

17. DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN

Summary:

Making the presentation of a work which is representative of an author can prove to be an arduous task. In such a work are found the geographical setting, the history of the time and the literary and philosophical trends; in a word, the whole of society. But, above all, it indicates the character, the sensitivity, the culture, the preferences and the artistic talent of the author.

To this gathering of factors is added, in this case, the theological and pastoral genre of the work, THE DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN TOWARDS GOD (henceforth, D.I.).

The very nature and brevity of this article does not allow us to outline, at least, the determining precedents of the D.I. In other parts of the present work, the reader will find fuller references to these... We shall adapt our presentation to the following outline.

1. Duties I in the setting of the French Catechisms of the 17th. C. – 2. Duties I in the catechetical-pastoral work of St. De La Salle. – 3. Those for whom the D.I was written. – 4. The sources of Duties I. – 5. The structure of Duties I. – 6. Presentation of the doctrinal message of Duties I. – 7. The style of Duties I. – 8. Brief history of Duties I. – 9. A re-reading of Duties I today.

1. THE DUTIES I IN THE SETTING OF THE FRENCH CATECHISMS OF THE 17TH. CENTURY

The original French catechisms had anonymous or private authors; people like Pierre Viret,¹ Edmond Auger,² René Benoit...³ followed by César de Bus,⁴ founder of the Brothers of the Christian Doctrine, Olier⁵ and the catechists of St. Sulpice; Bourdoise,⁶ St. Vincent de Paul and his Mission Catechisms, Simon Cerne,⁷ among others...

Translations of the "Catechismus ad Parocos" (Parish Catechism) abounded in France, at the start of, and throughout, the 17th. Century.⁸ In addition, adaptations for both persons and places were common.⁹ A number of bishops drew their inspiration from this to devise their own diocesan

catechisms.¹⁰ It was frequently offered to priests and teachers as a source of doctrine¹¹ and as a manual for preaching and catechesis.¹² Usually, Trent was based on Bellarmine and more rarely on Canisius.¹³

Halfway through the 17th. Century, the catechetical renewal became more vigorous in France. The bishops became aware of the profound ignorance of the people in their dioceses with regard to the mysteries of religion, and of their serious duty to instruct them in the sacred mysteries. At this time, bishops who were authors of catechisms appeared: Bossuet, who found inspiration in that of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet;¹⁴ Claude Joly,¹⁵ Bishop of Agen, one of De La Salle's sources, etc. In this way, other bishops disseminated in their dioceses the catechisms for

schools... those of Cambrai and Rheims adopted the Catechisme ou Sommaire de la Doctrine Chrétienne;¹⁶ the Cardinal of Lyons, Camille de Neuville, made use of the catechism of the Petites Écoles... It was rare for a diocese in the 17th. Century not to have its own catechism or an adopted one.

It was an approved practice of the time for authors to draw their inspiration, and even to copy, with impunity, without any acknowledgement of the source. The following title is expressive of this, "Catéchisme ou instruction de la Doctrine Chrétienne, où l'on apprend à devenir bon chrétien et à faire son salut, qui comprend et renferme tout ce qui est contenu dans les plus célèbres catéchismes de France, principalement ceux du diocèse de Lyon, Paris, Sens, Chalons de Campagne, Agen, et dans plusieurs catéchismes particuliers" (Avertissement du catéchisme de Besançon).

We know for certain that the majority of the French catechisms written before the Revolution were inspired by that of Claude Joly, the source of the D.I. This explains the similarity of the vocabulary, the way that the truths are expressed and the actual doctrinal content which confers on the catechisms under discussion a seal of differentiated "uniformity".

This "differentiation" affects the quantitative more than the qualitative; the cognitive more than the psychological. The "graduated" catechisms of several dioceses and authors conform to this criterion; we shall take two, by way of example. The Bishop of Orleans¹⁷ divides his catechism into:

- a) Summary for the little ones.
- b) For First Communion candidates.
- c) For those desirous of more thorough teaching.

M. de la Chétardie¹⁸ intended his for:

- a) Little ones and those who were ignorant (grossiers).
- b) Those approaching the Sacraments.
- c) The more advanced, including catechists.

The "differentiation" has to be considered in the light of the pastoral objective of the works: catechisms for First Communion; for the Sacrament of Penance; for Missions; and in the light of the apologetic objective; for the training of Christians; concerning the principal feasts, etc.

On to this luxuriant and colourful scene, De La Salle introduced Duties I, not by an act of spontaneous generation but foreshadowed, prepared and accompanied by a select and numerous family. Let us run our eyes over its prolific development.

2. THE D.I IN THE CATECHETICAL-PASTORAL WRITINGS OF DE LA SALLE¹⁹

From commitment to commitment, De La Salle was answering, faithfully, the call of Providence which seeks that all men be saved. His itinerary as a founder was based on "providing a Christian education for children",²⁰ preferably for the poor, by means of the knowledge and experience of the Gospel.²¹ The shaping and carrying out of this evangelical ideal gave unity, coherence and complementarity to the life, thinking and writings of De La Salle.

The treatise on Duties I, in virtue of its being a handbook of theology within the reach of the fairly well educated Christian²² is the writing of De La Salle which best gives testimony to the above-mentioned unity, coherence and complementarity, since it gives a theological structure to the educational plan of De La Salle's school. In this work, the author explains the saving action of God in the Jesus Christ of the Gospel,²³ and the response that the Christian must make: "connaître Dieu par la foi; et l'aimer par la charité".²⁴

The family of the duties²⁵

In a direct line, this family is composed of: D.I,²⁶ D.II,²⁷ Long Summary,²⁸ Short Summary,²⁹ and in a collateral line, Duties III. The following chart sheds light on this.

Duties I	510 pages and continuous text.
Duties II	304 pages, 1479 questions.
Long Summary	127 pages, 478 questions.
Short Summary	35 pages, 170 questions.

Conclusions

1st. Presentation in continuous text allows the author to clarify and develop his thinking; makes

him closer to the reader; the teaching is more personal; can introduce pastoral applications..

2nd. The questions and answers, in their theological conciseness, give the text strict, cold and impersonal qualities.

