Justice, Peace and Dominicans 1216–1999: VII – France in 1953–4: Do the baptised have rights? The Worker-Priest Crisis

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'The members of the Holy Office use methods which, if they were in Great Britain, would soon land them in court. The Holy Office ruins reputations and destroys people's careers.' The English Jesuit, Archbishop Tommy Roberts, formerly Archbishop of Bombay, made these grave allegations in a full session of the Second Vatican Council. They are well illustrated by the way the French worker-priest crisis was dealt with between the summer of 1953 and the spring of 1954. Obviously I can only record such a richly complex period in summary form—almost telegraphically. But even such a résumé gives an eloquent demonstration of the way the hierarchical authority of that time functioned, particularly in regard to the human rights of the baptised.

The Vatican's diktat

The loss of the working classes to the Catholic Church in France in the nineteenth century had for a long while made social issues prominent in French ecclesiastical thinking. The spiritual humanism with socialist leanings to be found, for example, in the influential periodical *Esprit* (founded by Emmanuel Mounier in 1932) was gradually accepted even by some members of the hierarchy. The publication in 1943 of the book by A. Godin and Y. Daniel *La France, pays de mission?*—the question mark was included at the request of the ecclesiastical authorities—helped to spur concrete attempts to bridge the gap between the Church and the working class. By far the most outstanding among these was the decision by the bishops to permit some of the clergy to combine their priestly ministry with day-to-day sharing in the lives of manual labourers, in other words working beside them, joining their trade unions and living among them in working-class flats. So 'the worker-priest movement' had been born.

However, during the summer of 1953 the French press carried a series of reports about measures aimed at blocking all new initiatives in

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the worker-priest project. They were the preliminaries to a much more serious decision which Marella, the papal nuncio in France, announced to the cardinals, bishops and religious superiors who had responsibility for any worker priests. The worker priests were to stop all union militancy and, worse still, stop working in factories. It was assumed that the religious, as the more docile element, would be the first to withdraw. There were about twenty of them, of whom ten were Dominicans, out of the one hundred concerned. Moreover, it had to appear that this decision, which was irrevocable, came from the French hierarchy, and everything had to be done with the utmost secrecy, out of view of the press.

In fact it was the cardinals themselves—Feltin of Paris, Liénart of Lille and Gerlier of Lyons—who prevented the Vatican strategy proceeding as intended. They felt that the decision was too abrupt and made without any awareness of the catastrophic effect that the suppression of the worker-priest movement would have on the working class. 'Rome must realise,' declared Cardinal Feltin, 'that after this the Church will be seen by the workers to be definitively allied with capitalism.' The credibility which these few men had gained for the Church would now be irremediably lost. This was why the prelates wanted an audience with the Pope, Pius XII. Meanwhile, the press got wind of what was afoot. Theologians like Congar, academics like Borne, journalists like Hourdin, took up the cause of these threatened men who had done nothing wrong. Everything hung on the French prelates' visit to Rome. The worker priests had their advocates and the press were alerted.

The prelates returned from Rome at the beginning of November. The former defenders of the worker priests, now completely at one with the Vatican, outlined a series of measures which added up to the fact that, while the mission directed to the world of the workers would be intensified, the future of the worker priests as such was in serious danger.

This ambiguity made for a very unstable situation. Some people wrote articles expressing hope. Cardinal Gerlier himself thought there was room for further negotiation. His confrere in Lille insisted there was no way that could happen: Rome had spoken, the Pontiff's decision was irrevocable. The hierarchy counted on the effects of the formation in religious life which the worker priests who were religious had been given.

The Jesuits withdrew at the end of December. By contrast the Dominicans—and they were the most important group—made no move. Yet, since the autumn, the pressures on Suarez, the Master of the

Dominican Order, had been steadily growing. They came mainly from the Holy Office, of which he was a member by right. The demands for information on such-and-such a friar, the response to such a delation as, for example, that of Boisselot, Director of Éditions du Cerf, and the summoning of the theologian Féret, who appeared before a tribunal of the Holy Office, all point to this ever-increasing harassment. Meanwhile the worker priests wrote to their bishops, individually and collectively, to confront them with their pastoral responsibilities. After all, it was they who had sent them on this mission. How could they now justify their sudden change? The question was made all the more dramatic because, fundamentally, it remained unanswered.

