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## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the theological narratives about industrial work which Joseph Cardijn and M.-Dominique Chenu developed during the inter-war and immediate post-war period should be read in terms of *ressourcement* theology. Cardijn and Chenu recovered the sources of theology of work, whilst acknowledging the critical importance of the everyday experience of working life, the hallmark of *ressourcement* theology. In doing so, this thesis makes the first sustained scholarly comparison of the theological narratives of work of Cardijn and Chenu.

Drawing on archival material, I argue that Cardijn was fully conversant with the debates on Mystical Body ecclesiology of the mid-twentieth century, linking the experience of factory work to the Eucharist, and thereby offering workers a concrete method of integrating their faith into their working life. I argue that his development of the See-Judge-Act methodology was a practical way of reinforcing workers' identity as dignified human persons created in the divine image.

Turning to Chenu I draw on his French-language publications, few of which have been translated into English, to argue that by publishing much of his theological writing on work in popular (rather than academic) format, he was putting the *ressourcement* methodology into practice, by bringing theological discourse into the heart of life. I show how Chenu shared Cardijn's concern for the salvation of the working classes, then largely absent from the churches and parish life. I demonstrate that he employed the dramatic socio-economic changes of the high medieval period to interrogate contemporary theological discourse on work, and to develop a theological narrative appropriate to twentieth-century industrial work, whether for the Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne (JOC) or for the Worker Priests. Finally, I draw out their critical contributions to contemporary theologies of work.

## KEY WORDS

Cardijn, Chenu, *ressourcement* theology, Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne, JOC, theology of work

Patricia Kelly  
*Taking theology to work:*  
*ressourcement theology and industrial work in interwar France and Belgium*

TAKING THEOLOGY TO WORK:  
*RESSOURCEMENT* THEOLOGY AND  
INDUSTRIAL WORK  
IN INTERWAR FRANCE AND BELGIUM

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ACO	Action catholique ouvrière
ACJF	Association catholique de la jeunesse française
ACJB	Association catholique de la jeunesse belge
AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
ASS	Acta Sanctae Sedis
KAJ	Kristene Arbeidersjeugd
JOC	Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne
<i>L'Œuvre</i>	L'Œuvre des Cercles catholiques des ouvriers
PL	Migne, <i>Patrologia Latina</i>
SJA	See-Judge-Act
<i>ST</i>	Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>
<i>STO</i>	Service du Travail obligatoire
YCW	Young Christian Workers

I use the French term 'Jociste(s)' to refer to the members of the JOC.

Translations of papal encyclicals, etc., are taken from the Vatican website.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

## STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### *1.1 Statement of the thesis*

This thesis has two central themes. First, making extensive use of unpublished archival material, it demonstrates that Joseph Cardijn (1882-1967), founder of the Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne (JOC), was a theologian as well as a pastor and an educator. By using the *ressourcement* theologian, Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990) as a conversation partner, Cardijn's theology may better be brought into relief. This in turn leads to our second theme, which is the working out of *ressourcement* theology into a theological discourse on work which spoke to industrial workers. During the interwar period, Chenu worked with Cardijn to evangelise and form young workers through the JOC. The two shared a concern for the spiritual well-being of the working classes, and were concerned about how to offer a valid theological account of work to those employed in industry. Their theological account of work, designed for those employed in the factories of France and Belgium during the 1920s and 1930s, is one way in which *ressourcement* theology was brought to life.

Leo Jozef Cardijn (known as 'Joseph') was born into a poor working-class family in Brussels. Ordained in 1906 to the Archdiocese of Malines, he studied Social Science at Leuven for a year, before teaching in the junior seminary until 1913. As a curate in Laeken, he ran successful groups for young adults, and was soon appointed archdiocesan Director of the *Œuvres Sociales*. The JOC was formed in the 1920s, building on Cardijn's war-time experience of responding to

the spiritual needs of young workers. Approved by Pope Pius XI and the Belgian bishops in 1925, it remained his life's work, as he was first national, and subsequently international chaplain to the movement. As a Cardinal, Cardijn was present at the Second Vatican Council, where he contributed to discussions on the role of the laity.<sup>1</sup>

Marcel Chenu (Marie-Dominique in Religion) was born into a working-class family in Versailles. Joining the Dominicans in 1913, he studied in Rome, returning to teach theology in the French novitiate at Le Saulchoir in 1920. A ground-breaking historical theologian who focused on the twelfth-century renaissance, he was an important supporter of the early JOC in both Belgium and northern France. Banned from teaching in 1942 and silenced in 1955 following the Worker Priests controversy, Chenu had no official role at Vatican II, but acted as theological adviser to the Bishops of Madagascar, some of whom had been his pupils at Le Saulchoir. He continued to research and publish until his death.

This thesis will proceed as follows. The remainder of Chapter 1 will set the scholarly context for this research. Chapter 2 turns to nineteenth-century Social Catholicism in France and Belgium, which sets the historical context for the work of Cardijn and Chenu. The term Social Catholicism describes the groupings of middle- and upper-class Catholics, appalled by the effects of industrialisation on workers, who sought to alleviate this distress through education, rudimentary welfare, and charitable works. Chapter 3 examines

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<sup>1</sup> See the forthcoming research of Stefan Gigacz, who is preparing a thesis on 'The role and influence of Joseph Cardijn at Vatican II' for the University of Divinity, Australia.

Cardijn the theologian, and Chapter 4 turns to his theology of work. Likewise, Chapter 5 assesses Chenu the theologian, while Chapter 6 looks at his approach to theology of work. Chapter 7 concludes with a review of some contemporary theological and philosophical discourse on work in the light of the contributions of our two theologians. We conclude, in Chapter 8, by asking, whether a single theology of work is possible in the post-industrial world, and suggesting that Cardijn's model is the stronger of the two.

Chapter 1 will now examine the scholarly context of this thesis. Section 1.2 asks why work should be discussed in systematic theology (as opposed to the discussions around business and workplace ethics which form part of moral theology). Section 1.3 offers a brief summary of the reflection on work in the sources of Catholic theology: the Scriptures, Tradition, and the Magisterium particularly since the publication of *Rerum Novarum*<sup>2</sup> in 1891. We turn next (Section 1.4) to the theological context in which Chenu and Cardijn must be situated, that 'movement for renewal in twentieth-century Catholic theology'<sup>3</sup> known as *ressourcement* theology. This is an opportune moment to note that this thesis self-consciously uses a *ressourcement* methodology, seeking out the sources of the theologies of work of Cardijn and Chenu, and placing them in their historical and social context. Finally, in Section 1.5 we turn to the scholarly context in which this thesis is located, reviewing the extant literature on Chenu and Cardijn.

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<sup>2</sup> Leo XIII, "Rerum Novarum. Encyclical Letter on Capital and Labour", (Acta Sanctae Sedis, 15 May 1891)

<sup>3</sup> G. Flynn and P.D. Murray, eds., *Ressourcement. A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

## 1.2 Why a 'theology of work'?

The decision to focus on theology of work was taken because it most clearly demonstrates a key aspect of the theology of Cardijn and Chenu, namely that theological discourse should not be limited to the 'ivory tower' of academe, but should be engaged in and responsive to the reality of daily life. Through their pastoral involvement with (young) workers, both theologians recognised the need to speak theologically yet relevantly about industrial work, and sought new, more effective, ways of doing so.

For the purposes of this thesis, Miroslav Volf's definition of work will be used:

*Work is honest, purposeful, and methodologically specified social activity, whose primary goal is the creation of products or states of affairs that can satisfy the needs of working individuals or their co-creatures, or (if primarily an end in itself) activity that is necessary in order for acting individuals to satisfy their needs apart from the need for the activity itself.<sup>4</sup>*

Volf's definition is the broadest and most detailed offered by a contemporary theologian of work. In his engagement with Volf's work, Cosden,

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<sup>4</sup> M. Volf, *Work in the Spirit. Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001) 10-11.

despite his critique of Volf's approach,<sup>5</sup> sidesteps the question by failing to offer a substantive definition of his own understanding of work. For John Paul II, work

means any human activity, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances; it means any human activity that can and must be recognized as work...<sup>6</sup>

Borrowdale, in her search for a feminist theology of work, warns against the temptation of suggesting that 'theology of work' refers only to paid employment:

Although jobs are important for many individual women, and women's waged work is vital for the economy, the expectation is that women's main role and their identity is to be found in their work as wives and mothers.<sup>7</sup>

This thesis will not deal with questions pertaining to ethics of work and the workplace, and issues around employment, unemployment, and precarious work.<sup>8</sup> It will however be necessarily attentive to Cardijn's emphasis on the formation of young workers as advocates, in the secular sphere of work, for

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<sup>5</sup> D. Cosden, *A Theology of Work. Work and the New Creation*, Paternoster Theological Monographs (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004) 9-10.

<sup>6</sup> John Paul II, "Laborem Exercens. Encyclical Letter on Human Work on the Ninetieth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum", (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 14 September 1981) 1.

<sup>7</sup> C.A. Borrowdale, "In Search of a Feminist Theology of Work" (PhD, Durham University, 1988) 4.

<sup>8</sup> On unemployment see e.g., CCBI, ed. *Unemployment and the Future of Work: An Enquiry for the Churches* (London: CCBI, 1997); M. Brown and P. Sedgwick, eds., *Putting Theology to Work: A Theological Symposium on Unemployment and the Future of Work* (London: CCBI, 1998); on precarious work see G. Standing, *The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011); *A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to Citizens* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); on spirituality in the workplace, see e.g., A. Walker and A. Kennedy, eds., *Discovering the Spirit in the City* (London: Continuum, 2010)

themselves and their colleagues: participating in unions, demanding adequate health and safety, and improving working conditions. It will not pursue a detailed analysis of contemporary working practices, such as those of Terkel, Biggs, Ehrenreich, or Toynbee.<sup>9</sup> Neither will it engage with the important research currently being carried out into the public health effects of industrial and post-industrial work, and worklessness in former industrial areas.<sup>10</sup>

So why should theology talk about work? At a purely human level, it may be argued that all areas of research which focus on the human person, from theology and philosophy to psychology, sociology, and anthropology, must look at work, since it forms such a large part of human existence. It has, says Volf,

come to pervade and rule the lives of men and women, be it in the form of indefatigable or cruelly enforced industriousness, pure and simple ... [or] in combination with frantically pursued leisure.<sup>11</sup>

Whether engaged in academic research, employed in a '9-to-5' office environment, subsistence farming to produce food for the family, or making a home and caring for family members, human persons spend a significant proportion of each day working. This alone would justify attention from theologians to human work. Yet there is another dimension to human work, to which Cardijn and Chenu were especially attentive. Christian theology

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<sup>9</sup> For example, see S. Terkel, *Working* (New York: The New Press, 1972); J. Biggs, *All Day Long. A portrait of Britain at work* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2015); B. Ehrenreich and A.R. Hochschild, *Global Woman. Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (London: Granta Books, 2002); P. Toynbee, *Hard Work. Life in low-pay Britain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003)

<sup>10</sup> For instance C. Bambra, *Work, Worklessness, and the Political Economy of Health* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

<sup>11</sup> Volf, *Spirit* 3.

encompasses, not only the study of God, but also the study of how humanity, and all of human life, relates to God. Human activity, or work, is thus also an appropriate arena for theological discourse. There is also the question of theological anthropology. If, as John Paul II suggests, ‘from the beginning, [the human person] is called to work’,<sup>12</sup> then work must, as Cardijn and Chenu insist, be a part of the essence of the human person.

In his Introduction to Fletcher’s study of the theology of work of Dorothy L. Sayers, Malcolm Brown succinctly draws attention to the lack of an adequate contemporary theology of work.

Most of what has passed for a “theology of work” in the UK and the USA has, until recently, had the character of personal anecdote linked, more or less adequately, to sermonic reflection.<sup>13</sup>

Brown’s critique is important, for it emphasises the paucity of theological resources in this field, which deals with reflection on a significant proportion of the human experience. In this thesis, we will develop Brown’s critique. First we will identify the theological resources on work offered by Cardijn and Chenu. Second, we will draw out what remains implicit in Brown’s words: whether a single theology of work, applicable across the contemporary world and to the work of the future, is possible.

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<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, “L.E.”, 1.

<sup>13</sup> C.M. Fletcher, *The Artist and the Trinity. Dorothy L. Sayers’ Theology of Work* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2013) p.x.

Any theology of work must respond to, and be rooted in, the reality of human work. It is this which makes the theologies of work of Cardijn and Chenu worthy of especial consideration. 'Everywhere in the Bible', Léon-Dufour pronounces, 'humanity is at work.'<sup>14</sup> Yet the model of work proposed in the Bible is far removed from the work of the industrialised world. The change in working practices goes beyond what Chenu described as the 'shift from tool to machine'. Industrialisation also altered the relationship between worker and work, and effected a dramatic rise in the size of the workplace. In this sense, we may note that call centres are industrial workplaces just as much as the factories they have often replaced. Above all industrialisation is associated with a multiplication in scale, and an accompanying depersonalisation of work, to which theology of work must also be attentive. Marx reported this depersonalisation, describing the workers' loss of claim or control over what was produced as 'alienating'.<sup>15</sup> Leo XIII's encyclical on industrial work, *Rerum Novarum*, dealt with the inequalities of industrialised work in combination with the political ferment and the class struggle. *Rerum Novarum*, while often proposed as the 'beginning' of Catholic Social Teaching, may be better considered as the culmination of nineteenth-century Social Catholicism, with its

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<sup>14</sup> X. Leon-Dufour, ed. *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967) 590.

<sup>15</sup> See chs. 23-25 of K. Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, trans. B. Fowkes (London: Penguin Classics, 1990 (1976)), esp. p.716, the worker's 'own labour has already been alienated from him, appropriated by the capitalist'; and the powerful description in ch.25 of how 'all methods of raising the social productivity of the worker ... alienate from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process', p. 799.



praise for those who had sought to alleviate industrial poverty, and its insistence on workers' rights.<sup>16</sup>

Questions about work in the Christian life – how it might best be incorporated into the Christian life, and how it might become a 'tool' of Christian witness and apostolate – were widespread during the early twentieth century, doubtless in reaction to both industrialisation and *Rerum Novarum*. The Little Brothers of Charles de Foucauld follow his 'Rule', earn their keep through secular work, and evangelise through their work, modelling their way of life on that of de Foucauld (1858-1916) during his period in Algeria (1905-1916). In 1928 the Spanish priest Josemaría Escrivá (1902-1975) founded Opus Dei, whose lay members seek to sanctify the world through their work, offering work as a sacrifice to God, and using the workplace as a locus for evangelisation. Yet neither movement has the evangelisation of industrialised workers as its particular charism.

A different approach was adopted by the *Catholic Worker* newspaper, founded by Dorothy Day (1897-1980) and Peter Maurin (1887-1949) in 1933. Their aim was to make Catholic Social Teaching as it affected workers more concrete and better known. Day's radicalism caused her to regard the JOC and Catholic Action with antipathy. In a 1946 article she lambasted Cardijn and Catholic Action for, as she saw it, cooperating with employers, rather than truly working for the workers.<sup>17</sup> Day's and Maurin's enthusiasm for farms – which led

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<sup>16</sup> Leo XIII, "R.N.", esp. 55, praising those 'who have striven ... to better the condition of the working class'; and 57, on workers' associations.

<sup>17</sup> D. Day, "The Church and Work", *The Catholic Worker* September 1946 (1946) I am grateful to Rev Dr Ashley Beck for drawing my attention to this article.

to the founding of Catholic Worker farms, where volunteers are housed and fed in return for labour – was mirrored in Britain by the Catholic Land Movement, which sought to combine Catholic Social Teaching with distributivism to resolve the problems of unemployment and social injustice.<sup>18</sup>

Within this early-twentieth-century Catholic context, it will immediately be seen that the contribution of Cardijn and Chenu, with its focus on the often marginalised industrial working class, is unique. They were aware that references to biblical ‘models of work’ made no sense in a working world of repetitive, monotonous tasks, in cavernous factories, with little or no control over work, and no identification with the end product. They realised this required a new theological discourse on work, which would ‘speak to the masses’. For both theologians, rooted in the Catholic intellectual tradition of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a theology of work had to begin in Christian anthropology. At the very heart of their theologies of work, is the idea that work is part of the human condition from the beginning of Creation (Genesis 1), not as the result of the Fall (Genesis 3). The insistence that human work forms part of the good Creation of God – a concept recovered from medieval theology – was crucial. Like Marx, whose writings both had studied, they perceived that industrial work changed workers’ relationship to work, making traditional analogies for work irrelevant. Both understood that human work has a unique place in the divine economy. Cardijn’s emphasis on work as anthropological, vocational, and liturgical established that, because all work was

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<sup>18</sup> See J. Kelly, "Vincent McNabb, Agrarian Utopia, and The Theology of Work", *New Blackfriars* (2009)

part of the divine image borne by humanity, work should be worthy of workers, who were worth more than all the gold in the world. Chenu's recovery of Aquinas and the Scholastics led him to focus on the social aspect of industrial work and the 'change from tool to machine' – the qualitative change in the nature of work itself.

### *1.3 Work in the biblical, magisterial, and monastic sources of Catholic*

#### *Theology: an overview*

In the sources of Catholic Theology on which Cardijn and Chenu drew, a 'theology of work' *per se* is indeed absent. While in the Bible, monastic writings, and some medieval sources, there is reflection on the role of work in the divine economy and in human life, there is no sustained development of a theology of work. The shift to sustained theological reflection on work, and the theologies of work which resulted from this, is due to nineteenth-century industrialisation, and its Christian responses, such as Social Catholicism.

'A biblical *theology*' of work, notes Peifer, 'is doubtless too pretentious a word to describe the reality.'<sup>19</sup> There is indeed little *theological* reflection on work evident in the scriptural sources. Léon-Dufour observes that 'because the work of an artisan or farmer is so different from ... the work we see today, we are led to believe that Scripture is uninformed or ill-informed on work.'<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, he continues, work fulfils 'the Creator's command'; is 'a

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<sup>19</sup> C. Peifer, "The relevance of the monastic tradition to the problem of work and leisure", *American Benedictine Review* 28, no. 4 (1977) 381.

<sup>20</sup> Léon-Dufour, *Dictionary* 590.

fundamental fact of human existence, it is directly and deeply afflicted by sin'; but it is also redeemed, restorative, and, 'insofar as work is done in Christ, it shares in creation's return to God.'<sup>21</sup> The Jewish and Christian Scriptures begin 'by showing us God at work'.<sup>22</sup> Genesis 1 describes 'God at work creating the universe and finding pleasure in it',<sup>23</sup> a pleasure shared with the zenith of divine creation, humanity, who is to work 'co-creatively' or 'collaboratively' with God. 'God is the first and supreme Workman, who fashioned the entire universe and continues to work in it through his conservation of all creatures and his interventions in human history.'<sup>24</sup> The human work of the potter, the shepherd, the vine-dresser, is used analogically throughout the Old Testament to describe God's creative activity.

The New Testament describes divine work rather differently. The Incarnate Word is not only a carpenter (Mk 6.3//Mt. 13.55), but does the Father's work (Jn 10.37), and the Father works in him (Jn 14.10). For Paul, God's work is the reconciliation of humanity to himself through Christ (2 Cor. 5.17), while Christ's work is the ongoing recreation, or redemption, of the world. Yet 'the "work" of the reconciliation of the world to God and of the transformation of all things into their intended fullness in Christ is in part *our* work, no less than God's', suggests Vest,<sup>25</sup> implying that human work is not only participation in divine creation, and exercise of the *imago Dei*, but also brings about the new creation. Work in the Bible is largely what humanity does in order to survive,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 590-3.

<sup>22</sup> M. van Caster, "Human and Christian Meaning of Work", *Lumen Vitae* 20, no. 2 (1965) 37.

<sup>23</sup> N. Vest, *Friend of the Soul. A Benedictine Spirituality of Work* (Cambridge MA: Cowley Publications, 1997) 3.

<sup>24</sup> C. Peifer, *Monastic Spirituality* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1966) 310.

<sup>25</sup> Vest, *Friend* 3.

and may also provide a useful analogy to conceptualise the ongoing divine action in the world. Yet Peifer's point remains valid – however many analogies are to be found between divine and human work, and however positively work is described, there is not enough sustained reflection to justify the term 'theology of work'.

Meeks has observed that there appears to have been a very early Christian tradition according to which 'it is taken for granted that people work in order to eat', for the "'typical" Christian ... is a free artisan or small trader'.<sup>26</sup> Markus in turn has pointed to some of the 'earliest Christian writings [which] warn the faithful time and again against idleness and [those] who would live on the work of others on the pretext of being ministers',<sup>27</sup> citing *Didache* 12 and *Barnabas* 10, in addition to 1 Thess. 4.11 and 2 Thess. 3.11. Tertullian's list of Christian occupations (*Apology* 42) is important, suggested Markus, for 'the appeal is that Christians are respectable *because* they work just like other people'.<sup>28</sup>

For the early monastic tradition work had a threefold purpose: it fulfilled the biblical injunction to earn one's bread by the labor of one's hands; it kept the monk from idleness, with its attendant dangers, and was thus an important element in his ascetical discipline; and it provided the means by which he might fulfil the duty of almsgiving to the needy.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> W.A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven CT/London: Yale University Press, 1983) 65, 73.

<sup>27</sup> R.A. Markus, "Work and workers in Early Christianity", in *Work*, ed. John M Todd (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1960) 17.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 17.

<sup>29</sup> C. Peifer, "New monastic industries", *American Benedictine Review* 42, no. 3 (1991) 298.

As Peifer had noted in his earlier article, this stress on work in early monastic writing was, in many ways, counter-cultural, since it contradicted the ‘the Hellenistic disdain for labor’.<sup>30</sup> Athanasius’ *Life of Antony* shows Antony’s work fulfilling all three purposes laid out by Peifer: ‘he was pleased to be able to live in the desert by the work of his own hands’, and ‘was always working’, growing food and basket-making to raise alms.<sup>31</sup> Pachomius’ monastic apprenticeship had similarly consisted of prayer, fasting, and ‘unceasing manual labor, weaving rope and baskets’,<sup>32</sup> and the monks who followed his rule even made rope during prayer services.<sup>33</sup> The *Lives of the Desert Fathers*<sup>34</sup> give multiple instances of monastic work, from the agriculture and construction necessary to sustain life, to the weaving undertaken to earn alms needed by the Egyptian monks who ‘took in old people and orphans [and in] time of plague they would care for the sick, feed the hungry and bury the dead.’<sup>35</sup>

By the sixth-century *Rule of Benedict (RSB)*, work, alongside liturgical prayer (the *opus Dei*), and meditative reading of the Scriptures (*lectio divina*),

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<sup>30</sup> "Tradition" 383. Peifer notes that while the Egyptian monastic tradition was focused on work as part of the ascetic discipline of the monk, the Syrian view was more complex: while Basil of Caesarea valued labour for monastics, Gregory of Nyssa appears not to have shared this view. This corresponds to the Hellenistic preference of the author of Ecclesiasticus for the work of the scribe, studying the Law and Prophets (Eccl. 39.1-11) over the skills of each trade required for city life (Eccl. 38.24-39).

<sup>31</sup> ‘Life of Antony’ 50, 53, in C. White, *Early Christian Lives* (London: Penguin, 1998) 40-41.

<sup>32</sup> W. Harmless, *Desert Christians: an introduction to the literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 118.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 128.

<sup>34</sup> N. Russell and B. Ward, eds., *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*, Cistercian Studies (Kalamzoo MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980)

<sup>35</sup> T. Fry, ed. *RB 1980. The Rule of St Benedict* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1980) 25. Fry describes the *Rule* as ‘the most influential document in the entire history of Western monasticism’ (p.65).

had become one of the pillars of the monastic life.<sup>36</sup> Notwithstanding questions about its authorship, *RSB* is a key source, for Benedictine monasticism and its offshoots were a major cultural influence on Western European culture and theology until well into the modern period. *RSB* 48 links manual work (*labor manuum*) to *lectio divina*, and the daily timetable balances the three works: *labor manuum*, *lectio divina*, and prayer. *Labor manuum* ‘can refer to either light or heavy work but always connotes the physical’, and Kardong adds that its focus on *labor manuum* means that ‘ancient monasticism cannot be seen as in any way catering to the aristocracy.’<sup>37</sup> *Vere monachi sunt si labore manuum suarum vivunt*, Benedict explains, *sicut et patres nostri et apostolici* (*RSB* 48.8): the reference is both to the Egyptian monastic heritage and to the Apostles. Kardong suggests that this comment is ‘curious and ambiguous’, for

Benedict claims that manual labor is normative for monks [yet] it is apparent that his monks *resisted* this norm, to the point where he has to beg them to roll up their sleeves!<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> De Vogüé argues that there should be a fourth pillar – that of meditation, for ‘without meditation the monk’s day is incomplete... meditation truly deserves a place among the fundamental elements of the monastic life, for it binds the chief occupations together and cements their unity.’ (A. de Vogüé, *The Rule of St Benedict. A doctrinal and spiritual commentary*, trans. J B Hasbrouck (Kalamazoo MI: Cistercian Publications, 1983 (1977)) 242.)

<sup>37</sup> T.G. Kardong, *Benedict’s Rule: A Commentary* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1996) 384–385. Although in a personal conversation following his lecture at St Patrick’s College, Maynooth (7 October 2014), Professor Peter Brown noted that early recruits to the Egyptian monasteries of Pachomius and Antony were likely to have been at least very comfortably off, if not necessarily members of the aristocracy (as would be the case in many medieval European monasteries).

<sup>38</sup> T. Kardong, “Work in the Convents of the Paraclete: Echoes of RB48”, *American Benedictine Review* 53, no. 1 (2012) 54.

*RSB* 48 uses both *opus* and *labor* to refer to 'work' or 'task'. Böckmann agrees with Kardong that '*labor* has the association of difficulty ... *Opus* is a more common term, and is used for the product of the work.'<sup>39</sup> Thus, because 'idleness is the enemy of the soul' (*RSB* 48.1), *labor manuum* is required in addition to *lectio divina* (48.1). Summer mornings are to be spent *laborent* (48.3), while from None to Vespers monks are to do the necessary *opera* (48.6). Harvesting is *labor* (48.8). The winter timetable requires that *omnes in opus suum laborent* between Terce and None (48.11). Post-reading work during Lent is *opus* (48.14), and *opus* is given to those who cannot or will not read (48.23). Work, whether *labor* or *opus*, is as integral to monastic life as prayer and *lectio*. The cellarer is to 'regard all utensils and goods of the monastery as sacred vessels of the altar' (*RSB* 31.10),<sup>40</sup> and these goods, *in ferramentis vel vestibus seu quibuslibet rebus* (*RSB* 32.1), are to be carefully looked after. 'Whoever fails to keep the things belonging to the monastery clean or treat them carefully should be reprov'd.' (*RSB* 32.4) 'All things are holy' for Benedict, suggests Kardong, 'since they come from the hand of God, who looked on them and said: "It is good."<sup>41</sup>

The Carolingian reforms ensured that the *RSB* became the basis of monastic life in Western Europe, despite the Cluniac and Cistercian reforms. Ranft's *Theology of Work* evaluates work in the theology of the eleventh-century monastic theologian Peter Damian. Locating him decisively in the

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<sup>39</sup> A. Böckmann, "R.B. 48: Of the daily manual labor: Part 1", *ibid.* 59, no. 2 (2008) 158.

<sup>40</sup> Kardong and Fry both indicate the parallel with Zech. 14.20-21, when the cooking pots will be as holy as the sprinkling bowls of the altar; Kardong suggests that Benedict is 'in effect describing the monastery as a locus of realized eschatology.' (Kardong, *Commentary* 263.)

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 271.



context of the millennialism which underpinned the Cluniac revival, she argues that Damian followed a common pattern in his day, whereby leading members of the intellectual elite abandoned scholarship in favour of the eremitical or monastic life.<sup>42</sup> Critical of Chenu for his ‘overlooking’ of Damian’s theology (although she ‘overlooks’ much of Chenu’s writing on work),<sup>43</sup> Ranft argues that Damian was a key influence in the twelfth-century Religious renewal. She agrees with Chenu, however, in noting that theology of work in this context must mean simply a Christian reflection on work, rather than a ‘formal reflective, systematic and methodical presentation’ of work.<sup>44</sup> Damian’s theology of work, Ranft suggests, grew out of the eschatology and witness implied in the eremitical life, and sought ‘to help people render witness to permanent values in a temporary world and to enable them to change their world and ready it for the eschaton.’<sup>45</sup> It was a theology of work founded in the creation of humanity *in imago Dei*, which allows human beings to fulfil their potential, and to ‘anticipate and bear witness to the eschaton’.<sup>46</sup> Crucially, for Damian, work was key to the contemplative life, being ‘a prerequisite for contemplation.’<sup>47</sup> This linking of work with contemplation is an important corrective to the commonly held view that the medieval world view held the two in opposition: Ranft argues persuasively that for Damian, the two went hand in hand. There can be no contemplation without work, particularly not for monastics, whose life must,

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<sup>42</sup> See P. Ranft, *The Theology of Work. Pater Damian and the medieval religious renewal movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) 55-56.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 66f.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 64.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 63.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 71, 73.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 71.

according to Damian's reading of the *Rule*, entail labour.<sup>48</sup> Damian's reflection on Religious life percolated the renewal movements of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, argues Ranft. Hence her criticism of Chenu, whose work on the twelfth-century renaissance and the evangelical awakening of the Friars ignores Damian's contribution.

For Damian, concludes Ranft, theology of work flowed from the focus on eschatology and witness so key to Cluniac monasticism and the Gregorian Reform which she argues Cluny and Damian influenced so powerfully. 'All human activity, be it intellectual, spiritual, or physical, that readies the world for end time is worthy of being called work.'<sup>49</sup> Damian's understanding of work was broad, and applied across the board, to all of humanity – agricultural labourers, monks, even, Ranft argues, the aristocracy. She suggests that work, for Damian, had a social function: 'it is only when the work of each person is united with the work of every other person that creation is complete.'<sup>50</sup> According to Ranft, work in Peter Damian's theology is participating in divine creative activity; following Christ; acting as witness; and, finally, bringing about the eschaton, in which all of creation will be transformed.