3rd. This very difference in presentation allows De La Salle to be more original in the D.I., and to stamp all his pages with the unmistakable seal of his spirituality. In various instances, D.I. is less inflexible than D.II.

4th. The use of the sources is more frequent, direct and relevant in D.I than in D.II.

5th. The basic message is the same in all four treatises, the only difference being the theological range and depth. There are slight variations in structure, but these are unimportant.

6th. It is worth pointing out that more space is given to subjects like the Eucharist, Matrimony, Prayer... in D.I. than in D.II. and the Summaries.

7th. There are subjects which only the D.I. deals with, such as the Canon of Holy Scripture, the capital sins, the Beatitudes, the virtue of penance and Sacramental rites.

8th. De La Salle, in his own summing up, gives proof of his "fidelity to essentials" which can be expressed in these terms: GOD who saves through the JESUS CHRIST of the GOSPEL, through the CHURCH, the dispenser of the SACRAMENTS (Topics of the Short Summary).

9th. The D.III, a treatise on the liturgy, even though it is on the collateral branch, belongs to the main body of the DUTIES, as much for the subjects dealt with, as for the way in which they are dealt. Its title³⁰ is a statement of unity and complementarity with the family. This very complementarity is mentioned on different occasions in D.III.

The liturgical basis, and the spirit exuded by the D.I receive their pastoral explanation in D.III,³¹ as in subjects like the Holy Mass, the Divine Office, Prayers for Sundays, the Mysteries of Christianity, made topical and celebrated in the Feasts which mark out the liturgical year.

3. D.I IN OTHER PASTORAL WRITINGS OF DE LA SALLE

Would it be pretentious to apply the "common noun", "pastoral works", to any writings of De La Salle? If the term pastoral does not appear in them, the content, the style and the purpose are indeed dedicated to the idea, as the author states in the prefaces.³² It seems to us that under this heading, we can have recourse to the following titles: the Meditations,³³ the Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer,³⁴ Instructions and Prayers for Holy Mass,³⁵ Of Exterior and Public Worship,³⁶ The Management of the Christian Schools,³⁷ Rules of Politeness and Christian Civility,³⁸ Instructions for Making a Good Confession,³⁹ Practices of Piety for the Christian Schools.⁴⁰

We cannot linger to make a study, treatise by treatise, of the literary, thematic or natural coincidences between these and the D.I. We shall have to be satisfied with putting forward, using the D.I as a starting point, a sample of some common traits.

1st. In all of these, De La Salle pursues the same objective: "to train him to be a Christian and to provide him with the means of leading a life in keeping with his state in life".⁴¹

2nd. To succeed in carrying out this objective, De La Salle will use every means within his grasp: of these the most effective is the school; but it must be given the tools for the job: teachers and books.

3rd. For De La Salle, knowledge, love and life always go hand in hand; that is why the teaching, from the D.I, sheds light on faith, becomes a living reality in the life of the Christian, and, the pastoral writings show how this living out of the faith must be animated by charity.⁴²

4th. According to De La Salle, the Christian School evangelises and is the arena for the practice of the Gospel maxims; even Christian civility must be practised in the light of faith.

5th. A comparative reading of the works we are discussing, reveals coincidences in the sources

and how they are made use of; the unity, coherence and complementarity of the teaching; the stress placed on certain topics dear to De La Salle: Prayer, Eucharist, Liturgy, Gospel...; the very persons for whom they were written, all their pages are steeped in the spirituality, which is encoded in the Lasallian project, "to live the Christian Spirit".⁴³

6th. In the same way, textual criticism reveals the unity of style, which is mirrored in the structure of the works; the vocabulary, the use of adjectives; the twin relationships of ideas and concepts, which are repeated, the comparisons and the use of the same examples; the syntax; the prefaces, where there are any,⁴⁴ etc., etc.

Conclusion

If, at the start of the D.I, De La Salle believes he has the duty of writing them in order to inform the Christian what the Christian Religion might be, he also shows, in the pastoral treatises, the compulsion he feels to instruct the pupils and the faithful, in general,⁴⁵ about the basic topics of the Christian life,⁴⁶ which he could not easily enlarge on in the D.I. Let us set down as our own the words of Georges Rigault who can put the full-stop to this title: "Duties I — the most important monument of Lasallian literature, a masterpiece in its own kind and one of the greatest publishing successes of the 18th. Century — were linked to De La Salle's teaching methodology, with which, in spite of its close relationship, they must not be confused".⁴⁷

4. THOSE FOR WHOM DUTIES I WAS INTENDED

Before the artist sets about his work, he asks himself: For whom am I doing this? De La Salle, unlike the way in which he dealt with other writings, does not specify who the readers of the D.I might be; hence, we must reflect and try to answer the question above. Three groups, either alone or together with others, could have been the object of his intentions: the Brothers of the Christian Schools, their pupils, or the faithful in general. With the support of internal criticism and the his-

tory of the D.I, we shall attempt to cast some light on the subject.

4.1. The Brothers

The presence of the Brothers in the thinking of the Founder is in contrast with their absence in the D.I. In the Fourth Commandment no reference is made to the teacher-pupil relationship. The approach to the Sixth commandment is more directed to married persons than to single people. How can the omission of the Evangelical Counsels be justified in a treatise intended for religious? In the examination of conscience for confession, there is not one question composed which refers to the obligations of religious... In the long and productive history of the D.I, there is no explicit statement that the Brothers have benefited from this book...

In spite of this, although the Brothers do not figure directly and obviously as the persons for whom this book was written, there can be no doubt that De La Salle bore them in mind when he was writing it. The heresies of the time,^{48 49} and the constant worry that the Brothers should have sound and dependable catechisms⁵⁰ at their disposal led him to provide them with these implements. Blain, his biographer, corroborates this when he writes: "(He wrote) other more complete, more profound and well-documented (catechisms)... It was these latter which formed the source whence the Brothers obtained the inspiration to explain the great truths of Religion".⁵¹

For our part, we have no hesitation in stating that when De La Salle's Rule prescribed that the Brothers "use their time well for the preparation of the catechism lessons which they must give to the pupils",⁵² they would have done this by using the D.I as a source of doctrine.

