

# 75. DUTY, OBLIGATION

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## 1. A WORD ABOUT SEMANTICS

### 1.1. Frequency of the use of the verb "devoir" (to have to, must)

The verb *devoir* is mentioned 3,219 times in the *Lasallian Vocabulary*. From the point of view of frequency, it occupies 5th place. As a verb, it occupies 4th place after "to be", "to do" and "to have". As a verb of action, it occupies 2nd place.

It is noticeable that often in a sentence it is only the verb *devoir* that expresses obligation.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.2. Frequency of use of the noun "devoir" (duty)

As a noun *devoir* is used 318 times in 16 out of the 20 writings covered by the *Lasallian Vocabulary*. It appears 150 times in the catechetical works, and 136 times in the writings intended more specifically for the Brothers.

### 1.3. The noun "devoir" is often specified

A duty or duties can be prescribed for persons: Christians (37 times), married couples, servants, pastors, faithful, fathers and mothers, schoolchildren, teachers, etc. All these are different "states" (see § 5). These may be permanent or temporary, and the terms used define relationships between different situations. The duty of state will be dealt with later.

They may be prescribed also for situations. In this case, duty or duties of "one's state" are referred to (16 times), or of one's profession, marital state, of our responsibility, of your employment, of religion, of a ministry, etc. Here also duties of state may be involved.

The use of duty is sometimes precise, as in the case of Easter communion, or more general, as "in with regard to God", or "daily", or "in school", etc. Of the 99 examples of its use, 26 refer to teachers or Brothers, and 50 to pupils or seculars.

*Devoir* (duty) can be specified also by the use of a verb. De La Salle speaks of the duty of praying, thanking, offering, loving, adoring, knowing, teaching, learning, taking the place, taking up again, sharing in someone's zeal, being watchful, giving a blessing, greeting, defending oneself, stopping... Of the 16 instances of this use, 7 refer to personal behaviour and 9 to attitudes towards others.

The noun *devoir* (duty) has many meanings, as can be seen from the following expressions: *se mettre en devoir de* (to set about doing something), *rendre ses devoirs à* (pay one's respects to), *avoir le devoir de* (to have a duty to), *faire son devoir* (to do one's duty), *il est du devoir de* (it is the duty of). It can also be preceded by such verbs as "to acquit oneself" (67 times), fulfil (7 times), do (*faire*), satisfy, to attach oneself to, pay (*rendre*) (76 times), or by expressions such as *il est de votre* (it is your) (31 times), *c'est votre* (it is your) (21 times) or the equivalent. There is also the verb *manquer à* (to fail in) and others with a similar meaning (12 times).

All these verbs indicate the need "to do" one's duty. They are used in an imperative sense, which is often strengthened by the use of the verb *falloir* (to have to, must) and the adverb *bien* (well, very). In this context there are few negative verbs. There is no doubt that, for De La Salle, to acquit oneself well of one's duty, is an imperative obligation.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1.4. Duty and obligation defined in 18th century dictionaries

What was the meaning of the words "duty" and "obligation" at the time of the Founder? The *Dictionnaire Universel* printed in Trévoux in 1721 defines the noun *duty* as follows: "The obligation one has to say or do something, either because one is obliged to do so by the law, or by necessity, or by decency or propriety". The writer does not define the kind of law he is referring to, and his definition seems to equate duty and obligation, although the latter term is seen as being a little more abstract in character, while duty is seen as being more concrete (to say or do something).

The same work defines obligation as follows: "What constrains a person to do something, such as duty, necessity, the law, precept [...]. Bond which induces someone to do something".

Another edition of this dictionary, dated 1771, adds the following shade of meaning: "Duty [...] refers more to conscience; it has to do with law; virtue induces us to acquit ourselves of it. Obligation refers more directly to practice; it has to do with usage. One is lacking in one's duty, but one dispenses oneself from an obligation. [...] It is a duty for an ecclesiastic to dress modestly; it is an obligation to wear black clothing and a rabat".<sup>3</sup>

## 2. OBLIGATION AND DUTY IN DE LA SALLE'S WRITINGS

### 2.1. A few texts

We read in the preface to the *Duties of a Christian*: "All that a Christian must do in this world is to know God and love him: all his obligations are included in this" (CL 20,x = DA 0,0,18).