The fateful date: 1 March

Days passed; weeks passed. Finally, on 19 January 1954 the bishops who were involved published an official letter to the worker priests announcing that their work must stop on 1 March. Shortly afterwards news came of Suarez's 'raid' on France. The three French Dominican provincials were removed, the Director of Editions du Cerf was dismissed, the three outstanding Dominican theologians Chenu, Congar and Féret were deprived of their teaching posts and had to leave Paris. Their very slightest contributions to debates were subject to episcopal authorisation, and even tiny articles written by them were subjected to the very strict censorship which had just been activated.

The French press reverberated with the event. Several of the major dailies devoted their editorials to it. François Mauriac made a lyrical plea on behalf of the 'sons of St Dominic'. Somewhat later *Le Monde* published a manifesto signed by dozens of intellectuals. There was a growing number of meetings and petitions. Supporters and opponents of the theologians underlined the link between those measures and the suppression of the worker priests. The French ambassador to the Holy See attempted to convince the Secretary of State and the Holy Office that this upsurge of public opinion did not come from the traditional opponents of the Church but expressed widely-held feelings, made all the stronger by the fact that the worker priests had not done anything wrong, and that the friars who had been purged were 'the glory of the country's Catholic intelligentsia'.

The message was no doubt received, but the Roman officials (the Pope was ill at the time) were more concerned with congratulating themselves on the obedience which the Dominicans had demonstrated in response to the harsh sanctions imposed on them. The hope was that their conduct would set an example to the worker priests who very soon would have to give up their work. At the end of February the worker

priests gathered for the last time, out of earshot of the press (or so they hoped) at the Café de la Paix in Villejuif, part of Paris's 'Red' district. They each told the others what they personally had decided. More than half had decided to go on working, to remain in solidarity with their workmates. The gathering was intensely dramatic: they had all been presented with 'an impossible choice'.[1]

If the story set the press alight, it was quite simply because the position of the worker priests was so unusual—in fact unprecedented: priest and worker, an unheard-of combination, a paradox which opponents found all the more objectionable because, given the laws of solidarity, it would entail regular dealings with Communist comrades. This was intolerable in those times of grave social conflicts, Cold War, the persecution of Christian churches behind the Iron Curtain, and the strength of the French Communist Party. The worker priests' project represented for Rome a 'diminution' of their priesthood.[2]

This understanding of their project was itself in need of a modicum of caution. Instead of the pre-emptive removal of these priests from 'the harmful atmosphere of the shop floor'[3], there should have been a more gradual approach. To be sure, there were those in the bosom of the Church—and not only the traditionalists—who protested that the worker priests were in the wrong place, doing the work of lay people. To be sure, in addition to the 'romantic' aspect of their situation, these priests were, all innocently, relativising the Tridentine theology of priesthood, elaborated in and for a Christian society, and challenging the life-style which incarnated it. But instead of the brutal axing of the project there should have been discussion. For now, the argument from authority was shutting the door on a very necessary, indeed vital, exercise in creative theology.

It is understandable that from now onwards the press and public opinion had questions to ask. Over and above the inexorable unfolding of the crisis, what shocked people were the methods used to resolve it; they made it apparent to everyone that the Roman Church was governed in a manner which was both 'totalitarian and paternalistic'[4], at the cost of great suffering for a good number of its members.

A travesty of justice

In the repression suffered by all those who actively supported the theological reflection of the worker priests, Féret was the one subjected to the most searing encounter with authority. Having spent three weeks hanging around in Rome without knowing why he had been summoned there, he was questioned for nearly four hours by a tribunal of the Holy Office. As a good historian, he was not unaware of the inquisitorial

misdeeds of the institution, but he had not until then experienced for himself the odiousness of the process of which he was the subject. Let the reader judge.[5]

The first shock: Féret very quickly discovered that for a long time he had been the subject of denunciations, some from his brethren but most from integrist theological circles which refused to address the kind of problems that he, as a responsible theologian, found confronting him, or from extremely reactionary political and social circles that were hostile to the Church's social teaching.