4.2. The pupils

At his point, we could repeat the bases of internal criticism cited in the case of the Brothers: not once are the words "enfant" and "élève" found; the omission of these in the Fourth Commandment and in the series of questions for the examination of conscience... Moreover, we must include the subject matter which is inappropriate

for the minds of young children; the lay-out in continuous prose which is unsuitable for learning by heart... Compare this absence in the D.I with the presence of the pupils in D.II⁵³ and D.III.⁵⁴

The fate of the D.I when it was published contradicts the internal criticism: if it was not basically intended for the pupils, in spite of all, these were the chief beneficiaries. The evidence in favour of using the D.I as a reading book in the Brothers' classrooms and in other centres, both private and public, is as plentiful as it is reliable. The reference in the "Conduite" to "le second livre de lecture dont on se servira... sera un livre d'instruction chrétienne",⁵⁵ seems to refer to the D.I as a reader in the classes.⁵⁶ We should also include the approval of the bishops who insisted on its use in schools. Writers and booksellers,⁵⁷ year after year, offered the D.I to schools, secondary schools, seminaries, girls' schools... Of interest is the personal experience of Antoine Sylvère in his novel "Le cri d'un enfant auvergnat".⁵⁸

4.3. The Faithful

The reader of the D.I repeatedly comes across expressions with this sense "c'est ici le lieu d'en traiter, et d'en instruire les fidèles".⁵⁹ Frequently the concept "fidèles" becomes more definite as "pères et mères".⁶⁰ This leads us to the conclusion that Christians, and, specifically, parents were part of the plan for the D.I. Did he set out deliberately, when writing it, to put into their hands a weapon for combating the ignorance that he deplored in other writings?⁶¹ Did he seek a meeting-point for the family-school complementarity?

The systemisation of the numerous passages in which the author of the D.I proposes "to teach, to train, to assist" Christians and parents to fulfil their obligations corresponds to three main objectives:

1. To bring about the training of the readers in the mysteries of the faith⁶² and in the duties of the Christian; to have them be considered as the focus of the Commandments, of the long treatment and the casuistry devoted to the Sacrament of Matrimony, of the treatise on Prayer...

2. To remind the parents of their duties as educators of their children in the faith.⁶³

3. To forewarn the parents about sins of omission.⁶⁴

The variety and the frequency with which the names of the professions adorn the pages of the D.I support the Carión's theory that the D.I constitutes a theological treatise for Christians who have received an average education.⁶⁵ With this work, De La Salle shows that the world of adults and that of the family is not inconsistent with his apostolic and fundamental concerns.

Conclusion

Judging by the text of the D.I, where we read in the very first page: "ayant le dessein de former un chrétien",⁶⁶ its content and structure were thought out with fairly well educated Christians in mind; its layout in continuous text facilitated and recommended, following the practice of the time, its introduction in the schools, where it found its success as a publication; its sound and clear teaching helped the Brothers in their personal training and in the preparation of catechism lessons for their pupils. In sum, in spite of the fact that the persons for whom it was written are not clearly specified, Brothers, pupils, the faithful and parents reaped benefits from its teaching, for centuries, in different ways and proportions.

5. THE SOURCES OF THE D.I

The credibility of any data, the trustworthiness of a dissertation are guaranteed, for the most part, by the sources. The theological studies, which De La Salle successfully pursued, enabled him to prepare the subject matter of the D.I without his having to rely on outside authorities: the facts were otherwise. The reader can discover quite easily in its pages what these might be. The explanation could be given, of course, that to speak about the sources of the D.I is to refer to De La Salle's great "devotions". Our consideration will be centred, in turn, on the nature and the presence of the sources and how they are used in the D.I.

5.1. The Nature of the sources in the Duties

The doctrinal construction of the D.I is supported by four cornerstones of granite: the Holy Scripture, the Church, the Sacred Fathers and the Liturgy. The inspiration for the structure and the setting of the mysteries and truths come, in the main, from the catechisms of Claude Joly, Bishop of Agen and Le Coreur, the missionary theologian.

5.1.1. *The Holy Scriptures*

Their presence in the D.I is continuous from the first to the last page.⁶⁷ Forty-two holy books light up and endorse the D.I. There are more New Testament references than ones from the Old Testament; the majority of the N.T. references are from the Gospels and among the Evangelists, St. Matthew leads, followed by St. John. St. Paul is also prominent, as Apostle of the Gentiles.

5.1.2. *The Church*

The D.I. offers De La Salle the opportunity to demonstrate his love for Holy Mother Church.⁶⁸ The special functions of the Church — teaching,⁶⁹ ministering, witnessing⁷⁰ and prophesying⁷¹ — stand out in hundreds of passages.

5.1.3. *The Sacred Fathers*

The Sacred Fathers embody living Tradition, adapted to the “hic et nunc”. In them, De La Salle’s Faithfulness seeks official references for his statements.

5.1.4. *The Liturgy*

The D.I does not depart from the Liturgy in order to work out the doctrine; but, indeed, it gives plenty of scope in its pages to liturgical initiation and prayers. The thinking Christian finds there how to combine his life of faith with celebration.

5.2. How the D.I makes use of the sources

At this stage, it is impossible to quantify, even if only in percentages, the number of times that each source appears in the D.I.⁷² The quotations,

either literal or with stated references, amount to more than a thousand; indirect, but genuine, references, are more numerous. Writing in continuous prose allows the author frequent use and the blending of the sources in his theological thinking, a process which did not take place in the D.II nor in the catechisms of Joly and Le Coreur.

5.3 The way in which the sources are used in the D.I

In the D.I the sources are presented:

5.3.1. *Implicitly*: without any reference given, perfectly assimilated to the text; e.g. in the Life of Jesus Christ⁷³ and passim.

5.3.2. *According to such an author*: De La Salle put his text together, starting with expressions in this style: “As Jesus Christ says...” “According to the Gospel...”⁷⁴ This usage occurs very often.

