class families exempted from paying the tax because of indigence.

places in the charity schools of the Frères, if they did not altogether dominate them. It is unlikely that this situation would have displeased the Frères, who in any case claimed the right to teach the poor and the artisans. Nor is it difficult, upon examination, to determine why the social weighting of the Frères' schools was such as it was.

There is, first, the question of the economic implications of a worker sending his child to school. In doing so he would have lost the few *sous* that the child might otherwise have earned, and normally he would have had to pay a fee. Now, the poorer a family, the less it could afford the loss of economic opportunity, slight as it might be, involved in sending a child to school. Even if a very poor family decided to make this sacrifice, it would have found that while the Frères charged no fees, they did ask that their students provide their own books, and, further, that they contribute to the cost of heating the classroom.⁸⁵ Thus attendance at the *écoles chrétiennes* entailed not only some loss of economic opportunity, but also a certain outlay, and the poorer a family was, the less it could have afforded either.⁸⁶

A second, related reason why artisans and not *journaliers* or *ouvriers* dominated the Frères' schools follows from the outlooks and aspirations of these two groups. A skilled artisan, one expects, would have acquired a minimal education, and would have recognized the practical utility of the skills of literacy. Aware of the advantages of a basic education, he would have wished his children to have one. An illiterate porter or day-labourer who earned his living without knowing how to read or write probably attached little importance to these skills, and would have been less aware of their utility. Consequently he would have been less prepared to make the sacrifices necessary to allow his child to acquire them. School attendance is a question not only of economic ability, but also of cultural orientation.

A third reason why the poorer and less skilled part of the population of Amiens had a relatively modest place in the charity schools of the Frères lies in the way in which students were granted places. The Frères were not free to choose their pupils. Since the schools had been founded by private individuals, places in them were subject to conditions laid down by the founders. For example, Tartasse de Romainville stipulated that children were to be named to the class he established for the parish of Saint-Leu by the administrators of the *Hôpital*, on the authority of a certificate attesting poverty delivered by the parish priest; de l'Estoq and Pingré simply retained the right to name students at their pleasure to all the places in the class they founded; and Mgr Machault, in establishing two Frères in the parish of Saint-Jacques, stipulated that two-thirds of the places in the school were to go to children of that parish, one-third to children from Saint-Germain, and that of this third, ten places were to be

85. *Prospectus*.

86. It should not be overlooked, however, that certain countervailing forces were also at work. These include the Church's interest in religious instruction and the desire of the upper classes to see the poor effectively socialized.

reserved for the parish of Saint-Firmin-à-la-Porte. Although assigning to the parish priests and curates of these parishes the power to nominate to the places in the school, Machault reserved twelve places for descendants of the Delacourt family, to be filled as they saw fit, in recognition of the original Delacourt foundation of the late seventeenth century which was incorporated in the new foundation. Places in the first three classes established in the town, however, were not initially designated for any parish or in the gift of any individual. The Parlement in its ruling of 1767 laid it down that students were to be admitted to these classes on the basis of certificates of indigence delivered by the parish priests of the town and endorsed by the mayor and aldermen of the town according to their place of residence.⁸⁷ The evidence on actual appointments to places in the schools is, however, somewhat ambivalent. It suggests both that the theory that students of the Frères should be indigent continued to prevail, but that the places in their schools under the jurisdiction of the municipal authorities sometimes became the object of outright patronage on the part of the mayor and councillors.

It does not appear that the system of appointments described in the March 1767 ruling of the Parlement was ever implemented in Amiens. Far from simply countersigning certificates of indigence issued by parish priests, the municipal council had admission slips of its own printed up. These forms made no direct mention of poverty, and stated only that the child named on it was "dans le cas d'entrer aux Écoles de Charité de cette ville".⁸⁸ Furthermore, students were named to most places in the three classes that existed in 1767 by members of the municipal council alone. The procedure was for the director of the Frères to send the mayor and aldermen a notice, usually quarterly, stating the number of vacant places at their disposition. At their next meeting members of the council would take turns naming students until all the vacant places had been filled.⁸⁹