It is important to remember that the process against a theologian by the Holy Office began with denunciations which were anonymous, so unidentified delators, who had a guarantee that they would never be confronted by their victim, were able to make that victim an accused suspect. The Provincial of the Paris Province was protesting at that time to the Master of the Order (who, as a member of the Holy Office, was implicated) about the credence given to all the denunciations which were being heaped on several of his brethren. He added: 'I cannot help being shocked and scandalised that Rome is condemning and penalising religious without giving them a hearing. It seems to me to be a basic principle of natural justice, irrespective of the quantity or quality of the accusers, that anyone who is accused should be informed of the charges brought against him and have the opportunity to explain and defend himself. Otherwise there is nothing but a travesty of justice.'[6]

In September 1953 Joseph Robert, a Dominican worker priest, had admitted, 'I feel troubled about the possible motives for a condemnation. We have been attacked and slandered. Our accusers have been believed and have remained anonymous... To me it seems terrible that the Church, or rather certain authorities, accept this, and always do so. I have protested and I am grimly determined to go on protesting.'

Next shock: the prosecutors were also the judges. Without knowing beforehand what is his dossier, the accused was delivered into the hands of his interrogators without knowing what to expect. As the questions were being asked he had to try and grasp what they are really all about—they are often long and complex—and at the same time formulate a response which the clerk would minute and require him to sign at the end of the interrogation.

The final straw was that the accused was alone before his judges. There was no sign of a counsel for the defence. The hearing ended with a threefold oath: to keep secret the trial itself, the names of the judges and the nature of the questions. Scandalized by this final demand, the defendant objected and replied: 'Inflict whatever penalties you want, exile me ... but you won't have my conscience.'

In a normal court, after the cross-examination and the counsel's summing-up (of which there were none here) the judges would retire to consider the case and announce the sentence at least to the accused, if the court was held in camera. But in the present case the sentence was never published. So, equally, there was no right of appeal. Nevertheless, at the beginning of January 1954, the Pro-Prefect of the Holy Office sent two contradictory letters on the same day. The first was to Father Féret's superiors: no error had been found in his doctrine, so he could continue teaching at the Dominican pontifical faculty of Le Saulchoir. The second was for the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, 'High Chancellor of the Catholic Faculty', saying the doctrine of this religious was not suspect, but his influence on the priests, clerical students and sisters was, on the other hand, 'inopportune'. So for the Rector, who, like the Cardinal, knew nothing of the first letter, there was nothing for it but to terminate the Dominican's employment.[9]

That whole world of delation, of suspicion, of secrecy, aimed at coercing consciences—those of the members of the Holy Office and of the 'suspects'—was the cause of enormous suffering, though those who were operating the machinery could not even see how unjust it was. The scandal was doubly grave when one considers that the institution claimed to embody the justice willed by Christ for his Church.[10]

A hierarchy united behind the Holy Father

The juridical arsenal (inherited from the Inquisition) deployed by the Holy Office was, however, just one part of the apparatus of government of the Roman Pontiff and the rest of the bishops; you can see the hortatory and repressive mentality of the hierarchy here, in the way they managed people and resolved the worker-priest crisis.

In 1953 the three cardinals had together come to Castelgandolfo (a move which annoyed Rome—Rome preferred audiences to be of single individuals). They had come to submit to the Sovereign Pontiff a 'directory' which they had been drafting since the previous spring. It would, they hoped, allow them to contain the worker-priest project without stopping the ground-breaking missionary apostolate which the worker priests were conducting. The Pope did not deny the disastrous effects of putting a stop to it, but that was what had to happen; he could no longer permit the experiment to go on, because he was convinced that it amounted to a 'diminution of priestly life'. Other ways had to be sought.[11] Of course it was a painful moment for everyone, but the Pope had spoken. There could be no beating about the bush.

The men who had to tell the worker priests for whom they were responsible what was the Pope's final decision were undoubtedly

pained. Sometimes they did the job clumsily: this was the case with Cardinal Feltin when he met his worker priests in January 1954.[12] This embarrassed attitude was compounded by the glaring contradiction which they could not suppress; they were in effect saying: 'You have done an admirable job but in the interests of prudence you have got to disappear.' That was the substance of the communique of 19 January, which put a stop to the adventure.[13] Was it duplicity on their part and on the part of the other bishops who participated in the decision—issuing admonitions about the painful crisis, calling for obedience from the worker priests, then from those who signed petitions and from the faithful in general? Not at all. Although they had firmly defended the mission to the workers, for three decisive reasons they rallied to the Roman decision.