5.3.3. *References to the quotation*: The D.I gives the specific reference to a quotation only in a few instances.⁷⁵

In the first instances, the D.I, in accordance with the major ecclesial and patristic tradition, uses the sources as a means of generating doctrine. The literal quotations seldom have any apologetic worth, as the spirit and tone of the D.I are far removed from the polemical.⁷⁶

It is proper to note the role given by the D.I to the Church as the exemplar and the witness of the Christian message. Phrases such as: “dans la primitive Église... Les premiers chrétiens...” abound in the D.I.⁷⁷

Conclusion

1st. The D.I draw inspiration lavishly from the authentic and ever green sources of Revelation: Holy Scripture and Tradition, *latu sensu*. Catechisms throughout the ages have drawn their inspiration from these same sources, as did the writers of the Universal Catechism of Vatican II.⁷⁸

2nd. In this sphere, the D.I. takes its place at the head of the catechisms of its time, and without making any claim to labelling it as “biblical-liturgical”, with genuine status, we can state that its pages are beset with Scripture, especially the Gospel, and the worship of the Triune God.

3rd. The use De La Salle makes of the above sources gives evidence of the knowledge he had of them and the command and mastery he had in order to make use of them; up to the point of forcing the reader to reflect as to what belongs to the sources and what belongs to De La Salle.

6. PLAN OR STRUCTURE

The structure of a theological work is significant. The sequence and linking of the parts

reveals how the author sees the history of Salvation... Among the catechisms of De La Salle's time, it is unusual to find any which indicate and justify the transition between their constituent parts. When they do so, there is no compromise: "...it is not enough to believe, you must hope; it is not enough to believe and hope, you must practise..." What occurs in D.I?

The structure of the principal catechisms of the 17th. Century in France corresponds to one of the three following canons:

CANISIUS	FAITH (Creed)	HOPE (Prayer)	CHARITY (Commandments)	SACRAMENTS	JUSTIFICATION
CALVIN-AUGER	FAITH (Creed)	LAW (Commandments)	PRAYER	SACRAMENTS	
ROMAN CAT.	FAITH (Creed)	SACRAMENTS	COMMANDMENTS	PRAYER	
JOLY-DLS	CREED	COMMANDMENTS	SACRAMENTS	PRAYER	

The writing of the D.I in continuous text allows the author to reason out and to substantiate his ideas; in this way, the work has a logical construction and from the point of view of theology, there is a logical sequence between parts, articles, chapters and, sometimes, sections. On this point, De La Salle shows himself as a systematic person, who sees the plan of salvation as a complete entity, and compared to Joly and Le Coreur and to much of the catechisms of that time, he shows exceptional originality. His reasoning is as follows:

*** 1st. PART**

The Christian's essential duties in this life are to KNOW AND LOVE GOD p. X.

1st. TREATISE

Of the knowledge of God in Himself... and of Jesus Christ and what he has done to save us p. 12

2nd. TREATISE

FAITH without CHARITY; with Good Works would be useless. p. 89

*** 2nd. PART**

In order to KNOW AND LOVE GOD we need GRACE which GOD gives us... p. 193

1st. TREATISE

HABITUAL GRACE through the SACRAMENTS, p. 198

2nd. TREATISE

ACTUAL GRACE through PRAYER

Important consequences can be deduced from the above plan:

1st. "LOGICAL-THEOLOGICAL" PLAN.

De La Salle covers his structure with Cartesian logic: TO KNOW = TO LOVE = TO ACT; but, at the same time, the deepest theology defies the thinking: GOD known, GOD loved and GOD served.

2nd. We can state convincingly that the D.I is THEOCENTRIC and PERSONALISED. In the titles of its two parts and its four treatises, GOD IS ALWAYS THE OBJECT of the DUTIES of the Christian.⁷⁹

3rd. The phrase "Duties" — "devoirs envers Dieu" — is not taken in the D.I as something extrinsic, as an imperative... but as a "commitment" which springs forth from existence itself... as something which is born of the very essence of the Christian; something which he cannot fail

to carry out, as expressed in D.II.⁸⁰ These “duties” imply the liberty of a son, not the servitude of a slave.

4th. For De La Salle, GRACE is “the means” of carrying out the “devoirs envers Dieu”⁸¹ and not a “cure” for sin, according to Joly.⁸² De La Salle connects grace with the Sacraments, from which it flows, and not with the commandments. It is a GIFT of GOD with a view to his service first and the salvation of mankind afterwards.

5th. In the D.I, De La Salle does not overlook the fact that man must work for his salvation; but this salvation will result from the fulfilling of the “devoirs envers Dieu”, and, in every instance, it will be God who takes the initiative and saves, with the collaboration of man.

Whoever wishes more detail on this subject can read the following pages of D.I: X, 1-2, 88-90, 102, 161-162, 193-194, 198-200, and from this reading, the most satisfying conclusions can be drawn.

7. THE CATECHETICAL MESSAGE OF D.I

De La Salle opens the pages of his treatise with some lines which suggest his plan of work: “Eternal life consists of knowing God in Himself and what he has done (Mirabilia Dei), and the Incarnate Son of God and what he has done for our Salvation, Redemption and Sanctification”. “ALL THE TRUTHS THAT WE HAVE TO KNOW” are summarised in this.⁸³ By its having been faithful to the results of this principle, the text of the D.I would correspond to the History of Salvation. With regard to the mysteries of Creation⁸⁴ and Redemption,⁸⁵ they are faithful to the Bible and the Gospel, respectively; in the remainder, they are in conformity with the treatises of theology, although they are always committed and close to the reader.

The message of the D.I certainly coincides well with that of the catechisms that inspired it, nevertheless, certain points of interest in the better catechetical tradition are outstanding in them and these we wish to point out briefly.

7.1. The Trinitarian basis of the message: the division of the Creed, God the Father (Creation),

Jesus Christ (Redemption) and Holy Spirit (Sanctification);⁸⁶ the mysteries of the church, grace, the Sacraments and prayer... find their cause and their explanation in the Mystery of the Trinity.