Of requests to the municipal council for places in the schools of the Frères, certain were based simply on need and took the form of outright appeals for charity. Thus, for example, Louis Le Normand, a *marchand épicier* of the parish of Saint-Martin, referred to the deplorable state in which he and his family found themselves and appealed to the charity of the council in asking for a place for his son in the *écoles chrétiennes*.⁹⁰

A clothworker wrote the following note to an influential acquaintance to try to gain a place for his son in the schools of the Frères:

Madame Lefebvre,

Je vous donne le nom de mon fils et de moy, Jean Baptiste Oyez,
fils de Jean Baptiste Oyez, anciens ouvrier saiteur, rue de doubles chaise,

87. AM Amiens, GG 762, Arrêt du Parlement de Paris, 18 March 1767.

88. AM Amiens, GG 768. The printed admission slips used by the municipal council left spaces for the name, age, name of father and street and parish of residence.

89. AM Amiens, GG 768.

90. AM Amiens, GG 768, 29 October 1772.

paroisse Saint Firmin en Castillon, pour presenter a Monsieur Janvier [the mayor], esperans de vous c'est charité.

[signed] Oyez⁹¹

Similarly, Étienne Bellegueulle, a *fermier du poids* of the market, requested a place in the Frères' school on the grounds that all his property had been lost in a fire and he could no longer afford to pay school fees.⁹² Young Bellegueulle received the place his father solicited for him, but not until three years later.⁹³

A considerable proportion of the surviving requests for places in the *écoles chrétiennes* were written by well-connected friends of poorer families to their acquaintances, friends or relatives on the municipal council, and were frank solicitations of favours. Thus, for example, an acquaintance of the mayor wrote him saying, "Je lui auray une tres grande obligation s'il peut faire comprendre dans le nombre des enfants a recevoir aux grands chapeaux [Frères de La Salle] le fils du domestique de mon père . . ."; and a M. Pipaurt asked a member of the council as a favour ("une obligation tres particulière") to obtain a place for the son of a local miller.⁹⁴ Charles Guillaume Bellard seems to have owed his place in the *écoles chrétiennes* to a recommendation of the *procureur du roi*, and Jean Baptiste Mille [Maille] held his as a result of the mayor's cousin intervening on his behalf.⁹⁵ Indeed, it sometimes happened that families whose need for a place in a charity school seemed at best doubtful received them as a result of influence. Augustin Fontenay, whose father, a *marchand épicier*, had recently died, was admitted to the Frères' school on the advocacy of a M. Lalauchette, who himself observed: "Ce sont des honettes gens qui n'eussent pas même du besoin de ce secours sans la mort du pere".⁹⁶ Families whose situation may have been worse than that of the Fontenay, on the other hand, often failed to find places in the Frères' classes because they lacked a patron or influential friend. This is made clear in the following unsigned request:

Le nommé Bazin, ouvrier de la manufacture à Amiens, paroisse de Saint Remy, a un fils nommé Charles Bazin, âgé de 12 ans, qui commence à bien lire et à écrire, et pour lequel il sollicite inutilement depuis quatre ans pour faire entrer chez les frères des Écol[e]s chrétiennes et de charité. Les père et mère sont pauvres et absolument hors d'état de faire la moindre dépense pour donner de l'éducation à leurs enfans. Le frère supérieur de ces écoles, à qui on a proposé de recevoir cet enfant, a répondu qu'il ne le pouvoit sans un billet de M. le maire de la ville et a ajouté qu'il y avoit actuellement des places vacantes.⁹⁷

If a degree of poverty was at least in theory a necessary condition for admission to the Frères' schools, it was not a sufficient one.