The writer says the same thing in a title on the following page: "First part of the two duties of a Christian towards God, which are to know and to love him" (CL 20,1 = DA 100). One could say, in other words, that the obligations of a Christian are reduced to the two duties of knowing and loving God. It would seem that the two terms are synonymous.

DeLaSalle speaks of the "three obligations of married persons", one of which is "to remain together always", and a little later, of "the first duty of married persons which is to remain together always" (CL 20, 384 = DA 310,1,5). Duty and obligation are seen, therefore, as being synonymous. Another example: the duties and obligations of a Christian are mentioned when the following question is asked: "What is the connection between the obligation a Christian has to observe the commandments of God and the duty he has to love God?" (CL 20,9 = DB 0,3,6). Obligation seems to be more concrete and to derive from duty, but the two words often seem interchangeable in practice.

## 2.2. The verbs “devoir” (to have to, must) and “obliger” (to oblige)

The use of the verbs *devoir* and *obliger* is characterised by the same kind of interchangeability. We read in one of the Founder’s meditations: “You are obliged to teach these holy maxims to the children” (MD 44,2). In another, the Founder speaks of those “whom you must instruct” (MD 37,1).

Elsewhere we find: “You should begin by giving them good example” (MF 92,2) and “You are obliged to give them good example” (MD 69,1). We could quote many other examples: the context might be dif-

ferent, but the verbs *devoir* and *être obligé* would express the same idea.

## 2.3. Conclusion

We see, therefore, that De La Salle appears to make no real distinction in his mind between duty and obligation. In both cases, there is something we must absolutely do or not do in order to be pleasing to God. These nouns are often preceded by the same verb, and in both cases the context is that of constrained behaviour. The Founder’s use of words does not imply value judgments regarding the nature of the actions done nor of their motives: a moral judgment is still needed.

## 3. DUTY AND MORALITY

### 3.1. A very clear example

The following extract from the preface of the *Rules of Propriety and Christian Politeness* is significant: “It is a surprising thing that most Christians look upon propriety and politeness as purely human and social attributes, [...] they do not consider them as a virtue related to God, to one’s neighbour and to ourselves. This shows how little Christianity there is in the world, and how few people there are who live in it and behave according to the spirit of Jesus Christ. And yet it is this spirit alone which should inspire all your actions so that they may become holy and pleasing to God. This is an obligation St Paul reminds us of when he speaks to us in the person of the first Christians, saying that, just as we must live according to the spirit of Jesus Christ, so we must also behave in all things according to this same spirit” (CL 19,1f = RB 0,0,1f).

We see from this extract that the Founder of the Christian Schools makes God the source of all duties and obligations. Whatever we do, we must live and behave, he says, according to the spirit of God. “It is an obligation”.

### 3.2. The origin of duty according to De La Salle

De La Salle does not deal with the origin of duty explicitly. It would seem that he thought that everybody believed in the existence and benevolent presence of God in the world, with the result that everybody sought “to know him, adore him, love him and

obey him”, and suffered deep guilt-feelings if they failed to do so. Like St Paul, De La Salle thought that nothing could escape from the control of God’s Spirit. Nothing in our lives escapes morality.

### 3.3. De La Salle and morality

The word “morality” is used rarely by De La Salle. It occurs only 10 times in his works, even though morality is never from his mind.

The Trévoux dictionary (1721) defines morality as follows: “Moral doctrine, the art of living well, science that teaches how to lead one’s life, perform one’s actions”. It illustrates what it says by a quotation from P. Lamy: “Read the book by Fr Mourgues: the parallel he draws between Christian morality and that of the ancient philosophers shows the superiority of our holy maxims to those of human wisdom”.

The quotation calls to mind the use of the word “maxims” in De La Salle’s writings, where it occurs 172 times. Maxims must be “observed, practised, followed”; one can “make profession of them”; one cannot “refute them” just as one cannot refute “the doctrine of Jesus Christ” (MD 5,1). Are not these practical means of acquitting oneself of one’s duties?<sup>4</sup>

### 3.4. Conclusion

It is time to define the Lasallian concept of duty. We take our definition from Br Jean Pungier: “De La Salle speaks of duties in the strict sense of the term.