7.2. We have pointed out, above, the “Theocentricism” of the D.I; in the same way that it is “Christocentric”. The person of Jesus Christ lights up and animates all the doctrines and mysteries. We can make so bold as to apply the adjective “Christotheo-centric” to the D.I.

7.3. What we say about Jesus Christ is applicable to the message of the Good News; hence, to proclaim that the D.I is “Christocentric” is to affirm that it is “evangelical”. In fact, the maxims and spirit of the Gospel confirm and give life to its pages from the first to the last.⁸⁷

7.4. The sixteen pages that the D.I⁸⁸ devotes to laying the foundations of the fulfilment of the law by the double precept of love, constitutes proof positive of the essential nature of the message it expounds. “Love” is a constant when the D.I deals with the mysteries of Creation,⁸⁹ Redemption,⁹⁰ Sanctification,⁹¹ sin,⁹² Grace,⁹³ eschatology,⁹⁴ prayer, etc...

7.5. We must note the spiritual unction in which the pages of the D.I are steeped. The person of the Holy Spirit is present in the Christian mysteries: faith,⁹⁵ Redemption,⁹⁶ Church,⁹⁷ the New Law,⁹⁸ sin,⁹⁹ Sacraments,¹⁰⁰ prayer,¹⁰¹ Sanctification...¹⁰² author of the D.I goes above and beyond the legal and ritualistic fulfilling of the law, in order to substantiate motivation and action in the “spirit”. There is an abundance of expressions with the sense of: “Spirit of God”,¹⁰³ “Spirit of Jesus Christ”,¹⁰⁴ “Spirit of the Church”,¹⁰⁵ “Spirit of penance”, etc., etc...

7.6. At this point, it is important to highlight the originality of the D.I in the way it presents the message. In the face of the declared impersonality of the teachings of the catechisms of the time, De La Salle establishes personal relationship between the Christian and God. Statements such as the following are commonplace: “De la foi par laquelle NOUS connaissons DIEU en ce monde”;¹⁰⁶ “NOUS rendons à DIEU NOS devoirs”.¹⁰⁷ Bringing things to a personal level is a trait of De La Salle’s pedagogy.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

A catechism based on the transcendence and immanence of the triune God, who creates, redeems and sanctifies by the rule of the New Commandment and by the maxims of the Gospel, will always retain its current importance in what are the essentials.

8. THE STYLE OF THE DUTIES I

De La Salle's biographers, and those who have written about him, are in agreement about the D.I as being most carefully written and successful of his writings from the point of view of style. Blain depicts the Saint as repeatedly revising and re-touching the text.¹⁰⁹ Maillefer, in a concise sentence, evaluates the D.I in this way: "Its style is simple and flowing and, at the same time, 'effective'; no one could read it without being moved".¹¹⁰ The historian, Georges Rigault assesses the D.I as "the most important monument in Lasallian literature and a masterpiece in its own genre".¹¹¹ The Superior General, Bro. Athanase Emile, recalls the words of Maillefer when he writes: "The pages of the D.I have a clear and economic style; there is nothing that gratifies the senses".¹¹² Finally, Bro. Saturnino Gallego states: "We are in the presence of a very personal work: the language is clear and, even-flowing, except when he uses the indirect style".¹¹³ For our part, after repeated readings, we make bold to pass our own judgement on the style of the D.I.

We attribute the following qualities, among others: simple, concise, clear, precise, direct and intimate. It is within the grasp of any fairly well-educated Christian, of housekeepers, of the employees in the various occupations common to contemporary society.¹¹⁴ He uses only the necessary terms and is sparing with adjectives, which makes for a more personal approach.¹¹⁵ Its conciseness does not obscure the text, which has been prepared with words which are exact and within the grasp of the reader. This latter feels that he is addressed directly and involved in the teachings and mysteries being discussed.¹¹⁶ The reader of the D.I is steeped in the readings by means of the spirituality which glows in and unifies all its pages.

Occasionally, mainly when the style is indirect, fluency is lost because of the extent and the detailed and subordinate structure of the sentence. On the other hand, the style gains rhythm and harmony with the use of double main clause sentences, of which his contemporaries were so fond.¹¹⁷

The D.I is sparse in the use of images, comparisons and examples, which embellish and brighten up the style. When any of these are used, the source of inspiration is the Holy Scripture.¹¹⁸

Conclusion

If, as Azorin writes, "the style is the man", we can state that the D.I presents De La Salle to us as a person who is emotive, creative, methodical, realistic and balanced.

9. MATERIALS FOR A HISTORY OF THE D.I

Since 1703, when it made its first appearance, until 1982 when Antonio Carión brought out the latest edition, the D.I has had a long and fruitful existence. Its history remains to be written. This is not the place to write it. We are simply offering some pieces of information which express its vitality and its circulation.

9.1. Editions and reprints amounted to over three hundred.

9.2. The year 1828 has been the most fruitful in re-editions: ten.

9.3. It has been published or reprinted in forty five different cities; Paris stands out with 38 reprints.

9.4. Editors, printers and booksellers who have benefited from the D.I total more than ninety nine.

9.5. It has been in constant use in primary schools, high schools for both sexes, seminaries, education centres for young girls and youths... It has been used for prize-giving.

9.6. How many readers has the D.I had? This is a question for the imagination of the historian. There have been print runs which ran to 10,000, 5,000, 4,000 and 3,000 copies respectively.

9.7. As it was a school textbook, many of the reprints were prefaced with learning aids for the pupils: daily prayers, acts of faith..., the Office of Our Lady..., including, multiplication tables...

9.8. In the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, it has taken up the attention of a fair number of Superiors General and General Chapters.

9.9. In the Institute itself, for reasons of misguided filial zeal, De La Salle's authorship was denied at one given time.

Will the D.I ever find a meticulous and persistent historian to pursue, step by step, its lowly but fertile story?

10. THE DUTIES TODAY

More than one reader could ask himself: Does the D.I contain anything of catechetical worth that is on the same wavelength as modern catechisms? We shall try to draw attention to a mere handful of "points of interest" which endorse the teaching put forth in the D.I and which have not lost their present importance, as being essential to the message of salvation.