91. AM Amiens, GG 768, undated.

92. AM Amiens, GG 768, 26 March, 1774.

93. Bellegueulle appears in the "Liste des Enfans admis" (1779).

94. AM Amiens, GG 768, [?] 1772 and 3 January 1778.

95. AM Amiens, GG 768, 9 March 1772 and undated. Maille, however does appear in the 1779 list.

96. AM Amiens, GG 768, 15 January 1772.

97. AM Amiens, GG 768, undated.

An examination of the siblings attending the schools of the Frères heightens the impression that patronage played an important role in the allocation of places. On the assumption that places were awarded in an even-handed manner, one would expect first that few families would benefit from more than one place in the schools, and secondly that the families who did have more than one would reflect the social make-up of the schools as a whole. That is to say, one would expect about half such families to come from Group 3, and the rest from Groups 1 and 2 (see Table 3 above for classification). In the 1769 list forty children—almost 20 percent—came from eighteen families. Of these families only three can be classified in Group 3, thirteen in Group 2, and two in Group 1.⁹⁸ The results from the 1779 list are somewhat less striking, especially in that it is diachronic, but analogous nevertheless. Here thirty-seven children come from seventeen families. No occupational designation was given for three of these families, but of the remaining fourteen only four came from Group 3, and the rest from Group 2.⁹⁹

That artisans and shopkeepers and not servants and day-labourers should have benefitted most from the way in which the municipal council administered the places under its control in the schools of the Frères, and have come to dominate the *écoles chrétiennes*, should not cause surprise. In addition to the reasons cited above, two more can be adduced. First, the definition of poverty is highly elastic. Those interested in determining whether or not a family is "poor" must take into account not only its income, but also its property, the number of children and their ages, whether both spouses are alive and able-bodied, opportunities for employment, and the price of food, to mention only the most obvious factors. And those enjoying a degree of affluence may not be so nice in distinguishing shades of need, poverty and indigence as those experiencing, or who have experienced, real deprivation. The municipal council seems to have favoured *honnêtes gens* who had fallen on hard times, or who were burdened with a particularly large number of children, over the hard-core poor. Secondly, skilled artisans, petty functionaries and shopkeepers were in general in a better position than unskilled labourers to make contact with richer and more influential men who might subsequently use their influence on their behalf.

Having seen what the social standing of the Frères' students was, it now remains to determine, as far as this is possible, how efficacious the education they received was. To do so we have again had recourse to the parish registers of Amiens and the marriage acts of the students in the 1769 list. Of the thirty-seven former students of the Frères whose acts of marriage could be identified with certainty, thirty-four were able to sign their names, while only three could not. This yields a 92 percent literacy rate, higher than that for any parish in the town. There can be no doubt,

98. "État des Écoliers" (1769). One family had four children in the schools, two had three each, and fifteen had at least two children in the Frères' classes.

99. "Liste des Enfants admis" (1779). Here three families benefitted from three places each in the schools, while fourteen families had two places each.

then, that the students who passed through the schools of the Frères did learn the basic skills of literacy. There were, among these thirty-seven former students, none whose social origins placed them in Group 1. Those in Group 2 showed 100 percent literacy, though the male mean for this group for the town was just over 80 percent, and those in Group 3 showed 83.5 percent literacy, almost double the male mean for this group for the town.¹⁰⁰ That a few students were unable to sign their names some ten or fifteen years after leaving the schools in no way calls into question the effectiveness of their teachers. A shorter than average duration of studies, home environment, or simple ineptitude adequately explain this shortcoming in the few cases in which it occurs.

That students emerging from the schools of the Frères had above average literacy is indisputable. But whether the Frères alone were responsible for this is another matter. A high proportion of their students came from social groups—artisans, shopkeepers, petty functionaries—which were already highly literate. It might also be observed in this connection that the brides of these former charity-school boys also show surprisingly high literacy rates. While no parish in Amiens had a higher female literacy rate than 66 percent, 76 percent of the brides of the Frères' former students could sign their names. This suggests that they married well. If the Frères' success in teaching the skills of literacy was considerable, it would have been yet more impressive had it been achieved among the more truly popular classes.

Secondly, there is reason to believe that certain of the Frères' students had already received a degree of instruction before entering the *écoles chrétiennes*. J.-B. Maille, who was recommended for a place in the schools when he was eight-and-a-half years old, was said to "commence a epeleer [*sic*] assés bien", while J. Normand, who entered the schools when eleven already had "quelques principes d'écriture", and Charles Bazin was recommended for a place in the *écoles chrétiennes* after he could read well and had begun to write.¹⁰¹ Unfortunately we lack a systematic source to inform us about the level of the Frères' students on their entry into the schools, but these examples suggest that attending an *école chrétienne* was sometimes just a stage in a child's education, and that whether they had learned their alphabets in other schools or informally, it was not uncommon for them to come to the Frères' schools with some preparation.