Firstly, the hierarchy shared the Pope's suspicion that the worker-priest movement could lead to a watering-down of the priesthood. The last time they had expressed their fear had been in a letter to the Holy Office at the end of their first national meeting with worker-priest delegates, in June 1953! In addition, each member of the hierarchy had to give his opinion on the document drafted by the secretary of the permanent commission of the bishops on worker priests. Here, for instance, is the comment of Cardinal Liénart. After giving his approval in general terms, he added: 'I just wonder whether, having agreed to discuss the position of worker priests in general, the document should not have stressed, in its conclusion, how impossible it is for the hierarchy to concur with an attitude which challenges the true mission of the Church and the correct idea of priesthood such as these have been laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ.'[14]

Secondly, Rome had spoken. The determined approach of the three cardinals to Pius XII was unquestionably a measure of their concern to gauge exactly the Pope's will. They gave full authority to the dictum 'Rome has spoken.' The expression implies unwavering submission to the Pontiff's word, which enjoys unlimited power, obedience and reverence. From the abundant crop of episcopal texts coming from France at that time here are two quotations which convey the flavour of this unconditional devotion. The Archbishop of Bordeaux invited his clergy to be 'more and more imbued with papal thoughts and directives, because one always comes back to the realization that the Sovereign Pontiff has seen more clearly, deeper, further than anyone else, because he gazes from a higher peak.'[15] At the same time, the Archbishop's colleague at Angers spelled out to his diocesan priests that 'his Holiness Pius XII knows our problems, our difficulties and our anxieties better than anyone; nobody grasps them with more lucidity, from such a

serenely exalted perspective. If we learn how to listen to him like obedient and devoted sons, he will guide us along the right path.'[16]

Thirdly, the hierarchy all shared the same idea of an obedience which claimed unconditional submission for the sake of greater unity—that of the bishops and that of the whole Church. As they said in their joint letter to the worker priests of 19 January 1954, 'You never go wrong if you obey.' Any suffering entailed—which is a communion in the Passion of Christ—must in their eyes be fruitful. Here again the writings of the bishops, which re-applied the Jesuit doctrine to the present circumstances, were frequent and unanimous.[17] So this view of the Holy Father, undergirded by an unprecedented personality cult, and its corollary of absolute obedience, excluded all debate, all right of dissent, any appeal to conscience. It was in this frame of mind that the French hierarchy set out to resolve the crisis. So all those who showed any form of opposition to this resolution had to be denounced, marginalised, even discredited.

Reprimands and reflections

As we have seen, the first to feel the indignant suspicion of the bishops were the theologians. Bishop Ancel, who was very close to the worker priests, wrote to his fellow-bishops in July 1953: 'The worker priests have met some theologians who have constructed a novel theology to reassure them. Only an authentic document from the hierarchy will be able to oppose these pseudo-theological concoctions.' Back from Rome in February 1954, the same bishop told Cardinal Gerlier that when he met Cardinal Valerio Valeri he confessed to 'preferring by far the Jesuit way of doing things to that of the Dominicans', and that in conversation with French priests he had mentioned Chenu by name. 'In fact,' he added, 'I believe that along with Desroches and Montuclard (two Dominicans who have left their Order) he is one of those mainly responsible not only for today's deviations but also for current acts of resistance.'[18]

Cardinal Saliège was indignant when he found a deep disquiet among the worker priests at the end of 1953. He spoke out against those 'second-rate minds who have not done any higher studies and who grab our Mother, the Church, and shake her.'[19] Cardinal Liénart was just as virulent about Chenu when his article appeared in February 1954, 'Le sacerdoce des prêtres-ouvriers'. He saw it as rank insubordination. The very notion of 'worker priest' had been effaced by episcopal decree (had it not?) on 19 January, and here was this theologian calmly addressing a question which was no longer open to debate! The attitude was, he thought, doubly blameworthy because, in prolonging the discussion of

the question with them and seeking to elucidate it, this theologian was feeding the disquiet of these priests who would soon have to 'submit'.[20]

Confronted with the genuine disquiet of Catholic intellectuals about the Church's mission, expressed in private or in the press during those months, the hierarchy could only see 'the resurgence of a thoroughly Gallican mentality', 'a breath of protestantism'.[21] If those same academics wanted to know on what basis the repressive measures were taken against the worker priests, which the Church authorities were now so anxious to see disappear, and against some Dominicans, they were invited to make an act of faith and not forget 'that, unfortunately, these questions are beyond the collective competence of the faithful.'[21]