Human work imitated the Creator's work and helped repair and prepare creation for the Second Coming. Witness reminded people that work was sanctifying not only on an individual level but on a communal level as well.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 72.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 77.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 77.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 191.

Peter Damian-Grint uses a range of English sources – biblical exegesis, homilies, teaching works, and allegory – from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries to argue persuasively that the medieval understanding of work was more complex than has usually been acknowledged. Following Ranft, he shows that Peter Damian not only distinguished fully between ‘lay’ and ‘clerical’ work, but insisted, for instance, in letters to lay correspondents, that their duties to society took priority over private prayer and devotions.<sup>52</sup> Damian-Grint’s analysis of the view of God the ‘Master Craftsman’ working at creation is important, for it draws attention to the medieval world-view of a divinely-ordered, rational cosmos. Damian-Grint’s reading of the English sources on which he focuses suggests that the medieval texts clearly indicate that the whole population had a strong sense of work as something ‘done for God, in order to fulfil his will, to find salvation and to reach heaven.’<sup>53</sup>

Theological reflection on work in Scripture and medieval tradition tends to focus on the analogy between human work and the divine work of creation, in which humanity participates. Of course, when human work is agricultural labour, the manual making of goods, the copying of manuscripts, and governing, these analogies and metaphors are largely appropriate and successful. Once work becomes industrialised, the analogy ceases to function. How may we then describe industrialised human work as participation in divine creation?

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<sup>52</sup> P. Damian-Grint, "Reflection on work and Christian life in medieval England" (Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, 2012) 8-10, quoting Ranft, *Theology of Work* 191, suggesting that 'to work was to live the *vita apostolica*'.

<sup>53</sup> Damian-Grint, "Reflection" 219.

The industrialisation which occurred in Western Europe from the late eighteenth century, and at a greatly accelerated pace during the nineteenth century, naturally drew a response from all Christian communities, from Methodists and Quakers in England to Social Catholics in France and Belgium. *Rerum Novarum* may be understood as the culmination of the Social Catholic response to industrialisation. The encyclical made a huge impact on publication: *The Times* dedicated a comment piece to 'The Pope's Encyclical', offering a summary of the content.<sup>54</sup> In Belgium, 'at least eight popular editions' were available immediately (five in French, three in Flemish), and 'over the next few months the text would be published at least a dozen more times either with commentaries or with other texts.'<sup>55</sup> Subsequent popes marked its anniversary: Pius XI with *Quadragesimo Anno*,<sup>56</sup> Pius XII with a radio broadcast,<sup>57</sup> John XXIII with *Mater et Magistra*,<sup>58</sup> and John Paul II with *Laborem Exercens*<sup>59</sup> and *Centesimus Annos*.<sup>60</sup> The teaching developed in these documents ranges from the dignity of the worker and the right to work, the just wage, and the role of unions to the impact of globalisation and Marxism.

*Rerum Novarum* is one of a number of social encyclicals issued by Leo XIII, so-called because the pope responded in them to political and economic

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<sup>54</sup> 'Dalziel', "The Pope's Encyclical," *The Times* 18 May 1891.

<sup>55</sup> P. Gérin, "Catholicisme social et démocratie chrétienne (1884-1904)", in *Histoire du Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien en Belgique*, ed. E. Gerard and P. Wynants, KADOC-STUDIES (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994) 81.

<sup>56</sup> Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno. Encyclical Letter on Reconstruction of the Social Order", (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 15 May 1931)

<sup>57</sup> Pius XII, "Discourse to commemorate the 50th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*", (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 1941)

<sup>58</sup> John XXIII, "Mater et Magistra. Encyclical Letter on Christianity and Social Progress", (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 15 May 1961)

<sup>59</sup> John Paul II, "L.E.",

<sup>60</sup> "Centesimus Annos", (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 1991)

questions.<sup>61</sup> Schäfers has correctly suggested that the 'great achievement of Leo XIII was to draw the attention of large areas of the public within the church to the workers' question, which hitherto had been treated only by individual representatives and groups within Catholicism and the Christian social movements.'<sup>62</sup> The encyclical recounted the 'vast expansion of industrial pursuits', particularly the 'changed relations between masters and workmen; in the enormous fortunes of some few individuals, and the utter poverty of the masses' (*RN* 1).

Probably drawing on the work of the German bishop, Wilhelm von Ketteler (1811-77), the encyclical defends the right to private property within a withering attack on Socialism. It is likely that Ketteler, who influenced a generation of Social Catholics in German-speaking Europe, derived his thought on private property from Aquinas. The importance accorded to private property in *RN* is matched only by the demand for workers' rights, which should be respected by employers and recognised by the State. It insists on the dignity of both workers – employers are to 'respect in every man his dignity as a person' – and of work, as 'working for gain is creditable, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honorable livelihood.' (*RN* 20) 'To labour', explains the Encyclical, 'is to exert oneself for the sake of procuring what is necessary for the various purposes of life', and everyone 'has a natural right to procure what is required to live'. (*RN* 44) In the context of the loss of access to agricultural land,

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<sup>61</sup> For instance, *Quod Apostolici Muneris* (1878), on Socialism; the three encyclicals specifically dealing with the political situation in France, *Immortale Dei* (1885); *Sapientiae Christianae* (1890), and *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes* (1892); and *Graves de Communi* (1901), on Christian Democracy.

<sup>62</sup> M. Schäfers, "Rerum Novarum - The Result of Christian Social Movements 'From Below'", *Concilium*, no. 5 (1991) 14.

and control of the 'means of production' which had led across Europe to unemployment and destitution, the right to work in order to live was key.

The author expressed outrage at the 'shameful and inhuman' tendency of employers to 'misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers', for work tasks should be commensurate with the worker's ability (*RN 20*). The need for Sabbath rest (*RN 41*), appropriate rest intervals, and restrictions on the work of women and children (*RN 42*) were emphasised. Employers are bound to provide for their employees' spiritual needs (*RN 20*), and to help them meet their material needs by paying a just wage.<sup>63</sup> The just wage was here defined – for the first time – as 'sufficient to enable [the worker] comfortably to support himself, his wife, and his children' (*RN 46*), provided he were 'frugal and well-behaved' (*RN 45*).

Crucially for the development of the JOC, the encyclical requires that workers have the right in natural law to free association (*RN 51*). While Leo's preference – again, probably influenced by Ketteler and his contemporary and compatriot Kolping – was for a return to the 'confraternities, societies, and religious orders', such as the medieval guilds (*RN 53*), he nevertheless advocated workers' associations whose goal would be to 'secure... an increase in the goods of body, of soul, and of property.' (*RN 57*) Gérin points out that in the aftermath of the encyclical, 'unions, co-operatives and mutual societies were established' in Belgium.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Leo XIII, "R.N.", 21. Leo continued by reminding the wealthy that their riches are to be used wisely (*RN 22*).

<sup>64</sup> Gérin, "Catholicisme", 82.

The encyclical acknowledged the biblical understanding of work as part of the human condition, for ‘even had man never fallen from the state of innocence, he would not have remained wholly idle’ (*RN* 17).<sup>65</sup> The Fall has had an implication for work, with the curse of Gen. 3.17 interpreted as making work laborious. Yet poverty, and the need to work are ‘no disgrace ... there is nothing to be ashamed of in earning [one’s] bread by labour’ (*RN* 23). Even Christ ‘did not disdain to spend a great part of his life as a carpenter’ (*RN* 23). Work may, indeed, should, be a means for perfecting the life of the soul, ‘made after the image and likeness of God’ (*RN* 40). *Rerum Novarum*’s forceful insistence on the dignity of the worker, and the dignity of work, which should be played out through the establishment of reasonable working conditions, the payment of a just wage, and the development of unions and workers’ associations, was key in the development of the concept of workers’ rights and economic and social justice during the twentieth century. It also shaped the development of a theology of work focussed on the interplay between the dignity of the human worker, and the necessary dignity of work itself.

To mark the fortieth anniversary of the ‘peerless Encyclical’ (*QA* 1), Pius XI published *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931, in the midst of a worldwide economic downturn. The importance of *RN*, which ‘Christian workers received ... with special joy’, and ‘commemorate every year’ (*QA* 13), led him to observe that a new encyclical would not only ‘recall the great benefits’ of *RN*, but also ‘[summon] to court the contemporary economic regime’ (*QA* 13). Like Leo, Pius

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<sup>65</sup> Leo XIII, "R.N.", 27, implicitly interpreting Gen. 1.28 ('fill the earth and subdue it') as an indication that humanity was created in order to work; it is only with the Fall that work becomes so 'painful' that it results in 'the sweat of [humanity's] face' (Gen. 3.17, 19).

expressed concern about the ‘huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered propertyless, [which] must be effectively called back to and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good, that is, social justice.’ (QA 58) In ‘calling to judgement the economic system now in force’ (QA 98), Pius continued the critique of capitalism enunciated by Leo XIII: ‘since the publication of Leo XIII’s Encyclical,’ he observed ‘[capitalism] has invaded and pervaded the economic and social life’ of the world, meaning that ‘the principles of right reason, that is, of Christian social philosophy, must be kept in mind regarding ownership and labor and their association together’. (QA 110)

*Quadragesimo Anno* developed a number of principles enunciated in *Rerum Novarum*. First, we note a renewed emphasis on the dignity of the worker. The critique of capitalism may be justified because capitalism ‘violate[s] right order ... scorning the human dignity of the workers’. (QA 101) ‘The opportunity to work [should] be provided to those who are able and willing to work’, and this ‘depends largely on the wage and salary rate’. (QA 74) The just wage ‘should be calculated not on a single basis, but on several.’ (QA 66) It should be ‘sufficient to support [the worker] and his family’ (QA 71) while neither compromising the security of the business nor eroding workers’ rights by being too low (QA 74).

Pius XI praised the ‘new branch of law’ whose aim is ‘to protect vigorously the sacred rights of the workers that flow from their dignity as men and as Christians.’ (QA 28) Workers, he suggested, should ‘hold [their work] in esteem ... following closely in the footsteps of Him Who, being in the form of God, willed to be a carpenter among men’. (QA 137) He praised those Catholic



clergy and laity who have made 'zealous efforts ... to lift up that class ... the workers'. (QA 23) Catholic Action was mentioned (QA 138), along with the 'ranks of the workers' and 'massed companies of young workers' who were 'striving with marvelous zeal to gain their comrades for Christ', (QA 140) for 'the first and immediate apostles to the workers ought to be workers; the apostles to those who follow industry and trade ought to be from among themselves.' (QA 141) Rightly, this is often read as approval of the JOC and Catholic Action, which was then developing apace in Italy.

Pius XII marked the fiftieth anniversary of the *RN* with a radio broadcast. The wartime pope described *RN* as 'the Magna Carta of Christian Social Endeavour'.<sup>66</sup> The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary was observed by John XXIII with *Mater et Magistra*, drafted by Cardijn (see Chapter 3 below). Here human work was described as the way in which humanity can 'develop and perfect themselves', 'a service to humanity, in intimate union with God through Christ, and to God's greater glory.' (M&M 256) The papal magisterium on the right to work, the need for decent work, the right to unionise, and the need for a just wage was reasserted without developing a theology of work. The Second Vatican Council touched on work both in its document on the laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, and in its closing document, *Gaudium et Spes*, but again there was no theological development of the idea of work. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* merely acknowledged that work is part of the 'temporal order' which 'helps to the final

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<sup>66</sup> Pius XII, "Discourse to commemorate the 50th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*", , 220.

end of human beings' (AA 7).<sup>67</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* described the way in which human beings '[further] the creator's work by their labour' (G&S 34).<sup>68</sup> Earlier it had discussed the Christian understanding of humanity created *in imago Dei*, which underpins this understanding of work as participation in divine creation. This is placed in the context of atheism and religious freedom, a discussion which was taking place against the background of Communism in Eastern Europe.

One of those particularly affected by this political divide was the then Archbishop of Kraków, Karol Wojtyła. John Paul II was unique among modern popes – possibly any pope since late antiquity – in his personal experience of hard manual labour. As a student in Nazi-occupied Poland, his forced labour was in a quarry and a factory. He was more than familiar with '*the sometimes heavy toil that from [the Fall] has accompanied human work*'. (LE 9) Ordained in 1946, his experience of more than 30 years under the Communist regime in Poland informed his papal teaching. In his first Encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*,<sup>69</sup> John Paul II examined the 'state of the world'. A lengthy section on economic progress warned against the risk of excessive focus on the material and of defining 'progress' simply as increasing material prosperity. 'Man', he asserted, 'cannot ... become the slave of things, the slave of economic systems, the slave of production, the slave of his own products.' (RH 16) This insistence on the primacy of the ontological over the material recurred in the 1987 Encyclical,

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<sup>67</sup> N.P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils. Trent-Vatican II*, vol. 2 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990) 986.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 1089.

<sup>69</sup> John Paul II, "Redemptor Hominis. Encyclical Letter by John Paul II at the beginning of his papal ministry. ", (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 4 March 1979)

*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,<sup>70</sup> marking the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum*

*Progressio*. Chapter 4 of *SRS*, on ‘authentic human development’, argued that development should be measured in terms of the person’s being (ontologically), rather than in terms of what they have (materially). Part of the ontological development of humanity should acknowledge that the human person is created ‘as a *creature* and *image*’ whose ‘task is “to have dominion” over the other created beings, “to cultivate the garden”’. (*SRS* 30)

It is this call to work which forms the heart of the Polish Pope’s encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, marking the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. His third encyclical, published in 1981, it was ‘devoted to *human work* and, even more, to [*humanity*] in the vast context of the reality of work.’ (*LE* 1)<sup>71</sup> Volf has described it as ‘one of the most remarkable ecclesiastical documents on the question of work ever written’, suggesting that it is ‘primarily a philosophy and theology of work.’<sup>72</sup> John Paul II insisted that ‘the mystery of creation’ lies at the heart of human work, and that ‘this affirmation ... is the guiding thread of this document’ (*LE* 12). The final chapter identifies a ‘Gospel of Work’, expressed in the ‘hidden life’ at Nazareth ‘devoted ... to *manual work* at the carpenter’s bench’ (*LE* 6), and through the world of work described in Jesus’ parables and throughout the Old Testament (*LE* 26).<sup>73</sup> Roos<sup>74</sup> sees the content as rooted in John Paul II’s reading of *Gaudium et Spes* Chapter 3, in which the

<sup>70</sup> "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis. Encyclical Letter for the 20th Anniversary of Populorum Progressio", (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 30 December 1987)

<sup>71</sup> Author’s emphasis.

<sup>72</sup> Volf, *Spirit* 5.

<sup>73</sup> Nn 44-70 give references to ‘the individual professions’ listed in the Bible.

<sup>74</sup> L. Roos, "On a theology and ethics of work", *Communio* 11, no. 2 (1984) 110-11.

Fathers discussed 'human activity throughout the world'.<sup>75</sup> In *Laborem Exercens*, the late Pope was clear that '*the whole person, body and spirit, participates in [work], whether it is manual or intellectual work*', and thus that '[humanity], created in the image of God, *shares ...in the activity of the Creator.*' (LE 24, 25)

John Paul II distinguished between work in its objective sense and in its subjective sense. In his discussion of work as 'objective', he may be alluding to Chenu's 'shift from tool to machine' which 'has caused great changes in civilization', (LE 5) although we should note that Chenu is not cited anywhere in the Encyclical. Work in the subjective sense, meanwhile, turns to the human person, created in the image of God, as a worker. Preece suggests this develops Descartes' statement to "I do, therefore I am." Doing derives from the creation commission...<sup>76</sup> Work, notes Roos, is 'an existential part of [the human person]'.<sup>77</sup> Juros praises the Pope's theology of work for establishing that 'work proceeds from the person ... work is good for the human [being]'.<sup>78</sup> Such a focus, he observes, permits John Paul II to realign the theology of work with 'creation, incarnation, and redemption',<sup>79</sup> the primary concerns of Christian theology. Juros continues by suggesting that, where earlier papal discourse on work had been constructed in opposition to Marx (the call for the just wage, decent working conditions, etc., are thus reframed as an appeal to the worker to rely on the Church rather than the Socialists), John Paul II engaged with

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<sup>75</sup> Tanner, *Decrees*, 2, 2 1089.

<sup>76</sup> G. Preece, *Changing Work Values: A Christian Response* (Melbourne: Acorn Press Ltd., 1995) 205.

<sup>77</sup> Roos, "Theology of work" 111.

<sup>78</sup> H. Juros, "The object of the theology of work", *ibid.* 141.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 141.

Marxism on its own terms. He was also engaging with existentialism, one of the more influential of the 'atheistic' philosophies of twentieth-century Western thought. For the existentialist human life is an entirely subjective experience. There is, for instance, no overarching, objective moral stance. Human persons are the agents of their own individualness, and become individuals through taking responsibility for their personal development.

For John Paul II, by contrast, the human person developed as a person through their response in faith to the divine creation. The 'subjective' sense of work permitted John Paul II to conclude that the very dignity of the human person-worker leads to the dignity of the work. The value or dignity of the work is conferred by the fact that it is being done by a human being, created with inherent dignity *in imago Dei*. For Cardijn, the dignity of the worker as a human person created *in imago Dei* led, not to a dignity in work, but rather, to a requirement that work be made worthy of that dignity. Cardijn's intuition here is somewhat more successful than John Paul's, which risks Volf's criticism of theology of work: that by claiming humanity is created to work, and work 'glorifies God', even degrading work (and working conditions) are acceptable.<sup>80</sup>

*Laborem Exercens* describes work as 'a key, probably the essential key to the whole social question', its importance lying in it being the route to humanity becoming fully human (*LE* 3). As Preece points out,

[John Paul II] uses Marx against the Marxists ... [reminding] them of the early Marx' emphasis on the alienation of the worker, who is not treated [by

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<sup>80</sup> See Volf, *Spirit* 107.

industrial work] as a subject but as an object', while 'resist[ing] Marx' economic determinism...<sup>81</sup>

Preece's criticism of *Laborem Exercens*' 'Marxist emphasis on work viewed in terms of human self-creation', which he describes as its 'greatest virtue [and also] its greatest vice',<sup>82</sup> misses the similarity, albeit from radically differing departure points, between Marx's desire that work promote human flourishing,<sup>83</sup> and John Paul II's view, expressed more clearly in *Centesimus Annos*, that 'work belongs to the vocation of every person; indeed, [humanity] expresses and fulfils [itself] by working.' (CA 6) While for Marx, the human flourishing is entirely 'earthly', for John Paul II it relates rather to the 'eternal destiny' of humanity. Work is part of the essence of humanity, so working makes us more fully human. In this way we are brought closer to salvation and ultimately the Beatific Vision. 'The fundamental error of socialism', the Pope clarified in *Centesimus Annos*, 'is anthropological in nature'. (CA 13) The socialist misconception of the human person inevitably leads to a misunderstanding of the reality of work for humanity. Published in 1991, 'in response to requests from many Bishops, Church institutions ... business leaders and workers' (CA 1), it offered a 're-reading' of *Rerum Novarum* (CA 3), clarifying that encyclical's emphasis on work as 'the vocation of every person': 'the key to reading [RN] is

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<sup>81</sup> Preece, *Changing Work Values: A Christian Response* 209.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* 209-10.

<sup>83</sup> Marx discusses the deleterious effects of mechanisation on workers in Chs 10 and 15 of *Capital*; 'factory work exhausts the nervous system [and] deprives the work of all content', Marx, *Capital* 548.

the *dignity of the worker* as such, and, for the same reason, the *dignity of work* which should lead to humanity's 'fulfilment' (CA 6).

While building on his predecessors' teaching on workers' rights – unemployment is described as an 'evil' (LE 18), with particular concern for youth unemployment; the concept of the 'just wage' is developed to suggest that the state might support a 'family wage' through welfare payments (LE 19); and teaching on unions reiterated (LE 20) – the late Pope also insisted that work is both a 'good' in itself, and good for humanity (LE 9, 11), Repeating the demands of previous encyclicals for workers' rights (CA 7-8) and proper economic development (CA 29), *Centesimus Annos* also engaged with economic systems. While 'the modern business economy has positive aspects', the technology which drives it requires such a high level of skill that many would-be workers are simply excluded. (CA 32-33) Neither Marxism nor capitalism could offer the only model for work in the modern world, (CA 42) and 'the Church has no models to present', although its Social Teaching is 'an indispensable and ideal orientation' to ensure that work matches the dignity of the human person, by permitting creativity at work and the 'integral development of the human person.' (CA 43)

John Paul II's contribution remains intriguing. Was he, as many have claimed, the 'Workers' Pope', promoting workers' rights in an increasingly complex global economy? Or was his primary concern the end of Marxism in Poland and Eastern Europe, with workers' rights a 'collateral benefit'? Novak describes John Paul's magisterium on work as an attempt 'to end the divorce

between economics and religion'.<sup>84</sup> It could also be argued that this was a catastrophic failure which, rather than condemning both Marxism and rampant capitalism, ended up enabling capitalism to proceed untrammelled, as the only economic model, and with no moral criticism. His successors Benedict XVI and Francis I, in *Caritas in Veritate*, *Evangelii Gaudium*, and *Laudato Si'*, have sought to redress the balance and return the papal magisterium to a more critical position on global capitalism, resituating the worker at the heart of the economy, whether local, national, or global. In this sense, it may be argued that Benedict XVI and Francis I have successfully begun a retrieval (*ressourcement*) of the tradition of the papal magisterium on work. The retrieval of the threefold tradition – Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium – known as *ressourcement* theology is at the very heart of the theology of Cardijn and Chenu, and so it is to *ressourcement* theology that we now turn.

#### 1.4 *Ressourcement theology*<sup>85</sup>

*Ressourcement* theology is the most significant development in twentieth-century Catholic theology, marking a bridge, as Mettepenningen suggests, between Modernism, that nebulous 'movement' condemned in the first decade

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<sup>84</sup> M. Novak, *The Catholic ethic and the spirit of Catholicism* (New York: The Free Press, 1993) 106.

<sup>85</sup> On *ressourcement* theology see e.g., H. Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); J. Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie - New Theology. Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (London: T&T Clark, 2010); Flynn and Murray, *Ressourcement*; , *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 4 (2005)



of the twentieth century,<sup>86</sup> and the Second Vatican Council. Modernism was condemned in the 1907 Encyclical *Pascendi*,<sup>87</sup> which criticised a perceived relativism in faith, the search for a Catholic attempt to use the historical critical method in biblical interpretation, a rejection of the distinction between nature and 'supernature' which underpinned neo-scholastic thought, and an over-emphasis on religion as 'experience'. It remains unclear whether the theologians associated with Modernism considered themselves a movement, or whether the concept of a 'movement' was externally imposed.<sup>88</sup> Jodock argues that '[i]n the face of the rigidities of neo-scholastic versions of Catholicism and its resistance to notions of historical development and change, these Catholics were seeking an alternative way of interpreting the faith.'<sup>89</sup> Not dissimilar criticisms would be made of the *ressourcement* theologians, particularly Chenu, with his emphasis on the importance of the historical context of theology, Congar, with his interest in ecumenism,<sup>90</sup> and de Lubac, with his critique of the nature/supernature position in neo-scholasticism.<sup>91</sup> *Ressourcement* theology existed in the long shadow cast by Modernism (or at least, by *Pascendi*) over

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<sup>86</sup> The best account of 'Modernism' and the crisis in the wake of its condemnation remains D. Jodock, ed. *Catholicism contending with modernity: Roman Catholic modernism and anti-modernism in historical context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also S. Bullivant, "Newman and Modernism: The *Pascendi* Crisis and its Wider Significance", *New Blackfriars* 92, no. 1038 (2011); G. Loughlin, "*Nouvelle Théologie*: A return to Modernism?", in *Ressourcement. A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. G. Flynn and P.D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

<sup>87</sup> Pius X, "Pascendi Dominici Gregis. Encyclical Letter on the Doctrines of the Modernists", (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1907)

<sup>88</sup> Jodock suggests that 'if Modernism is defined as a coherent system of thought, no such thing existed prior to the encyclical [*Pascendi*]'. Jodock, *Contending* 2. See also Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie* 142-3.

<sup>89</sup> Jodock, *Contending* 3.

<sup>90</sup> E.g., J.-M. Congar, *Divided Christendom. A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion*, trans. M A Bousfield OP (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1939)

<sup>91</sup> H. de Lubac, *Surnaturel* (Lyon: Aubier, 1946)

twentieth-century Catholic theology up until at least the Second Vatican Council, exemplified by Pius XII's 1950 encyclical, *Humani Generis*, warning of the dangers stalking theology.<sup>92</sup>

There is debate about the most pertinent term to describe the theology developed by these predominantly French-speaking, Religious theologians active during the interwar and post-war period. Mettepenningen acknowledges that the provenance and use of the term *nouvelle théologie* – implying a break with the Catholic tradition – were deliberately derogatory,<sup>93</sup> and that it is a 'loaded expression',<sup>94</sup> with 'the term "new" ... often taken as a term of reproach'.<sup>95</sup> The great historian of the French interwar Church, Étienne Fouilloux, cautiously avoids the contentious *nouvelle théologie*, preferring '*la théologie nouvelle*'.<sup>96</sup> Boersma<sup>97</sup> is more nuanced in his use of the terms *nouvelle théologie* and *ressourcement*. He notes the 'character [of *nouvelle théologie*] as a movement of *ressourcement*',<sup>98</sup> and suggests that *ressourcement* – the recovery or retrieval of the ancient sources of theology – developed from the return to the mystery of theology, as expressed in the nature/supernature debate which was part of the project of *nouvelle théologie*.<sup>99</sup> Boersma implies that *ressourcement* was the protagonists' preferred term, with *nouvelle*

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<sup>92</sup> Pius XII, *Humani Generis. Encyclical Letter concerning some False Opinions Threatening to Undermine the Foundations of Catholic Doctrine*, vol. 42 (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 1950)

<sup>93</sup> Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie* 4.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 143.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 142.

<sup>96</sup> É. Fouilloux, "'Nouvelle théologie' et théologie nouvelle (1930-1960)", in *L'histoire religieuse en France et en Espagne*, ed. Benoît Pellistrandi (Madrid: Casa Velasquez, 2004)

<sup>97</sup> Boersma, *Sacramental Ontology*

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p. viii.

<sup>99</sup> See *ibid.* Chapter 1.

*théologie* imposed by their theological opponents.<sup>100</sup> We use *ressourcement*, referring to the retrieval of the earliest sources of Christian theology – the biblical, patristic, liturgical, and medieval texts – in order to ‘refresh’ theological debate.

Mettepenningen dates the history of the term from Mariano Cordovani’s denunciation, in an address to Angelicum students in 1940, of the ‘*nuove tendenze teologiche*’ he perceived.<sup>101</sup> Pietro Parente’s infamous 1942 article<sup>102</sup> – which de Lubac regarded as ‘aimed at the writings of Fathers Charlier and Chenu, OP’<sup>103</sup> – took up the phrase, which was re-used by both Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange OP, in his 1946 broadside against ‘new theology’,<sup>104</sup> and his Toulouse *confrère* M.-Michel Labourdette, in the same year.<sup>105</sup> The term was employed polemically to imply that the ‘new’ theology, far from retrieving the Catholic tradition, was rejecting it. Labourdette’s article took aim at two of the principle projects of the Lyon Jesuits – the *Sources chrétiennes* and *Théologie* series. He argued that scholastic theology was not a closed system of categories ‘of its time’, but a ‘living tradition’ well able to deal with contemporary issues.<sup>106</sup> Labourdette suggested that the ‘rehabilitation of Greek Christianity’ in the *Sources chrétiennes* was a ‘war machine against St Thomas’<sup>107</sup> presaging a wider

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 1-3.

<sup>101</sup> Published as M. Cordovani, "Per la vitalità della teologia cattolica", *L'Osservatore Romano* 22 March 1940

<sup>102</sup> P. Parente, "Nuove tendenze teologiche", *ibid.* 9-10 February 1942

<sup>103</sup> H. de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church.*, trans. A.E. Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993) 60.

<sup>104</sup> R. Garrigou-Lagrange, "La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?", *Angelicum* 23 (1946)

<sup>105</sup> M.-M. Labourdette, "La Théologie et ses sources", *Revue thomiste* 46 (1946)

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 359 n.1.

<sup>107</sup> É. Fouilloux, *La collection 'Sources chrétiennes'. Éditer les pères de l'Église au XXème siècle* (Paris Les Éditions du Cerf, 1995) 120; Labourdette, "Sources"

suspicion of 'doctrinal deviation'.<sup>108</sup> As Holsinger points out, '[e]ven seemingly innocent editorial projects, such as the series *Sources chrétiennes*, threatened to undermine the centrality of Thomas Aquinas and scholastic theology to the spiritual and intellectual mission of the Church...'<sup>109</sup> Labourdette's fiercest condemnation was reserved for the historical methodology at the centre of *ressourcement*, of which Chenu was a leading exponent, which Labourdette attributed to relativism.<sup>110</sup>

Labourdette's article received a rebuttal in the Jesuit-run *Recherches de science religieuse*,<sup>111</sup> which ridiculed his misinterpretation and insisted on the fidelity of the Jesuit theologians to the Church and to Tradition. Crucially, the (anonymous) authors emphasised the development of human thought and the methodological differences between 'history' and 'dogma'.<sup>112</sup> The importance of the whole of Christian tradition – for tradition nourishes itself on what has preceded it – was reiterated.<sup>113</sup> Discussing Pius XII's use of '*nouvelle théologie*' in an address to the Jesuit Congregation in 1946, de Lubac later insisted that 'none of the members of what was called the "Fourvière School", as far as I know, ever used that expression [*nouvelle théologie*]'.<sup>114</sup> An analogy may here be drawn with the understanding of Vatican II described by Benedict XVI in his address to the Curia in December 2005. He suggested that, while many saw the Council as a break with the past (what he described as a 'hermeneutic of

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<sup>108</sup> Fouilloux, *Collection 'S C'* 113.