IV — POPULAR DEMAND FOR EDUCATION AND THEORIES OF CHARITY

The most salient facts to emerge from our analysis of the Frères' students are first, that the demand for places in their schools exceeded supply so that the schools can clearly be shown to have been popular

100. CHISICK, *L'Éducation élémentaire*, chap. 3.

101. AM Amiens, GG 768.

among the working population, and secondly that the independent rather than the very poorest levels of the working population formed the chief clientele of the Frères in Amiens. Both points, I think, call for explanation.

Not all charity schools had, or expected to have, lists of potential students awaiting admission. Avisse, in founding the charity school for the parish of Saint-Jacques, spoke of the need to oblige the poor to attend.¹⁰² Among parish charity schools, at least, the practice seems to have been common.¹⁰³ In Saint-Eustache in Paris parents failing to send their children to the parish charity school were to be deprived of any charitable assistance they had been receiving.¹⁰⁴ The same sanction was used for the same purpose by the parish of Saint-Gervais in Paris, and in an early experiment in charity education at Lille.¹⁰⁵ Both in Saint-Gervais and at Lille more positive means were also used to encourage the poor to attend charity classes. In the former case rewards in the form of clothes, bread, books and images were to be distributed every three months at the discretion of the parish priest, and this without prejudice to lesser rewards each Sunday.¹⁰⁶ The budget for the charity schools of Lille for 1670-72 shows that from total expenses of 15,239 *livres*, 1,443 *livres* were in small coins called *liards* given to the students "à titre d'encouragement", and 1,888 *livres* for clothing and shoes distributed for the same purpose. Together these two items nearly equal the expenditure of 3,520 *livres* for teachers' salaries.¹⁰⁷ This gives some indication of the importance attached to attracting children to the schools. A final revealing item in the budget of the Lille schools is 80 *livres* paid for a truant officer.¹⁰⁸ Evidently attraction was used in addition to coercion, and not in place of it, to assure students for these schools.

In the case of the schools of the Frères no coercion was envisaged, nor was any necessary to induce students to attend. Indeed, with respect to social demand, we seem to be dealing here with generically different kinds of schools. Some light will be thrown on this difference if we consider a remarkable experiment in popular education undertaken in Paris during the fourth decade of the eighteenth century.

A number of clerics in the capital were touched by the plight of Savoyard street-boys, whom they describe living eight to ten in a room in the *faubourgs*, principally the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, and more particularly by their ignorance of the most basic principles of religion. They therefore organized a catechism class to be held twice weekly after the boys' working hours. Though only ten came to the first class, the anonymous author reports:

102. *Factum*, p. 1.

103. RIGAULT, *Histoire générale*, II: 41.

104. *Reglement de Saint-Eustache*, p. 20.

105. *Reglement de Saint-Gervais*, p. 5, and Jules HOUDOY, "L'Instruction gratuite et obligatoire depuis le XVI^e siècle", *Mémoires de la Société des Sciences, de l'Agriculture et des Arts de Lille*, 3^e Série, XII (1873): 12.

106. *Reglement de Saint-Gervais*, pp. 11-12.

107. HOUDOY, "L'Instruction gratuite", pp. 14-15.

108. *Ibid.*

... nous ne nous rebutâmes point, nous revinmes à la charge, nous les gagnâmes peu à peu par douceur, par la commodité du feu en hyver & par les récompenses que nous donnâmes à ceux qui avoient fait paroître le plus de ferveur & d'assiduité; ce qui fit qu'en très-peu de tems nous eûmes la satisfaction de les voir venir en foule à notre Catéchisme.¹⁰⁹