The Catholic press was considered rebellious, and got a severe reprimand at the spring Assembly of Cardinals and Archbishops in March 1954. However, the Assembly could not touch the secular press; *Le Monde* and the review *Esprit* were immune from condemnation. The latter had published an article 'The Worker Priests and the Hopes of the Poor' by A. Béguin; its pertinence and lofty perspective had particularly irritated the ecclesiastics concerned. And there were others like A. Mandouze, J. M. Domenach and F. Perroux who joined strongly in the debate.[23] The weakest link in the 'rebellious' press was *La Quinzaine*. It received explicit and sustained reprimands before being suppressed a year later. *L'Actualité Religieuse dans le Monde* officially lost its Dominican patronage. *La Vie Intellectuelle*, another Dominican review, was to disappear at the beginning of February 1957, thanks to the assiduity of the high-handed Dominican promoters of the 'restoration' which had started after the crisis of 1954.[24]

Resisting in a world *'totalitaire et paternaliste'*

A considerable body of Christians, lay people and clerics, challenged the demands for submission which were spreading out from Rome, from the hierarchy, from everywhere. Or, rather, they joined in the resistance to this 'dictatorship by isolation' which, according to the French ambassador to the Holy See, was the hallmark of the final years of Pius XII's reign. Various intellectuals continued to point out what was at stake in this crisis, and the dangers which the Catholic Church faced as a result of the manner in which it was resolved. The editor of *Esprit* wrote in March 1954:

> The most dangerous aspect of all this is somewhere else: it is that in the very heart of the Church there will grow a hidden intimidation which interiorises censorship, makes it a habit of mind, thereby making barren the field of research, encouraging hypocrisy and double-thinking, and multiplying not true teachers but intellectual

reptiles who will serve any power provided it silences their adversaries.[25]

But the worst affected, and irreparably so, were the worker priests; their very raison d'être had been undermined. Most of them chose to be dissidents. All refused to show that submission', that 'token of obedience', which Rome was so keen on. They had merely 'left their work'. Some of those who did 'leave their work' were to live with their remorse at having done what they were told. And others, hoping against hope, chose an 'active' obedience. So, for instance, the Dominican worker priest J. Screpel, with the backing of none other than Cardinal Liénart, worked with A. Depierre for the renewed acceptance of worker priests.

As for the theologians who had been disciplined, it was vital that their resistance was free of the anger they felt at first, or of bitterness. To achieve this freedom they drew on their profound knowledge of history. After all, had not Chenu's work *Le Saulchoir, une école de théologie* been put on the Index in 1942 especially because of the importance it had given to history in the theological task? They continued their work in exile. We could instance Congar's book *Le mystère du Temple,* written in Jerusalem, or *La théologie au XIIe siècle,* which Chenu wrote in Rouen. They had to be careful not to be defeated by a slow process of censorship which delayed their publications. They remained obdurately clearsighted both about the ecclesiological implications of the crisis[26] and about the mystique of obedience which prevailed at that time, even in the Dominican Order.

If the Dominicans who had been disciplined showed obedience, it was for prudential reasons. It was not a matter of plunging into a hopeless submission, but of clear-sighted recognition of what was at stake: the very Constitutions of their Order, which a good number of leading ecclesiastics in France and in Rome wanted to modify. So it was a question of preserving the one area of liberty which was canonically guaranteed![27]

When the most acute phase of the crisis was over, Congar reflected on what Catholic life really was. The Church, he said, boils down to the Pope and his Curia. Through the hierarchy they govern the masses of the faithful. Theological research is just about tolerated. In cases of disagreement there is no alternative to 'trustful and filial submission'—terms constantly used in the bishops' writings—other than disappearance. The dissident worker priests did not even have the option of 'reduction to the lay state'. Quite simply, they were excommunicated. In that scheme of things, everything hung on the arbitrary (even if benevolent) will of the omniscient Father, who expected in return the complete submission of his 'sons'. That view of obedience could,

Congar said, only lead to servility or revolt.