<sup>109</sup> B. Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition. Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 40.

<sup>110</sup> Labourdette, "Sources" 360ff.

<sup>111</sup> "La théologie et ses sources : réponse", *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 33 (1947)

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* 391.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* 394.

<sup>114</sup> de Lubac, *Service* 60.

rupture'), he viewed it as a renewing and continuing of the tradition, or a 'hermeneutic of continuity.'<sup>115</sup> In a similar way, the *ressourcement* scholars saw themselves as retrieving the ancient texts in order to renew tradition (hermeneutic of continuity) while their opponents' use of the term '*nouvelle théologie*' sought rather to imply that they were breaking with tradition (hermeneutic of rupture).

Mettepenningen argues that the term *nouvelle théologie*, while contentious, is justified because of the 'innovative'<sup>116</sup> return to the sources it marked: 'the *new theologians* were "new" because they insisted on the return to the oldest sources of the faith.'<sup>117</sup> His assumption is that the return to the sources and use of historical-critical methodologies in Francophone theology between the 1930s and 1950s constitutes a movement.<sup>118</sup> He posits a four-stage development of this movement, arguing that it began in 1930s Paris and Belgium with the Dominicans (chiefly Chenu, Congar, and Féret); had moved by 1940 to Lyon and the Jesuits (de Lubac, Daniélou, Bouillard); then overseas and beyond the French-speaking world (helped by the teaching role of many of its proponents); before being assimilated and accepted at Vatican II, where many of its leaders were now influential *periti*. According to Mettepenningen's reading, therefore, this thesis is focused on the 'first stage' of *nouvelle théologie*, in the hands of the Dominicans in Paris and at Le Saulchoir, during the inter-war period.

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<sup>115</sup> Benedict XVI, "Christmas Greetings to the Members of the Roman Curia and Prelature (22 December 2005)," (AAS, 2006)

<sup>116</sup> Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie* p. xiii.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* 11.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* Ch 1.

Where Mettepenningen offers a chronological account, Boersma identifies the issue at the heart of *ressourcement* as a recovery of “mystery” as a central theological category serving an overall sacramental ontology.<sup>119</sup> The return to mystery, he argues, enabled the chasm between nature and ‘supernature’ to be bridged, with the help of the ‘sources of Tradition’ to which these theologians returned. This bridging in turn enabled a reconnection between theology and the reality of life. In Boersma’s analysis, then, Cardijn may be included among the *ressourcement* theologians – despite being a generation older, and not engaged in academic theology – for at the heart of his theology was a concern to reintegrate faith/religious practice and daily life. Cardijn’s focus on the liturgy as the privileged encounter with the mystery that is the divine matches the priority of the liturgy in *ressourcement* identified by Boersma, according to which the liturgy led to ‘the contemplation of the realities behind the sacramental signs’.<sup>120</sup>

The first characteristic of *ressourcement* theology is undoubtedly the return to the sources from which it derives its name. A common theme was a desire to study attentively the ancient sources of Christian theology, and to do so respecting the context in which they had been produced. In this the protagonists consciously opposed the neo-Thomist orthodoxy of their day, which they rightly perceived as stunting the theological development of theology students:

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<sup>119</sup> H. Boersma, *Heavenly Participation. The weaving of a sacramental tapestry* (Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2011) p. viii.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

[f]ailure to allow for the context which [Thomas] took for granted – the Christian mystery, liturgically performed, inhabited in disciplined contemplation – leaves the *Summa* as arid an exercise as most seminarians found it.<sup>121</sup>

Rather than the rote-learning of theological statements from Thomas and his later commentators, described as ‘Denzinger-theology’,<sup>122</sup> the *ressourcement* scholars, led by Chenu, developed a method of study which refreshed and renewed Catholic theology, while being entirely faithful to the tradition.

A key contribution to the retrieval of the sources of Christian thought was the series *Sources chrétiennes*, founded in 1941-2 by de Lubac, Daniélou, and Claude Mondésert, under the guidance of the pre-war Rector of Studies at Lyon-Fourvière, Victor Fontoynt.<sup>123</sup> Although the series had been in planning since 1938, it became concrete only in the midst of war; yet some dozen volumes were prepared for translation between 1943 and the end of the war in 1945. The series was a collaboration both between the Paris and Lyons Jesuits, and between a Jesuit editorial team and Dominican publishers. The aim of the series was ‘intellectual and spiritual: to return the Church Fathers, first Greek and then Latin, Eastern and medieval, to the influence they had since lost in the

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<sup>121</sup> F. Kerr, "A Different World: Neoscholasticism and its Discontents", *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8, no. 2 (2006) 144-5.

<sup>122</sup> J. Mettepenningen, "*Nouvelle théologie: Four Historical Stages of Theological Reform Towards Ressourcement (1935-1965)*", in *Ressourcement. A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. G. Flynn and P.D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 173.

<sup>123</sup> On the founding of the series, see in particular Fouilloux, *Collection 'S C'*; de Lubac, *Service* 94-94. See also Lebreton's appreciative note, J. Lebreton, "Etudes critiques", *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 31 (1943)

formation of the Christian elite, both lay and clerical.<sup>124</sup> Offering critical editions and translations of the Fathers, 'and through reflection ... finding a new and deeper identity, enriching Western experience with the witness of the East',<sup>125</sup> it grew out of a desire to 'draw the Fathers out of the narrow circle of specialist Catholic theologians to offer this nourishment more widely', 'filling the lacuna' of texts available in Greek, and 'reintroducing the Greek Fathers into the culture of people living in the second half of the twentieth century'.<sup>126</sup> Already in 1943, Lebreton could note that 'we can see from the range of subjects and the diversity of periods the huge extent of that Christian thought which they are proposing to help us get to know better.'<sup>127</sup> By 1948, 'the titles announced or in print comprise[d] some fifty-three works of the Greek Fathers, and some seventeen of the Latin Fathers'.<sup>128</sup>

*Sources chrétiennes* represented a real commitment by the *ressourcement* theologians involved in the project to ensure the availability of the sources of theology in the best possible scholarly editions. In a similar vein, the *Unam Sanctam* series, founded by Congar in 1938, sought to invigorate the study of the 'one, holy' Church. The twentieth century has been referred to as 'the century of the Church',<sup>129</sup> and ecclesiology was a second key characteristic

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<sup>124</sup> Fouilloux, *Collection 'S C'* 9.

<sup>125</sup> A. Louth, "French *Ressourcement* Theology and Orthodoxy: A Living Mutual Relationship?", in *Ressourcement. A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. G. Flynn and P.D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 505.

<sup>126</sup> Fouilloux, *Collection 'S C'* 35, 37.

<sup>127</sup> Lebreton, "Etudes critiques" 251. At that stage, only four volumes had been published: Gregory of Nyssa's *Contemplation sur la Vie de Moïse*; Clement of Alexandria's *Proteptique*; Athenagoras' *Supplique au sujet des Chrétiens*; and Nicholas Cabsilas' *Explication de la divine Liturgie*.

<sup>128</sup> J.C. Murray, "Sources Chrétiennes", *Theological Studies* 9 (1948) 252.

<sup>129</sup> A. Dulles, "A Half Century of Ecclesiology", *ibid.* 50 (1989) citing Dibelius.



of *ressourcement* theology. Moving away from Bellarmine's definition of the Church as

a human society bound together by professing the same Christian faith, and by participation in the same sacraments, under the rule of legitimate pastors, particularly the sole vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman pontiff<sup>130</sup>

*ressourcement* theologians such as de Lubac, Bouyer, and Congar laid the ground for the new ecclesiology which would be expressed at Vatican II.

Both series also demonstrate a third major characteristic of *ressourcement* theology, which is engagement with the world beyond the Church. The political context of France and Belgium during the inter-war period offered plenty of opportunity for those who sought to live and preach a *théologie engagée*. *Ressourcement* theologians were engaged with the social questions associated with industrialisation through such means as the JOC, the *Mission de France* and *Mission de Paris*, and the Worker Priests. One of the first JOC chaplains in France, Henri Godin, co-authored a report on the state of the Church in urban industrial areas in France, where it had effectively ceased to exist.<sup>131</sup> As a result, the hierarchy, led by Cardinal Suhard of Paris, established a missionary college to train priests for the 'home mission' of industry.

Concurrently, some priests were clandestinely accompanying Frenchmen sent

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<sup>130</sup> *De controversiis* 2.3.

<sup>131</sup> H. Godin and Y. Daniel, *La France, Pays de Mission?* (Paris: Cerf, 1943); E.T.: M. Ward, *France Pagan? The Mission of Abbé Godin* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1950) See also Chenu's obituary of Godin following the latter's sudden death from carbon monoxide poisoning in 1943; M.-D. Chenu, "L'Abbé H. Godin. Fondateur de la "Mission de Paris"", in *La Parole de Dieu* 2. *L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1960 (1944))

on the *Service du travail obligatoire (STO)* in Germany.<sup>132</sup> Nazi Occupation offered further opportunity for *engagement*: Yves de Montcheuil SJ lost his life when captured with a resistance group to which he was chaplain;<sup>133</sup> de Lubac, heavily involved in *Témoignage Chrétien*, which called for resistance as a Christian duty, was forced into hiding.<sup>134</sup> Daniélou's call for a theology at the service of a wider audience, to which article Garrigou-Lagrange and Labourdette responded with such outrage, drew on this experience, as well as the return to the sources, and to the 'renewal of the Christian life' almost contemporary with a rise in 'virulent forms of atheism', which both required 'a more substantial doctrinal and spiritual nourishment than is usually the case'.<sup>135</sup>

The renewal of Catholic theology led by the *ressourcement* theologians bore fruit in the Second Vatican Council. Not only were they now *periti*, but as academics, many had also been engaged from before World War II in forming the next generation of clergy, some of whom were now Council Fathers or their advisers. Flynn describes the *ressourcement* theologians as 'the harbingers of the new era of openness, ecumenism, and dialogue inaugurated at the Second Vatican Council',<sup>136</sup> while Neufeld's description of de Lubac – 'a world wide

<sup>132</sup> See H. Perrin, *Priest and Worker. The autobiography of Henri Perrin* (London: MacMillan & Co Ltd, 1965) ch.2; G. Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, trans. Isabel McHugh and Florence McHugh (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964) esp. 18-48; S. Windass, ed. *The chronicle of the Worker Priests* (London: Merlin Press, 1966) ch. 1.

<sup>133</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Mort d'un théologien", *La Vie Intellectuelle* (Fev. 1945); J. Lebreton, "In Memoriam. Le P. Yves de Montcheuil", *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 33 (1946)

<sup>134</sup> de Lubac, *Service* 48ff gives an account of his work with *Témoignage Chrétien*; see also his writings published as 'Christian Resistance to Nazism and anti-Semitism', Part 2, Ch 4, of *Theology in History*, trans. A.E. Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996) 367ff; and *Christian Resistance to Anti-Semitism. Memories from 1940-1944*, trans. E. Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990)

<sup>135</sup> J. Daniélou, "Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse", *Études* 249 (1946) 5.

<sup>136</sup> G. Flynn, "Introduction", in *Ressourcement. A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. G. Flynn and P.D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 9.

reputation' due to his theological output, and the 'discreet manner in which he reacted to the difficulties that had prevented him from teaching since 1950'<sup>137</sup> – might equally be applied to Chenu.

Chenu was a leading *ressourcement* theologian, albeit poorly known in English-language theology. Following Mettepenningen's location of the first waves of *ressourcement* with the Belgian Dominicans and French Jesuits during the inter-war years, and Boersma's emphasis on the return to a sacramental ontology in order to successfully bridge the gap between faith and life, Cardijn may also be counted among the *ressourcement* theologians. We now turn to discuss the scholarly context and the contribution of this thesis in more detail.

### *1.5 Scholarly context and author's contribution*

The primary contribution of this thesis to scholarly discourse is the establishment of Cardijn as an important twentieth-century theologian. As Horn has noted, 'amazingly enough, until today there has still not been a single serious biographical monograph on Joseph Cardijn.'<sup>138</sup> It is immediately clear from the Cardijn archives why he has not until now been considered a 'serious' theologian.<sup>139</sup> During his time teaching at the seminary of Basse-Wavre (1907-1913), he produced three articles for the *Revue Sociale Catholique*, based on his

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<sup>137</sup> K.-H. Neufeld, "In the service of the Council", in *Vatican II. Assessment and Perspectives. Twenty-five years after (1962-1987)*, ed. Renè Latourelle (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1988) 88.

<sup>138</sup> G.-R. Horn, *Western European Liberation Theology. The First Wave (1924-1959)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009) 20.

<sup>139</sup> The Cardijn archives are available at KADOC, the 'Documentation and Research Centre for Religion, Culture and Society', a research centre at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, focusing on the role of religion in Flemish life from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

studies of working conditions in England, Germany, and Belgium.<sup>140</sup> In 1960, he produced an outline and short draft for an encyclical marking the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*,<sup>141</sup> which formed the basis for *Mater et Magistra*. Aside from these articles, his archive consists of the speeches and talks given to JOC members and chaplains at meetings and study weeks; articles published in magazines for JOC members and chaplains;<sup>142</sup> and personal correspondence.

Of the secondary literature on Cardijn, much falls into the category of biographies written for JOC members. These works tend towards the hagiographical, but are nonetheless of some value for the insight they give into Cardijn's 'theology in practice', which underpinned the founding of the JOC.<sup>143</sup> The major published academic studies fall under the auspices of the KADOC. Walckiers' *Sources inédites*<sup>144</sup> covers the very earliest years of the JOC, situating

<sup>140</sup> J. Cardijn, "L'industrie à domicile en Allemagne", *Revue Sociale Catholique* 11 (1907); "L'organisation ouvrière anglaise", *Revue Sociale Catholique* 15/16 (1911); "L'ouvrière isolée", *Revue Sociale Catholique* 17 (1913) These articles are assessed more fully in Chapter 4.2.

<sup>141</sup> "70e anniversaire de Rerum Novarum," (Leuven KADOC, 1960), discussed and analysed in Chapter 4.2.

<sup>142</sup> Many were collected and republished: for instance, *Le laïcat ouvrier* (Paris: Les éditions ouvrières, 1935); *Les jeunes travailleurs en face du mariage* (Paris: Les Éditions ouvrières, 1938); *The Hour of the Working Class* (London: Young Worker Publications, 1948); *The Church and the Young Worker. Speeches and Writings of Canon Joseph Cardijn*, trans. Eugene Langdale (London: Young Worker Publications, 1948); *Challenge to Action* trans. Eugene Langdale (Chicago: Fides, 1955); and, edited by himself, *Laïcs en premières lignes* (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1963) 'I have consecrated my entire priestly life to the apostolate of the laity. But I have had to wait until now – the eve of my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday! – to have the opportunity to publish something on the subject.' ("Avant-Propos", in *Laïcs en premiers lignes*, ed. J. Cardijn (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1963) 9. During his periods of imprisonment in World War I, Cardijn also wrote the first edition of the Manuel de la JOC (republished in 1930; *Manuel de la J.O.C.* (Brussels: Les éditions jocistes, 1930)

<sup>143</sup> For example, in English, E. Arbuthnott, *Joseph Cardijn. Priest and Founder of the Y.C.W.* (London 1966); M. de la Bedoyere, *The Cardijn Story* (London: The Catholic Book Club, 1958); in French, M. Fiévez and J. Meert, *Cardijn* (Brussels: Éditions Vie Ouvrière, 1978); in Flemish, M. Van Roey, *Kardinaal Jozef Cardijn* (Brussels: D.A.P. Reinaert Uitgaven, 1972); J. Verhoeven, *Jozef Cardijn, profet van onze tijd* (Brussels: Uitgeverij Labor, 1972)

<sup>144</sup> M.A. Walckiers, *Sources inédites relatives aux débuts de la J.O.C. 1919-1925*, ed. Cahiers Bijdragen (Louvain/Paris: Nauwelaerts, 1970).

its foundation within the context of the First World War and its aftermath.

*Cardijn, een mens, een beweging* is the proceedings of a 1983 colloquium on Cardijn and the JOC.<sup>145</sup> Two separate studies assess the history and context of the Christian Worker Movements in Belgium. The single-volume *Voor Kerk en Werk*<sup>146</sup> discusses the history of the movements from the earliest days of Christian trades unions in the 1880s, while the two-volume *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier chrétien en Belgique*<sup>147</sup> covers both the broader history and the specific development of the Cardijn Movements and their implication for the Belgian Church. The study by Dèbes and Poulat offers a history of the JOC in France.<sup>148</sup> It includes correspondence relating to the beginnings of the JOC in Paris and the *département du Nord*, and is based around the visits of Georges Guérin to Belgium and Cardijn to France. The authors are particularly attentive to Guérin's involvement, from the age of 16, in *Le Sillon*, and the importance of his assignment to the huge industrial parish of Clichy as a curate immediately after ordination.<sup>149</sup>

Of 10 theses on Cardijn and the JOC, only that of Birck<sup>150</sup> – a former JOC chaplain in Brazil, who examined the apostolate of the laity in Cardijn's writing – looks at Cardijn's theology. The remainder locate the JOC within the local socio-

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<sup>145</sup> *Cardijn, Een Mens, Een Beweging/Cardijn, Un Homme, Un Mouvement. Handelingen van het colloquium/Actes du colloque, Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, 18-19.11.1982.* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers/KADOC, 1983).

<sup>146</sup> E. Gerard and J. Mampuy, eds., *Voor Kerk en Werk. Opstellen over de geschiedenis van de christelijke arbeidersbeweging, 1886-1986*, KADOC Studies (Leuven: Universitaire Pers, 1986).

<sup>147</sup> E. Gerard and P. Wynants, eds., *Histoire du Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien en Belgique*, vol. 1, KADOC-STUDIES (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994); *ibid.*, 2..

<sup>148</sup> J. Dèbes and É Poulat, *L'appel de la J.O.C. (1926-1928)*, Histoires (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1986)

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* 21, 25.

<sup>150</sup> A.J. Birck, "Um mundo a construir : o apostolado dos leigos no pensamento de J. Cardijn" (PhD, Lateran University, 1975)

political context, ranging from the interwar period to the 1970s.<sup>151</sup> Birck's focus was two-fold. First, he noted the importance of the JOC as a 'movement of renewal',<sup>152</sup> which educated young workers and encouraged them to take responsibility for the lay apostolate. Second, he was attentive to the importance of the doctrines of creation and redemption in Cardijn's theology. Cardijn, argued Birck, sought to transform and re-Christianise the world of work. The See-Judge-Act (SJA) methodology was transformative of both the Jocistes and their realities, but it was rooted in creation and redemption, and reliant on the role of the sacraments and the liturgy.<sup>153</sup> Birck's consideration of Cardijn's description of the complementarity of the lay and clerical apostolates, while rather narrative, correctly observed that, while Cardijn could be radical, he was uncompromising in his understanding of the hierarchical nature of the Church, and the role of the clergy in which the laity were enabled to participate.<sup>154</sup> The major weakness of Birck's work remains his reliance on very limited primary

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<sup>151</sup> J. Balenciaga, "Les origines de la JOC à Valladolid : contribution aux débuts de la JOC en Espagne" (UC Louvain, 1982); Balenciaga also contributed an article to the *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* ("Les origines de la JOC à Valladolid. Contribution à l'étude des débuts de la JOC en Espagne", *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 77 (1982); and a chapter in Cholvy's recent work on European youth movements ("Aux origines de la JOC en Espagne. Le rôle de Valladolid", in *Mouvements de jeunesse chrétiens et juifs: sociabilité juvénile dans un cadre européen 1799-1968*, ed. Gérard Cholvy (Paris: Cerf, 2008); B. López García, "La presencia del Movimiento Obrero Católico español en Europa: la HOAC en los organismos internacionales católicos bajo el Franquismo, 1946-1975" (Universidad de Murcia, 2005); M. Garbi, "La JOC et la guerre d'Algérie" (Université Lyon 2 (Lumière), 2000); V. Lúcia Vieira, "Entre a cruz e o manifesto: dilemas da contemporaneidade no discurso da Juventude Operária Católica do Brasil(1960/1968)" (Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo, 2002); M. Blassioli Moraes, "A ação social católica e a luta operária : a experiência dos jovens operários católicos em Santo André (1954-1964)" (Santo André, 2003); D. Leo, "Die ideologische und politische Position der christlichen Arbeiterjugendorganisation 'Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne' (JOC) in den siebziger Jahren in Frankreich" (Humboldt Universiteit, 1983); F. Richou, "La J.O.C.F. dans l'ouest" (Doctoral thesis, Nantes, 1986); V.F. Muraro, "A JOC : uma utopia operária? " (Universidade de São Paulo, 1983); S. Ahlers, "Murais de Marcier em Mauá afrescos na Capela da Juventude Operária Católic" (São Paulo, 2008) Ahlers' research focuses on a 1940s fresco cycle in which biblical scenes were related to the lives of the local JOC.

<sup>152</sup> Birck, "Um mundo" 49.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. Ch. 6.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. Ch. 4.

sources. He refers predominantly to three 1951 addresses, 'Le monde d'aujourd'hui', 'Dimensions de l'apostolat des laïcs', and 'La formation des laïcs' (all reprinted in *Laïcs en premiers lignes*), and neglects Cardijn's wider output.

To date there has been no other study of Cardijn as a theologian. By contrast, the bibliography on Chenu tends to focus more on his academic production, and less on how this informed his pastoral work and taking out of theology to the world. In his 1995 contribution to the colloquium on Chenu held at Le Saulchoir,<sup>155</sup> Jolivet analyses Chenu's bibliography to demonstrate the importance of medieval research to his theology. Indeed, he points out that, 'anyone interested in medieval thought cannot get away without reading a certain number of Chenu's works', even if they have no interest in theology.<sup>156</sup> Chenu published from the early 1920s until the year of his death: his bibliography runs into the hundreds.<sup>157</sup> However, unlike other *ressourcement* theologians, he was the author of only three monographs. *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin*,<sup>158</sup> *La théologie comme science au XIIIe siècle*,<sup>159</sup> and *La*

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<sup>155</sup> Published as G. Bedouelle, ed. *Marie-Dominique Chenu. Moyen-Âge et Modernité*, Les cahiers du Centre d'études du Saulchoir (Paris: Cerf, 1997) Another colloquium was held at Lyon the same year, and the proceedings published in *RSPT* 81/3, with Vrin publishing 5 offprints as *Le P. M.-Dominique Chenu*.

<sup>156</sup> J. Jolivet, "Les études consacrées par le Père Chenu au moyen-âge", in *Mare-Dominique Chenu. Moyen-Age et modernité*, ed. G. Bedouelle (Paris: Cerf, 1997) 70.

<sup>157</sup> C.E. Potworowski, *Contemplation and Incarnation. The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), supplies a bibliography of 1396 items, including all translations; the bibliography in A. Duval, ed. *Mélanges offertes à M.-D. Chenu, maître en théologie*, Bibliothèque Thomiste (Paris: Vrin, 1967), from 1921 to 1965, runs to over 300 items.

<sup>158</sup> M.-D. Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, vol. 11, Publications de l'Institut d'etudes medievals (Montreal/Paris: Institut d'Etudes Medievals/Vrin, 1950); ET *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. A.-M. Lanry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regener Company, 1963)

<sup>159</sup> *La Théologie comme Science au XIIIe Siècle. Troisième édition revue et augmentée* (Paris: Librairie J. Vrin, 1969)

*théologie au XIIe siècle*<sup>160</sup> all examine the birth of scholasticism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Chenu's shorter works include the infamous *Une école de théologie*;<sup>161</sup> the popular *La théologie une science?*;<sup>162</sup> *Pour une théologie du travail*;<sup>163</sup> and a two-volume collection of essays, chapters, articles, and talks, *La Parole de Dieu*.<sup>164</sup> He published frequently in more popular journals with a pastoral focus, such as *Sept* and *La Vie Intellectuelle*, ensuring that his writing had a wider readership than the 'ivory tower'.

The *Festschrift* published for Chenu's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday offers a window into the vast range of Chenu's academic interests, from biblical studies to Dominican history, from early scholasticism to clerical pedagogy in the twentieth-century Church.<sup>165</sup> Potworowski's biography is the only major work available in English, and turns on the 'particular mix of liturgy, prayer life, and intellectual activity in research and study'<sup>166</sup> that attracted him to Le Saulchoir. Vangu's study offers a reading of Chenu the historical theologian appropriate to twenty-first-century Africa.<sup>167</sup> Other secondary works include the book-length interview with Jacques Duquesne,<sup>168</sup> Congar's widely-published obituary,<sup>169</sup> the issue of *RSPT*

<sup>160</sup> *La théologie au XIIe siècle*, vol. 45, *Etudes de Philosophie Médiévale* (Paris: J Vrin, 1957)

<sup>161</sup> *Une école de théologie: le Saulchoir* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1985 (1937))

<sup>162</sup> *La Théologie est-elle une science?* (Paris: Fayard, 1957); ET *Is Theology a Science?*, trans. A.H.N. Green-Armytage, Faith and Fact Books (London: Burns & Oates, 1959)

<sup>163</sup> *Pour une théologie du travail* (Lagny-sur-Marne: E Grevin et fils, 1955); ET *The Theology of Work. An Exploration*, trans. L. Soiron (Dublin: Gill & Son, 1963)

<sup>164</sup> *La Parole de Dieu, I. La Foi dans l'intelligence* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1964); *La Parole de Dieu, II. L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1964)

<sup>165</sup> Duval, *Mélanges*

<sup>166</sup> Potworowski, *Contemplation & Incarnation* p.ix.

<sup>167</sup> E. Vangu Vangu, *La théologie de Marie-Dominique Chenu* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007)

<sup>168</sup> J. Duquesne, *Un théologien en liberté. Jacques Duquesne interroge le Père Chenu*, les interviews (Paris: Le Centurion, 1975)

<sup>169</sup> J.-M. Congar, "The brother I have known", *Thomist* 49, no. 4 (1985) first published in French in *Revue thomiste*, and later re-published in *New Blackfriars*.



dedicated to Chenu the medievalist,<sup>170</sup> and the proceedings of the 1995 conference, *Moyen-âge*.<sup>171</sup> Of 17 theses, the majority examine Chenu's theology, whether reading it as incarnational,<sup>172</sup> historical theology,<sup>173</sup> or pastoral theology;<sup>174</sup> or his contribution to Vatican II.<sup>175</sup> Keller compares the theologies of work of Chenu and of John Paul II;<sup>176</sup> Sailer-Pfister<sup>177</sup> links the theologies of work of Chenu and Sölle, with a focus on their ability to confront

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<sup>170</sup> A. Boureau, "Le Père Chenu médiéviste : historicité, contexte et tradition", *RSPT* 81, no. 3 (1997); H. Donneaud, "M.-D. Chenu et l'exegese de *sacra doctrina*", *ibid.*; J. Jolivet, "M.-D. Chenu, médiéviste et théologien", *ibid.*; J. Le Goff, "Le Père Chenu et la société médiévale", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 81, no. 3 (1997); J.-C. Schmitt, "L'œuvre de médiéviste du Père Chenu", *RSPT* 81, no. 3 (1997)

<sup>171</sup> Bedouelle, *Marie-Dominique Chenu. Moyen-Âge et Modernité*

<sup>172</sup> P.J. Philibert, "The unity of the order of faith and the order of witness : a study of the theology of M.-D. Chenu" (Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception, 1973); C. N. Salgado Vaz, "Progresso humano e mensagem cristã : a teologia do mundo de Marie-Dominique Chenu" (Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1974); M. Graczyk, "La doctrine de la 'consecratio mundi' chez Marie-Dominique Chenu" (Strasbourg 2, 1978); C.E. Potworowski, "The incarnation in the theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu" (Toronto School of Theology, 1988); V. Zanatta, "Por uma igreja encarnada na história: linhas de fundo do pensamento eclesiológico de M.-D. Chenu" (Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1989); D. Kubicki, "La logique de l'incarnation chez M.-D. Chenu" (Strasbourg 2, 1994); P. Huish, "Marie-Dominique Chenu and Témoignage Chrétien : witness as first ministry and the form of christian life" (Université de Montréal, 1997); F.A. Eyabi, "La loi d'incarnation de Marie-Dominique Chenu : histoire de "victoires humaines" ou histoire de la "vie menacée"" (Pontificia Università Urbaniana, 2000); R. Kecka, "Die Einheit von Glaube und Zeugnis eine Suche nach dem Durchgang vom Glauben durch Theologie zum christlichen Zeugnis bei M.-Dominique Chenu" (Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2006)*ibid.*; J.L. Rakotoarisoa, "La venue de Dieu dans l'histoire: la foi théandrique dans la théologie de l'incarnation chez M.-D. Chenu" (Institut catholique de Paris, 2008)*ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> M. J. Skrobisz, "La teologia di M. D. Chenu nei suoi legami con la filosofia" (Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1999)*ibid.*; P. Januard, "L'émergence d'une école historique de théologie, histoire et enjeux théologiques. Marie-Dominique Chenu et le Saulchoir" (Université Catholique de Lille, 2007)*ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> T. van den Hoogen, "Pastorale teologie: ontwikkeling en structuur in de teologie van M.-D. Chenu" (Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, n.d.)*ibid.*; B. Beaulne, "Le risque du silence: étude sur l'intention pastorale du discernement des signes des temps dans la théologie du Père Chenu de 1923 à 1967" (Université de Montréal, 1969)

<sup>175</sup> M. Quisinsky, "Geschichtlicher Glaube in einer geschichtlichen Welt: der Beitrag von M.-D. Chenu, Y. Congar und H.-M. Féret zum II. Vaticanum" (Freiburg-im-Briesgau, 2006)

<sup>176</sup> R.J. Keller, "Towards a Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology of Work" (University of California Berkeley, 1993)

<sup>177</sup> S. Sailer-Pfister, "Theologie der Arbeit vor neuen Herausforderungen: sozialetische Untersuchungen im Anschluß an Marie-Dominique Chenu und Dorothee Sölle" (Bamberg, 2005); published as *Theologie der Arbeit vor neuen Herausforderungen: Sozialetische Untersuchungen im Anschluss an Marie-Dominique Chenu und Dorothee Soelle* (Berlin: LitVerlag, 2006)

the challenges of the modern workplace; while Ahouha's<sup>178</sup> search to link theology of work to the Passover of the Lord takes Chenu's theology of work as its starting point.