It is true, the author went on, there was considerable cost involved, but the teachers were rewarded by the eagerness with which the boys attended to their instruction.¹¹⁰ To attract the young Savoyards to the classes they were promised that the four most assiduous boys would receive suits of clothing, and to encourage their observance of religion they were given a small sum for confessing and bringing an attestation from the priest who had administered the sacrament. This last measure succeeded in inspiring in the boys what the author called a persuasive eloquence.¹¹¹ It also greatly increased the popularity of the catechism classes, attracting all the Savoyards of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, and indeed boys from other areas.¹¹² By 1735 some twenty clerics were holding classes for 400 street-boys. In April of that year an award ceremony was held in the Collège de Lisieux. Of the more than 400 students who attended, 16 were given new suits of clothes, while 150 received other prizes.¹¹³ Two years later some 700 boys attended the prize-giving ceremony held in the parish church of Saint-Benoît, since the hall of the Collège de Lisieux was too small. On this occasion 60 boys received complete outfits, another 60 received shirts, and a number of others lesser prizes.¹¹⁴ These good works, the author observed, were expensive, for "Comme ces Enfants sont ici livrés à eux-mêmes, pour les attirer à nos Instructions, nous sommes obligés de leur donner beaucoup de récompenses."¹¹⁵ Here we come to the heart of the matter. The Savoyard street-boys were being offered religious instruction which was intended to assure their salvation in the world to come, and to ensure their morality and quiescence in this one. Constantly faced with more pressing needs, they showed little interest in the classes themselves, and had to be "attracted" with various gifts and incentives. Yet these same wretchedly indigent *gamins* repeatedly asked and even offered to pay for classes in reading and writing.¹¹⁶ Such classes were indeed established—they met between six and eight in the morning so as not to cause the students loss of working time.¹¹⁷ It is not known how long they lasted or how successful they were.¹¹⁸

109. *Projet d'un établissement déjà Commencé pour elever dans la piété les Savoyards qui sont à Paris* (Paris, 1735), p. 9. (Bibl. Maz., imprimé 42 886^s.)

110. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

112. *Ibid.*

113. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

114. *Progrès de l'Établissement commencé depuis peu pour les Savoyards qui sont dans Paris* (Paris, 1737), pp. 20-22. (Bibl. Maz., imprimé 42 886^s.)

115. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

116. *Projet pour les Savoyards*, p. 18.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

118. The clerics favoured teaching the Savoyards to read as this would reinforce the instruction they gave, but were apprehensive about the costs involved. Nevertheless, they put their trust in Providence and opened the new classes. As no mention is made of them in the following pamphlet one may assume that Providence failed to smile on them.

The schools of the Frères, we have seen, did not force students to attend. Nor did they attempt to bribe them. The education they offered was in itself sufficient incentive. In addition to teaching religion, and teaching it with devotion, the Frères taught skills that were recognized to be of socio-economic utility—the skills of literacy—and they taught them competently. It is worthwhile to pause for a moment to emphasize the competence of the Frères as teachers. They were almost alone among teachers of the primary level in receiving pedagogical training, this by itself accounting in large part for their reputation as the best primary-level teachers of the period.¹¹⁹ But one can appreciate the basic competence of the Frères only in the light of the very high level of incompetence that was the rule among the teachers of *petites écoles* and of many charity schools.¹²⁰

More interesting than the competence of the Frères as teachers is the recognition of the utility of the instruction they offered and the popular demand for it. Sellier wrote that the Frères taught writing because it pleased the people.¹²¹ The case of the Savoyard street-boys of Paris suggests that even below the level of small shopkeepers and artisans there was a demand for basic education, and what is more, that the *menu peuple* distinguished accurately between unadorned indoctrination and instruction that was of some value in helping them make their way in the world. In the latter case the lower classes, or at least parts of them,¹²² willingly sent their children to charity schools; in the former they had to be coerced or bribed to attend. Thus there was a considerable demand for education among the working population. But it was an informed and selective demand.

The administrators of charitable institutions too were selective in the aid they offered and whom they offered it to. The dimensions of the problem of poverty and the pitiful inadequacy of resources with which to deal with it made this inevitable. Institutionalized charity under the Old Regime, especially at the parish level, tended to be directed not to the very poorest, but to the least indigent among the poor, or to those who could not yet be considered truly poor but needed help to avoid crossing the threshold of poverty. In the language of the time they were called *pauvres honteux*, to which the English “deserving poor” or “honourable

119. GONTARD, *L'Enseignement primaire*, p. 29.

120. Ibid., and CHISICK, “School Attendance, Literacy and Acculturation”, pp. 211-12. Philippe ARIÈS, *Centuries of Childhood*, pp. 293-94, on the other hand, has a higher opinion of at least the urban *maître d'école*.