By contrast, the space inhabited by Dominicans was like a little island whose laws—potentially, and if Dominicans made responsible use of them—allowed independence of thought. So those Dominicans who had been disciplined retained a complete liberty of mind, heart and conscience. As an example of this attitude we could quote this robust and humourous observation of Chenu's, contained in a letter to one of his brethren written in the spring of 1954:

> There are times when, in the midst of darkness and stupidity, we come face to face with the harsh demands of obedience, in the Church more than anywhere else. But to do justice to those very demands, I refuse to accept a mystification, which makes of moral obedience an act of faith in Christ crucified, and reduces the theological virtue of faith to simple obedience to Church authority. This is a false exaltation of obedience, which entails its own inversion. Let's have no more complaints about the loss of a sense of obedience. As I said, my faith led me to obedience. But my obedience doesn't then escape from its own rational principles, and plunge me into a mournful mystery in which my victim soul uncomprehendingly accomplishes the redemption of the world.[28]

As for Féret, during the Second Vatican Council, at the request of Cardinal Frings, he drew up a detailed report of the procedures to which he had been subjected by a tribunal of the Holy Office. Thus he was able to contribute to the reform of that institution—a reform which the German prelate wished to set in motion.[29]

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What I have written I see to be a brief incursion into a relatively recent episode in the history of the Catholic Church which shows with harsh clarity the type of mind-set and the cultural handicaps which that venerable institution must overcome, if the human rights which it now promotes in civil society are to be respected within its own bosom. For further reading, in addition to my own book *Quand Rome condamne,* Terre humaine, Plon, 1989, consult...

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Watteleb, R.: *Strategies catholiques en monde ouvrier dans la France d'après-guerre*, Paris, éditions ouvrières, 1990.

Inédits du dossier des prêtres-ouvriers, *Il est une Foi*, n.22-23, oct-nov 1989.

1 For the historical context of the crisis see *Quand Rome Condamne,* Terre humaine, Plon, Paris, 1989, 766p.

2 This was a theme which the cardinals spoke of at great length during this period; cf *Quand Rome Condamne* (Q.R.C.) pp.343-347, for example.

3 The expression is Cardinal Feltin's.

4 Y.M. Congar, 'Chronique d'une petite purge', *Quand Rome Condamne* p.433. Throughout the crisis Congar kept a kind of journal.

5 You will find an account of this interview in Q.R.C. pp.410–412.

6 Q.R.C. p.413.

7 ibid.

8 On those last two points Féret simply promised to be discreet.

9 Q.R.C. p.427. Féret came back to this subject in a letter to Bishop Guerry, at whose request he wrote a long clarification in response to statements made by the Secretary of the Episcopate. The latter had just published in *La Documentation Catholique* of 12 June 1955 a 'letter on the Episcopate of France and certain current problems: a reply to various articles in the Press.' The writer made reference to 'measures taken against certain Dominican Fathers' when *Le Quinzaine* was condemned. Féret considered that the juxtaposition of the two events was shameful. See letter to Mgr. Guerry, June 1955, Archives de la Province de France.

10 Q.R.C. pp.414f.

11 Canon Hollande's audience with Cardinal Feltin, 8 Novembre 1953. Cardinal Feltin referred to that meeting in January, when he addressed a group of worker priests.

12 See Henri Barreau, 'Prêtres-ouvriers, prêtres oubliés?', *Golias* n.26, p.72; Jean Desailly, *Prêtre-Ouvrier, Mission de Paris 1946-1954,* L'Harmattan, Paris 1997, p.459.

13 'The worker priests have done good work, but they had to be removed in order to protect them from the great dangers to which they were exposed.' Cardinal Feltin, Pastoral Letter on a current problem in our missionary apostolate, 27.2.1954. *Documentation Catholique* n. 1168, col.263–270.

14 Lettre du Cardinal Liénart to Mgr. Guerry, 15 July 1953, Archives du diocèse de Lille, dossier P.0.1953.

15 Statement by Mgr. Richaud, 15.1.1954. *Documentation Catholique* n. 1166, col. 144–145.

16. Allocution of Mgr. Chapoulie, 7.2.1954. *Documentation Catholique* n. 1166, col. 144.

17 See ch.6 of Q.R.C., entitled 'Soumission ou obéissance'.

18 Letter to Worker Priests, remarks of His Excellency Mgr. Ancel, 19 July 1953, Archives du diocése de Lille, dossier Prêtres-Ouvriers, 1953. Letter to Cardinal Gerlier, 20 february 1954, archives du diocèse de Lyon, dossier Ancel. On the serious disagreement between the majority of the French bishops and the Dominican theologians, see Q.R.C. pp. 212-230.