Huish's 1997 MA dissertation on Chenu's articles for *Témoignage Chrétien* focuses on the 77 articles written by the Dominican from 1944 until his death.<sup>179</sup> Huish suggests that these articles represent the 'mature' Chenu, already well known as a historical theologian,<sup>180</sup> although Chenu's historical monographs date from the 1950s, a full decade or more later. Huish is nonetheless correct to point to the importance of the JOC for Chenu's development as a theologian.<sup>181</sup> The doctrine of the Incarnation was absolutely central to Chenu's theology, as Huish notes, going so far as to suggest that his *theologie engagée* functions within an analogy of incarnation.<sup>182</sup> Drawing heavily on Chenu's own words in Duquesne, Huish suggests – with more success – that an analogy between (divine) Creation and (human co-)creation also characterises Chenu's theology, and particularly his theological writing on work.<sup>183</sup>

Keller's 1993 thesis<sup>184</sup> posits Chenu and John Paul II as theologians of work whose theologies offer foundations for a contemporary Catholic theology of work. His reading of both theologians is supplemented by a sociological

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<sup>178</sup> A.R. Miessan Ahoua, "Le travail humain à la lumière de la Pâque du Seigneur : à partir de la contribution de Marie-Dominique Chenu" (Pontificia Universitas Sanctae Crucis, 2003)

<sup>179</sup> Huish, "Marie-Dominique Chenu and Témoignage Chrétien : witness as first ministry and the form of christian life"

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.* 13-14.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* 15ff.

<sup>184</sup> Keller, "Towards a Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology of Work"

analysis of work. Keller's reading of the Catholic Tradition is that 'work' is seen predominantly as manual labour, which is thus toilsome, tiresome, and extrinsic to the person. John Paul II and Chenu, by contrast, viewed work as intrinsic to the person, an activity carried out through choice and involving rationality, which contributes to the fulfilment of humanity.<sup>185</sup> Keller is correct to identify Incarnation, Creation, and Salvation as the doctrines which underpin Chenu's theology of work,<sup>186</sup> with Incarnation linking his theology of work to that of John Paul II. His account of Chenu is weakened by his overly narrow focus on a single text, *Pour une théologie du travail*, although he does note that the book is in fact three articles. As we shall demonstrate, Chenu was attentive to the need for theological discourse on industrial work from the start of his career. Keller appears to allude to this, by using two early articles, but then mis-ascribes their publication to their re-issue date in 1964.

As Potworowski has noted, there is a surprising dearth – given 'Chenu's significance ... in twentieth-century Catholic theology'<sup>187</sup> – of secondary sources, and this is particularly the case in English. Potworowski begins by demonstrating how essential Chenu's 'context' – the 'particular mix....' is to his theology.<sup>188</sup> His main focus, however, is the importance of contemplation and the centrality of the doctrine of the Incarnation in Chenu's theology. The Dominican charism, as lived by Chenu, is rooted both in contemplation and action, or *engagement* with the world. It was the Incarnation – so central to the JOC –<sup>189</sup> which enabled

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid. 'Introduction'.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. Ch. 2.

<sup>187</sup> Potworowski, *Contemplation & Incarnation* p. viii.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. pp. ix, 4.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. 148ff.

Chenu, according to Potworowski, to find the key to action. The Incarnation marks God's *engagement* with the world and his creation, through his only Son becoming human. It marks a shift away from the transcendent God – so key to Baroque art and architecture, reflecting what Chenu derided as 'Baroque scholasticism' in theology – and a move back to human face of the divine. As Potworowski notes, it is this shift back to the Incarnation which enables *ressourcement* theology to include *engagement*.<sup>190</sup> Indeed, it not only enables the inclusion of *engagement*, but forces it.

Ahoua's 2003 thesis relies on a wider range of texts than some other commentators, and for this he is to be commended.<sup>191</sup> He includes, for instance, Chenu's 1937 address to JOC chaplains ('Dimension nouvelle de la chrétienté') and his 1959 paper given at the BICE congress. However, once more works are taken out of context. *Pour une théologie du travail* is treated as though it were a single work written in 1955, rather than three separate articles written over a ten-year period. 'Dimension nouvelle' and 'Théologie du travail' are cited from their 1964 re-edition in *La Parole de Dieu*, with no clear indication that Ahoua is aware that they were written more than 20 years apart.

Ahoua's introduction to Chenu is a year-by-year account of his life which fails to properly make the connections between the various events he alludes to. For instance, he touches on the importance of the JOC and associated movements, but fails to note that the JOC went to Le Saulchoir first because of its geographical location between the French *département du Nord* and

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid. 226, 227.

<sup>191</sup> Miessan Ahoua, "Le travail humain à la lumière de la Pâque du Seigneur : à partir de la contribution de Marie-Dominique Chenu"

Brussels, and secondarily because of the warm welcome and support offered by Chenu and his colleagues.<sup>192</sup> Likewise, he mentions de Lubac's *Catholicism* in the same breath as an article by Chenu, 'St Dominique et le communisme', but fails to indicate why de Lubac's work should be relevant to Chenu's.<sup>193</sup>

Ahoua's reading of Chenu's theology of work, while largely correct, is overly pious. His own insistence on locating work within the tradition of Genesis 3 – as a painful punishment for human sinfulness<sup>194</sup> – leads him to critique Chenu for his lack of attention to human sinfulness.<sup>195</sup> Where a critique of Chenu for his over-optimism, or his rose-tinted reading of Marxism, socialism, and unions might be expected, Ahoua instead criticises his 'lack of formation in philosophy'<sup>196</sup>

Yet Chenu was not searching to write or construct a systematic theology of work. As we shall see in Chapter 6 below, he was first of all trying to ensure that contemporary theologians engaged with the world of work as it really was. This meant asking theological questions about what it meant to work in an industrial, rather than an artisanal, workplace, for instance. Even the title of Chenu's 1955 collection, *Pour une théologie du travail*, indicates that this is something to be worked towards, rather than systematically set down.

Sailer-Pfister's 2005 dissertation compares Chenu's approach to theology of work<sup>197</sup> with that of the German feminist and liberation theologian,

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid. 65.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. 66.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. 76-78.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. 128-130.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid. 126.

<sup>197</sup> Sailer-Pfister, *Theologie der Arbeit vor neuen Herausforderungen: Sozialethische Untersuchungen im Anschluss an Marie-Dominique Chenu und Dorothee Soelle* 108-217.

Dorothee Sölle,<sup>198</sup> before considering the structural changes affecting contemporary working patterns.<sup>199</sup> She observes that at first glance, Chenu and Sölle might not strike the reader as close collaborators on theology of work; yet, she notes, they share a number of ‘criteria’, including an interest in the community and social aspects of work and its organisation, the connection to Scripture, a discussion of the spirituality of work, and a rooting in Christian anthropology.<sup>200</sup> Both, she adds, were critical of their contemporary theological traditions.<sup>201</sup> Drawing attention to Chenu’s reading of Marx alongside Thomas and his focus on the ‘signs of the times’,<sup>202</sup> she demands his ‘recognition as a fore-runner of Liberation Theology’.<sup>203</sup> The conversation with Sölle enables her to suggest that theology of work should rightly be located within liberation theology, as part of the option for the poor.<sup>204</sup> She suggests that ‘a reflection on work which is grounded in a liberation theology hermeneutic’<sup>205</sup> will be attentive to the presence of Christ in the world of work and sensitive to the human potential of each person. This thesis will argue that Chenu and Cardijn show precisely this sensitivity and attention.

## 1.6 Conclusions

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.* 224-329.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.* 335-400.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* 400.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.* 403.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.* 401.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.* 405.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.* 425.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.* 475.

The scholarly context of this thesis has demonstrated that, within the sources of Catholic theology, there is little sustained theological reflection on the subject of human work. This changed with the advent of *Rerum Novarum* and the suite of Encyclicals and other magisterial documents which follow in its wake, which consider human work within the particular framework of industrialisation. Second, Chenu and Cardijn, both working-class priests, took this reflection forward in their theology. Cardijn may be closely linked to the aims of *ressourcement* theology, in his desire to reconnect theology and faith with the reality of daily life. Finally, we have seen that there is very little scholarly discussion of Cardijn as a theologian. A single thesis over 40 years ago is weakened by its narrative approach and over-reliance on limited sources. While there has been more attention to Chenu's engagement with the question of theological discourse on industrial work, it too has often relied overly on limited sources, rather than locating such discourse within the wider context of Chenu's work as a whole.

In the next chapter, we examine the legacy of nineteenth-century Social Catholicism, the first attempt by the Church to engage with industrial work. Chapter 3 then turns to Cardijn as a theologian, paying particular attention to his recovery of Mystical Body ecclesiology. In Chapter 4 we build on this – as Cardijn himself did – to demonstrate how he linked work to the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life. Chapter 5 turns to Chenu, the historical theologian *engagé*, while in Chapter 6 we examine his theological engagement with work. Finally, in Chapter 7 we turn to a consideration of contemporary theological discourse on work in the light of the contributions of Cardijn and

Chenu, before, in Chapter 8, asking whether a theology of work is truly possible in the complex post-industrial economy of the twenty-first century and beyond.





## CHAPTER 2

### SOCIAL CATHOLICISM IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM

#### *2.1 Introduction*

The development of Social Catholicism<sup>1</sup> in nineteenth-century France and Belgium, in response to the social and political upheavals of the era, is key to the context of the theology of Cardijn and Chenu. Walckiers notes that ‘the great writers of French nineteenth-century social Catholicism’ were among the most influential works which Cardijn read at seminary.<sup>2</sup> Social Catholics sought to respond to the social challenges of industrialisation by ameliorating working and living conditions for the urban poor and distributing welfare, advice, and faith. Cardijn and Chenu offered theological accounts of industrial work, which supported the pastoral work of the JOC and other missionary movements. This in turn assured workers of their worth as sons and daughters of God, giving them confidence to challenge and improve deleterious working conditions.

This chapter examines those aspects of nineteenth-century Social Catholicism in France and Belgium most pertinent to the argument of this thesis. We turn first to the history and context of Social Catholicism in France and Belgium (Section 2.2). Section 2.3 offers a broad-brush account of its developments, and suggests there were a number of phases of Social Catholicism. Section 2.4 looks at the impact of legislation, and Section 2.5 to

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<sup>1</sup> The most comprehensive account remains P. Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe. From the Onset of Industrialization to the First World War* (New York: Crossroad, 1991)

<sup>2</sup> M. Walckiers, "Quarante années qui façonnèrent les conceptions et la personnalité de Joseph Cardijn", in *Cardijn, Een Mens, Een Beweging/Cardijn, Un Homme, Un Mouvement. Handelingen van het colloquium/Actes du colloque, Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, 18-19.11.1982* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers/KADOC, 1983) 19.

attempts to relieve poverty, both in the earlier half of the nineteenth century.

Section 2.6 examines the contribution of the industrialist, Léon Harmel, and the *Union de Fribourg*, and Section 2.7, Marc Sangnier and *Le Sillon*, influential on Cardijn's development of the JOC. Cardijn described meeting 'le "bon Père Harmel", les dirigeants des Semaines Sociales de France, Marc Sangnier et les chefs du Sillon' at the *Semaine Sociale* at Amiens, which he attended in 1906.<sup>3</sup>

What is now quite generally known as the Social Catholic Movement is a loosely-organized but very significant endeavor on the part of social-minded Catholics, the world over, to formulate a practical program of social reconstruction and to translate that program into action.<sup>4</sup>

As Moon's 80-year-old definition suggests, Social Catholics were inspired by the Gospel to change the structures of the industrial world, and to mitigate the effects of industrialisation on the workers. Like their Evangelical counterparts in nineteenth-century England, they were strongly motivated by both social activism and the impulse to convert. Both groups believed that 'Christian conversion was the most reliable means of securing a lasting improvement' for both society at large and individual workers.<sup>5</sup> The Evangelical revival in Britain, which Bebbington dates from the early eighteenth century, and Wolffe from the 1780s, provides an interesting parallel with Social

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<sup>3</sup> Cardijn, *Laïcs* 20.

<sup>4</sup> P.T. Moon, "The Social Catholic Movement in France under the Third Republic", *The Catholic Historical Review* 7, no. 1 (1921) 1.

<sup>5</sup> B. Dickey, "'Going about and doing good": Evangelicals and Poverty c. 1815-1870", in *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal. Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1980*, ed. J. Wolffe (London: SPCK, 1995) 44. Social Catholics were also, of course, genuinely concerned for the salvation of the workers' souls.

Catholicism in France and Belgium.<sup>6</sup> While a detailed comparison of the two movements is beyond the scope of this thesis, it should be noted that Bebbington's 'quadrilateral of priorities' at the basis of Evangelicalism – conversionism, activism, biblicism, crucicentricism<sup>7</sup> – are not so different from the priorities of Social Catholics, who also sought to ameliorate the ills of industrial society through social activism and conversionism.

Hobsbawm's 'long nineteenth century' provides useful parameters for this chapter, for the reverberations of the French Revolution were felt until the First World War. Social change resulted as much from political (in)stability as from industrialisation, leading Social Catholics to insist that their project had nothing to do with the much-feared 'Socialism' and, much less, Marxism. 'Socialism and Social Catholicism were set against one another from the mid-nineteenth century, although both were opposed to [economic] liberalism.'<sup>8</sup> Indeed, an oft-used and powerful argument in favour of Social Catholicism was precisely that it could and should be the Church's response to the threat of Socialism, which was taking a sometimes rapid hold in cities and centres of industry. Marc Sangnier (1873-1950)<sup>9</sup> claimed to 'envy the Socialists' when a soldier he was visiting in hospital spoke warmly about them.<sup>10</sup> Yet until well into the 1870s, the organisations of Social Catholicism tended to recruit from the

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<sup>6</sup> D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989); J. Wolffe, ed. *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal. Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1980* (London: SPCK, 1995)

<sup>7</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism* 3.

<sup>8</sup> J.-M. Mayeur, "Le catholicisme social en France", *Le Mouvement Social* 77 (1971) 114.

<sup>9</sup> On Sangnier, see M. Sangnier, *L'Esprit démocratique* (Paris: Perrin & Cie, 1905); *Discours. 1891-1906* (Paris: Bloud et Cie, 1910); *Autrefois...* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1936); J.-Cl. Delbreil, ed. *Marc Sangnier, Politiques & Chrétiens* (Paris: Beauchsene, 1997)

<sup>10</sup> L. Cousin, *Vie et Doctrine du Sillon* (Lyon Emmanuel Vitte, 1906) 22.

urban and rural 'artisanat', rather than the urban working classes. Bebbington demonstrates that this tendency was paralleled by early-nineteenth-century Evangelicalism in Britain, where 'the artisan section of society ... was highly over-represented in Evangelical ranks'.<sup>11</sup> As in Britain, so in France, where movements run by members of the upper echelons of a still highly stratified society, from the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) to *L'Œuvre*, had extreme difficulty in reaching the most marginalised and needy groups among the workers.

Among the first to genuinely reach the workers were Sangnier and Léon Harmel (1829-1915).<sup>12</sup> The industrialist Harmel, whose textile factory in north-eastern France was an experimental model of Christian enterprise, insisted that the formation offered to workers in his factory be given by their peers. Sangnier acknowledged that reaching every industrial worker in the Paris basin was unrealistic, and the focus of *Le Sillon* was instead the formation of an elite of workers who in turn could form their peers. Cardijn took on both ideas, demanding 'an apostolate of like to like' carried out by a carefully formed elite.<sup>13</sup> Before discovering the work of Harmel and Sangnier, however, it is

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<sup>11</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism* 25.

<sup>12</sup> On Harmel see G. Guitton, *Léon Harmel 1829-1915*, 2 vols. (Paris: Action Populaire, 1927); *Léon Harmel et l'initiative ouvrière* (Paris: Éditions Spes, 1929); *La vie ardente et féconde de Léon Harmel* (Paris: Éditions Spes, 1930); P. Trimouille, *Léon Harmel et l'usine chrétienne du Val des Bois: 1840-1914, fécondité d'une expérience sociale* (Lyons: Centre d'histoire du catholicisme, 1974); J.L. Coffey, *Léon Harmel. Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003); and Harmel's own works, such as L. Harmel, *De l'organisation chrétienne de l'usine, par un industriel* (Paris: Bureau central de l'Union, 1873); and *Manuel d'une corporation chrétienne* (Tours: Alfred Mame, 1877).

<sup>13</sup> See for instance, J. Cardijn, "L'apostolat des laïcs 2", in *Laïcs en premiers lignes* (Brussels: Editions universitaires, 1963 (1935)) 50, where he compares a working-class 'elite' of activists (*militants*) to the yeast in the dough.

important to understand the context, achievements, and failings of nineteenth-century Social Catholicism in France and Belgium, to which we now turn.

## *2.2 The context of Social Catholicism*<sup>14</sup>

There have long been close intellectual and cultural links between France and Belgium, enabling us to treat Social Catholicism in the two countries together.

Mayeur discusses the 'deep connections between French and Belgian Catholicism throughout the nineteenth century', noting in particular that these connections went in both directions, so that just as French theorists such as Lammenais, and Social Catholics such as de Mun, were influential in Belgium,

French Social Catholics and Social Democrats looked to Belgium, as to the German Rhineland ... for the foundation of Catholic associations which they thought would give Catholics influence in political society.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In addition to Misner, *Social Catholicism* and A.R. Vidler, *A Century of Social Catholicism 1820-1920* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), on Social Catholicism, see for instance R. Aubert, *The Church in a Secularised Society*, trans. J. Sondheimer, *The Christian Centuries* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978) Part I; and V. Viane, *Belgium and the Holy See from Gregory XVI to Pius IX (1831-1859). Catholic revival, society and politics in 19th-century Europe* Kadoc Studies (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001). On France, see A.L. Dunham, *The Industrial Revolution in France, 1815-1848* (New York: Exposition Press, 1955); A. Jardin and A.J. Tudesq, *The Cambridge History of Modern France. Restoration & Reaction, 1815-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. chs 8, 16, 17; J.-M. Mayeur, *Catholicisme sociale et démocratie chrétienne* (Paris: Cerf, 1986); and P. Pierrard, *L'Église et les ouvriers en France (1840-1940)* (Paris: Hachette, 1984). On Belgium, see E.H. Kossman, *The Low Countries 1780-1940* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978); E. Lamberts, "Belgium since 1830", in *History of the Low Countries*, ed. J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts (Providence RI: Berghahn Books, 1998), esp. 314-322; R. Rezsöházy, *Origines et formation du catholicisme social en Belgique 1842-1909* (Louvain: Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1958); L. Wils, "La Belgique au 19ème siècle: situation religieuse, politique et sociale", in *Histoire du Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien en Belgique*, ed. E. Gerard and P. Wynants, KADOC-STUDIES (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994); and E. Witte, J. Craeybeckx, and A. Meynen, *Political History of Belgium from 1830 onwards* (Brussels: ASP nv, 2009) chs. 1-3. On the industrial revolution in Europe more generally see T. Kemp, *Industrialization in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (London: Longman, 1985).

Yet the two nations industrialised in very different political and economic situations. Belgium industrialised rapidly, particularly in the southern coal belt, and benefitted from a relatively stable political situation. As its current political situation demonstrates, the country lacks a nationally binding 'founding myth' equivalent to '1789' in France. Comprising the southern, mostly Catholic provinces of the Netherlands, historically ruled by Burgundy and Spain-Austria, it was united at the Vienna Congress to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, under the Protestant House of Orange.<sup>16</sup> This was unacceptable to the Church and the majority of the population, and following the Belgian Revolution, independence was won in 1830. The new state was 'the issue ... of a coalition between the Catholic Church and the liberal bourgeoisie'.<sup>17</sup> The Church's support during the fight for independence led to a privileged role in what was nonetheless an avowedly liberal democracy. The 1831 constitution may have been 'the most liberal of the time', but it was one to which the Church happily 'signed up'.<sup>18</sup>

Belgium was, after Britain, 'the first country to shift from a predominantly agricultural to a predominantly industrial economy' and 'the first stage of industrialization was completed already in the 1840s'.<sup>19</sup> Ghent was soon 'one of the most important centres of the cotton trade in Europe',<sup>20</sup> and

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<sup>15</sup> J.-M. Mayeur, "Quelques rencontres entre les catholiques français et les catholiques belges", *Le Mouvement Social*, no. 178 (1997) 27, 34.

<sup>16</sup> See Wils, "La Belgique", 19-21.

<sup>17</sup> J. Delfosse, "Belgium", in *The Catholic Church Today: Western Europe*, ed. M. A. Fitzsimons (Notre Dame IN/London: University of Notre Dame Press 1969) 243.

<sup>18</sup> B. de Wever, "Catholicism and Fascism in Belgium", *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 2 (2007) 343.

<sup>19</sup> Misner, *Social Catholicism* 22, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Wils, "La Belgique", 30.

the development of the railways from 1835 aided the southern steel industry.

By 1844, Belgium had '1447 working steam machines; at this date it was one of the great industrial powers of Europe.'<sup>21</sup> Not only one of the first countries to undergo significant industrialisation, it was, proportional to its geographical area, 'the most industrialised on the continent'.<sup>22</sup> Yet Belgium underwent a major recession and political crisis in 1847-1848, when it narrowly avoided revolution and regime change. It suffered from the widespread industrial recession which began in 1873, and which in 1886 led to strikes and rioting in the *Liègois*. The Liège Congresses of 1886, 1887, and 1890, followed by the Malines Congress of 1891, were the Church's direct response to this economic crisis. Rezsöhazy has suggested that they were 'the first sign of renewal in Belgium', optimistically indicating that they 'mark a turning-point in the attitude of Social Catholics: paternalism was disappearing, and the main speakers at the conferences were corporatists or Christian democrats.'<sup>23</sup> Gérin disagrees, arguing that they were organised by 'a certain intellectual, professional, and religious elite', and pointing out that 'the working world as such did not take an active part in the Liège congress'. One Liège meeting, he notes, was dominated by 'overlong and incomprehensible' speeches 'still in the paternalistic mode'.<sup>24</sup> Yet the key point remains that – notwithstanding the paternalism – the Church had organised a formal debate to respond to the crisis.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>22</sup> P. Gérin, "Catholicisme social et démocratie chrétienne (1884-1904)", *ibid.* 60.

<sup>23</sup> Rezsöhazy, *Origines* 103, 105.

<sup>24</sup> Gérin, "Catholicisme", 65, 66.



Turning to France, we find that the country had industrialised slowly during the nineteenth century, amid significant political instability. Even where economic development led to industrialisation, such as in the *département du Nord* which bordered the Belgian coal belt, French industrialists faced immense structural problems. The Revolution and Napoleonic wars had disrupted production and trade links, and ‘the sharp swings from inflation to deflation, the lack of confidence ... the chronic scarcities’ all ‘encouraged speculative activity rather than long-term investment in production.’<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, France experienced dramatic regime change six times between 1800 and 1870, switching between republican government and monarchy/empire. The development of industrialisation in nineteenth-century France has ‘a number of perplexing features which make its analysis and appreciation of special difficulty.’<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Pierrard begins his monumental account of the French Church and workers by arguing that ‘industrialisation’, with its implication of ‘a rapid and huge movement from a rural economy to an industrial economy’,<sup>27</sup> can hardly be applied to France. Historically, notes Kemp, France was a country of ‘large distances and poor transport’,<sup>28</sup> whose markets were often local and regional. There were a number of important manufacturing centres, each concentrating on specialist luxury markets and requiring small-scale, expert enterprise. The continuing dominance of agriculture meant that, as far as possible, industry continued to focus on ‘quality not low cost production, on

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<sup>25</sup> Kemp, *Industrialization* 55-6.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 49.

<sup>27</sup> Pierrard, *L’Église et les ouvriers* 19.

<sup>28</sup> Kemp, *Industrialization* 52.

skilled craftsmanship rather than on machine technology.<sup>29</sup> Cholvy and Hilaire

agree, arguing that it is

incorrect to say that in the middle of the [19<sup>th</sup>] century mechanical work replaced manual work; large factories replaced little workshops; the city replaced the countryside; and that thus a ‘working class’ was born.<sup>30</sup>

The combination of a predominantly rural economy – 68% of the population in 1881 – <sup>31</sup> the focus on quality, and structural limitations, meant that by 1898, 80% of the workforce was still employed in a business employing 3 or fewer. ‘[E]ven in 1906, 60% of workers were in businesses employing fewer than 10 ... and in 1931, 40%.’<sup>32</sup> However, these figures exclude textile workers, often home-based and employed on the ‘putting-out’ system. They had to find their own working space, and were paid by the completed piece. Conditions were far from ideal for workers in most industries, and legislation was not on the side of the workers.

### 2.2.1 Anti-worker legislation

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 58.

<sup>30</sup> G. Cholvy and Y.-M. Hilaire, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine 1800-1880* (Toulouse: Éditions Privat, 1985) 247.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 247.

<sup>32</sup> Pierrard, *L’Église et les ouvriers* 19.

Industrial work [in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries] was severely unhealthy with men, women and children mentally and physically exhausted from regularly working sixteen hour days. Repetitive, intensive, heavy, unskilled work was the norm, usually conducted in damp and unsanitary conditions with few, if any, rest breaks.<sup>33</sup>

Poor working conditions were exacerbated by the lack of rights. Workers'<sup>34</sup> lives were made more difficult by the prohibition on associations, introduced in 1791 in France, and approved under the 1804 Napoleonic Code, which also applied in Belgium until 1866. The Code effectively stymied the growth of any workers' organisation which was *not* directed by the '*patrons*'.<sup>35</sup> It also reflected wider anxieties in both Church and society about the risks of Socialism or revolution. Those who were perceived as the un-Churched masses in industrial cities challenged the nineteenth-century Church's return to 'Christendom': its response to liberal thought and secular society. As we shall see in Chapter 6.2, Chenu disagreed with this narrative. Civil society was terrified by the prospect of an enraged and impoverished rabble turning into a revolutionary mob, as in 1789, 1848, and 1870 (France), and 1848 and 1886 (Belgium). In both countries

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<sup>33</sup> Bamba, *Work* 47.

<sup>34</sup> 'Those who work in a manual job and are paid in a factory, a workshop, or a mine' Cholvy and Hilaire, *Histoire* 235); 'The working class, in its broadest sense, is made up of the population of factories and manufacturers, artisans, who were still numerous, and those working at home' (Rezsöhazy, *Origines* 1, n.1).

<sup>35</sup> Reid offers a fascinating reflection on the etymology and inference of the use of the term '*patron*', replacing '*maître*' as the head of a workshop in post-Revolutionary France, to describe 'a new relationship of employers to workers'. The use of the term '*patron*' 'may have suggested both the transformation of a system of institutionalized inequality ... and its replacement in post-Revolutionary France by a new system in which social relations between employers and employees would be characterized by deference and clientage.' (D. Reid, "In the Name of the Father: A Language of Labour Relations in Nineteenth-Century France", *History Workshop* 38 (1994) esp. 1-7).

the law inherently favoured employers over employees. Workers were obliged to carry a *livret* and when s/he 'left or was discharged, the employer was expected to enter salient characteristics, commendatory or other' into it for scrutiny by future employers.<sup>36</sup> Like the ban on associations, 'this remained in effect ... until 1868 in France and in Belgium until 1883'.<sup>37</sup> The legal balance was already skewed in favour of employers: in cases of dispute over wages, leave, or any other aspect of the (almost inevitably unwritten and unsigned) contract it was the employer's word which was believed.<sup>38</sup> The bar on associations ensured it was impossible for workers to unionise, and thus challenge the structural issues and problems of industrialisation, until the very end of the century, when associations were legally permitted and had even been actively encouraged in *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.2.2 A de-Christianised working class?

The standard account of the nineteenth-century French Church<sup>40</sup> describes the aristocracy as (broadly) in favour of the Church – 'Throne and Altar' – and divides the bourgeoisie into those (mostly urbanised, and intellectuals) who sought to remove the Church from public life, and those (mostly rural, small businessmen) who found that the Church supported their vision of the 'respectable' life. The 'workers' are usually depicted as 'lost to the Church' with

<sup>36</sup> Misner, *Social Catholicism* 27.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Rezsöhazy, *Origines* 3.

<sup>39</sup> Leo XIII, "R.N.",

<sup>40</sup> See, for instance, R. Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism 1789-1914* (London: Routledge, 1989) Ch. 7.

the potential to become an anti-clerical mob who could easily turn into a revolutionary rabble. Their salvation – both temporal and eternal – would come via the intervention of the Social Catholics. Yet recent French historiography, such as that of Hilaire and Cholvy,<sup>41</sup> has questioned this account. While ‘levels of working-class religious practice were lower than the national average’, the indications are that ‘[w]orking-class practice varied considerably from region to region [and that] the variation in such rates was closely correlated with those of the population in the region as a whole’.<sup>42</sup> Working-class anti-clericalism should thus not be presumed. As Cholvy notes, regional contrasts in practice are often historical. Anecdotally, for instance, Normandy, Brittany, and the Vendée have been seen as devoutly Catholic regions, while the south has been seen as tainted by Catharism. Isambert had earlier shown that while a broadly ‘Catholic’ cultural religious base for the majority of the French population may be assumed, there were also Protestant strongholds in the industrialising regions, particularly in the East of the country.<sup>43</sup>

The French Church had a further structural problem. In Belgium, the Church was free to establish new parishes according to need. By contrast, the 1801 French Concordat ensured that even ‘the creation of new parishes [was] subject to government approval’,<sup>44</sup> stunting the ecclesial response to rural-

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<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, Cholvy and Hilaire, *Histoire* Ch. 8; G. Cholvy, "Sociologists, historians and the religious evolution of France from the 18th century to the present", *Modern & Contemporary France* 2, no. 3 (1994); and *Archives de sociologie des religions* 3/6 (1958), dedicated to the question of religion and industrialisation in nineteenth-century France.