10.1. De La Salle makes the readers of the D.I sharers in his own personal experience of the mystery of the one in three God: "theocentricism". God the Father creates through love; God the Son redeems through love; and God the Holy Spirit sanctifies through love. The God of the D.I is both transcendent and immanent: He is the God of the Burning Bush and of the personal call to Abraham.

10.2. The person of Jesus Christ sheds light on and lays the foundations of all the truths and mysteries imparted in the D.I. When it gives a definition of the Christian, it points out as distinctive that he must "be animated by the Spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and lead a life similar to his".¹¹⁹ The role that the D.I assigns to the person of Jesus Christ is central, and the way it deals with His various attributes is complete, balanced and discerned, and in accordance with each one of them in the history of salvation. On this point, De La Salle looks to the past in St. Augustine, "everyth-

ing in catechesis must evangelise in Christ",¹²⁰ and he looks to the future in John Paul II, "the central position of Christ is the inspirational motive and the basis on which modern catechetics, especially those for youth and adults, is built".

10.3. If we cannot come to the conclusion that the D.I is a biblical catechism in today's terms, we can indeed affirm that the Holy Scripture, especially the Holy Gospels, forms the warp wherein the catechetical message of the D.I is woven together. De La Salle, who drew sustenance every day from the sacred fountains, conveys, through necessity, his personal experience to his readers.¹²¹

10.4. For faith to be expressed, personal relationships between God and the believer are necessary. The D.I, from its title, "Duties of a Christian towards God..." right up to its last page, "finally, any other act that draws us towards God..." gives rise to the personal relationship and keeps it alive. This feature distinguishes it from its sources and from many of the catechisms of that period, and brings it close to those of today.

10.5. The "sensus Ecclesiae" of De La Salle — Roman Priest — and the devotion which led him to put it into practice — allowed him to blend and make a synthesis, as few others could, of the Church mystical and the Church hierarchical: it has always been animated by the Holy Spirit,¹²² and founded, in due time, by Jesus Christ and ruled by his successors. For De La Salle, the Church has a value as a witness and as an example: on repeated occasions, he urges his readers with phrases like: "as was practised in the Church, or in the 'early' Church".¹²³

10.6. The D.I in the school of Jesus Christ, of St. Augustine, of the Roman Catechism¹²⁴ and of many catechists of recognised worth, transforms "love" into the supreme law of catechism teaching. The Law, the Sacraments, Prayer, sin, eschatology, etc... all are filtered in the D.I in a categorical manner, through the prism of the New Commandment. In this case, De La Salle can say with St. Augustine, "Ama et fac quod vis".

10.7. Without any doubt, the treatise on Prayer is the most original of the D.I. Few contemporary catechisms can equal the scope, depth and unction of the D.I. It is the most in accord with the author's spiritual journey. It is the most

personal, and a fair number of De La Salle's writings come together in it. We believe that it synthesises the message of the D.I: God saves with the co-operation of the Christian... The Universal Catechism of Vatican II, as well, was to highlight the treatise on Prayer, with its own identity.

10.8. Likewise, it appears that we should underline the talent for "synthesis" and for "essentiality" that is part and parcel of the D.I. As far as its author is concerned, everything that the Christian must "believe, know, practice and receive" can be reduced to two "duties which spring from the essence of every man" — "to know and to love God": this will be repeated at one time or another throughout the treatise.¹²⁵ Moreover, in the preface to this work, the author breaks off to state that "all the truths that we must believe can be condensed to knowing God in Himself and what Jesus Christ has accomplished for our salvation". Can the message of salvation be condensed in fewer words?

CONCLUSION

To conclude, let us draw attention to four corner stones of the solid edifice of the D.I.

a) The stated PURPOSE: to educate true Christians in their filial relationships with God.

b) The solidity of its THEOCHRISTOCENTRIC MESSAGE, unified in and by LOVE.

c) The evergreen quality of the biblical-evangelical, ecclesial-patristic, and liturgical sources.

d) The LIVING REFLECTION of its author's spirituality, in each one of its pages.

¹ VIRET, Pierre: *Exposition familière de l'Oraison de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ, et des choses dignes de considérer sur celle, fait en forme de dialogue.* Genève, J. Girard, 1548, in 8°.

² *Catéchisme et sommaire de la Doctrine Chrétienne avec un formulaire de diverses prières catholiques et plusieurs avertissements pour toutes les manières de gens. Composé par Edmond Auger de la Compagnie de Jésus,* Paris G. Buon, 1565.

³ *Catéchisme ou instruction populaire, contenant les principales points de la Religion Chrétienne, lesquels tous les chrétiens sont tenus de savoir,* par René Benoit, Docteur, Paris, J. Poupy 1574.

⁴ Cfr. Article "Doctrinaires" in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*

t. III, col. 1501-1512; RAYEZ, S.J., *Spiritualité du Vénérable César de Bus*, RAM, 34 1958 pp. 185-203. Michel SAUVAGE, *FSC, Catéchèse et Laïcat*, Ligel, 1962, p. 386.

⁵ Cf. *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, t. XI, col. 970.

⁶ Cf. *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, t. II, col. 1927 et seq.; BROUTIN: *La Réforme Pastorale en France au XVII^e s.*, Desclée, Paris 1956, t. II, pp. 127-191.

⁷ *Le Pédagogie des familles chrétiennes, contenant un recueil de plusieurs instructions sur diverses matières. Divisé en quatre parties. Utile aux Curez, prestes, missionnaires pour l'instruction des simples, aux chefs de famille pour l'instruction de leurs enfants et domestiques et à toutes sortes de personnes, qui veulent vivre selon Dieu.* Recueilli par un prestre de Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet. 5^{ème} ed. Paris, Chez Jacques de Laize de Bresche, MDCLXXXIV.

⁸ We should note in passing how much more productive the second half of 17th. Century was than the first: 1610 - 1661 - 1673 -1676 - 1678 - 1679 - 1681 - 1683 - 1685 - 1686 - 1694...

⁹ *Catéchisme abrégé de la Doctrine et Instruction Chrétienne du Saint Concile de Trente*, traduit en langue vulgaire pour l'usage du diocèse de Vavres, 1648.