121. AD Somme, C 1547², Jacques Sellier, “Lettre sur l'éducation des enfants du peuple”.

122. As argued above, the very poorest probably begrudged a child's time in school and undervalued education. The Savoyard street-boys are not really an exception, for they were part of a distinct social structure. They followed traditional migration routes and lived in organized communities in Paris, each room having an older man as its recognized leader (*Projet pour les Savoyards*, pp. 7-8). Moreover, the skills of literacy can well be seen as an occupational requirement for them. In the normal course of things street-boys became servants (*Progrès des Savoyards*, p. 24), and as Daniel ROCHE, *Le Peuple de Paris*, pp. 208-9, has shown, Parisian servants showed very high rates of literacy.

poor" are imprecise equivalents. One eighteenth-century source defines them as "persons worthy of consideration on account of their birth and professions", another describes them negatively as those who had not received alms or who did not belong to the "class of workers, servants or day-laborers", while a third is more specific in calling them, "les Marchands, Artisans, Maîtres de Métiers & autres de la Paroisse, qui gagnent leur vie par diverses industries equipotentes [*sic*] à un metier".¹²³ The *pauvres honteux*, then, were normally small artisans and shopkeepers who had fallen on hard times, but could reasonably be expected to recover. Léon Cahen has gone so far as to call the charitable companies of the parishes of Paris which normally controlled the parish charity schools as well as other aspects of poor relief, "des sociétés de secours mutuel ayant un caractère confessionnel et bourgeois" and to say of them, "elles visent à relever les membres de la classe moyenne, tombés dans la misère, non à élever à une condition supérieure les pauvres de plus basse origine".¹²⁴ In describing innovations in charity at the parish level Jeffry Kaplow writes:

The concern here was with the settled, well-known, one might say honorable, poor, rather than with those whose relationships to their superiors were more tenuous, the unskilled streetworkers and merchants, the floaters who most needed help. The latter were the victims of a long-standing prejudice which denied them almost all forms of charitable aid except when they were severely ill.¹²⁵

Here then is perhaps the most important aspect of the *pauvres honteux*; they remained integrated into the community, which recognized the legitimacy of their need and was prepared to devote part of its hopelessly inadequate resources toward helping them. The intensely indigent and far more numerous floating population were written off, or could expect to receive only casual charity such as handouts. Where organized attempts were made to deal with them, they were generally inspired by a concern for social order and took the form of police measures. For the poorest sections of the population, the goal the society of the Old Regime set itself was not reintegration, but control and repression.

Contemporary attitudes toward the *pauvres honteux* throw further light on charity education under the Old Regime. They help to explain why the Frères should have insisted they had the right to teach artisans as well as simply the poor and why the social composition of their students was such as we have seen it to have been. The assumption that the beneficiaries of the kind of charity education the Frères offered would not be the very poorest also helps to explain why in most cases the

123. KAPLOW, *Names of Kings*, p. 97; ENGRAND, "Paupérisme et condition ouvrière", p. 380; Reglement de Saint-Eustache, p. 19. See also FAIRCHILD, *Poverty and Charity*, p. 30.

124. LÉON CAHEN, "Les idées charitables à Paris au XVII^e et au XVIII^e siècles d'après les règlements des compagnies paroissiales", *RHMC*, II (1900-1901): 18.

125. KAPLOW, *Names of Kings*, p. 96. CAHEN "Les idées charitables", p. 14, states, "Le vagabond n'est pas susceptible, par définition, de devenir jamais utile, de rendre service à la société dont il implore l'appui: celle-ci l'écarte et le repousse."

future occupations of the children attending such classes were not of the meanest sort. It is true that the clerics who organized and directed the project for young Savoyards expected their students to become servants, and the charity classes for the beggar children of Rouen in the sixteenth century were run on the assumption that these children would grow up to be domestics also.¹²⁶ But these cases are exceptional. At Blois in the early eighteenth century a certain number of students from a privately founded charity school were apprenticed to learn a trade after their first communion.¹²⁷ The founder of a charity school in Lille stipulated that students attending should be taught some trade or useful occupation in addition to the usual subjects.¹²⁸ In Paris the most promising of the Frères' students were found apprenticeships, and we have seen that in Provence a lawyer complained that the Ignorantins produced a mass of artisans.¹²⁹ It may be that the status of journeyman was no very elevated one. Yet it was infinitely more desirable than that of day-labourer, porter, migrant or vagabond.