<sup>42</sup> "Sociologists" 4.

<sup>43</sup> F.A. Isambert, "L'attitude religieuse des ouvriers français au milieu du XIXe siècle", *Archives de sociologie des religions* 3, no. 6 (1958) 17ff.

<sup>44</sup> D.M.G. Sutherland, *France 1789-1815. Revolution and Counterrevolution* (London: Fontana, 1985) 370.

urban migration. Average parish populations in Paris quintupled between the Concordat and the Separation of Church and State in 1904/5, with 'Notre-Dame de Clignancourt [having] in 1906 a population of 121,034.'<sup>45</sup> It was circumstances such as this which led Chenu to insist that workers were not de-Christianised, but un-Christianised.<sup>46</sup> Aubert notes that as a result of the Separation, 'more churches were built in Paris between 1906 and 1914 than throughout the entire century under the Concordat.'<sup>47</sup> Previously the only way to establish a new place of worship had been to provide a chapel of ease, and it was these which were raised, by the Church, to the canonical status of parish following the Separation.

The perceived de-Christianisation of the working classes was part of a wider crisis in French Church-State relations during the nineteenth century.<sup>48</sup> The Concordat had acknowledged Catholicism as the majority religion,<sup>49</sup> yet it also offered the Empire a way of controlling the Church, through a return to Gallicanism, the administration of the *budget des cultes*, and restrictions on new parishes. The gradual return of the Orders after 1830 and the founding of new Orders to provide social welfare and education from the period of the July Monarchy onwards were counteracted by the overt anti-clericalism of the Third Republic, including Ferry's efforts to curtail the Church's staffing of schools, and

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<sup>45</sup> Gibson, *Social History* 222. The figures given by Poulat and Dèbes confirm this: the population of Paris in 1831 was 560,000 and in 1930, 2,891,000; in the same period the population of the suburbs grew from 164,000 to 2,050,000. (Dèbes and Poulat, *L'Appel* 26.)

<sup>46</sup> See Ch. 6.2 below.

<sup>47</sup> Aubert, *Church* 78. Gibson suggests that the bar on new parishes was due to government reluctance to fund 'the upkeep of the church and the *curé's* salary' (Gibson, *Social History* 222.)

<sup>48</sup> See J. McManners, *Church and State in France 1870-1914* (London: SPCK, 1972), Chs 6-8; G. Bedouelle and J.-P. Costa, *Les laïcités à la française, Politique d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998) Ch. 2; R. Magraw, *France 1815-1914. The Bourgeois Century* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1983) Chs 6-7.

<sup>49</sup> See e.g., Bedouelle and Costa, *Laïcités* 26; McManners, *Church & State* 4.

the expulsion of Religious in 1880. By the end of the century, Catholic opinion was divided between those who wished to see an end to the Republic, and those, urged on by Leo XIII and his call to 'rally to the Republic',<sup>50</sup> who recognised that this was the legitimately elected government, to which Catholics had a duty of loyalty. Yet education remained a battleground, and was the underlying cause of the rupture between Church and State in 1904/5, resulting in a breakdown of diplomatic relations, the exiling of houses of formation, and the enshrining in law of *laïcité*.

Nonetheless, a generation of lay and predominantly elite Catholics began to consider ways in which religion could address the needs and problems of the French working class after the trauma of 1848. Léon Harmel, industrialist turned social reformer, was one of several men of this generation, which also included Albert de Mun, René de la Tour du Pin, and Frédéric Le Play.<sup>51</sup>

The collapse of the Second Empire and the advent of the increasingly secular Third Republic revealed the need for a re-Christianisation of France, which would be accomplished by encouraging a new religiosity among workers.

Underpinning Catholic hostility to the Third Republic was the fear of Socialism, with its rejection of religion and anti-clericalism, and, particularly after 1848, a perceived association between Socialism and revolution. The Churches were largely united in their perception of Socialism as a real threat to

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<sup>50</sup> Leo XIII, "Au milieu des sollicitudes", (Acta Sanctae Sedis, 1892)

<sup>51</sup> C. Ford, "Review, "Joan L. Coffey. Leon Harmel: Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer"", *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 1 (2005) 234.

society in general and Christianity in particular. Cardijn was able to pressurise the Belgian bishops to approve the JOC as a separate movement by reiterating the threat from 'the Socialists' to young people. Yet Whitney's suggestion that the JOC, and indeed, Catholic Action, were founded purely as a response to Socialism is an overly-simplistic reading which is unsupported by the theological literature.<sup>52</sup> Cardijn and Chenu were indeed unusually familiar for the time with the writings of Karl Marx, and were responding in part to the Marxism which pervaded industry by the twentieth century. Yet Cardijn insisted that he was motivated to found the JOC only by the desire to evangelise young workers, whom he witnessed falling away from, or distant from, the Church. There is no reason to disbelieve this claim, nor to assume that the principal reason for the founding of Social Catholic movements was not the salvation of souls, even though both Cardijn and Chenu, like the Social Catholics before them, were concerned by the Marxism which had pervaded industrial workplaces (and unions) from the late nineteenth century onwards.<sup>53</sup>

### 2.2.3. Karl Marx

Marx's antipathy to religion is well documented, and it is here that he parted company with those Social Christians across Europe resolved to improve at least some of the symptoms of industrialisation. His virulent atheism was profoundly shocking to Socialists in both Paris and Brussels, for whom socialist values did

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<sup>52</sup> S.B. Whitney, *Mobilizing Youth. Communists and Catholics in Interwar France* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2009)

<sup>53</sup> See also notes 74-75 below.



not automatically imply a rejection of religion;<sup>54</sup> on the contrary, those early Socialists most engaged with the evils of industrialisation were often also the most faithful. Unusually for their time, both Cardijn and Chenu were familiar with the work of Karl Marx. Cardijn studied Marx while imprisoned during World War I,<sup>55</sup> while Chenu claimed to be ‘the first to introduce a course on Marxism’ in a seminary.<sup>56</sup>

Marx’s analysis of industrialisation and its discontents focused on the structural problems, and advocated the re-structuring of society. Only a thorough-going change of the structures of capitalism would alleviate the workers’ situation, he argued. *Grundrisse*<sup>57</sup> and its final version, *Capital* vol. 1<sup>58</sup> offer detailed and well-documented accounts of how industrial work and the liberal economic regime which enabled capitalism to flourish in Western Europe needed to change in order for workers to benefit from industrialisation. The critiques of the structures of industrialisation implicit in Cardijn and Chenu are, in part, a response to Marx, and an acknowledgement that capitalism does not put the human person first. As they argued, the human person should be ‘centre-stage’. A correct Christian anthropology, their work implied, would go a long way toward redressing the ills of capitalism.

In *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, Marx demonstrated that capitalism holds the human labourer to be simply one commodity among the many required in

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<sup>54</sup> See D. McLellan, *Marxism and Religion: a description and assessment of the Marxist critique of Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1987) 1.

<sup>55</sup> Verhoeven, *Jozef Cardijn* 11.

<sup>56</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 66.

<sup>57</sup> First published 1857-8; K. Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. M. Nicholas (London: Penguin Classics, 1993 (1973)).

<sup>58</sup> First published 1867; *Capital*.

industrial production. Denying the worker ownership of what he produces alienates him from his work just as much as denying him access to the means of production. Chapter 10 of *Capital*<sup>59</sup> describes the objectification of the human person which results from this commodification. This was also noted by Pope John Paul II, in *Laborem Exercens*, in which he argued that the worker should be the subject, not the object, of work. Social Catholicism, too, with its personalist origins,<sup>60</sup> argued that the human person should be the centre around which legislation in support of workers and safer working practices were designed. Marx catalogued in great detail the move from tool to machine brought about by industrialisation which led to both deskilling and significant welfare issues.<sup>61</sup> Factory work posed a significant threat to life and limb; additionally the level of education of workers was so low as to be non-existent, or at least, ineffective.<sup>62</sup> Marx proposed a utopian vision of education and physical exercise integrated into the working day, as ‘the only method of producing fully developed human beings’.<sup>63</sup>

### 2.3 The development of Social Catholicism

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<sup>59</sup> ‘The Working Day’, *ibid.* 340-416. Note that in *Laborem Exercens* John Paul II is critical of work which turns the worker into the object (John Paul II, “L.E.”, ).

<sup>60</sup> Rezsöhazy, *Origines* 14.

<sup>61</sup> See an analysis of Chenu’s take on ‘the shift from tool to machine’ in Ch. 6.3 below.

<sup>62</sup> ‘The level of education of these “labour-powers” must naturally be such as appears in the following dialogues...’ Marx, *Capital* 370, n.66. The examples which follow indicate a lack of basic general knowledge and an inability in maths and spelling.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 614.

A significant part of the work of French and Belgian Social Catholics was to ensure that ‘fully developed human beings’ were working in the factories and workshops of their industrialising countries.

Social Catholicism, which existed before receiving its name, is nothing more than all the efforts of Catholicism to fight against the material and moral poverty to which the industrial revolution and the liberal economic regime had reduced workers. It is characterised by a strong sentiment of the dignity of humanity, the desire to improve its temporal and spiritual lot, the fundamental value to the institution of the family, and the refusal to envisage feelings of hatred as a means of resolving the social problem to which it dedicated itself.<sup>64</sup>

Dansette’s definition offers an excellent summary of the achievements and failings of Social Catholicism as a movement of predominantly middle- and upper-class Catholics, inspired by their faith to improve the lot of those who suffered most from industrialisation. Many, points out Aubert, ‘belonged by birth to the landed aristocracy’, which explains both the ‘highly paternalistic perspective’, and the ‘nostalgic vision of returning to the patriarchal and corporative past’ rather than seeking to respond to the needs of the present.<sup>65</sup> Yet it should also be noted that in the absence of any desire on the part of the State or the hierarchy to respond to these needs, the social elite were usually the only people with the time and resources, as well as the inclination, to act on behalf of Europe’s workers.

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<sup>64</sup> A. Dansette, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine* (Paris Flammarion, 1965) 490.

<sup>65</sup> Aubert, *Church* 145.

In his comprehensive account of European Social Catholicism,<sup>66</sup> Misner offers the classical narrative of Social Catholicism in the nineteenth century. First, he describes a phase of ‘concern’, between the late 1820s and 1840s, in which the principal tools were works of charity and, later, legislation. Second, he moves to the ‘*patronages*’,<sup>67</sup> corresponding to the Church’s absolute rejection, post-1848, of any whiff of Socialism. Finally, he discusses the increasing moves towards worker-led organisations from the 1880s onwards. In this model, Social Catholicism in both France and Belgium is said to start with the founding of *L’Avenir*. This short-lived Catholic daily, ‘which bore the epigraph, “God and freedom”’,<sup>68</sup> marked a preparatory stage, an almost utopian attempt to reconcile democratic ideas and Catholic teaching. Inevitably, the demands for freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of the press, and separation of Church and State, endeared the newspaper and its editors to neither institution. Founded by the priest and political thinker, Lamennais (1782-1854),<sup>69</sup> with his collaborators, Lacordaire (1802-61), re-founder of the Dominicans in France, and Montalembert (1810-70), it ‘claimed to be integrally catholic [*sic*] and sincerely liberal: integrally catholic in its unshakable attachment and submission to the centre of unity in Rome; sincerely liberal in its determination to defend the liberties of all individuals and

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<sup>66</sup> Misner, *Social Catholicism*

<sup>67</sup> ‘a club or organization set up by members of the *classes dirigeantes* ... for members of the *classes inférieures*, who [in France] ... neither had the vote (until 1848) nor were allowed to form any sort of organization on their own.’ *ibid.* 63. Walckiers’ analysis (Walckiers, *Sources* pp. xvff) makes it clear that the patronages continued in Belgium until well into the inter-war period.

<sup>68</sup> Dansette, *Histoire* 231.

<sup>69</sup> ‘After he had completely aligned himself with the democratic movement he signed himself “F. Lamennais”’. A.R. Vidler, *Prophecy and Papacy. A Study of Lammenais, the Church and the Revolution. The Birkbeck Lectures 1952-1953* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1954) 18.

communities within the state'.<sup>70</sup> For Dansette, La Mennais stands with Marx as one of 'the two great visionaries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; La Mennais in religion, Marx in society.'<sup>71</sup> He was 'the first to proclaim the alliance between the Church and liberalism', holding it 'to be the mission of the Church to turn to the people instead of to the kings, to go with liberalism and to proclaim a belief in democracy.'<sup>72</sup> But *L'Avenir* 'rocked traditional French Catholicism to its very roots',<sup>73</sup> and Lamennais' proposed solution to 'the relationship between right and force', the separation of Church and State, was too much.<sup>74</sup> His political thought condemned by two encyclicals, Lamennais left the Church. Catholicism and Liberalism would never truly be aligned, but his work piqued the interest of later French Social Catholics from the Third Republic onwards.

Whilst not neglecting this narrative, Pierrard is also attentive to the motivation of those engaging with the social question in nineteenth-century France.<sup>75</sup> Recalling Romantic idealism and Marx's astonishment on encountering the largely Christian French socialists,<sup>76</sup> he observes that 'the Gospel really seems to have been the driving force' behind Social Catholicism, with a 'nostalgia' for early Christianity 'which was thought at that time to be characterised by a spirit of community and fraternity.'<sup>77</sup> For Lamennais and others, the Gospel was a call to establish the Kingdom in the here and now.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 163.

<sup>71</sup> Dansette, *Histoire* 227.

<sup>72</sup> G. Briefs, "The Dispute between Catholicism and Liberalism in the early decades of Capitalism", *Social Research* 4, no. 1 (1937) 96.

<sup>73</sup> J.J. Oldfield, "The Evolution of Lamennais' Catholic-Liberal Synthesis", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 8, no. 2 (1969) 281.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 281, cf 284f.

<sup>75</sup> Pierrard, *L'Église et les ouvriers*.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 125; cf. McLellan, *Marxism and Religion* 1.

<sup>77</sup> Pierrard, *L'Église et les ouvriers* 125.

Their often utopian reading of the Gospel led to a focus on Christ the liberator, 'the prototype of revolutionary and humanitarian socialism',<sup>78</sup> and an awareness that the Church was out of touch with social realities.

Yet both accounts arise with the benefit of hindsight, implying a planned and coherent 'movement' to improve the lot of workers which developed throughout the century. While it is true that many Social Catholics grouped around informal leaders, from Villeneuve-Bargemont and Ozanam to de Mun, the suggestion that there was a clear progression of Catholic Social thought throughout the century disintegrates on closer examination. Rather, it is more likely that those involved in Social Catholicism responded in a well-meaning but ultimately haphazard way to the economic and social crises. Socialism, on the other hand, which developed in a more organised manner, offered 'a rival secular doctrine, in which the hope of the working class for salvation in heaven from the ills of the temporal world was transferred to the here and now.'<sup>79</sup> For the authorities, civil and ecclesiastical, it threatened a return to revolution, hence the frequent ecclesial condemnations of not only Socialism itself, but any ideas which appeared to even approach it. Yet on the whole, European Social Catholics were as remote from Socialism as from the working classes. A notable exception is the working-class priest, François-Auguste Ledreuille (1797-1860), inspired by the Société Saint-François-Xavier to seek ordination. Surrounded by workers at his ordination, he was known for his fiery sermons warning the bourgeoisie of the likelihood of revolt by workers if they did not start dealing

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 147.

<sup>79</sup> E. Cahm, *Politics and Society in Contemporary France (1789-1971). A documentary history.* (London: Harrap, 1972) 605.

seriously with the situation engendered by industrialisation. Social Catholics sought to offer a Catholic alternative to Socialism, by offering a charitable response through prayer and works of mercy. It is unclear why this engendered quite the panic it did among the Church authorities. Gregory XVI condemned 'liberty of conscience', 'freedom to publish', and the separation of the Church and State – all key ideas of the *L'Avenir* circle – in *Mirari Vos* (1832),<sup>80</sup> while Pius IX attacked Enlightenment thought, liberalism, and revolution in *Qui Pluribus* (1846),<sup>81</sup> even before the *Syllabus of Errors* contained in *Quanta Cura* (1862).<sup>82</sup>

#### 2.4. Stage 1: Legislation

Much of the work of Social Catholics in France and Belgium began in the first half of the nineteenth century, with legislative measures designed to improve working conditions and working-class life. Villeneuve-Bargemont, Dupéctiaux, Le Play, and de Melun made vital contributions in France and Belgium to improving the lot of the working classes through legislation.

J.-Paul Villeneuve-Bargemont (1784-1850)<sup>83</sup> was 'the first in a French parliament to advocate social reform as a responsibility of government.'<sup>84</sup> A 'sound theorist, a very practical administrator and an experienced statesman ...

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<sup>80</sup> Gregory XVI, *Mirari Vos. Encyclical Letter on Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism* (15 August 1832)

<sup>81</sup> Pius IX, "Qui Pluribus. Encyclical Letter on Faith and Religion", (9 November 1846)

<sup>82</sup> "Quanta Cura. Encyclical Letter Condemning Current Errors", (8 December 1864)

<sup>83</sup> On Villeneuve-Bargemont, see M.I. Ring, *Villeneuve-Bargemont. Precursor of Modern Social Catholicism (1794-1850)* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1935)

<sup>84</sup> Misner, *Social Catholicism* 61.

a social reformer with a knowledge of economics',<sup>85</sup> he had served as a *département* administrator before becoming *Député* for the Var during the July Monarchy. Appointed to administer the *département du Nord* in 1828, he was shocked by the abject poverty he found, prompting him to undertake an 'acute observation of economic and social conditions [which later] became the basis for an extended comparative study',<sup>86</sup> as well as giving him a sound basis on which to campaign for protective legislation for industrial workers. His three-volume *Économie Politique Chrétienne ou Recherches sur la Nature et les Causes du Paupérisme* (1834) rejected the inhumanity of classical economic theory, according to which the market ruled everything, including wages,<sup>87</sup> in favour of '[injecting] definite Christian principles into political economy'.<sup>88</sup> As a legislator, Villeneuve-Bargemont promoted government intervention to achieve social reform in industry and the economy, including a reform of the Poor Laws, regulation of child labour (restricted to 8 hours a day by legislation in 1841), and advocating the rights of workers to organise themselves. Ring took account of this work to describe him as 'the first important social precursor of Leo XIII'.<sup>89</sup>

The Belgian Édouard Dupéctiaux (1804-1868) had been banned from political activity due to his involvement in the 1830 revolution. Nonetheless, he was appointed 'Inspector General of prisons and charitable establishments, a

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<sup>85</sup> EJC, "Review 'Villeneuve-Bargemont by Sr Mary Ignatius Ring SND PhD'", *The Irish Monthly* 64, no. 755 (1936) 18.

<sup>86</sup> Ring, *Villeneuve-Bargemont* 9.

<sup>87</sup> W.G. Welk, "Review, 'Ring, Sister Mary Ignatius, *Villeneuve-Bargemont, Precursor of Modern Social Catholicism (1784-1850)*'", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 183 (1936)

<sup>88</sup> Ring, *Villeneuve-Bargemont* 35

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 209



role which he would hold until 1861'.<sup>90</sup> This position enabled him to conduct surveys on issues such as housing, transport, health and safety, and education, which provided the basis for legislation to improve working conditions. The Frenchman Frédéric de Play (1806-1882)<sup>91</sup> had trained as a mining engineer, and his 'extensive travels' in that role 'gave him an intense interest in people and especially in families and in their relation to their physical, economic and social environments'.<sup>92</sup> Arnault suggests that it was Le Play's 'romantic socialism',<sup>93</sup> which enabled him to move from mining to social enquiry, for he viewed the understanding of the lives of workers as crucial to his work as a mining engineer. From 1833 to 1853, he studied the economic lives of workers in mining regions around Europe, his findings published as subsequent volumes of *Les Ouvriers Européens*.<sup>94</sup> Garrigós describes Le Play as 'a key figure for the understanding of the creation of the process of sociology, as much for his influence on methodology ... as for his development of sociological theories'.<sup>95</sup> Armand de Melun (1807-1877)<sup>96</sup> had conducted a Parliamentary report on the

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<sup>90</sup> Rezsöhazy, *Origines* 11

<sup>91</sup> On Le Play, Inspector of Mines, founder of *La Science Sociale*, State Counsellor and Senator, see F. Arnault, *Frédéric Le Play. De la métallurgie à la science sociale* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1993); M.Z. Brooke, *Le Play: Engineer and Social Scientist. The Life and Work of Frédéric Le Play* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1970); D. Herbertson, "The Life of Frederic Le Play", *The Sociological Review* 38 (1946); L. Tomasi, *L'apporto de Frederic Le Play all'elaborazione teorica ed all'investigazione empirica nella sociologia contemporanea* (Trent: Reverdito, 1991)

<sup>92</sup> S.H. Beaver, "Review of 'Le Play: Engineer and Social Scientist. The Life and Work of Frédéric Le Play'", *Geography* 56, no. 1 (1971)

<sup>93</sup> F. Gresle, "Review, 'Frédéric Le Play. De la métallurgie à la science sociale by Françoise Arnault'", *Revue française de sociologie* 35, no. 4 (1994) 689.

<sup>94</sup> F. Arnault, "Frédéric Le Play, de la métallurgie à la science sociale", *ibid.* 25, no. 3 (1984) 439.

<sup>95</sup> J.I. Garrigós Monerris, "Frédéric Le Play en el origen de la preocupación por la cuestión social", *Reis* 115 (2006) 323.

<sup>96</sup> On de Melun (1807-1877), see A. d'Andigné, *Un apôtre de la charité. Armand de Melun (1807-1877)* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1961); T.P. Neill, "Review, 'Un apôtre de la charité. Armand de Melun (1807-1877) by Amédée d'Andigné'", *The Catholic Historical Review* 48, no. 3 (1962)

need for public charity, and was responsible for bringing in the accompanying legislation in the early days of the Second Republic to deal with numerous issues. These included not only restrictions on child labour (1841), permission to strike, and the establishment of a mutual aid society (*Société d'économie charitable*), and the development of apprenticeships, but ensuring more basic needs, such as accommodation and public washing facilities were met.

## *2.5 Stage 2: Relieving poverty*

### 2.5.1 *La Société de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul (SVP)*

It was clear by the mid-nineteenth century that, in centres of industry, the Church's standard responses to poverty, 'a charitable institution for residents [or] a distribution point for alms',<sup>97</sup> were no longer enough. As Misner points out,

"the social question" had not existed previously. It was not just a matter of rich and poor, but of a newly dominant model of production that, though highly efficient, redounded to the benefit of the few, as it seemed, and to the social and economic decline or exploitation of a great number.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Misner, *Social Catholicism* 63.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* 39.

In their biographies of Frédéric Ozanam (1813-1853),<sup>99</sup> both Lavergnée and Cholvy reject the long-standing account of the single founder (Ozanam) following an ‘inspiration’ and suddenly founding the SVP. Instead, they favour a narrative which describes a gradual evolution of the first conference out of a series of meetings at which a group of seven, including Ozanam, discussed what they might do to ease the social problems they could see in the poorer quarters of Paris. Lavergnée, indeed, is adamant that the search for a single founder, and a single ‘founding act’ is redolent of a clericalism which seeks a ‘founding saint’.<sup>100</sup> He also, however, notes the importance of the Collège Stanislas, which was

noted for the quality of teaching, the recruitment from a particular social elite, and the piety of the students who were educated there. Compared to the state-run Collèges, it offered more certainty for Catholic families anxious about the religious education of their sons.<sup>101</sup>

This was indeed still the case when Marc Sangnier attended the Collège at the end of the century, where the first meetings of *Le Sillon* took place.

The SVP became a network of parish-based ‘conferences’ whose members were to ‘visit the poor personally ... alleviate their needs and sufferings with food and clothing, [despite] the barriers of class and upbringing

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<sup>99</sup> On Ozanam and the *Société de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul* (SVP) see in particular the careful analysis in M. Brejon de Lavergnée, *La société de saint-Vincent-de-Paul au XIXe siècle (1833-1871). Un fleuron du catholicisme social*, Histoire religieuse de la France (Paris Les éditions du Cerf, 2008); and the major biography by G. Cholvy, *Frédéric Ozanam. L'engagement d'un intellectuel catholique du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2003)

<sup>100</sup> Brejon de Lavergnée, *La SVP au XIXs* 39.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 65.

to establish personal contact'. Yet Misner has questioned whether the SVP should be considered a movement of Social Catholicism, for he claims that

social reform as such never formed part of [its] ethos. ... It was a seedbed of concerned Catholics, mostly of the middle or upper classes, who would be open to further attempts to analyze and correct problems of gross social inequality.<sup>102</sup>

The SVP offered material aid and a personal relationship with the isolated and distressed. Spreading rapidly through both France and Belgium, by the end of the century there were '466 local conferences, or the highest number in Europe' in Belgium.<sup>103</sup> The focus was on the whole human person: material needs were met, but so were the needs for companionship and human flourishing.

### 2.5.2 The patronages

In France, the response to this new 'industrial system and its repercussions on the workers' arose largely within 'traditionalist and legitimist Catholicism'.<sup>104</sup> In Belgium, the response came initially from the Socialists, and only by default – thanks to an unusual political situation in which Catholics and Liberals collaborated closely – did socially-minded Catholics become involved. Social Catholicism therefore operated at two levels. First, the legislative, where those

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<sup>102</sup> Misner, *Social Catholicism* 59.

<sup>103</sup> Wils, "La Belgique", 33.

<sup>104</sup> F.A. Isambert, "Religion et développement dans la France du XIXe siècle", *Archives de sociologie des religions* 8, no. 15 (1963) 65.

inspired by the Gospel used their parliamentary influence to improve working and living conditions. Second, employers, who founded associations to help their employees, the unemployed, and those who had fallen on bad times. An early example was Fr Ledreuille's Maison d'Ouvriers, an agency founded in 1844 for the 'free placing [into jobs] of workers of all kinds'.<sup>105</sup>

The dominant model in both countries was that of the *patronages*, since only an organisation or association established by those with influence and money would be permitted. The *patronages* were usually linked to places of employment and offered educational and leisure facilities; their heritage continues in football clubs such as PSV Eindhoven and Accrington Stanley, which both began life as work-based clubs. Organisations such as the Société Ouvrière Saint-Joseph in Liège offered workers

a Sunday school and 'appropriate leisure activities'. It founded libraries, a health-insurance fund... a savings bank, and even two co-operative stores. ... By 1866, it already had 1000 members.<sup>106</sup>

Among the most successful of the Belgian *patronages* was the *Archiconfrérie de Saint-François-Xavier*, founded in 1854 by the Jesuit Louis Van Caloen. Its aim was 'to form true Christians who were ready to work for the conversion of sinners'<sup>107</sup> among the workers. The *Archiconfrérie* offered libraries and evening classes where 'reading, writing, grammar, mathematics, and the catechism'

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<sup>105</sup> Pierrard, *L'Église et les ouvriers* 186.

<sup>106</sup> Wils, "La Belgique", 33.

<sup>107</sup> Rezsöhazy, *Origines* 52.

were taught, sponsoring choirs, bands, dramatic societies, savings banks and insurance funds.<sup>108</sup> The underlying common theme was inculcating Christian belief and way of life, meeting and improving material needs, and developing social resources.

Many French *patronages* developed out of the SVP, such as de Melun's, whose *Œuvre des apprentis* grew out of his work with Parisian orphanages, which doubled as schools for apprentices. The *Œuvre des apprentis* offered social and leisure facilities, evening classes, and religious instruction to male and, later, female apprentices. The Société Saint-François-Xavier, which also functioned alongside the SVP, offered education, religious instruction, and common prayer to adult workers, although it seems likely that, once again, a majority of workers were not reached.<sup>109</sup> Yet most *patronages* remained highly paternalistic in their aims and structures, for

[a]lmost nowhere did the idea dawn that the workers themselves should be entrusted with responsibility for running the Catholic social organisations created for their benefit. Yet this was precisely the moment when ... the working-class movement was developing an increased resistance to paternalism.<sup>110</sup>

### 2.5.3 L'Œuvre

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>109</sup> Pierrard, *L'Église et les ouvriers* 183-4.

<sup>110</sup> Aubert, *Church* 146

In the aftermath of the Paris Commune, *L'Œuvre*, a club for adult workers, grew out of the *Cercle des jeunes ouvriers*. At the helm was Albert de Mun (1841-1914), although his account of the founding as his initiative<sup>111</sup> is disputed by his biographer<sup>112</sup> as well as the majority of commentators. The aristocratic de Mun,<sup>113</sup> an army officer and *Député*, was from an even higher social elite than Ozanam. Levillain's biography situates *L'Œuvre* in the increasingly complex situation of the monarchist wing of the French Church during the final decades of the nineteenth century, faced with an ever more secularist Third Republic, and asks whether *L'Œuvre* had a 'second wind' in the founding of the *Association catholique de la Jeunesse de France (ACJF)*.<sup>114</sup> Prior to the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, de Mun had been involved in the SVP-led *Œuvre catholique ouvrière*. He and his fellow aristocrat de la Tour du Pin discovered Keller's *L'Encyclique du 8 décembre et les principes de 1789* as prisoners of war in 1870. The arch-ultramontane Keller 'had already made a name for himself by calling on the imperial government [the Second Empire] to defend the papal states unconditionally'.<sup>115</sup> Now, in defending the *Syllabus of Errors*, he attacked liberalism and the prevailing idea that the French Revolution had led to a new

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<sup>111</sup> A. de Mun, *Ma Vocation Sociale* (Paris: P. Lethielleux éditions, 1908)

<sup>112</sup> P. Levillain, *Albert de Mun. Catholicisme français et Catholicisme romain du syllabus au ralliement* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1983) 211ff.