[...] For the Founder, the *Duties of the Christian* derive from his very nature, from the law governing his being. Their source is ontological. [...] The fundamen-

tal moral attitude is to act in conformity with the demands of the two duties that are incumbent on him" (PUNGIER, p. 154, see in bibliography).

## 4. DUTY AND THE LAW

### 4.1. Various examples

The 1706 manuscript copy of the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* includes the following observation: "Man is so liable to laxness [...] that he needs written rules to ensure he does his duty" (CL 24, Preface = CE 0,0,1). It is an interesting observation because it expresses clearly the practical need for the law, and for a written law, "to prescribe our duty for us" (CL 20,102 = DA 202,0,2).

The same idea is reflected in the *Rules* when they speak about reading the *New Testament*: the Brothers "will not spend a single day without reading from it [...] considering it as their first and principal rule" (RC 2,3).

The Brothers need not only written *Rules*, but also the voice of their superior revealing to them the will of God. "Ah, how unfortunate are those whose superiors never or hardly ever give them an opportunity to practise obedience" (MD 13,3).

De La Salle has the same attitude towards the commandments of the Church: "The intention of the Church in ordering the faithful to attend holy Mass is to oblige them [...] to do their duty to God by doing so" (CL 17,11 = I 1,4,1); even though, as De La Salle points out, in the days of "Pope St Anacletus [...] there was no positive commandment of the Church obliging them to communicate. However, the fervour of the faithful was so great that they did not need orders to make them acquit themselves of this duty" (CL 17,239 = I 5,2,4).

Finally, we can note the following sentence from one of De La Salle's letters: "I shall make him do his duty" (LA 35,3).

### 4.2. Need for knowledge

"One of the main duties of fathers and mothers is to bring up their children in a Christian manner and to teach them their religion. But most parents are not sufficiently enlightened in these matters [...] and cannot take the time to teach their children their duties as

Christians" (MR 193,2). This sums up the whole mission of the Brothers: "It is your duty to teach your disciples the knowledge of God" (MF 100,2). And De La Salle reminds them that they are obliged "to instil his holy love in the hearts of those" they instruct (MD 39,1).

### 4.3. Duty and obedience

Speaking of the obligation to hear Mass on Sundays, De La Salle tells us that duty can be prescribed by law and in particular by the commandments of God and of the Church (CL 17,11 = I 1,4,1). Duty cannot be learnt spontaneously from personal relations, especially in one's "employment". Often some external mediation is required to define it and even provide it with sanctions.

For De La Salle, a person's whole life is, or ought to be, regulated by the duty God prescribes for him by revealing his will through the intermediary of others.<sup>5</sup>

He is nonetheless on his guard against the perversion of duty typical of legalism. In chapter 16 of the *Rules*, entitled "On Regularity", we read: "It is necessary for the Brothers to apply to themselves and to take as the foundation and support of their regularity what St Augustine says at the beginning of his rule, that those who live in a community must love God above all things and then their neighbour, because these are the principal commandments given us by God, and because if we separate regularity of whatever kind from the observation of these two commandments it is of no use whatever for salvation" (RC 13,1).

Further on he says: "All will consider important the failure to observe a small point of regularity, wishing to perform in all things and very exactly the will of God which is indicated for them by the Rules and by the practices of their Institute" (RC 13,4).

It is, therefore, concern for the will of God that should govern the attitude of Brothers regarding the law. De La Salle offers an example of this in the person of Jesus Christ especially during his Passion: "O the loving abandonment of the human will of

Jesus, submissive in everything to the divine will. [...] Be a disciple of Jesus in this so as to have no other will except that of God" (MD 24,3).

De La Salle recommends, then, a fervent devotion to obedience as a practical indication of a sense of duty. See the article on *Obedience* in the present volume.