¹⁰ *Catéchisme du diocèse de Chartres*, imprimé par l'ordre de Mgr. l'Illustrissime et Révérendissime Paul Godet des Marais, Evêque de Chartres, 1698. In the "Mandement" in which he recommended it, we read: "On s'est proposé pour modèle le Catéchisme de Trente..."

¹¹ Pour remédier l'ignorance voici les livres signalés et les plus recommandés: *Le catéchisme du Concile de Trente...* cf. BROUTIN, *op.cit.*, t. 1, p. 128.

¹² Les dits curés achèteront les livres que nous avons désignés: Grenade, Tolet, Polanco et le Catéchisme de Trente... cf. Synodal decree of 1648, quoted by J. AULANCHE in *La Réforme Catholique au XVII^{ème} siècle dans le Diocèse de Limoges*; Paris, 1906 and quoted by Broutin, *op.cit.*, t 1, pp. 263-264.

¹³ Pour lutter contre l'ignorance religieuse, les statuts de 1630 prescrivent les prênes que les curés devront faire tous les dimanches. Pour préparer ces instructions l'Evêque renvoi e aux Catéchisme Romain, à ceux de Canisius et de Bellarmin... Henri de SPONDE, Evêque de Pamiers, 1628-1634; quoted by BROUTIN, *op.cit.*, t. 1, p. 151.

¹⁴ Cf. *Catéchisme de Meaux*.

¹⁵ *Les Devoirs du Chrétien, dressés en forme de catéchisme* par feu Messire Claude JOLY, Evêque et Comte d'Agen, en faveur des curez et des fidèles de son diocèse, A Agen, chez Antoine Bou, 1686.

¹⁶ *Sommaire de la Doctrine Chrétienne*, réimprimé par le commandement de Mgr l'Illustrissime et Révérendissime Louis de LORRAINE, Arch. de Reims, 1622.

¹⁷ *Catéchisme du diocèse d'Orléans*, imprimé par l'ordre de Mgr. l'Illustrissime et Révérendissime Louis Gaston FLEURIAN, Evêque d'Orléans, pour être le seul enseigné dans son diocèse. A Orléans, chez François BORDE, 1709.

¹⁸ Cf. *Catéchisme ou abrégé de la Doctrine Chrétienne*, imprimé par ordre de Mgr P.P. Archevêque de Bourges, pour être le seul enseigné dans son diocèse. Bourges chez François Toubeau, 1688.

¹⁹ MD. 193, 2 & 3 passim.

²⁰ Common Rule of 1917, Ch. 1, Art. 4.

²¹ MD. 194, 2 & 3 passim.

²² Debers I, ed. 1892 by Carión, preface.

²³ D.I, pp. 1 & 2.

²⁴ D.I, preface, p. X.

²⁵ Yves POUTET, *Jean-Baptiste de La Salle aux prises avec*

son temps. C.L., No. 48, p. 168. For the sake of coherence with the doctoral thesis, I have kept to the earlier name of these findings.

²⁶ *Les Devoirs d'un chrétien envers Dieu et les moyens de pouvoir bien s'en acquitter*, divisés en deux parties. Paris, 1703, C.L. 20.

²⁷ *Les Devoirs d'un chrétien envers Dieu* divisés en deux parties, Paris 170, C.L. 21.

²⁸ *Grand abrégé des devoirs d'un chrétien envers Dieu*; Paris 1704? C.L. 23.

²⁹ *Petit abrégé des Devoirs d'un chrétien envers Dieu*, Paris 1704? C.L. 23.

³⁰ *Du culte extérieur et public que les chrétiens sont obligés de rendre à Dieu, et des moyens de le lui rendre*. Troisième partie des *Devoirs d'un chrétien envers Dieu*, Paris, 1703. C.L. 22.

³¹ *Du Culte ext.* pp. 70 & 25.

³² *Instructions et prières pour la sainte messe*, préface; and *Règles de la Bienséance*, préface.

³³ *Méditations pour les Dimanches de l'année*. Rouen 1729 C.L. 14. *Méditations pour le temps de la Retraite*, Rouen 1728. C.L. 13.

³⁴ *Instructions et prières pour la sainte Messe*, Paris 1698? C.L. 17.

³⁵ Cf. Note 30.

³⁶ *Conduite des Écoles Chrétiennes*, Avignon 1720. C.L. 24.

³⁷ *Règles de la Bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne*, Troyes, 1703, C.L. 19.

³⁸ *Instruction méthodique pour apprendre à se bien confesser*; Paris 1698? C.L. 17.

³⁹ *Exercices de piété qui se pratiquent dans les écoles chrétiennes*, Paris, between 1696 and 1700, C.L. 18.

⁴⁰ D.I, préface p. II.

⁴¹ D.I, p. 89.

⁴² Md. 196,3 & 199,1, etc...

⁴³ Cf. The prologues of the *Règles de la Bienséance* and the *Instructions et prières*.

⁴⁴ D.I, préface, p. II.

⁴⁵ Cf. note 32.

⁴⁶ Georges RIGAUT, *Histoire générale de l'Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes*, t. I, p. 556, Paris, Librairie Plon.

⁴⁷ *Conduite*, Préface, C.L. N. 24; *Règles de la Bienséance*, Préface, C.L. N. 19; *Instructions pour la Sainte Messe*. Avertissement, C.L. N. 17.

⁴⁸ Among others, Jansenism, Quietism, Gallicanism...

⁴⁹ MD. p. 20; MD. p. 172, C.L. N. 12.

⁵⁰ Cf. Blain, t. I, p. 341.

⁵¹ R.C. c. XXIX, 13.

⁵² *Devoirs* II, pp. 182, 183, C.L. N. 21.

⁵³ *Devoirs* III, p. 293 and passim, C.L. N. 22.

⁵⁴ *Conduite*, p. 33, C.L. N. 24.

⁵⁵ The following Superiors General, among others, referred in their Circulars, to *Devoirs* I: Agathon, Gerbaud, Guillaume, Philippe, Joseph, Gabriel-Marie, Imier de Jésus, Adrien, Athanase Emile, J. Pablo Basterrechea...