<sup>113</sup> On de Mun, see among others B.F. Martin, *Count Albert de Mun. Paladin of the Third Republic* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978); Levillain, *De Mun* esp. 211ff and 349-86; OSU Sr Miriam, "Count Albert de Mun: His Theory of the Social Apostolate", *American Catholic Historical Review* 14, no. 1 (1953); R. Stuart, "'Jesus the Sans-Culotte': Marxism and Religion during the French fin-de-siècle", *The Historical Journal* 42, no. 3 (1999). A weakness of Martin's biography is his focus on the politician at the expense of the Catholic: 'Martin's empathy is a bit less than complete with this churchman, and he does not quite capture the inner spirit of this man' (M. L. Brown, "Review", *The Catholic Historical Review* 67, no. 2 (1981) 337.)

<sup>114</sup> Levillain, *De Mun* 896ff.

<sup>115</sup> Misner, *Social Catholicism* 149-50.

‘emancipation’ of all. On their return to Paris, de Mun and de la Tour du Pin decided that ‘the way to renew France was to establish clubs, *cercles* [in which] they could, through faith, hope, and charity, begin to reduce the cleavage between rich and poor’.<sup>116</sup> *L’Œuvre*, which ‘brought together employers and workers under the direction of men of rank [for] communal prayer’ remained ‘legitimist in its politics and wedded to the principles of paternalism and hierarchy’.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, notwithstanding its founders’ contribution to social legislation, it appears to have been less about ameliorating social and working conditions than about returning France to ‘Christendom’.

By 1872, *L’Œuvre* was already operating as ‘a Church within the Church’,<sup>118</sup> and the following year de Mun persuaded the directors of other *œuvres sociales* to join a loose confederation centred on *L’Œuvre*. Levillain’s detailed analysis clearly demonstrates the dominance of the upper echelons of society within the organising structure of *L’Œuvre*. In 1873, the central committee of 27 included 8 army officers, 4 lawyers, and 2 government officials, while no fewer than 10 title-holders were members of the committee, and nearly all bore ‘la particule’.<sup>119</sup> Even when Harmel was involved in the 1870s, ‘[m]ost of the members were not factory workers from large, industrial enterprises but traditional artisans and city shop assistants.’<sup>120</sup> Herein lay the seeds of its implosion. By the 1880s, Social Catholicism in general was in decline, but *L’Œuvre* more so than most, for reasons which included ‘ongoing internal

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<sup>116</sup> Martin, *De Mun* 15.

<sup>117</sup> P.G. Nord, “Three views of Christian Democracy in Fin de Siècle France”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, no. 4 (1984) 714.

<sup>118</sup> Levillain, *De Mun* 317.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* 355.

<sup>120</sup> Coffey, *Harmel* 116.



tensions; structures which were too vertical and overly military; a dubious and ambiguous recruitment at the level of the *cercles* (i.e., of workers)...’ and a movement towards ‘professional associations and corporatism.’<sup>121</sup> In 1886, de Mun turned away from *L’Œuvre*, founding the *Association catholique de la jeunesse française (ACJF)*. His turning away from the workers of the *L’Œuvre* towards the middle and upper classes of the *ACJF* marks, to an extent, the end of French (and Belgian) worker-based Social Catholicism. The *ACJF* recruited students and the middle classes, aiming to ‘restore Christian order’<sup>122</sup> in an increasingly secularised France. For the *ACJF* and the right-wing *Action Française* which developed in the early twentieth century, the mission was no longer the salvation of the working class, but rather, the salvation of the remnants of a Christian France within a hostile and secularist Third Republic. In the final analysis, the contribution of *L’Œuvre* to Social Catholicism has to be questioned: it continued, even deepened, the already profoundly paternalistic nature of much of nineteenth-century Social Catholicism; it failed to reach the most marginalized; it was unquestionably attached to the legitimist wing of the Church, resiting even the *ralliement* urged by the Pope; and it appears to have had a not inconsiderable influence on the nefarious and proto-fascist *ACJF*.<sup>123</sup>

### *2.6 Stage 3: Harmel and Fribourg*

Throughout the century,

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<sup>121</sup> Pierrard, *L’Église et les ouvriers* 325.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* 356.

<sup>123</sup> Brown, "Review" 337.

[t]he various groups of Catholics preoccupied with the working class question in Germany, Austria, France, Belgium and Italy had not remained in complete ignorance of one another. They were kept informed of each other's activities by the exchange of literature and also through occasional encounters.<sup>124</sup>

The most influential of meetings was the *Union catholique d'études sociales et économiques*, or the *Union de Fribourg*, which permitted Social Catholics from across Europe to compare research, problems, and solutions to the structural problems of industrialisation. Convoled by Gaspard Mermillod, Bishop of Geneva and later founder of the Catholic University of Fribourg, the Union met annually between 1885 and 1892 to discuss solutions such as unions, and was instrumental in the writing of *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>125</sup>

Harmel ran the family textile business near Reims from the age of 25, turning it into a model Christian enterprise which not only formed workers, but also listened to their concerns. According to Crawford, Harmel developed 'saving-banks [for] the children in his schools'; 'choral, athletic and other recreative societies'; 'the "workmen's council" which, at Val-des-Bois, met the employers month by month to discuss, on terms of equality, many of the conditions' in the factory; a housewifery school for unmarried female workers; and sought to bring about unions.<sup>126</sup> While his overall contribution to Social Catholicism is debated – Martin suggests he 'should be remembered as a quaint

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<sup>124</sup> Aubert, *Church* 149.

<sup>125</sup> Misner, *Social Catholicism*, 202f; Coffey, *Harmel* 137f.

<sup>126</sup> V.M. Crawford, "The Centenary of Léon Harmel", *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 18, no. No 69 (1929) 133-4.

failure'<sup>127</sup> – there is little doubt that he exercised a profound influence on Cardijn's development of worker-led organisations. Elected to the national organising committee of *L'Œuvre* in 1874, his ideas and ideals were ultimately too radical for its founders, as were their legitimist aims for him. Harmel wished for more direct contact between employer and employee, viewed the worker as a mature adult, and sought to improve worker education – both general education, and education in the faith. In this he was moving away from overtly paternalistic organisations such as *L'Œuvre*, at just the moment when *L'Œuvre* itself was moving away from the workers.

An 1893 letter to the *Croix de Reims* offers a useful summary of Harmel's priorities for 'the well-being of his workers', including paying a family wage; training young women in housewifery; and replacing medieval corporations with mutual savings organisations and pensions for the old and needy, including widows.<sup>128</sup> The letter is his own description of how Val-des-Bois was run as a specifically Christian enterprise, with the well-being of all its workers at heart, in line with the demands of Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*. Indeed, '[m]ore than twenty economic and social organizations supplemented the compensation plan at Val-des-Bois and were designed to enhance the lifestyle of everyone at the factory',<sup>129</sup> while 'primary education to age thirteen was free and compulsory ...

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<sup>127</sup> B.F. Martin, "Review, 'Léon Harmel: Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer by Joan L. Coffey'", *The Business History Review* 79, no. 1 (2005) 180.

<sup>128</sup> L. Harmel, "Lettre sur la question des salaires," *La Croix de Reims* 1893.. As we shall see in Chapter 3 below, education was also key to Cardijn's work.

<sup>129</sup> Coffey, *Harmel* 81.

long before the national law of 1882 mandated the same for all French children.<sup>130</sup>

Anxious to re-Christianise his workers, Harmel 'sought an effective method, which would go beyond simple patronage, practised everywhere and with mediocre results'.<sup>131</sup> The method he decided upon was a corporative model, but far removed from the romanticised, neo-medieval model favoured by many Social Catholics, and promoted in *Rerum Novarum*. It was 'a three-step process to assure [*sic*] that religious matters took precedence from the outset but with the overall welfare and happiness of the workers and their families a constant consideration.'<sup>132</sup> Starting with what might be called a 'base community' of well-formed, practising Catholic families, savings funds and cooperative stores could be established. 'With religious, economic, and social structures in place, the enterprise inaugurated the third step and organized professionally by becoming a union'.<sup>133</sup> The union, to which all could belong, was run by the 'Conseil d'Usine', itself consisting of representatives of both workers and management. 'Involving itself in just about every aspect of factory life, the council reviewed matters dealing with accident prevention, workroom hygiene and discipline, wage schedules, the bonus system, and the apprentice program.'<sup>134</sup> While still excluded from financial planning, for the first time in modern industrial France, workers had some control over their working

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 85.

<sup>131</sup> Pierrard, *L'Église et les ouvriers* 344.

<sup>132</sup> Coffey, *Harmel* 73.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. 73.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 94.

conditions; their voice was heard; their contribution valued.<sup>135</sup> This was indeed a huge step forward. Yet Pierrard rightly warns against seeing Harmel as the antithesis of paternalism (which Coffey, clearly writing about her hero, was all too wont to do), pointing out that his presence was unavoidable in all the works at Val-des-Bois, and his 'grip over his "business" absolute'.<sup>136</sup>

Harmel had contact with the Pope via the *Union de Fribourg* as well as through his leadership of workers' pilgrimages to Rome. Cardijn's insistence on the importance of workers' pilgrimages in the JOC was based on his appreciation of Harmel's lead.<sup>137</sup> Pilgrimage had become an ever-more important part of Catholic devotion during the late nineteenth century, due in part to improved transport networks, particularly the advent of relatively inexpensive rail travel.<sup>138</sup> Harmel led regular workers' pilgrimages to Rome from 1885 onwards, gathering workers from all over France, whose trains would converge at Lyon to travel through Italy. Extraordinarily, Harmel and other *patrons* habitually travelled in Third Class, alongside the workers. The pilgrimages served many purposes. First and foremost, they 'intended to call papal attention to the plight of workingmen'.<sup>139</sup> By travelling and worshipping together, workers and managers might be reconciled; by going to Rome, workers were assured of their place within the Church's Mystical Body. As

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<sup>135</sup> Bamba points to the importance for public health of feeling of control of working conditions; Bamba, *Work*, Ch. 4.

<sup>136</sup> Pierrard, *L'Église et les ouvriers* 345.

<sup>137</sup> In his interview, J. Cardijn, "Ten Huize van... Monseigneur Cardijn," (Leuven: KADOC, 1962) Cardijn points to Harmel as the first to go on pilgrimage to Rome with the workers.

<sup>138</sup> 'The post-war [1870] religious climate, coinciding with the development of railways, enabled the Assumptionists to resurrect the ancient custom of pilgrimages, to a scale never before achieved. They obtained special fares from the railway companies and, from 1872 onwards, yearly led hundreds of thousands of the faithful to places of devotion'; Dansette, *Histoire* 341-2.

<sup>139</sup> Coffey, *Harmel* 159.

Coffey pointed out, 'the corporate nature of the journey is crucial, because it represents the Mystical Body, a corporate body with its Communion of Saints...'.<sup>140</sup> Pilgrimages were also a viable alternative to the annual May Day parades which increasingly 'carried political overtones'<sup>141</sup> and were promoted by the Socialists and Marxists. The celebration of the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, with parish processions and celebrations, further reclaimed May Day for the Church.

Harmel's influence on Cardijn was profound. Among the first to realise that workers should be the first apostles of workers, he actively promoted this practice at Val-des-Bois. Concerned not only with the spiritual well-being of his workers, he ensured that workers' children at Val-des-Bois were educated until 13, and offered further opportunities for education and formation, such as the housewifery school and numeracy classes. Allowing representatives to participate on an equal footing in the discussion of pay and conditions enabled workers to feel in control of a crucial aspect of their lives. All these would be taken up by Cardijn, and become a fundamental part of his theology.

### *2.7 Stage 4: Sangnier and Le Sillon*

De Mun's shift away from *L'Œuvre* to the *ACJF* was paralleled by a number of initiatives at the turn of the twentieth century, all of which broadened the aims of Social Catholicism. No longer was it simply a question of alleviating acute

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* 149.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* 160.

poverty and improving working conditions; now it was important to educate and train future leaders, who would both educate the workers, and be able to implement safer working practices and improved living conditions.

Internationally, as we have seen, the work of the *Union de Fribourg* was influential on the Pope. In France and Belgium, the development of the *Semaines Sociales* and the work of *Le Sillon*, along with the *ACJF*, are the final pieces of the jigsaw giving the background to the formation of the JOC in 1925, so key to the theology of both Chenu and Cardijn.

*Le Sillon*<sup>142</sup> has been described as ‘the most successful of the Social Catholic groups both in terms of its duration and its following.’<sup>143</sup> Flower suggested further that it ‘provided the link to join all those hitherto divided by the politico-religious disputes’ of the period, as it was ‘a fusion of Catholicism with democracy.’<sup>144</sup> Run as a network of ‘study circles’ whose members ‘did not play a passive role like students, but an active role as questioners’, it brought together a diverse group of ‘students, bourgeois, and workers most of whom belonged to the average income groups. The urban milieu of employees and artisans always formed the backbone’ of *Le Sillon*.<sup>145</sup> A student-led movement for Christian democracy founded in 1894, it sought to form an ‘elite’, to be educated in the Catholic faith and in ‘civic duty’, who would re-Christianise France, particularly the working class. This elite was to be drawn both from the

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<sup>142</sup> On *Le Sillon* see Cousin, *Vie et Doctrine du Sillon*; N. Ariès, *Le Sillon et le mouvement démocratique* (Paris: Nouvelle librairie nationale, 1910); A. Dansette and J.A. Trans. Corbett, "The Rejuvenation of French Catholicism: Marc Sangnier's Sillon", *The Review of Politics* 15, no. 1 (1953); J. de Fabrègues, *Le Sillon de Marc Sangnier* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1964).

<sup>143</sup> J.E. Flower, "Forerunners of the Worker-Priests", *Journal of Contemporary History* 2, no. 4 (1967) 190.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.* 191-2.

<sup>145</sup> Dansette and Trans. Corbett, "Rejuvenation" 36-7.

social elite which led the movement, and the artisans and workers who formed the majority of its members. From 1906, *Le Sillon* defined itself as a lay organisation, suggesting that the work of the laity was ‘a collaboration with the work of the priest’; and while the Church maintained ‘its right of control over the thought, words, and actions of its children, this control does not prevent initiative.’<sup>146</sup> There is a clear link here to Cardijn’s emphasis on *jocistes* as an elite among working-class youth, and his understanding of the complementary roles of the laity and hierarchy in the apostolate. We will examine this further in Chapter 3 below. But the desire to fuse Catholic faith with democracy during the first years of the twentieth century proved too much for the hierarchy. In the wake of the enforced Separation of Church and State in France, not to mention the suspicion in Rome of those ‘Modernists’ who would be condemned in 1910,<sup>147</sup> an attempt to marry democratic political values with religious belief was bound to be perceived as hazardous to faith. Despite Sangnier’s insistence that it was a lay organisation, faithful to the instructions of the hierarchy in its religious belief and practice, but independent in its understanding of political and economic factors, the movement was dissolved by order of the papal letter *Notre Charge Apostolique*.<sup>148</sup>

Like *Le Sillon*, the *ACJF* largely appealed to educated young men who ‘because they were Catholics’ were driven to become involved in questions of social concern.<sup>149</sup> The movement consisted of study groups, made up of either

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<sup>146</sup> de Fabrègues, *Le Sillon de Marc Sangnier* 178, quoting Cousin, ‘L’Eveil démocratique’, 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Sillon.

<sup>147</sup> Pius X, “Pascendi”,

<sup>148</sup> “Notre charge apostolique”, (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 1910)

<sup>149</sup> Misner, *Social Catholicism* 294.



students or workers, who conducted what Cardijn described as ‘social enquiries’, that is, investigations into local social questions. Building on the support for unions expressed in the Magisterium after the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, from 1903 onwards the *ACJF* became increasingly involved in the establishment and support of unions. Like *L’Œuvre*, the *ACJF* sought to pull together the Catholic youth groups under its own leadership. In Belgium, the *ACJB* was relatively successful in this aim, as even the *Jeunesse Syndicaliste*, formed after World War I initially joined the *ACJB*. Yet Cardijn’s intuition that bringing all young people together would harm the autonomy of young workers, meaning that the group would be led by the middle and upper classes, led him to insist on the JOC as a separate institution, as we note in Chapter 3 below.<sup>150</sup>

The *Semaines sociales* were another development which drew middle-class Catholic youth to the social question. Formed in Lyon to promote both Catholic practice and social justice, the *Semaines sociales* arranged annual conferences around France and supported a publishing arm to produce the conference proceedings and other documentation. The 1906 *Semaine* was key in Cardijn’s development, as it was here that he met both Sangnier and Harmel. He continued to attend the *Semaines Sociales* whenever possible, as did other JOC chaplains. Chenu was another keen supporter of these events, who also contributed papers at the meetings.

## 2.8 Le bilan du Catholicisme social

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<sup>150</sup> See Walckiers, *Sources* pp.xxviiiiff.

In concluding this chapter, it is necessary to draw up a balance-sheet of the successes and failures of Social Catholicism. Notwithstanding the strongly paternalistic attitude which dominated Social Catholicism, there were successes. Motivated by a Christian charity which often grew out of deep faith, early Social Catholics moved beyond traditional almsgiving, offering practical help, such as friendship (SVP), and, crucially, being at the forefront of legislation to improve working and living conditions for those who benefited least and suffered most from industrialisation (the research and legislative work of Villeneuve-Bargemont, de Melun, Le Play, and others). The development of the *patronages* was a genuine and well-meaning attempt to improve the lot of workers, albeit by limited means, and to offer them eternal salvation, rather than the temporal 'happiness in this world' which the attractions of Socialism offered.

Yet nineteenth-century Social Catholicism failed in two significant ways. First, it offered a paternalistic, 'top-down', engagement with 'the workers', as groups founded by the social elite to remedy the problems of industrialisation inevitably recruited from their own *milieu*, and sought to educate and form the workers in the image of middle-class ideals. Almost inevitably, this alienated those in most need. Moreover, the *œuvres* tended to recruit from the artisanal, urban lower-middle classes, whose needs were fewer, and who were already articulate enough to seek solutions, rather than from among industrial workers. The industrial working classes, whose desperate plight moved so many, were too often excluded from the *œuvres*, simply because social structures meant they were unreachable.

The second failure was that of an inadequate theology. Locked as they were into a post-Tridentine, neo-scholastic world view of nature and supernature, the nineteenth-century Social Catholics sought to bring workers to God, to give them the hope of everlasting life, and to teach them to accept their lot in this world, in the hope of extra grace (by ‘offering it up’) which would speed their journey into the next. It was not until mid-century that attempts were made to legislate for the improvement of working conditions; and not until Sangnier that a genuine attempt at improving the social structures was developed. At the heart of the *ressourcement* project, however, is a fresh understanding of the relationship between nature and supernature, a re-articulation of the teleological end of human life, and an understanding that theology, which grows out of a living faith, must also function within the reality of daily life. Chenu and Cardijn’s approach, rooted in *ressourcement* theology, was therefore a more fully rounded response to the crisis.

We now turn to the theology of Joseph Cardijn. In Chapter 3, we will see that Cardijn himself may be counted as a theologian. Following Boersma, we will also see that Cardijn may further be numbered among the *ressourcement* theologians due to his insistence that living faith must be wholly integrated into daily life.

## CHAPTER 3

### Joseph Cardijn – man of action, teacher, writer, theologian

#### *3.1 Introduction*

Having examined certain aspects of Social Catholicism in nineteenth-century France and Belgium, we now turn to Joseph Cardijn. It may be argued that the JOC grew out of the *œuvres* of Social Catholicism, although Cardijn was most influenced by Harmel and Sangnier, whom he met at the 1906 Amiens *Semaine Sociale*. In 1915, Cardijn was appointed Director of the *Œuvres Sociales* for the Archdiocese of Brussels. It was in this role that, in the aftermath of the First World War, he was able to roll out his parish *Œuvres* across the archdiocese, leading to the founding of the JOC in 1925. Cardijn himself insisted that he was ‘not a teacher, nor a theologian, not a canon lawyer, nor a writer, but a man of action’.<sup>1</sup> However, this chapter will argue that the founder of the JOC and tireless advocate of the workers, should also be understood as a theologian, a writer, and a teacher. As a theologian, Cardijn may be situated close to the *ressourcement* theologians. Although a generation older, his concern that theology and faith should be fully integrated with life is, as Boersma notes, a key aspect of *ressourcement* theology.<sup>2</sup> We begin this chapter with a summary of Cardijn’s biography until the founding of the JOC in 1925 (3.2). We then make use of his speeches and other writings to demonstrate that he was as thoughtful

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<sup>1</sup> Cardijn, "Avant-Propos", 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Boersma describes the *ressourcement* project as ‘an endeavour to allow theology to speak to people’s everyday lives’ (Boersma, *Heavenly* 15).

a teacher (3.3), as persuasive a writer (3.4), and as gifted a theologian (3.5) as he was a man of action. In particular, we will pay careful attention to his Mystical Body theology.

### *3.2 Cardijn: biographical notes and founding of the JOC*

Leo Jozef Cardijn (known as Joseph) was born in 1882 to domestic workers in the Brussels industrial suburb of Schaerbeek. His mother was so ill after his birth that he was sent to live with her parents in Hal, to be joined by the growing family some years later.<sup>3</sup> Hal's factories drew in workers from the surrounding countryside, and Cardijn grew up 'hearing the noise of their clogs on the pavements' early in the morning as 'the long lines of harassed, suffering people, including teenagers, even half-asleep children of his own age' passed by on their way to work.<sup>4</sup> The Cardijns were coal-merchants and café owners, although the Flemish father spoke little French and was effectively illiterate and innumerate. His Francophone wife, by contrast, was bilingual, literate, and numerate.<sup>5</sup> Later Joseph recalled that, 'Since my father had returned to Hal and established a small business, I had my after-school job. I brought sacks of coal to our customers, dragging them behind me in a little trailer over the large cobbles in the neighbourhood.'<sup>6</sup> In addition, his father's lack of education meant that Joseph, once he 'could count and read, was in charge of the "book-keeping" for

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<sup>3</sup> See Cardijn, "Ten Huize van... Monseigneur Cardijn," 2.

<sup>4</sup> Fiévez and Meert, *Cardijn* 17.

<sup>5</sup> Walckiers, "40 années", 17.

<sup>6</sup> Fiévez and Meert, *Cardijn* 17.

his father. He wrote the accounts and placed the orders.’<sup>7</sup> The family had expected him to leave school at 14 to work in a factory before eventually taking over the family business, but on leaving school he begged to study for the priesthood. As a priest he was very aware of the huge sacrifice this had entailed for his parents. They had lost the income they had assumed he would earn, while also being required to supplement the grant their son received as a needy student-priest.<sup>8</sup> His awareness of their generosity later led him to describe ‘the oath I made at my father’s deathbed ... to consecrate my life to the salvation of the working class and young workers.’<sup>9</sup>

Attending the Malines seminary from 1896 was difficult for Cardijn, leaving him truly comfortable neither at home nor at seminary.<sup>10</sup> He later observed that during this period, ‘I lived a double life: that of the student, and that of a worker’s child, and these two worlds were poles apart.’<sup>11</sup> The social dislocation between him and his upper- and middle-class peers was reinforced by the linguistic and cultural differences between his home life and his education. He had been brought up in a Flemish-speaking enclave in Brabant (‘I consider myself to be totally Flemish, albeit from the generation which was educated in French at school’<sup>12</sup>), and now found himself in a Francophone, culturally French environment. The linguistic gulf reinforced the social divide. French was the language of the social elite, government, and influence, while Flemish was language of the poor, both the rural poor in the north and the

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<sup>7</sup> Van Roey, *Cardijn* 24.

<sup>8</sup> Cardijn, "Ten Huize van... Monseigneur Cardijn," 5.

<sup>9</sup> "Point du départ", 20.

<sup>10</sup> Walckiers, "40 années", 19.

<sup>11</sup> Cardijn, "Ten Huize van... Monseigneur Cardijn," 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 11.

urban poor, who were economic migrants to the industrialised south. Cardijn's father would thus have been as economically disadvantaged by his Flemish monolingualism as by his poor education. Yet Joseph's discomfort at seminary was not without benefits, for he spent spare time in the library, reading voraciously – French classics, contemporary Flemish authors, the lives of saints, de Mun, Oznaman, Montalembert, Newman – and was nearly always top of the class.<sup>13</sup>

This deracination was acutely experienced on his return home from junior seminary after his first year of studies, vividly recalled and described half a century later, in his account of how he became obsessed by the question of saving the souls of young workers:

When fifty years ago I entered the junior seminary ... my schoolmates went out to work. They were intelligent, decent, God-fearing. When I came back for my holidays they were coarse, corrupted and lapsed from the Church – whilst I was becoming a priest. I started to make enquiries, it became the obsession of my life.<sup>14</sup>

This obsession reflected what was widely commented on in the Church:

'Entrance into the workforce was believed to be a moment of religious and moral peril, when any religious faith possessed by the child was likely to be

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<sup>13</sup> Walckiers, "40 années", 22.

<sup>14</sup> Cardijn, *Challenge* 8.

lost.’<sup>15</sup> The religious faith, Chenu observed, was often negligible, if existent at all (see Chapter 6.2 below).

Ordained in 1906, Cardijn was permitted to study at Leuven for a Licence in Social and Political Science and Sociology under Victor Brants (1856-1917). In 1884 Brants had ‘established a teaching group in which he formed many pupils following Le Play, and introduced them to social realities through travels, visits, and personal study’.<sup>16</sup> This methodology bore fruit in Cardijn’s travels to Germany and England, investigating unions and working conditions, published in articles in 1907, 1911, and 1913,<sup>17</sup> and in the ‘social enquiries’ he trained JOC members to carry out in their localities in order to improve living and working conditions for themselves and those around them. We can thus draw a ‘line of descent’ from the French mining engineer Le Play, through the Belgian Chair of Social Sciences, to the young workers of the JOC. As Walckiers notes,

Cardijn taught the young students and workers [in Laeken] to be concerned about improving the fate of the majority of young people: the young working class. ... he taught them to observe the material and moral situation of working-class families, and introduced them to the Church’s social teaching, studying the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* ...<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Whitney, *Mobilizing Youth* 84.

<sup>16</sup> Rezsöhazy, *Origines* 154.

<sup>17</sup> Cardijn, "L'industrie à domicile en Allemagne"; "L'organisation ouvrière anglaise"; "L'ouvrière isolée"

<sup>18</sup> Walckiers, *Sources* p.xiii-xiv.



Cardijn's Archbishop, Mercier, himself a former professor at Leuven, had sent him for further study despite a negative report from the Rector at Malines. According to this report, Cardijn was 'vain', 'not overly bright', and from an unsuitable social background, Mercier told his successor at Leuven. He added that Cardijn might someday teach – although not at tertiary level – and would no doubt soon be assigned to some industrial parish.<sup>19</sup> Within the year, Cardijn had been removed from his studies. Mercier's terse note to Deploige at this point gives little indication as to why, although it suggests something which cannot be put in writing ('if he will not tell you the reasons I shall find a way of letting you know').<sup>20</sup> Walckiers speculates it was due to an inappropriate friendship with a pair of siblings, with Cardijn indulging in an 'intense and secret' correspondence with the sister, to whom he had gained access through the brother, losing Mercier's trust (not to mention narrowly avoiding scandal).<sup>21</sup> This would make Cardijn's immediate appointment as a teacher in the junior seminary at Basse-Wavre, and his later responsibility for young women's parish groups in Laeken, most disappointing. Vos' reading, that Mercier wished Cardijn to have some time to 'mature' through the responsibility of teaching, may be closer to the mark.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Cardinal Mercier, "Letter to Mgr Deploige," (Leuven: KADOC, 1906)

<sup>20</sup> "Letter to Mgr Deploige," (Leuven: KADOC, 1907)

<sup>21</sup> Walckiers, "40 années", 26-28.

<sup>22</sup> Louis Vos, "La Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne", in *Histoire du Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien en Belgique*, ed. E. Gerard and P. Wynants, KADOC-STUDIES (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994) 2:430.

Cardijn remained in Basse-Wavre until his appointment as curate in Laeken in 1912.<sup>23</sup> The summer holidays from junior seminary had enabled him to conduct research into the textile industry and unions. Textile workers were especially vulnerable, as the work was 'put out' and paid by the piece.<sup>24</sup> Belgian textiles in particular were a luxury product, leaving workers at the mercy of economic change. Cardijn had investigated textile workers' situations and attempts to unionise in the German Rhineland and the Brussels area, and had also visited Ben Tillett, leader of the dockers' union in London to investigate British unions. This research, his year of study, and his teaching experience, would all contribute to his work in Laeken.

As a curate, he visited Catholic homes in Laeken, where he asked, not about participation in the life of the Church as his clerical colleagues did, but rather about working and living conditions – 'Where do you live? Where do you work? How much do you earn?'<sup>25</sup> But his major responsibility was for the *Œuvres féminines*, the range of parish-based support groups for young female workers. Vos<sup>26</sup> observes that the importance of this experience cannot be over-estimated. Cardijn's first action was to found a union for young female textile workers,<sup>27</sup> the *Syndicat d'Aiguilles*, which in due course would be rolled out across the diocese. Horn suggests that the union was ultimately a failure which

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<sup>23</sup> 'Laeken was of course the royal parish [where the royal palace is situated], but there were also many factories there.' Cardijn, "Ten Huize van... Monseigneur Cardijn," 12.