It would seem, then, that behind the different kinds of charity schools and the specific forms they took, there lay two conceptions of charity and two traditions of charity education. According to the first, the poor were seen as a danger, and the purpose of free education was to socialize and control them. The emphasis here is on neutralizing or controlling social elements unintegrated into the community, so that little concern is shown for the skills of literacy.¹³⁰ The second tradition of charity education focused on known, resident and integrated poor, the *pauvres honteux*, and aspired to allow them to retain, or return to, respectable and independent social standing. Accordingly, education in classes inspired by this second tradition, while retaining a solid religious core, sought to teach the skills of literacy at least to the level required by an artisan. As we have seen above, reactions to schools inspired by these two traditions were very different.

While it is justifiable to speak of two different sets of attitudes toward the poor and traditions of charity education for purposes of analysis, I do not wish to give the impression that the charity schools of the Old Regime fall neatly into one category or the other, for this was not so. In practice there was almost always overlap, and the situation is complicated by different people ascribing different functions to the same institutions. The classes established for the Savoyard street-boys of Paris and some schools in *hôpitaux* are surely examples of charity education conceived as social control. But even here there was an attempt to change the nature of the instruction offered in the direction of greater utility. And while it may be fair to see in the schools of the Frères an example of

126. *Progrès des Savoyards*, p. 24; ARIÈS, *Centuries of Childhood*, p. 304.

127. DUPRÉ, "Anciennes écoles de charité", *Semaine religieuse de Blois* (November-December 1873), p. 847.

128. HOUDOY, "L'Instruction gratuite", p. 5.

129. FOSSEYEU, "Les Écoles de charité à Paris", p. 68, and see above, n. 46.

130. It should be noted, however, that clerics frequently advocated teaching reading as an important aid to moral and religious instruction. This was the case with Avisse (*Factum*, p. 4), the clerics who had adopted the Savoyard street-boys (*Projet pour les Savoyards*, p. 18) and the Frères Tabourins (GAZIER, "Écoles de charité", p. 228).

charity education directed at the integrated poor, or *pauvres honteux*, it appears that in Amiens a significant proportion of the more dependent levels of the working population were admitted to them also. Moreover, master scribes and other schoolmasters went to law to demand that the Frères be allowed to receive only the most indigent into their classes, on a certificate attesting their poverty from their parish priest.

The fate of these certificates of poverty in Amiens illustrates something of the ambiguity of charity education in practice. Teachers of *petites écoles* and master scribes demanded that they be made a requirement for entry into the schools of the Frères to protect themselves from what they regarded, probably with justification, as unfair competition. Their stipulation that these certificates be issued by the priests of the parishes in which potential students lived is significant, for the parish clergy were best informed about the condition of their flock. In the event these certificates were issued not by the parish priests, but by members of the municipal council, in their final form they made no mention of the poverty of the students.¹³¹ Intended as a means of restricting the schools of the Frères to the most indigent levels of the working population, in the hands of the secularly minded mayor and aldermen of Amiens these certificates seem to have become an instrument of patronage and a means of assuring the honourable, integrated and not quite so destitute *pauvres honteux* the lion's share of the places in the *écoles chrétiennes*.

V — CONCLUSION

Toward the end of the Old Regime charity schools in France were subject to the play of various and often contradictory forces. Rivalries between the masters of schools who lived from their fees and charity schools that asked none, the contest for control of charity education between the parish clergy and the *écolâtre*, the sharing of this authority between the *écolâtre* and the secular municipal council, and changing concepts of charity, of the clientele of charity schools and of the purpose of charitable education, all left their imprint on the charity schools of the period. They do not permit us to distinguish neatly between schools intended for the most indigent and geared to social control and others, intended for the only marginally poor, providing an education of real utility, though I believe these tendencies existed, the former on the whole corresponding to the parish charity schools whose means were often modest, the latter to substantially endowed schools of the teaching orders. As I have said above, one trend of thought was seldom if ever uninfluenced by the other. Taking the charity schools of the Old Regime in sum, however, I would risk concluding that they were intended for and in practice served a narrower social spectrum than would be expected on the assumption that charity was to be directed to the most needy. Underlying the already complex question of charity education under the Old Regime is the immense problem of poverty. It was a problem of dimensions so great that,