⁵⁶ By way of example, Librero Mégard, 1813 - Léfors, 1818 - Catalogue Général, 1882 - Mame Tours, 1855 - Eugène Ardaant, 1870 - Thibaud - Landriot, 1877. There are plenty of others.

⁵⁷ Antoine Sylvère, *Le cri d'un enfant Auvergnat*, pp. 91-92.

⁵⁸ D.I, p. 162.

⁵⁹ D.I, p. 125.

⁶⁰ MR p. 9, C.L. No. 12; *Règles de la Bienséance*. Préface,

passim, C.L. No. 19.

⁶¹ D.I, pp. 162, 168, 184, 309, 397, 444...

⁶² D.I, pp. 15, 124, 125, 376, 385, 486...

⁶³ D.I, pp. 122, 179...

⁶⁴ Let us draw attention to some of these: artisans, pp. 120, 122, 158 - avocats, p. 142 - cabaretiers, p. 123 - domestiques, pp. 123, 137, 140, 152 - fermiers, p. 140 - juge, p. 299 - magistrats, pp. 123, 124, 129 - notaires, p. 142 - ouvriers, pp. 122, 133, 140 - serviteurs, pp. 120, 122, 124, 128 - comédiens, p. 134.

⁶⁵ D.I, Préface, p. II.

⁶⁶ D.I, pp. 1 & 494.

⁶⁷ MD. 106,1.

⁶⁸ D.I, pp. IV, V, IX, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, etc...

⁶⁹ D.I, pp. 224, 228, 340, 401, 475, etc...

⁷⁰ D.I, pp. 360, 441, 455, 459 etc...

⁷¹ Cf. Translation of *Duties* I by Bro. José Antonio Díez de Medina, 1990, my own thesis on the D.I 72. D.I, pp. 24 to 62.

⁷² D.I, pp. 24 to 62.

⁷³ D.I, pp. 89, 90, 91, 99, etc...

⁷⁴ D.I, p. 12.

⁷⁵ D.I, pp. 251, 252, 253, 254, 255 which show how the D.I. makes use of the sources.

⁷⁶ D.I, pp. 80, 215, 218, 219, 220... 456, 461, 465, 480 etc...

⁷⁷ Cf. Press conference given by Cardinal Ratzinger, in Rome, Rev. Vida Nueva. 78

⁷⁸ D.I, pp. 1, 89, 193, 199, 405, etc...

⁷⁹ D.II, p. 7. Un chrétien peut-il se dispenser de ces deux devoirs? Non, il ne peut jamais s'en dispenser, s'il veut vivre en véritable chrétien, et être agréable à Dieu.

⁸⁰ D.I, pp. 193, 194.

⁸¹ Claude Joly, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁸² D.I, pp. 1 & 2.

⁸³ D.I, pp. 19 to 24.

⁸⁴ D.I, pp. 24 to 62.

⁸⁵ D.I, p. 14.

⁸⁶ D.I, pp. 1 & 494, and passim in the treatise.

⁸⁷ D.I, pp. 89, 115.

⁸⁸ D.I, pp. 14, 19, 21, 22, 92...

⁸⁹ D.I, pp. 26, 44, 45, 56...

⁹⁰ D.I, pp. 61, 62...

⁹¹ D.I, pp. 290, 291, 23, 162, 266...

⁹² D.I, p. 249.

⁹³ D.I, pp. 22, 64, 88, 94...

⁹⁴ D.I, p. 223.

⁹⁵ D.I, p. 25.

⁹⁶ D.I, pp. 63, 99, 151.

⁹⁷ D.I, p. 99.

⁹⁸ D.I, pp. 168, 238, 328.

⁹⁹ D.I, pp. 201, 357.

¹⁰⁰ D.I, p. 474.

¹⁰¹ D.I, pp. 65, 73, 195.

¹⁰² D.I, pp. X, 196, 237, 295, 378...

¹⁰³ D.I, pp. V, 213, 232, 259, 260...

¹⁰⁴ D.I, pp. 111, 216, 476...

¹⁰⁵ D.I, p. 1 and following, passim.

¹⁰⁶ D.I, p. 407.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Conduite des Écoles Chrétiennes*... passim.

¹⁰⁸ Blain, *o.c.*, t. I, c. XII, p. 341 and Maillefer, 242.

¹⁰⁹ Maillefer, C.L. 6, No 183.

¹¹⁰ Georges Rigault, *o.c.*, t. I, p. 556.

¹¹¹ Bro. Athanase-Émile, Circ. 330, 1950.

¹¹² *San Juan Bautista de La Salle. Escritos*. H. Saturnino

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¹¹³ Cf. Artisans, p. 120, 122, 158 - médecin, p. 310 - ouvriers, pp. 122, 140 - marchands, pp. 122, 143, 299...

¹¹⁴ Cf. TRÈS SAINTE Vierge, SAINT Concile, SAINT Évangile, aimable vertu, VÉRITABLE chrétien...

¹¹⁵ Voilà ce que Jésus-Christ a souffert pour l'amour de NOUS... et pour NOUS exciter à l'aimer... D.I, p. 56 etc...

¹¹⁶ D.I, Maîtres et maîtresses... serviteurs et servantes... l'esprit de foi et de zèle...

¹¹⁷ D.I, pp. 324, 402, 440...

¹¹⁸ D.I, p. V.

¹¹⁹ Cf. St. Augustin, Commentary on the words of the eunuch baptised by Philip.

¹²⁰ D.I, p. 194.

¹²¹ D.I, p. 64.

¹²² D.I. Among other, pp. 229, 240, 245, 252, 303, 340, 341, 401, 402, 475.

¹²³ Cf. Catecismo Romano, Prólogo, BAC. t. 158, p. 17.

¹²⁴ D.I, pp. X, 1, 193, 405, 409, 477.

¹²⁵ D.I, pp. 1 & 2.

Complementary Themes:

Love; Catechism; Christian; God; Holy Spirit; Church; Commandments; Prayer; Sacraments; Salvation; Blessed Virgin.

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