<sup>24</sup> A. Osaer, "Le mouvement ouvrier chrétien féminin", in *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier chrétien en Belgique*, ed. E. Gerard and P. Wynants, KADOC-STUDIES (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994) 343.

<sup>25</sup> Cardijn, *Laïcs* 26; "Ten Huize van... Monseigneur Cardijn," 12-13.

<sup>26</sup> Vos, "La JOC", 431.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 427. Vos notes that most young women were employed in the textile industry, while most young men were in heavy industry.

left Cardijn disappointed due to low uptake,<sup>28</sup> although Vos is more inclined to see it as a success which encouraged Cardijn to roll it out across the diocese.

What remains the case is that at this stage, Cardijn was convinced, following his meetings with Tillett and his research in the Rhineland, that unions were not only effective for promoting human dignity in the workplace, but could also serve to help the worker develop and mature as a person.

In his role as Director of the Archdiocesan *Œuvres Sociales*, Cardijn 'made himself the catalyst of the Brussels workers in the national resistance movement', as a result of which he

was arrested on 6 December 1916 for having publicly protested against deportations and having distributed forbidden publications; he was released on 15 June 1917. Re-arrested on 23 June 1918 for spying, he was finally released on 9 September 1918.<sup>29</sup>

He used the time in prison to study, 'reading the Bible and Karl Marx's *Kapital*.

He wrote down his thoughts about the situation of young workers, and the solution he advocated.<sup>30</sup> In addition, he wrote a series of research papers on the need for unions for young workers in the Brussels area,<sup>31</sup> and notes to be used in the enquiries which formed part of the meetings of the *Syndicat*

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<sup>28</sup> Horn, *European Liberation Theology* 6.

<sup>29</sup> Walckiers, *Sources*, p.xv, n.2.

<sup>30</sup> Verhoeven, *Jozef Cardijn* 31. Cardijn's writings during his imprisonments in 1916 and 1917 are available on microfiches 22-24 at KADOC, and include his letters to the courts (22) and personal correspondence (23).

<sup>31</sup> These latter include J. Cardijn, "Syndicalisme ouvrier féminin à Bruxelles," (KADOC: Cardijn Microfiche 24, 1916); "Syndicalisme ouvrier masculin et féminin," (KADOC: Cardijn Microfiche 24, 1916); "Le syndicat d'aiguille," (KADOC: Cardijn microfiche 24, 1916); "Le syndicat d'aiguille dans l'agglomération bruxelloise," (KADOC: Cardijn microfiche 24, 1916)

*d'Aiguille* in Laeken.<sup>32</sup> These two periods of incarceration enabled Cardijn's ideas about the *Œuvres Sociales* to crystallise, leading him to the two key insights which essentially informed the development of the JOC from 1925 onwards. The first was that movements should be specialised: unifying, but not uniform, a 'co-ordination in the heart of the parochial, diocesan and ecclesiastical community, with a view to the mutual support that lay apostles need.'<sup>33</sup> To achieve this, he insisted that youth movements in the Archdiocese should be decoupled from the *ACJB*, in which, he noted, the middle classes tended to take the lead to the detriment of those lower down the social pecking order. He demanded that the movements be divided according to professional expertise and, therefore, social class.<sup>34</sup> Closely linked to this was his second insight, his revolutionary understanding of the lay apostolate as a universal call to all the laity, working 'through the environments and problems of life',<sup>35</sup> regardless of class, education, professional status, or upbringing.

Walckiers has situated the founding of the JOC between 1919 and 1925 within the context of the post-World War I collapse of Social Catholicism, alongside the Church's acknowledgement of the need for a new way forward for the evangelisation of young workers. He provides detailed information on the post-war shift from Cardijn's parish-based worker's circles in Laeken to the *Jeunesse Syndicaliste*. This proto-union, suggests Vos, developed from an *Œuvre* which Cardijn had founded for male apprentices. The *Jeunesse Syndicaliste*,

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<sup>32</sup> Available on KADOC microfiche 23.

<sup>33</sup> Cardijn, "Point du départ", 22.

<sup>34</sup> Walckiers, *Sources* pp.xxvff.

<sup>35</sup> Cardijn, "Point du départ", 24.

which operated bilingually, grew rapidly within the Brussels region and had the ‘triple objective of helping and protecting young workers in the professional, social, and moral domains’.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, notes Vos, *De Jonge Werkman* had developed in Antwerp, uniting Cardijn’s ideas with an existing Dutch movement. By 1924 the two came together, according to Vos,<sup>37</sup> as the KAJ (*Kristene Arbeidersjeugd*) in Flanders and the JOC in Wallonia, with the female branches (JOCF/VKAJ) adhering by the end of the year.

In 1925, the long-running dispute about how the *Jeunesse Syndicaliste* (JOC/KAJ) and the *ACJB* should cooperate in the evangelisation of young workers came to a head, and the JOC definitively separated from the *ACJB*. Walckiers assesses the sustained opposition from the Belgian bishops to a specialist movement for young workers.<sup>38</sup> There was significant resistance to Cardijn’s insistence on what was effectively a ‘separation of Catholic Action based on social class, although the facts justifying the establishment of the JOC were accepted’.<sup>39</sup> The bishops wanted young workers to be part of the *ACJB*, with any specific working-class or union formation taking place within existing Catholic unions. Cardijn insisted that young workers must have their own space. He noted, somewhat provocatively, that ‘While we are wasting time discussing this, the socialists are getting hold of more and more of our young workers.’<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Vos, “La JOC”, 433.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 432-438; on the JOCF/VKAJ, 438-440.

<sup>38</sup> See Mercier’s letter to his brother bishops, 6 October 1922, document 14 in Walckiers, *Sources* 29-30.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 125, n.1. Walckiers suggests that ‘Jeunesse Ouvrière Catholique’ was more acceptable than ‘Jeunesse Syndicaliste’ to bishops concerned about both unionism and socialism (p.xxix).

<sup>40</sup> Cardijn, Letter to Mercier, 17 July 1925, document 31 in *ibid.* 55.

In the end, Cardijn won the approval of Pope Pius XI and the Belgian bishops.<sup>41</sup>

The movement spread rapidly throughout Belgium, with 1500 delegates attending the 1926 conference in Namur,<sup>42</sup> a weekly publication by 1927 distributed in factories,<sup>43</sup> and, in 1929, the first JOC pilgrimage to Rome, when Cardijn led 1500 Belgian *jocistes* to the Vatican.<sup>44</sup> By now the JOC had spread to France – principally the *département du Nord* and Paris basin – and members in Belgium numbered in the thousands.<sup>45</sup> The huge spread of the movement, and the urgent needs of its members, provided Cardijn with ample opportunity to exercise his gifts as a teacher.

### 3.3 Cardijn the teacher

Cardijn himself pointed to his ‘five years’ teaching at the Junior Seminary in Basse-Wavre’ as important in the later development of the JOC.<sup>46</sup> In a 1938 article, he described the JOC as a ‘school’, ‘a school of the lay apostolate’, but also ‘a practical school, a school of training’. The JOC was to be ‘a school which

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<sup>41</sup> The account of Cardijn’s meeting with Pius XI has become something of a JOC myth. Cardijn simply states that ‘he had the providential grace to be received in private audience by Pius XI, who approved the YCW in its aim, method, and organisation’ (Cardijn, “Point du départ”, 26-7). This contrasts with the rather more extraordinary accounts in some of the quasi-hagiographic literature, according to which, after a public audience, Cardijn was to have sneaked into the Apostolic Palace, past the Swiss Guards, and entered the Pope’s study, where the surprised Pius XI granted him an audience, and the conversation between the two about the salvation of the workers took place. Here we should recall Brejon de Lavergnée’s critique of the tendency of ‘movements’ to insist on foundational actions carried out by a saintly founder, whose exemplary life becomes part of what may be referred to as the ‘founding myth’. (See Brejon de Lavergnée, *La SVP au XIXs* 38-40).

<sup>42</sup> Cardijn, *Manuel* 33.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 36.

<sup>45</sup> There were four branches – male and female, Flemish and French – in Belgium; JOC, ed. *Semaine d'Etudes Internationales de la JOC* (Bruxelles: Editions Jocistes, 1935) 77.

<sup>46</sup> Cardijn, “Point du départ”, 20.

transforms their life of young workers into a lay priesthood and a lay apostolate...<sup>47</sup> The parallels with the *RSB*, which seeks to be 'a school of the Lord's Service', are surely not accidental. The JOC was to train young workers to fully integrate their working lives and their lives of faith. Christian life (theology and faith) and the working life (lived reality) should not be separated.

The JOC not only formed working-class apostles, but also improved their education. It must, said Cardijn, 'be a school from the moment a young worker leaves the family, leaves school to start work.'<sup>48</sup> Vos notes that many young people were already in the Belgian workplace by the age of 12, having received only the most basic elementary education. Legal restrictions on child labour were largely absent in Belgium, with children working in heavy industry until the eve of the First World War.<sup>49</sup> The JOC was a 'school of workers' leaders',<sup>50</sup> which sought to train young workers 'to represent the working-class [*sic*] in the structural changes, in the committees, the economic councils, the social security organisations, the workers' holiday schemes'.<sup>51</sup> To be effective advocates and leaders of their peers, they needed to be literate and numerate. These basic skills – which Cardijn developed by, for instance, making the one who struggled most with writing take the minutes of the meetings<sup>52</sup> – led in turn to the confidence which would lead the Jocistes to be an effective elite of young

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<sup>47</sup> "The YCW", in *Challenge to Action* (Chicago: Fides Publishers, 1955 (1938)) 91.

<sup>48</sup> "The Hour of a Missionary YCW", in *The Hour of the Working Class* (London: Young Worker Publications, 1948) 37.

<sup>49</sup> Vos, "La JOC", 426-8.

<sup>50</sup> Cardijn, "Missionary YCW", 37.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

<sup>52</sup> Fiévez describes the first group of young men to meet in Laeken – the nascent JOC – often having to wait for Cardijn to be free while he helped a young woman from one of his groups prepare for or write up a meeting; M. Fiévez, *La vie de Fernand Tonnet, premier Jociste* (Brussels/Geneva: Editions Jocistes, 1947) 39.

workers, enabled to transform their working and living environments to something worthy of young people in the image of God. The focus on the training of an elite of workers was, suggests Osaer, characteristic of the Christian Workers' Movements in Belgium.<sup>53</sup> Already in Laeken, Cardijn had described the importance of 'educating, forming, and teaching' the young women in the *Œuvres* for which he had responsibility, in order to turn them into apostles.<sup>54</sup> This educational dimension has been described as a 'form of the life of faith which was adapted to young working-class people'.<sup>55</sup>

The JOC's educational role went far beyond improving literacy, numeracy, and knowledge of the faith. Study circles had formed the backbone of both the *patronages* and the *œuvres* such as those inherited by Cardijn at Laeken. However, as Osaer observes, Cardijn was an 'ardent defender of the inductive method, which grew out of the participants' personal experience'.<sup>56</sup> Cardijn trialled the 'inductive method' – the See-Judge-Act (SJA) – in the *Syndicat d'Aiguilles*. Replacing the then standard 'passive' learning, which 'relied on heavy memorization and the transmission of knowledge',<sup>57</sup> the SJA started from young workers' experience. They discussed, for instance, an injustice in the workplace (See) in the light of the gospel or Catholic social teaching, before agreeing on a solution (Judge) which the group would then put into practice (Act). Horn points out that the SJA had an oft-ignored further advantage,

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<sup>53</sup> Osaer, "Le mouvement ouvrier chrétien féminin", 344.

<sup>54</sup> Note to Madeleine de Roo, cited in Fiévez and Meert, *Cardijn* 40.

<sup>55</sup> M. Launay, "Reflexions sur les origines de la JOC", in *Mouvements de jeunesse chrétiens et juifs: sociabilité juvénile dans un cadre européen 1799-1968*, ed. G. Cholvy (Paris: Cerf, 2008) 227.

<sup>56</sup> Osaer, "Le mouvement ouvrier chrétien féminin", 349

<sup>57</sup> Whitney, *Mobilizing Youth* 98.



ensuring that action was thought-through and planned, an important brake on teenage impulsivity.<sup>58</sup> The reflective approach of the SJA, based on real-life experience and data collected through 'enquiries', ensured that Jocistes developed and matured through critical self-reflection. The JOC, asserts vanMol, 'marked a totally new direction in social and educational formation and in the whole of youth pastoral work.'<sup>59</sup>

Some study circles remained in Cardijn's remodelling of the *Œuvres* of Social Catholicism, but here too the young people led the discussions themselves.<sup>60</sup> Horn notes the pedagogical import of the shift from a lecture addressed to young people, to a 'round-table' discussion led by their peers, in which all participated on an equal footing.<sup>61</sup> Responsibility and autonomy within the movement were further promoted by the financial dimension. The JOC, unlike the *patronages*, was largely funded by the members themselves.<sup>62</sup> Each member paid a monthly or weekly subscription in order to participate in the meetings, training them in 'generosity, solidarity, and developing a sense of responsibility',<sup>63</sup> as well as budgeting.

As Launay points out,<sup>64</sup> the significant difference between the *patronages* – some of which persisted until the twentieth century – and the JOC was Cardijn's repeated insistence that it should operate 'by, through, and for'

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<sup>58</sup> Horn, *European Liberation Theology* 13.

<sup>59</sup> A. Vanmol, "De fundamentele orienteringen van de christelijke arbeidersjeugdbeweging" (n.d.) 41.

<sup>60</sup> Vos, "La JOC", 431

<sup>61</sup> Horn, *European Liberation Theology* 16.

<sup>62</sup> Vos notes that there was also 'significant financial aid from wealthy Catholic backers, solicited by the National Chaplain', Vos, "La JOC", 450.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 450.

<sup>64</sup> Launay, "Reflexions", 227.

working-class young adults. Cardijn was adamant that Jocistes had to take responsibility for their own movement. Adult-run unions, the middle-class run *ACJB*, and owner-run *patronages* all failed to ensure the personal development which organising a movement would bring about. The ‘by them, through them, for them’ principle which underpinned the JOC thus ensured its ‘ownership’ by the young workers who were its members. In modern-day parlance, they ‘bought in’ to the movement through their ‘subs’. They led the discussions (enquiries), based on personal experience of injustice, which led to action to improve their surroundings; the action was thought-through and planned. The combination of ‘by, through, for’, and the SJA permeates the *Manuel de la JOC*.<sup>65</sup> Jocistes developed planning skills, while learning ‘soft’ social skills enabled them to function effectively in meetings, improved their literacy and numeracy, and learned budgeting. All of this education ‘for life’ encouraged a growth in autonomy and self-confidence, which equipped them to live out their faith and act on behalf of their peers and colleagues. The ‘intellectual, moral, physical, health, and religious’ formation,<sup>66</sup> enabled Jocistes to be ‘in a position to transform the life of the social group in which they live[d] and work[ed]’.<sup>67</sup>

Mercier’s assessment of Cardijn in his note to Deploige was negative and snobbish. Yet it was also, in some senses, prophetic. Cardijn’s experience at Basse-Wavre honed the skills necessary to make him an effective teacher of young workers. His subsequent appointments to the industrial parish of Laeken

<sup>65</sup> What became the first edition was written by Cardijn during his time in prison in 1917; the second edition, according to its preface, was ‘completely reworked’ to take account of ‘the rapid development of the movement and the experience of its leaders’; Cardijn, *Manuel ‘Avant-propos’*. The Flemish version was the 1928 *Handboek der KAJ*.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 72.

<sup>67</sup> B. Goode, "Catholic Action for Young Workers", *Clergy Review* 14, no. 6 (1938) 487.

and as Director of the *Œuvres Sociales* enabled him to develop much-needed groups for young workers. These experiences in turn informed the work of the JOC, where Cardijn's skills as a teacher came to the fore. His revolutionary pedagogy relied on engaging the whole person, and was far removed from the traditional didactic methods employed by the *patronages* and the *œuvres* of Social Catholicism. Where literacy and numeracy skills needed to be improved, the young person was given a role which required the use and development of these skills, and supported in using them. The SJA started from personal experience and was led by the young people themselves. The 'by, through, for' ensured that young people took responsibility for their movement, and became autonomous leaders. The development of the whole person was completed by the religious formation, which was key to the transformation – or conquest – of society. Having seen that Cardijn was a successful *teacher*, we now turn to Cardijn the *writer*.

### *3.4 Cardijn the writer*

In the decade leading up to World War I, Cardijn published three sociological studies on working conditions in, respectively, Germany, England, and Belgium.

The first article grew out of Cardijn's end of course assessment in 1907.<sup>68</sup>

Encouraged by Brants, he visited

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<sup>68</sup> Cardijn, "L'industrie à domicile en Allemagne"

Mönchengladbach ... the great centre of the Workers' movement... Essen, Münster, Cologne, Aachen, in fact, the whole of the Rhineland where Christian Social Democracy was born...<sup>69</sup>

This article discussed in detail the living and working conditions of those workers, mostly in the 'put-out' textile industries in the Rhineland. Cardijn amassed data about the lengthy working days and the poor pay, details about work being carried out in living space, and the resulting insanitary living and working conditions.<sup>70</sup> Crucially, he stressed the uselessness of the legislation which imposed social insurance payments. For self-employed textile workers, the payments were almost impossible to meet, while in some industries, employers were only obliged to cover those working in factories; in others, there was no insurance for work-related illness or accidents.<sup>71</sup>

Cardijn's second article (published over two consecutive issues)<sup>72</sup> developed from his meetings with Ben Tillett and other union leaders in England.

During another holiday, I went to England to study the Trades Unions there. I spent days talking with the union leaders... In addition, I also made a visit to cooperatives in Manchester and Liverpool to research what they did for the worker.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> "Ten Huize van... Monseigneur Cardijn," 9-10.

<sup>70</sup> "L'industrie à domicile en Allemagne" 11-16.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 11-12.

<sup>72</sup> "L'organisation ouvrière anglaise"

<sup>73</sup> "Ten Huize van... Monseigneur Cardijn," 11.

Cardijn's principal interest was the development of unionism among the dockers, the support given by the Church, in the form of Cardinal Manning, and the significant implications for unionism worldwide which the formation of a union for the 'unskilled', and its success in striking, had brought about.<sup>74</sup>

Unskilled workers, such as dockers, were banned from unions at this time, and Cardijn discussed the importance of this new union in his article.<sup>75</sup> He was particularly impressed by Tillett, the dockers' leader in London, whom he met in the midst of busy union work following strikes.<sup>76</sup> Tillett was notorious for having led the 1889 dockers' strike, with Manning's eventual support, which was especially prized given the brush-off Bishop Temple had given him.<sup>77</sup>

Cardijn's final article, published as he took up residence in Laeken, examined the social factors facing young single female workers, usually needlewomen, working from home on the 'putting-out' system.<sup>78</sup> He noted that the research for this latter work was 'made concrete' when he became curate in Laeken, where the *Syndicat d'Aiguille* recruited from these young, isolated, women.<sup>79</sup>

Thirty years later, in the immediate post-war environment, Cardijn's 1947 'Godinne Lectures' (so called because they took place at the Belgian JOC

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<sup>74</sup> "L'organisation ouvrière anglaise" 382.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 387. On the exclusion of unskilled labourers from unions in England during the nineteenth century, see E. Hopkins, *Working-class self-help in nineteenth-century England* (London: UCL Press, 1995), 121-123 and J. Schnee, *Ben Tillett* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1982), 44-48.

<sup>76</sup> Cardijn, "L'organisation ouvrière anglaise" 383. Cardijn described the 'magnificent [Trades Unions] movement to which [Tillett] had dedicated his life'.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 384-386. On the Dockers' Strike and Manning's support, see Hopkins, *Self-help*, 143-144, and Schnee, *Ben Tillett*, ch. 3.

<sup>78</sup> Cardijn, "L'ouvrière isolée"

<sup>79</sup> "Le syndicat d'aiguille,"; "Le syndicat d'aiguille dans l'agglomération bruxelloise,"

study week<sup>80</sup>) focused on the issues of the post-war working world, and its implications for working-class young people.<sup>81</sup> The first lecture focused on the development of the working class: as Cardijn himself noted, a very recent phenomenon in human history.<sup>82</sup> The second and third lectures focused on the need for mission, and missionaries, among the working classes, and the fourth on how the JOC might fulfil these needs. The first lecture, in particular, shows Cardijn's new interest in a more global world; already he mentions industry in 'South America and Africa'.<sup>83</sup>

This concern about the implications for workers of the increasingly global and technical post-war world developed into Cardijn's 1960 proposal for an encyclical on work in the global world, to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>84</sup> Addressed to the *Sostituto* at the Secretariat of State, the 18-page '*L'Église face au monde du travail*'<sup>85</sup> offers an account of Cardijn's thought about work in the post-World War II world, and how he thought the Church should respond. Cardijn's 'note', as he describes it – 'written at a single sitting' – has a particular focus on 'the international aspect of the world of work and the problems this poses'.<sup>86</sup> It was this note which formed the basis of the 1961 encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The Jesuit college of Godinne, some 20km to the north of Namur, was used for the JOC study weeks from the 1930s onwards.

<sup>81</sup> The four lectures were translated and published in 1948 as Cardijn, *Hour*

<sup>82</sup> "Hour", 3.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>84</sup> Leo XIII, "R.N.",

<sup>85</sup> Cardijn, "RN 70,"

<sup>86</sup> Cardijn, Letter dated 13 April 1960 to Mgr Dell'Acqua, *Sostituto* at the Secretariat of State, in *ibid.* p.i.

<sup>87</sup> John XXIII, "M&M",

Having started by referring to the 'dizzying transformation' taking place in working conditions during the late 1950s and early 1960s – dramatic technological changes, whose effects were felt socially and economically far beyond the factory – <sup>88</sup>Cardijn returned to the theme of the first 1947 Godinne lecture, locating the roots of industrialisation, the growth of the 'proletariat', and class warfare, in the development of the steam engine. Alluding to the response of those – industrialists, academics, and churchmen – involved in Social Catholicism, he placed *Rerum Novarum* at the start of modern Catholic Social Teaching, noting its influence at the time, the marking of its anniversary by workers, and the taking up of its themes by twentieth-century popes, in particular Pius XI, with *Quadragesimo Anno*,<sup>89</sup> and Pius XII's radio address of 1941. In so doing, he followed the traditional structure of papal documents, which start with a summary of previous papal documents on the same theme, thus guiding the author of *Mater et Magistra* to follow suit. A noteworthy difference is the attention paid by Cardijn to Pius XII: 'not a year went by' during his pontificate, wrote Cardijn, in which Pius did not talk about work and workers.<sup>90</sup> *Mater et Magistra* focused rather on *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*.

In a shift mirrored by *Mater et Magistra* ch.2, Cardijn then moved from the Church's response to work, to a discussion of the technological advances which affect work and society. The issues he raised, such as the need for education, health, and rest, and the benefits and drawbacks of the

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<sup>88</sup> Cardijn, 'Note to the *Sostituto*', Cardijn, "RN 70," pp.i; 5, 10.

<sup>89</sup> Pius XI, "Q.A.",

<sup>90</sup> Cardijn, "RN 70," 4.

'development in social relationships' (*M&M* 59-61), were discussed in greater detail in the encyclical. Ch.4 of the encyclical, too, shows the influence of Cardijn's 'note'. Where he insisted that the role of the Church was to promote 'the eternal truths which are to guide individuals and institutions' in their use of technology in the economy and in society,<sup>91</sup> *Mater et Magistra* likewise devoted a significant section to re-asserting the need for God (213-4), the root of justice and right (215-6) and basis of order in the world (217). In the final pages of his 'note', Cardijn referred to the differing vocations of clergy and laity in the apostolate to the workers; the need for education, formation, and the family; and the role of the JOC. Once more, these themes were taken up by *Mater et Magistra*, which notes the particular importance of

those associations and organizations which have as their specific objective the christianization of contemporary society. The members of these associations, besides profiting personally from their own day to day experience in this field, can also help in the social education of the rising generation by giving it the benefit of the experience they have gained. (*M&M* 233)

Cardijn's gifts as a *writer* were apparent from early in his life. His research articles on working conditions were published in a prestigious new social research journal. Integrating his sociological and theological reflection and training led Cardijn to write a substantial and significant document which

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* 13.



formed the basis for an important encyclical and contribution to Catholic Social Teaching. We now turn to Cardijn the *theologian*.

### 3.5 Cardijn the theologian

In *Monseigneur Cardijn*, best described as a *Festschrift* offered by the Belgian bishops to mark Cardijn's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1962,<sup>92</sup> the great Belgian Church historian Aubert observed that, 'while Cardijn never claimed to be a theologian, it is difficult to exaggerate the ways in which he influenced theological reflection', pointing to Cardijn's important re-evaluation of the role of the laity and insistence on young workers as apostles of their peers.<sup>93</sup> Part of Cardijn's influence was the promotion of the SJA, which is now widely used as the 'pastoral cycle'. Despite his repeated denials of his abilities, Cardijn operated effectively as a theologian. His development and use of Mystical Body ecclesiology enabled him to link the Eucharist with work, and to reconceptualise the lay and clerical roles in the apostolate as complementary.

The ecclesiological image of the Church as the mystical body of Christ was an important theme for Cardijn from the 1930s through to the 1950s. Vos ascribes this to the influence of Pius XI, suggesting that it was 'inspired in particular by Pius XI's writings and speeches, particularly *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931).'<sup>94</sup> However, the use of the image of the Church as Mystical Body of

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<sup>92</sup> KAJ, ed. *Monseigneur Cardijn* (Brussels: KAJ uitgeverij, 1963)

<sup>93</sup> R. Aubert, "De historische betekenis van het werk van Mgr. Cardijn", in *Monseigneur Cardijn*, ed. KAJ (Brussels: KAJ uitgeverij, 1963) 68-9.

<sup>94</sup> Vos, "La JOC", 455.

Christ was a significant element of the theological *Zeitgeist* of interwar Catholic theology. '[D]uring the 1920s and 1930s', as Hahnenberg reminds us, 'Paul's organic image for the Church burst onto the scene'.<sup>95</sup> Bluett's bibliography<sup>96</sup> demonstrated a dramatic growth in studies in this field between 1920 and 1937, moving from 'doctrinal expositions [and e]xegetical studies' to 'historical studies of the doctrine in the Patristic and Medieval periods', and suggesting an exponential growth between 1920 and the mid-1930s which peaked in 1937. In total he counted 180 articles in French, English, and Latin alone.<sup>97</sup> A reviewer of Anger's *Corps Mystique* in 1930<sup>98</sup> suggested that, until then, there had been little available to offer sustained theological reflection on the conception of the Church as the mystical body of Christ, although 'in recent years [it] has been given a very prominent place in devotional and ascetical literature'.<sup>99</sup> This retrieval of Pauline ecclesiology<sup>100</sup> is characteristic of the *ressourcement*, and patristic and medieval authors were also used to recover Mystical Body ecclesiology, as Dulles<sup>101</sup> and Horn<sup>102</sup> agree. By taking up this important motif,

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<sup>95</sup> E.P. Hahnenberg, "The Mystical Body of Christ and Communion Ecclesiology: Historical Parallels", *Irish Theological Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2005) 3.

<sup>96</sup> J. Bluett, "The Mystical Body: A Bibliography, 1890-1940", *Theological Studies* 3 (1942)

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 262, 261.

<sup>98</sup> J. Anger, *La doctrine du corps mystique du Jésus Christ d'après les principes de la théologie de Saint Thomas* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1929); E.T., *The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ according to the Principles of Theology of St Thomas*, trans. J. J. Burke (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd, 1932). Reviewed as P.O'D., "La Doctrine du corps mystique de Jesus Christ. D'après les principes de la théologie de St.Thomas by l'Abbé Joseph Anger", *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 19, no. 74 (1930) 357-359; E.T. reviewed "The Doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. According to the Principles of the Theology of St. Thomas by Abbé Anger; John J. Burke", *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 21, no. 81 (1932) 170-172.

<sup>99</sup> "Review of 'Corps Mystique'" 357.

<sup>100</sup> The use of the image of the church as body of Christ is most present in Rom. 12.4-5; 1Cor. 12.12-27; Eph. 1.22-23; Col. 1.18-24, where it variously expresses both the unity and the diversity of the Christian Church, and the headship of Christ.

<sup>101</sup> Dulles, "Half Century" 421.

<sup>102</sup> Horn, *European Liberation Theology* Ch 2.

Cardijn demonstrated his credentials as a theologian, and justifies our locating him among the *ressourcement* theologians.

The dominant self-understanding (or 'model', to use Dulles' term<sup>103</sup>) of the post-Trent Church was that of the *societas perfecta*. The definition of the seventeenth-century Jesuit Robert Bellarmine<sup>104</sup> had become the *de facto* self-definition of the Church. Bellarmine's definition describes a hierarchical institution 'as visible, he says, as the Kingdom of France or the Republic of Venice.'<sup>105</sup> The emphasis on visible membership is problematic. It reduces Church membership to reception of sacraments, rather than participation in the life of the Spirit. Making the Church analogous to the 'nation state' ignores the working of divine grace and the Spirit through its members. Yet this model held sway until well beyond the mid-twentieth-century shift among theologians to the Church as Mystical Body of Christ – a shift which allows for the working of the Holy Spirit, and provides a focus on the Church as a community. Soujeole has shown how Vatican II made use of both the society and the communion models of the Church. He suggests that the combination has been fruitful for contemporary ecclesiology, particularly that which takes the Trinity as its starting point.<sup>106</sup> Doyle's series of articles on the roots of communion ecclesiology<sup>107</sup> firmly locate this trend within the *ressourcement* tradition. He

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<sup>103</sup> A. Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City NY: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1974)

<sup>104</sup> 'A human society bound together by professing the same Christian faith, and by participation in the same sacraments, under the rule of legitimate pastors, particularly the sole vicar of Christ on earth, the Roman Pontiff.' *De controversiis* 2.3.

<sup>105</sup> Dulles, *Models* 14.