#### 4.4. Duty and sanction

Law implies sanctions for those who break it. However, despite De La Salle's voluntarism when speaking of obedience, he rarely speaks of sanctions. In the *Lasallian Vocabulary*, "punishment" occurs 12 times, "chastisement" 16 times, "under pain of" 25 times, and "correction", used almost exclusively in a school and not a spiritual or doctrinal context, 120 times.

In the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, we find the expression "to give an account" used three or four times, and there are some allusions to God's judgment: "If you do not fail at all in your duty [...] so that you can face his judgment" (MR 205,1); or "Ensure, then, that you can answer him that you have acquitted yourself well of all those duties" (MR 205,3); and "If [...] you have not wasted your time on useless things, or even on useful things not connected with your duty" (MR 206,1).

In practice, however, sanctions did exist in the lives of the first Brothers. They were imposed on the Brothers by their superiors or Director; and the Brothers, in their turn, imposed them on their pupils. The biographers refer even to some cases where the person at fault imposed a sanction on himself. Also, in community each day there was the exercise of self-accusation. Once a week, there was an exercise of mutual

accusation, the Brothers had to give an account of themselves in redition, and go to confession.

But the chief sanction for a soul consecrated to God was his own awareness of his faults and his sinful state. This is the meaning of the expression "under pain of sin", used to invite a person to control himself and curb his passions.

Correction took place in Lasallian schools, but the Founder preferred it to be rare. It was better to form consciences and awaken the love of God and sentiments nobler than fear. When it is thought necessary to correct a stubborn child, for example, "the teacher will gently make him recognise and admit his fault [...] then he will correct him [...] making him first ask God's pardon on his knees, and then that of his teacher and his companions whom he has scandalised" (CL 24,162 = CE 15,6,18).

#### 4.5. In an atmosphere of charity

We read in the *Duties of a Christian*: "It is, therefore, a fundamental duty for Christians to have charity, and this admirable virtue covers everything they have to do in this world. [...] It is also in the practice of this virtue that all that God orders us consists, since all the commandments of God depend on it. Jesus Christ assures us [...] the whole law is included in only two commandments" (CL 20,90 = DA 201,1,2).

According to the Founder, this loving attitude towards God should be enough to make a Christian fulfil his duties towards God and his neighbour. However, he speaks also of the existence of hell, the ultimate and irrevocable sanction (CL 20,88 = DA 106,0,16).

## 5. THE DUTY OF STATE

The preface to the first volume of the *Duties of a Christian* begins as follows: "To belong to a profession and not to know what it is, not to know even what it is called, what it involves and what are the chief duties of this state, seems to be completely contrary to common sense and right reason" (CL 20,ij = DA 0,0,1). The words *état* (state), *profession* (profession) and *emploi* (employment) are used often in conjunction with *devoir* (duty) in Lasallian writing intended for the Brothers.

According to the Trévoux dictionary, *emploi* means work or an occupation which one obtains or takes up by oneself; *état* is used to refer to the different ranks or positions of persons based on their responsibilities, function, profession or work.

De La Salle does not seem to distinguish greatly between these two words: often they are synonymous. And so he speaks of a "holy employment" or of "an employment which is close to that of priests". He speaks even of looking upon this employment "as an

eminent function” and “of making oneself worthy of it” (MR 199,1).

The word “state”, on the other hand, would seem to refer to the situation of a “consecrated person”, or of one “withdrawn from the world”, which seems much the same thing. The expression “what there is exterior about your state” would seem to indicate they are synonymous. This has created problems, however. A case in point is the addition of the phrase “and to those of your employment” to the 1922 text of the *Meditations* (MD 58,3), giving the following: “You should apply yourself to the ministry to which he has called you and devote yourself entirely to spiritual things and to those of your employment”.<sup>6</sup>

Elsewhere De La Salle writes: “The commandments of God are laws that he himself has made to prescribe us our duty; and as we have duties to God and duties to our neighbour, it was quite appropriate for God to give us these two sorts of commandment” (CL 20,102 = DA 202,0,2). Duties to God and to one’s neighbour differ according to each person’s state — “a Christian’s external behaviour must conform to that of Jesus Christ” — as well as according to his profession (CL 19,IV = RB 0,0,8).