131. See above, n. 88.

given existing means of production and social structure, no humane solution was possible. For the men of the eighteenth century no less than for those of earlier periods, poverty remained an unchanging and inevitable condition of existence for the great majority of the population.¹³² For lack of resources the very poorest tended to be written off, or to be treated as a police problem. And among those who received charity education, there was a tendency for the least indigent to receive a greater share. For reasons stated above, educational opportunity seems to have eluded the very poor. Rather it was enjoyed by those who could appreciate the potential value of the instruction offered and where admission was restricted, those who had the necessary influence to be awarded the places.

132. A distinction was sometimes made between *misère*, which was regarded as unacceptable, and *pauvreté*, which was held to be both inevitable and necessary. See KAPLOW, *Names of Kings*, p. 27. On the assumed inevitability of poverty for the masses see HARRY PAYNE, *The Philosophes and the People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 146, and CHISICK, *The Limits of Reform*, chap. 5.

APPENDIX

Charity Schools Founded in Amiens during the Seventeenth
and Eighteenth Centuries

Date of Foundation	Institution or Parish	Founder	Position or Title	Endowment Principal	(in livres) Rente	Teachers
1624 ¹	Bureau des Pauvres					
1627 ¹	Enfans Orphelins	Guillaume Lucas	prêtre chanoine			
1676 ¹	Hôpital Général	Administrators				
[1680] ¹	Saint-Rémy	Du Fresne	curé	2,000		
[1675-80] ¹	Saint-Jacques	J. Avisse	curé	6,000 (and house)		priest
1689 ²	Saint-Jacques	Delacourt brothers				
1714 ³	unspecified	Moreau	écolâtre		150	3 maitresses d'école
1733 ³	unspecified	Moreau	écolâtre	40,000	1,250	4 sceurs
1748 ⁴	Frères de La Salle	A.-A. Vilmain	chanoine de la cathédrale	house acquired for school		
1759 ⁵	Frères de La Salle	J.-B. Pingré	écolâtre	19,056	762	3 frères
1762 ⁶	Frères de La Salle	Pierre de Châteauneuf	Trésorier extraordinaire des guerres		518	1 frère
1773 ⁷	Frères de La Salle	Tartasse de Romainville	major	9,000	300	1 frère
1775 ⁸	Frères de La Salle	De l'Estocq and P.J. Pingré	chanoine et vicaire général écolâtre	7,500 500 (for furniture)	300	1 frère
1788 ⁹	Frères de La Salle: Saint-Jacques	Machault	évêque	15,000	600	2 frères
1788 ¹⁰	Saint-Michel	Duminy	curé	house acquired for school		

¹ Archives municipales d'Amiens, GG 750, *Factum pour Maître Jacques Avisse*. Teachers at Enfants Orphelins to be appointed and removed by administrator.

² Ibid., GG 763³. Teacher to be a priest and to say three masses weekly for founders.

³ Ibid., GG 769. School to be located where *écolâtre* thinks best. Foundation of 1733 absorbed that of 1714.

⁴ Ibid., GG 759.

⁵ Ibid., GG 760.

⁶ Ibid., GG 761.

⁷ Ibid., GG 763. Fabrique of S. Leu to supply schoolhouse and furnishings; students from S. Leu and S. Sulpice only and named by administrators of Hôpital on basis of certificate of poverty from parish priest.

⁸ Ibid., GG 764. Students to pray for founders, each of whom names half the places in the class.

⁹ Ibid., GG 776. Two classes to be held in S. Jacques parish, two-thirds of the places from this parish and the other third from S. Germain, with ten of these for S. Firmin-à-la-Porte. Parish clergy to name to all places except twelve reserved for descendants of the Delacourt family (see 1689 foundation).

¹⁰ Ibid., GG 767.