19 Allocation of Cardinal Saliège to his clergy, 30.12.1953. *Documentation Catholique* n.1166, col. 144.

20 Letter of Cardinal Liénart to Chenu, 4 February 1954. Chenu had addressed this article in good faith to the cardinals who were directly involved in the crisis. Liénart wrote to him: 'Allow me to use this as an opportunity to tell you frankly what I think. I willingly acknowledge the freedom of a theologian to go deeply into a doctrine or to have a personal opinion on this or that matter. But he must not teach his followers a personal opinion as though it were a teaching of the Church when the Church has not yet pronounced on the question. And he is even less qualified to say how the Church should conduct its apostolate. The Pope and the Bishops are supposed to have become mere administrators; the higher authorities in the Church are deemed to be inadequately sensitive to certain delicate issues of the day. There is no lack of

unauthorised experts who presume to take their place and direct the apostolate of clerics and laity. They do this through articles—often unsigned—in reviews, by circulating notes, through study groups and conferences. The result is a real confusion in people's minds, and, I would say, in the Church at large.'

21 'Don't you sense a breath of free enquiry in the air, a whiff of protestantism, and, here and there, a loss of genuine Catholicism?' Mgr. Théas, 'La soumission au pape', *Bulletin religieux de Tarbes et Lourdes,* 14.1.1954, *Documentation Catholique*, n. 1168, col.288. 'Let us not listen to those who shout or complain without thinking, "Rome doesn't understand; Rome doesn't know; the Pope is badly informed"; maybe what they really mean is: "Come on, let's just do what our conscience tells us and not burden ourselves with instructions from Rome." On this subject I will not hesitate to call what's happening a resurgence of a Gallican mentality which would quickly undo the links which unite French Catholics with the Supreme Head of Christianity.' Mgr Chapoulie, homily of 25.12.1953, *Documentation Catholique,* n. 1166, col. 143.

22 Letter of Cardinal Liénart to M. and Mde. Benoit. Universitaires grenoblois, 4.3.1954.

23 Q.R.C., 'Haro sur la Quinzaine', pp.152–155. The Assembly of Cardinals and Archbishops responded to the repeated lay initiatives to appeal to the Hierarchy by issuing a very violent communique in which each paragraph began: 'It is not true to say...' Foreclosing any further discussion, they warned: 'No doubt some lay journalists are finding it difficult to understand the profound doctrinal, spiritual or religious reasons which lie behind these measures. Let them learn the true facts, or keep silent on this matter. The Hierarchy is speaking here of what is its own field: the priesthood. It is they, and not the journalists, who have the competence to define the conditions in which a priestly life is possible.' Congar commented at the time: 'These days I am painfully, agonisingly, aware of the great gulf existing between the Christian people and the processes of the hierarchy—especially Rome.'

24 Q.R.C. pp.438–452.

25 J.M. Domenach, 'D'autant s'obscurcit la lumière', Journal à plusieurs voix, *Esprit,* mars 1954, p.406.

26 Cf Congar's 'La chronique de la petite purge', or the correspondence of Féret; e.g. Q.R.C., 'Centralisme et insensibilité apostolique', pp 419–427.

27 Y.M. Congar, 'Chronique de la petite purge', Q.R.C. pp.432f. 'Here we see the general ecclesiological basis of the Dominican episode. We are almost the only organised body of free thought in the Church ... We remain the only body which can, canonically, organise and act on its own accord: when a superior is elected and confirmed he is in charge ipso facto; our Chapter ordinations have force without the permission of the Holy See; we still have independent legislative power.' He deplores yet again the extent to which 'freedom of research and thought' is currently shackled, circumscribed by the Pope and the congregations *'sibi subjectae'*, which identify themselves with the Church. He goes on to note the correlation between the Order's juridical status, its independence in Church law and its independence of thought.

28 Letter from Chenu to one of his fellow-Dominicans: 'Pourquoi et comment j'ai obéi', in *Il est une Foi,* n.22-23, oct–nov 1989, pp.22–23.

29 This report was published in *Il est une Foi,* nn.22–23, oct–nov 1989, pp.13–20. B. Quelquejeu evaluated this reform of the Holy Office twenty years after its inception: cf 'Ralliement aux droits de l'homme, méconnaissance des "droits des chrétiens"', *Concilium* 221, 1989, pp. 129–143.