There are two sentences from De La Salle’s writings inspired by the *Meditations* of Julien Hayneufve which are enlightening: “One will never acquire more perfection except by fulfilling the duties of one’s employment (*charge*), providing that one accomplishes them in view of the order of God” (CL 10,114 = EP 3,0,3). “Rest assured that you will never accomplish your salvation better, and you will never acquire so much perfection, as by acquitting yourself well of the duties of your state, providing that you do so in view of the order of God” (CL 15,95 = R 16,14). We can see the extent and importance of duties connected with one’s state or employment (*charge*).<sup>7</sup>

Finally, we can compare the following text from Vatican II with one from the *Rules*: “Therefore, let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other. The Christian who neglects his temporal duties neglects his duties towards his neighbour and even God, and jeopardises his eternal salvation” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 43). In the *Rules* we read: “Being well convinced that they should think only of him [God] and of what he ordains, that is, of what concerns their duty and employment” (RC 2,7).

## 6. PAYING ONE’S RESPECTS (“RENDRE SES DEVOIRS”)

Among the uses of *devoir* (duty) there is the one in the expression *rendre ses devoirs* (paying one’s respects), which occurs 80 times and which represents 25.15 % of all the cases in which *devoir* is used.

This expression comes first of all from the vocabulary of politeness. It has to do with relationships. The Trévoux dictionary defines it as follows: “To acquit oneself with regard to someone else of what one owes him”. This is illustrated as follows: “pay one’s respects (*vœux*) to God, pay one’s respects (*devoirs et respects*) to one’s superiors, swear fealty and pay homage to one’s lord”. We find all this reflected in the *Rules of Propriety and Christian Politeness*.

However, De La Salle uses this expression only 9 times in the context of politeness. More often (71 times out of 80) it refers to God. When it does it is usually accompanied by a verb which emphasises the meaning: adore, thank, beg, praise. And so out of the 18 times that “devoir” is used in EM, 16 times occur in the expression “pay one’s respects”.

Is the Founder applying the duties of propriety to God? One should say rather that he is referring to the duties of a creature to his creator: “For God only is amiable and essentially good in himself. If we love anything else but him, we do him an injury for we thereby prefer something infinitely below God to God himself” (MD 70,1).

In the *Duties of a Christian*, the Founder recognises only two essential duties: “All that a Christian must do in this world is to know God and love him. All his obligations consist in this” (CL 20,xii = DA 0,0,18). In the *Explanation of the Method of Mental Prayer*, we read: “We make an act of adoration next because the first way a Christian must pay his respects to God is by adoring him” (CL 14,45 = EM 4,145).

Of the 16 times the expression “pay one’s respects” is used in this work, it is accompanied 11 times by the word “adoration” or “adore”. For example: “We make an act of adoration by paying our respects to Our Lord” (CL 14,100 = EM 12,271) or “I paid my respects to

God by an act of adoration” (CL 14,125 = EM 20,334,2).

The word *devoir* is used in a somewhat special way in the expression “one will acquit oneself of this duty in the house” (RC 30,20,25). This occurs in the *Rules* when they speak of paying a visit to the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday and Good Friday (RC 30,20,25). The use of *devoir* in this context calls to mind inevitably its use in the expression *rendre ses devoirs* (pay one’s respects) with the meaning of “mak-

ing a courtesy call”, since there is no obligation involved, only convention.

In the *Duties of a Christian*, the Founder insists that all the duties we have are linked to that of loving God:

“Q. Why is the obligation that a Christian has to adore God linked to the duty of loving God?

A. Because whoever really loves God knows the respect he owes him and is careful to pay it to him” (CL 21,8 = DB 0,3,4).

## 7. CONCLUSION: THE “FUNDAMENTAL DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO HAVE CHARITY” (CL 20,90 = DA 201,1,2)

While the word *devoir* (duty) is not used in any personal or original way in the writings of De La Salle, it is used frequently when he is dealing with the Christian instruction of children and the spiritual formation of his Brothers. These writings indicate, in particular, the attitude a Christian should have towards God and, because of God, towards the people around him.

Obedience consists in doing the will of God in all things, and in adoring this will, which is often expressed through human intermediaries. This obedience is directed as much to the written Rules as to the orders that are given, always by God, in an atmosphere of respect and love. The following prayer is an excellent illustration of this:

“Let us pay our respects to Jesus Christ [...].  
I adore you, O my Saviour Jesus,  
only and eternal Son of God,  
who became man [...].  
I thank you for your goodness  
in dying on a cross  
to atone to God for my sins,  
to deliver me from the pains of hell  
and to earn for me eternal life.  
I give myself completely to you  
so that my only reason for living is to love you.  
Reign in my heart  
all the days of my life  
through your holy love  
and after my death  
make me reign with you in heaven”.  
(CL 18,8 = E 2,6).

Duty as described by the Founder is portrayed as austere and voluntarist. However, it is accompanied also by mercy, compassion and consolation, received with gratitude from God without having been sought: “The more exact you are in this respect [observing the Rule], the more God will [...] grant you attachment to your state” (MF 104,1).

If we succumb to sloth, which is “slowness and repugnance regarding acquitting ourselves of our duty”, the thought of God can cure us of it, if it is accompanied by a practical resolution “to regulate exactly each moment of the day” (CL 23,382 = GA 0,19,8). De La Salle, this “terrible Christian” was formed by God, step by step, over a long period of time, through the events of his life.

“Through the spirit of faith you will do  
“Everything, and for God alone” (CL 15,5 = R 3,1)

he said to his Brothers. That is how he lived his life in faith. “I adore in all things the conduct of God in my regard”, he confessed on his death-bed (CL 8,174).

If the world despises duty and the obligation of conscience, limiting its moral effort to the observation of the law, a penal obligation involving sanctions, the disciple of Jesus Christ, having received the revelation of God’s love for mankind, opposes to it the “fundamental duty of Christians to have charity” (CL 20,90 = DA 201,1,2). This demanding language finds its meaning in faith and is addressed to those who work “to obtain their salvation”. Only then is it possible, with De La Salle, to call charity as a “lovable virtue” (CL 20,90 = DA 201,2,2).

<sup>1</sup> A study of the frequency of the use of subjects with the verb *devoir* in the various writings of the Founder gives us the following results :

<i>on</i> (one)	852 times
<i>nous</i> (we)	512 times
<i>vous</i> (you)	347 times
<i>je</i> (I)	49 times.

If we take only the catechetical works, we find

<i>nous</i>	33.83 %
<i>on</i>	25.56 %
<i>chrétien</i> (Christian)	23.06 %.

And in the DA, a work less directly intended for the pupils :

<i>chrétien</i>	1.10 %
<i>on</i>	25.67 %
<i>nous</i>	21.08 %.

In the *Meditations*, a work intended primarily for the Brothers :

	MD	MF	MR
<i>vous</i>	36.30 %	37.45 %	55.67 %
<i>nous</i>	6.93 %	15.30 %	1.03 %
<i>on</i>	12.54 %	6.51 %	4.12 %

The verbs *obliger* (oblige) used 147 times, and even more *être obligé* (to be obliged) used 480 times, and the noun *obligation* used 151 times could be the basis for a similar study. In addition there is the verb *falloir* (have to, must, be necessary) used 1,743 times. As the latter is used only in the impersonal form, the question of subjects does not arise.

<sup>2</sup> A study of the frequency of use of the verb *devoir* (to have to) gives us the following raw figures and a percentage of its total use. They are classified in a way that shows the percentage of use, taking into account the length of the relevant document, in relation to the works of De La Salle as a whole :

RB	558	17.34	6.50
DA	479	14.88	12.57
DC	320	9.94	7.03
MF	307	9.54	9.96
MD	301	9.35	6.71
DB	260	8.08	6.96
CE	252	7.83	9.23
I	173	5.37	6.88
R	132	4.10	3.59

EM	105	3.26	4.61
MR	97	3.01	2.09
GA	69	2.14	2.94
L	65	2.02	2.73
RC	51	1.58	2.53
PA	18	0.55	0.75
E	17	0.52	1.67
FD	6	0.18	4.14
MH	5	0.15	0.34
RD	2	0.06	0.53

It appears, therefore, that the RB contain proportionally a higher number of references to this verb, while the other works have proportions that reflect the works as a whole.

The noun *devoir* (duty) gives the following figures :

DA	112	31.37	12.57
DB	48	13.44	6.96
CE	26	7.28	9.23
MF	24	6.72	9.96
MD	21	5.88	6.71
MR	19	5.32	2.09
EM	18	5.04	4.61
GA	18	5.04	2.94
I	16	4.48	6.88
RB	15	4.20	6.50
R	12	3.36	3.59
L	11	3.08	2.73
Dc	9	2.50	7.03
RC	5	1.40	2.53
E	2	0.50	1.67
PA	1	0.28	0.75

The differences here are more noticeable. The two words *devoir* need, therefore, to be treated separately, as if the fact of "having to" (the verb *devoir*) did not always lead to the appearance of the noun *devoir* (duty). The difference between RB and DA is very clear.

A study of the use of the verbs *devoir* and *falloir* (both meaning "to have to"), on the one hand, and the nouns *devoir* (duty) and *obligation* on the other, shows that the nouns are more used in the DA.

<i>devoir</i>	31.37 %
<i>obligation</i>	26.60 %

An examination of these nouns in RB gives us :

<i>devoir</i>	4.20 %
<i>obligation</i>	6.00 %

Verbs are more used in RB :

<i>devoir</i>	17.34 %
<i>falloir</i>	27.25 %

In DA, the figures for the verbs are :

<i>devoir</i>	14.88 %
<i>falloir</i>	9.69 %

<sup>3</sup> The *Dictionnaire des mots de la foi chrétienne* defines duty as follows: "What we must do because of divine law, human law, a precept, one's state or convention. [...] To do one's duty = to act as one ought to act". These same three origins of duty had already been defined in more or less the same terms by Furetière.

Imbs in the *Trésor de la langue française, Dictionnaire du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, offers two definitions of duty: "(a) An imperative of conscience, considered in general terms, which induces a person, without necessarily forcing him, to accomplish what is prescribed by virtue of an obligation of a religious, moral or legal nature. (b) In given circumstances, any behaviour to be followed, or any action to be accomplished by virtue of an obligation of a religious, moral or legal nature".

There follow definitions of some expressions: duty of state, Easter duties, professional duties, religious duties, Christian duties, the duties of a respectable person. In this dictionary, duty is not seen as synonymous with obligation: duty is born of obligation, which is defined as a moral, religious or social bond; necessity or duty by which one is obliged to do or give something.

<sup>4</sup> It is perhaps useful to see what Jean Tonneau writes in the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (vol. 3, col. 653f, article

on *Devoir*): "If the framework of duty is not capable of encompassing the whole of Christian life [...], it is because it does not give an exhaustive definition of morality and does not provide the radical explicative principle".

The writer then goes on to examine 1° the extent of duties, 2° the determination of duties from a formal point of view, and then concludes: "The domain of duties seems to coincide with that of social morality properly understood. A more comprehensive morality would insist on the principle of order [...]. The morality of duty is limited to the level of relations, and its characteristics reveal a social morality whose supreme law is to respect a legal order, in which each individual has his place and plays his role. It does not claim to express the natural needs of the individual, but the requirements of his state and of the condition in which he is placed".

<sup>5</sup> De La Salle's idea is close to that expressed by Jean Tonneau: "Duty expresses in all certainty God's will for us" (*Dict. de spiritualité*, art. on *Devoir*).

<sup>6</sup> This addition does not appear in Battersby's translation.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to read what the French edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) has to say: "The faithful must distinguish carefully between the rights and duties that are incumbent on them as members of the Church, and those that involve them as members of human society. They should try to reconcile both, not forgetting that Christian conscience must be their guide in all temporal matters, because no human activity, even of a temporal nature, can be withdrawn from God's dominion" (p. 912, quoting *Lumen Gentium* 36).

### Complementary themes

Child-Pupil-Disciple	Education	Penitent
Christian teacher	Employment	Pupil-teacher relation
Commandments	Faith (spirit of)	Rule-Regularity
Counsels	God	Sin
Correction	Love-charity	State
Duties of a Christian	Parents of the pupils	Vigilance

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