<sup>106</sup> B.-D. de la Soujeole, "L'Église comme société et l'Église comme communion au deuxième concile du Vatican", *Revue théologique* (1991) 254ff.

<sup>107</sup> D.M. Doyle, "Möhler, Schleiermacher, and the roots of communion ecclesiology", *Theological Studies* 57, no. 3 (1996); "Charles Journet, Yves Congar, and the roots of communion

describes communion ecclesiology as an understanding of the Church which 'challenged overly juridical approaches through a retrieval of scriptural and patristic sources' in the pre-conciliar era.<sup>108</sup>

As Dulles observed, early-twentieth-century theology was 'revitalized by a return to biblical and patristic sources',<sup>109</sup> and this was particularly the case for ecclesiology and the move towards a different understanding of the Church. Dulles rightly described the shift away from Bellarmine's juridical definition of the Church as an ecclesiological paradigm shift.<sup>110</sup> Already in the early nineteenth century, such a change had been an important element of the work of Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838), the Tübingen scholar who effected an early return to the patristic sources of Tradition. Boersma considers that 'Möhler intended *Einheit in der Kirche* as a project of *ressourcement*',<sup>111</sup> while for Himes, Möhler 'recast ecclesiology as the study of the nature of a historical community with a supernatural mission and demonstrated ... that such a study intersected with all the doctrinal issues most central to Christian theology.'<sup>112</sup> As Erb points out, although 'by 1827 it no longer represented his developed theological position fully', *Einheit* 'nonetheless deserves careful study both in itself and for its importance as a notable example of the early-nineteenth-

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ecclesiology (The historical development of conciliar theology regarding the mystical and essential within Catholic tradition)", *Theological Studies* 58, no. 3 (1997); "Henri de Lubac and the Roots of Communion Ecclesiology", *Theological Studies* 60, no. 2 (1999).

<sup>108</sup> "Roots" 211.

<sup>109</sup> Dulles, *Models* 47.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. 33; the idea of the 'paradigm shift' was introduced by Thomas S. Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962).

<sup>111</sup> Boersma, *Sacramental Ontology* 43.

<sup>112</sup> M.J. Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation. Johann Adam Möhler and the Beginnings of Modern Ecclesiology* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1977) 2.

century Catholic Awakening'.<sup>113</sup> Despite the fact that *Symbolik* represents Möhler's mature ecclesiology, and that Möhler himself downplayed the importance of *Einheit* almost immediately it had been published, it was *Einheit* that was most influential on *ressourcement* theologians. Chenu and Congar 'rediscovered' Möhler in the mid-1920s.<sup>114</sup> For Möhler's ecclesiology in *Einheit*, the key to the Church is the working of the Spirit in it through the community of believers. 'Through the Spirit they are held and bound together as a whole so that the *one* spirit of believers is the action of the *one* divine Spirit.'<sup>115</sup> The Möhler-Tübingen response to Bellarmine's definition of the Church thus emphasises the working of the Spirit in the Church and the Church as a community of persons, reversing the Tridentine conception of the Church as hierarchical institution.

The promotion of neo-Thomism as the preferred model of Catholic philosophy and theology meant that the Tübingen School fell out of favour.<sup>116</sup> As Congar and Ruddy<sup>117</sup> have observed, the Roman School, which became dominant in the late nineteenth century, was influenced by Tübingen, although in ways it failed to fully understand.<sup>118</sup> By the end of the 'long nineteenth

<sup>113</sup> Erb, 'Introduction', in J.A. Möhler, *Unity in the Church or The Principle of Catholicism Presented in the Spirit of the Church Fathers of the First Three Centuries*, trans. P.C. Erb (Washington DC: Catholic University of American Press, 1996) 3.

<sup>114</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 55.

<sup>115</sup> Möhler, *Unity* #1, p. 83.

<sup>116</sup> G.A. McCool, *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism. The search for a unitary method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989 (1977)) 3-5.

<sup>117</sup> Congar suggested that 'it was through *Symbolik* and his Christological ecclesiology that [Möhler] had such influence on the Roman School, even down to the texts offered at Vatican I.' (Y. Congar, "Johan Adam Möhler", *Theologische Quartalschrift* 150 (1970) 50.); see also C. Ruddy, "Ressourcement and the Enduring Legacy of Post-Tridentine Theology", in *Ressourcement. A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) esp. 192-197.

<sup>118</sup> McCool, *C19 Scholasticism* 4.

century', when the post-World War I settlement left Germans searching for identity and self-definition,<sup>119</sup> the yearning for a stronger Church community led to an initial recovery of Möhler, Tübingen, and Mystical Body theology. Krieg notes the increase in Church-based groups, such as the *Quickborn* youth movement with which Romano Guardini (1885-1968) was so closely associated. Guardini's ecclesiology and work with the Liturgical Movement were influential on the *ressourcement* theologians, through *Vom Geist der Liturgie* and *Vom Sinn der Kirche*.<sup>120</sup> His chaplaincy to *Quickborn* was marked by his 'presiding at masses [*sic*] with scripture readings, hymns, and congregational responses in German, [and his facing] the assembly instead of a wall.'<sup>121</sup> Like Cardijn, he was attentive to the impact of the liturgy on young people, and their need to understand the full import of what was taking place before them. Guardini's ecclesiology, with its focus on community, unity, and the working of the Holy Spirit, is marked by Möhler's. His 1922 *Vom Sinn der Kirche*, argues Krieg, marks 'a recovery of the ancient model of the church as the mystical body of Christ' which 'recognizes that the living Christ stands at the center of the believing community and that the source of unity is the Holy Spirit.'<sup>122</sup> It also marks a recovery of Möhler, in the same way as his contemporary Karl Adam's (1876-1966) ecclesiology in *The Spirit of Catholicism* (1924). Adam drew the concept of

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<sup>119</sup> R.A. Krieg, *Romano Guardini: a precursor of Vatican II* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997) 47f.

<sup>120</sup> One of his earliest works, which remains one of his best known, was *Vom Geist der Liturgie* (1918; ET, R. Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. Ada Lane (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998)

<sup>121</sup> R.A. Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany* (New York: Continuum, 2004) 109.

<sup>122</sup> *Precursor* 58.

the Church as a community (*Gemeinschaft*),<sup>123</sup> the importance of the Spirit in the workings of the Church,<sup>124</sup> and the focus on unity<sup>125</sup> from Möhler.

In a series of articles published in *RSR* in the 1930s,<sup>126</sup> and published together during World War II<sup>127</sup> Henri de Lubac traced the shift in meaning of the expression 'Corpus Mysticum', from the Church in antiquity to the twentieth century. De Lubac suffered, as McPartlan has pointed out, from *Corpus Mysticum's* publication a year after *Mystici Corporis Christi*. He 'inevitably appeared to be out of step with the pope regarding the niceties of the terminology'.<sup>128</sup> The Dutch Jesuit Sebastiaan Tromp (1889-1975), is widely accepted as the principal author of Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*,<sup>129</sup> and Dulles observed that the attempt in the encyclical to 'harmonize ancient Mystical Body ecclesiology with the more juridical approach current in Western Catholicism' at the time was typical of Tromp's writings on the Church as the Mystical Body.<sup>130</sup> De Lubac's *Corpus Mysticum* consists of a painstaking analysis of patristic and medieval texts, which enabled him to demonstrate that in the early Church, the term had been applied to the Eucharistic species. He used the example of the ancient term, 'sharing in the mysteries', to denote the

<sup>123</sup> Especially evident in Ch. 2 of K. Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, trans. Justin McCann OSB (Tacoma WA: Angelico Press, 2012 (1935)) e.g., p. 40, 'The spirit of Christ is realized in the community'; and the description of the Church as 'an organic community' (p. 39).

<sup>124</sup> For example, 'the Church possesses the Spirit of Christ, not as a many of single individuals ... [but] as a community that transcends the individual personalities...' (ibid. 35).

<sup>125</sup> As, for instance, 'If Christ is what the Church confesses him to be ... then it must be his mission to reunite to God mankind as a unity, as a whole, and not this or that individual' (ibid. 36).

<sup>126</sup> *RSR* 29 (1939) 257-302; 429-80; *RSR* 30 (1940), 40-80; 191-226.

<sup>127</sup> H. de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum. The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. G. Simmonds, R. Price, and C. Stevens (London: SCM Press, 2006).

<sup>128</sup> P. McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995) 57.

<sup>129</sup> Pius XII, "Mystici Corporis Christi. Encyclical Letter on the Mystical Body of Christ", (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 29 June 1943)

<sup>130</sup> Dulles, "Half Century" 422.

reception of communion<sup>131</sup> which had expressed the *koinonia* of shared belief.

The term ‘body of Christ’, he noted, described the three-fold ‘historical body, sacramental body, and ecclesial body’.<sup>132</sup> De Lubac showed that the crisis following the early medieval controversies at Corbie and Tours, about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, led to ‘the first two “bodies” [becoming] sealed into one.’<sup>133</sup> By the Scholastic period, the ‘true body of Christ’ referred either to the historical, or to the sacramental body, while the term ‘Mystical Body’ denoted the Church.<sup>134</sup> The shift was complete; and with it a shift towards a Eucharist now perceived as a powerful spiritual force.<sup>135</sup> Ultimately this led to the exclusion of the laity from the ‘body of Christ’, lest they were unworthy of it. De Lubac had already touched on the question of the relationship between Eucharist and Church in his earlier *Catholicism*. Boersma suggests that de Lubac’s insistence that Christianity is a social religion is one of ‘the most obvious and consistent elements of his ecclesiology.’<sup>136</sup> Catholicism, de Lubac noted, was ‘essentially social’,<sup>137</sup> and being a member of the Church meant being part of a body, as well as part of a community.<sup>138</sup> The building up of the Church through the Eucharist – ‘the Eucharist makes the Church’<sup>139</sup> – was also a two-

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<sup>131</sup> de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum* 19.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* 256.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* 95.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* 111.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.* 171ff.

<sup>136</sup> Boersma, *Sacramental Ontology* 244.

<sup>137</sup> H. de Lubac, *Catholicism. A Study of Dogma in relation to the corporate destiny of mankind*, trans. L.C. Sheppard (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1950) 15.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* 76.

<sup>139</sup> *Corpus Mysticum* 88.



way process, for 'the Church [makes] the Eucharist, but the Eucharist also [makes] the Church.'<sup>140</sup>

Unlike de Lubac, the theological output of the Belgian Jesuit Émile Mersch (1890-1940) was almost entirely focused on the Mystical Body of Christ, from his student days until his early death while escaping the German advance into Belgium. Bluett lists 11 articles published in the journal of the Leuven Jesuits, *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, between 1927 and 1938.<sup>141</sup> Mersch also produced two monographs: the 1933 *Le Corps Mystique*<sup>142</sup> and his posthumously published *La Théologie du Corps Mystique*.<sup>143</sup> His articles cover the themes of the Christian life as participation in the body of Christ (*rattaché(e)s au Christ*); the centrality of the Mass and the Eucharist, continued (*prolongées*) in daily life; and the importance of the Eucharist for the lay apostolate and Catholic Action. These themes are also important in Cardijn's theology. It is very probable that there was significant contact between the two men. Following ordination in 1917, Mersch had initially continued his studies in Leuven, before being assigned to teach philosophy at the Jesuit collège in Namur (to which Godinne was close) in 1920, where he also acted as chaplain to

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<sup>140</sup> *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. M. Mason (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986) 133. Mcpartlan (P. McPartlan, "Ressourcement, Vatican II, and Eucharistic Ecclesiology", in *Ressourcement. A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. G. Flynn and P.D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 393) correctly notes that 'produces' is a misleading translation from the French original, 'fait'.

<sup>141</sup> Bluett, "Bibliography" 275-276.

<sup>142</sup> É. Mersch, *Le Corps Mystique du Christ*, 2 vols., Muesum Lessianum - Section thèologique (Paris/Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer/L'Édition universelle, 1933); E.T., *The Whole Christ. The Historical Development of the Doctrine of the Mystical Body in Scripture and Tradition*, trans. J.R. Kelly (Milwaukee WI: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1938)

<sup>143</sup> É. Mersch, *La Théologie du Corps Mystique*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946 (1944)); ET É. Mersch, *The Theology of the Mystical Body*, trans. C. Vollert (St Louis MO: B. Herder Book Co. , 1951)

the JOC, before returning to Leuven in 1935.<sup>144</sup> As Malanowski has observed, 'several ideas and themes expressed by Mersch were ... incorporated into *Lumen Gentium*',<sup>145</sup> no doubt due to the prominence of Belgian theologians such as Thils and Philips in the drafting of the document. This would support the theory that Mersch's writings were well known in Belgium, both during his lifetime and after his death.

Mersch's research on the Church as Mystical Body of Christ began while he was completing his Jesuit noviciate, when he gave a pair of 'lengthy and dense' seminar papers: 'dedicated to the doctrine of the "Mystical Body of Christ", he sought to centre all the major Christian dogmas on this fundamental idea.'<sup>146</sup> In *The Whole Christ*, he traced the historical use of the metaphor of the Mystical Body of Christ from the Scriptures, through the Greek Fathers, and the 'Western Tradition' to the twentieth-century rediscovery of the concept. Already in *The Whole Christ*, Mersch acknowledged the 'rapid progress' of the 'doctrine' of the Mystical Body of Christ. 'Indeed, one of the distinctive notes of present-day theology is a tendency to broaden more and more the scope of our doctrine',<sup>147</sup> which he attributed to 'positive theology', in which 'inspired writers and the Fathers ... are being read more and more for the sake of becoming familiar with their way of thinking and with their concept of

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<sup>144</sup> G.E. Malanowski, "Emile Mersch, SJ. (1890-1940). Un Christocentrisme unifié", *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 112, no. 1 (1990) 44-46; J. Levie, "Introduction", in *La théologie du Corps Mystique*, ed. É. Mersch, Museum Lessianum - Section Théologique (Paris/Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer/L'édition universelle, 1946) p.xiv.

<sup>145</sup> Malanowski, "Christocentrisme" 64.

<sup>146</sup> Levie, "Introduction", p. xiii.

<sup>147</sup> Mersch, *Whole* 556.

Christianity.<sup>148</sup> So for Mersch the ecclesiological doctrine of the Mystical Body flowed from the return to the sources being promoted by Dominicans at Le Saulchoir.

The excerpts from the writings of the Fathers selected by Mersch to demonstrate the long history of the ecclesiology of the Mystical Body bear attention. He notes the importance to the Apostolic Fathers (Ignatius and the author of the *Didache*) of the physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist as a symbol and effecter of unity in the Church.<sup>149</sup> His turn to Athanasius' *Contra Gentes* and *Contra Arianos* notes the importance of two motifs which are taken up and used by Cardijn. First, the concept of Christ as the 'leaven' of the world: 'the whole universe is the mass that he leavens and the body to which he gives life.'<sup>150</sup> For Cardijn, Jocistes were to be a leaven to sanctify the world, and they became this 'leaven' through their participation in Christ in the Eucharist. Central to Athanasius' theology is the concept of deification achieved through the Incarnation. For Athanasius, noted Mersch, the Incarnation is what unites us to God's transcendence, and this is 'a capital element in the doctrine of the Mystical Body.' Mersch continued this appeal by noting that 'Christ is the very vital principle of our divinization. He makes us sons'.<sup>151</sup> For Athanasius, suggested Mersch, it is the Mystical Body of Christ 'that makes our own bodies precious in the eyes of God and of men.'<sup>152</sup> The dignity inherent to every Jociste – the dignity that made every young worker 'worth more than all the gold in the

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* 557.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* 216, 218.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* 265.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* 269-270.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* 276.

world, for they are children of God' – came about, Mersch showed, through participation in Christ at the Eucharist and the deification this accomplishes.

*La Théologie* sought to be 'a study that would endeavor to investigate how and in what measure all dogmas discourse of the whole Christ.'<sup>153</sup> Mersch observed that the 'study of all dogmas and ... doctrines, to show how they all lead eventually to the truth of the whole Christ, would be an endless task. Hence I have confined myself to the chief teachings.'<sup>154</sup> The translator's Introduction points to the similarities between Mersch's final work, and Pius XII's encyclical, which had appeared the year before the posthumous publication, suggesting that Mersch's 'many publications, particularly the present book, constitute a sort of anticipatory commentary on the encyclical.'<sup>155</sup> Mersch's monumental work links the Mystical Body of Christ to the Incarnation: it is 'closely connected with' and 'an effect and a sort of prolongation of the Incarnation.'<sup>156</sup> Throughout, this work demonstrates the shift from the Tridentine model of the Church as hierarchical *societas perfecta*, to a community infused by grace and moved by the Spirit. As Mersch points out, the 'traditional notes' of the Church (that it is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic) are 'exactly what we would expect of the society of grace in which Christ and his characteristics are perpetuated.'<sup>157</sup>

Cardijn was thus able to draw on a range of contemporary and ancient sources as he came to use Mystical Body ecclesiology to build up the JOC and

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<sup>153</sup> Mersch, *Théologie 1* p.iii.

<sup>154</sup> Author's preface, Mersch, *Theology* p.v.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* p.xii.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* 198. Note that the French 'prolongation' is better translated by 'continuation'.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* 493.

the Jocistes. The young worker, he insisted, was to 'develop in himself the sense of faith', a faith which 'must be continually renewed in our minds by an apostolic spiritual life which is not that of a priest or religious, but working class and adapted to working-class life.'<sup>158</sup> He returned frequently to the catastrophe of separating the life of faith from the rest of life. 'Too often', he said, '... we only think about religion on Sundays, fast-days, and feast-days'.<sup>159</sup> His 'primary concern', he wrote in 1963, '[had always been] to put religion back into life, into the place where we live, and the problems we live with.'<sup>160</sup> In common with the *ressourcement* theologians, he viewed faith not as something restricted to the edifice of the parish church, but something which should permeate every aspect of daily life.

Ordinary daily working life cannot be separated, even in its most profane aspects, from *the life of faith* ... religious practices – sacraments, prayer, Mass, communion, liturgy, religious ceremonies – are but the sources, the beginnings, the channels of the divine life which must transform and divinise all aspects and manifestations of working-class life.<sup>161</sup>

Like his contemporary Guardini and the younger *ressourcement* theologians, Cardijn was influenced by the Liturgical Movement, which, following the restoration of Religious life in post-Napoleonic Europe, grew out of monastic

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<sup>158</sup> J. Cardijn, "The Young Worker Faces Life (Godinne Lectures, 1949)", in *Challenge to Action*, ed. Eugene Langdale (Chicago ILL: Fides Publishers, 1955 (1949)) 79-80.

<sup>159</sup> "La Vraie Vie," (Leuven: KADOC, 1931) 2.

<sup>160</sup> "Point du départ", 24.

<sup>161</sup> "L'apostolat 2", 47.

research into liturgy, gathering pace during the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, profoundly influencing the liturgical reforms of Vatican II.<sup>162</sup> At its heart lay a profound desire that the faithful should develop a better understanding of the liturgy, allowing them to participate more fully; and the movement received a real impetus from Pius X's encouragement of both 'greater lay participation in the Mass'<sup>163</sup> and frequent communion.

'How must [young workers] pray, be united to Christ?' asked Cardijn. 'Try to make them understand the Mass. ... Not understanding it they get bored... They must want to go to Mass.'<sup>164</sup> Guardini was bold enough to celebrate Mass facing the congregation at Quickborn. Cardijn's own attempts to explain the Mass to young workers in Laeken were even more revolutionary.

Very often, when I was in parish ministry [1913–1925], I would replace the meetings of the first Jocistes with a live demonstration of the Mass. We would gather in the evening in the church in Laeken, and there, with the young men or young women around the altar, I would show them the sacred vessels, explain the symbols, and carry out in front of them, and with them, the most significant actions of the eucharistic sacrifice. For most of them it was such an extraordinary revelation ... that they were marked by it for life.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> See J. Martos, *Doors to the Sacred. A historical introduction to the sacraments in the Catholic Church* (Liguori MO: Triumph Books, 1991) Ch 8, esp. 254ff.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* 254.

<sup>164</sup> Cardijn, "Missionaries", 28.

<sup>165</sup> "La formation des laïcs à leur apostolat", in *Laïcs en premiers lignes*, ed. Jozef Cardijn (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1963 (1951)) 160. It is difficult now to imagine the scandal that permitting lay people – and lay women – onto the sanctuary would have caused in the pre-WW1 era.

Emphasising the importance of the Eucharist in the life of the young worker, Cardijn described the Mass as ‘the centre and summit of the liturgy’.<sup>166</sup> The central place accorded to the Eucharist in Catholic devotion and piety during the early and mid-twentieth century – attendance at Mass, reception of Communion, and adoration of the reserved Sacrament – left Cardijn ‘haunted by the thought of the thousands of workers who leave their homes before the church is open in the mornings, and only come home in the evening once the church is closed’.<sup>167</sup> For too many, locked churches meant that ‘daily Mass and Holy Communion [were] out of the question because of work’,<sup>168</sup> leaving a lacuna in workers’ spiritual lives. Just as Mersch had suggested the Eucharist and Mass could be continued in daily life, Cardijn showed the Jocistes how the Eucharist could be a part of their daily life even when unable to attend Mass. ‘[T]he Gloria and Sanctus’, he suggested in 1935, ‘are not only sung by those attending Mass, but by Christians who truly sing them by their lives, which become a prayer, a reparation, a thanksgiving.’<sup>169</sup>

Putting faith back into life was not something solely for the individual, for, he noted as de Lubac had before him, Catholic Christianity is a social religion.

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid. 159. Note the similarity to *LG* 11.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 158.

<sup>168</sup> "The Young Worker Faces Life (Godinne Lectures, 1949)", 62-82 (80).

<sup>169</sup> "L'apostolat 1", 33-41 (36); *Le laïcat ouvrier* 4. Note the similarity here with Mersch (É. Mersch, "Prière de chrétiens, prière de membres", *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 58, no. 2 (1931) 99-100 in which he suggests that the breviary continues the prayers of consecration at the Mass.

Even from the religious, or supernatural, perspective, men must live in society and must move forward together, under a visible authority, willed by God, towards their eternal destiny, for that glorification of God, by the blossoming of their being by religious life in community in the heart of the Church.<sup>170</sup>

Like de Lubac, Cardijn emphasised how receiving the Eucharist incorporated the Jociste into the community of Christians working in the world, continuing the Eucharistic sacrifice wherever they found themselves. Building on the insights of both Mersch (*'prolongation'*) and de Lubac, he demanded that 'their life [become] a divine life, in constant union with Christ, so that their own life becomes the life of Christ in them, within that divine community ... which is the Church.'<sup>171</sup>

Using the image of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ enabled Cardijn to insist on the need for Jocistes to be united not only to Christ, through the Eucharist, but also with each other. Their participation in the Eucharist transformed them and those around them, forming 'a working-class elite among the working-class masses ... the Mystical Body of Christ is there.'<sup>172</sup> This, he taught, was 'the only thing which could respond to the fears of separation and division in Catholic Action',<sup>173</sup> ensuring the movement would be 'more full of life, and more fruitful.' Only the Mystical Body, he continued, could bring about

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<sup>170</sup> J. Cardijn, "La personne humaine," (Leuven: KADOC, 1933) 3.

<sup>171</sup> "A YCW of the masses to the scale of the world", in *Challenge to Action* (Chicago: Fides Publishers, 1955 (1945)) 98.

<sup>172</sup> "L'apostolat 2", 50.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.* 51.



a 'true unity ... a dynamic, transformative unity; this alone will bring about a constructive charity'.<sup>174</sup>

As Guardini, Adam, Mersch, and de Lubac, as well as Cardijn knew, a key aspect of Mystical Body ecclesiology is the understanding of 'the Church as the continuation of the Incarnation of the Son of God'.<sup>175</sup> For Cardijn, the Incarnation had not only led to the Eucharist and the Church. The Incarnate Son of God had lived as a worker, showing the way for Jocistes to understanding their work as a collaboration with God, or 'the divine seal of vocation which makes every worker the immediate, personal, irreplaceable co-worker with God in his work of creation and of redemption'.<sup>176</sup> Linking work to the ecclesiology of the Mystical Body reinforced the understanding that every Jociste was to share in the apostolate, as part of the Mystical Body. The Mystical Body 'finds its foremost and full expression and realisation' in 'that apostolate, which confers on humanity all its value, and its supreme and ultimate significance'.<sup>177</sup> Cardijn offered Jocistes the concept of the Church as Mystical Body, formed 'by all humanity, united to Christ',<sup>178</sup> as a foundation to underpin the apostolate they carried out, 'a shared apostolate to all members of the Mystical Body',<sup>179</sup> for 'the whole Mystical Body is to be apostolic'.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid. 52.

<sup>175</sup> P. Riga, "The Ecclesiology of Johann Adam Möhler", *Theological Studies* 22, no. 4 (1961) 563.

<sup>176</sup> J. Cardijn, "Sermon lors des cérémonies de la consécration de la basilique à Lisieux," (Leuven: KADOC, 1937)

<sup>177</sup> "Dimensions de l'apostolat des laïcs", 108.

<sup>178</sup> "La mission terrestre de l'homme et de l'humanité", 70.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>180</sup> "L'apostolat 1", 38.

Despite the importance of ‘prayer, Mass, Communion, sacrifices’,<sup>181</sup>

Cardijn insisted that they would ensure the success of the mission to the working class only when united to action. ‘Faith is tried by action. Faith without work is not enough. You must pray, go to Mass, go to Communion, but that is not enough.’<sup>182</sup> Prayer rooted in action was the only route to success in building a Christian (as opposed to a Communist) workers’ movement. ‘If you want to build a house you can pray; but if you do not build it there will be no house.’<sup>183</sup> For this to be achieved, there was a need for ‘all young workers to be made into the living members of the One Mystical Body of Christ’,<sup>184</sup> formed by the clergy to carry out this unique lay apostolate of building the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.<sup>185</sup>

The ecclesiology of the Mystical Body of Christ was the seedbed in which Cardijn rooted the other aspects of his theology. As we shall see in Chapter 4, the unity which the Mystical Body of Christ enabled permitted a unity in the lay apostolate, through work, which would complement the distinctive apostolate of the hierarchy.

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<sup>181</sup> "Mission", 14.

<sup>182</sup> "Missionaries", 26. Note the similarity here with É. Mersch, "Religion, Christianisme, Catholicisme III - Le Catholicisme", *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 56 (1929), who insisted that Christian action and good works function because Christians are ‘incorporated mystically’ to the Word (p. 215). Note, in relation to the discussion on the Pauline interpretation of ‘work’ in Chapter 1, that Cardijn appears happy to accept ‘work’ as *both* ‘earning one’s daily bread’ *and* those actions required to ensure an effective apostolate.

<sup>183</sup> Cardijn, "Missionary YCW", 34.

<sup>184</sup> "Le problème de la jeunesse ouvrière et sa solution par l'Action Catholique des Jeunes Ouvriers", in *Semaine d'Études Internationales*, ed. JOC (Brussels: Editions jocistes, 1935) 77.

<sup>185</sup> "Réunion des Séminaristes", in *Semaine d'Études Internationales*, ed. JOC (Brussels: Editions Jocistes, 1935) 185.

### *3.6 Joseph Cardijn, Theologian, Writer, and Teacher*

Despite his declarations to the contrary, Cardijn was an effective teacher, writer, and theologian. It was these gifts which made the JOC such a success. As a teacher, he repeatedly emphasised the role of the JOC in teaching young workers. Jocistes were taught their faith, to enable them to be fruitful apostles among their peers. Those who had missed out on education were trained in the '3 Rs', enabling them to contribute to meetings of the movement. Most radical – and most effective – were Cardijn's own educational 'reforms'. Insisting that the movement was 'by, through, and for' young workers made it their own responsibility, while the SJA methodology both valued their experience and allowed them to lead and control the meetings. The 'school for young workers' aimed to develop fully rounded, mature young leaders. As a writer Cardijn was focused on the needs of the most vulnerable workers, whether textile workers suffering from the 'putting-out' system, unskilled dockers finally able to join unions, or workers in developing industrialising nations. Cardijn the theologian used the emerging ecclesiology of the Mystical Body, so important during the inter-war period, as the foundation for his developing theology of work and his theological understanding of the apostolate. It is to Cardijn's theology of work that we now turn.

## CHAPTER 4

### CARDIJN'S THEOLOGY OF WORK

#### *4.1 Introduction*

Cardijn's theological interests, from the Mystical Body ecclesiology which he espoused to his insistence on the complete integration of faith and life, show him to have been close to the *ressourcement* theologians. His work developing the diocesan *Œuvres Sociales* led him to found the JOC, thus putting into action his determination to dedicate his priestly ministry to the workers. In this capacity, he sought to develop a theological account of work, which would be coherent and relevant to the industrial workers with whom he was concerned. It is in his theology of work that Cardijn may be seen most fully as a theologian, and indeed, that his theology may be most closely linked to that of the *ressourcement* movement. His theology of work reflects the concerns of *ressourcement* theology in two ways. First, it corresponds to the demand that theology should leave the 'ivory tower' and be concerned with the realities of contemporary life. Second, the linking of Eucharist and work reflects the *ressourcement* recovery of the sacramental world-view.

We turn first in this chapter to Cardijn's understanding of the vocational aspect of work, in which work is a response to the divine call issued to all human persons (4.2). We next (4.3) examine his understanding of work as participation in the Eucharist. There are two aspects to this unique and all too often ignored contribution to theological discourse on work. Cardijn first drew an analogy between the priestly work of the Eucharist and the action of the 'lay

priest' prolonging the Eucharist at their workbench – their 'altar' in this analogy.

Second, he pointed to the crucial contribution of work to the very action of the priest in the Eucharist – without work, no Mass. In Section 4.4, we pay attention to Cardijn's understanding of work as a collaboration with God in the ongoing act of Creation, which leads us, in Section 4.5 to consider the complementary apostolates of laity and clergy, and, in Section 4.6, Cardijn's criticism of the Worker Priests.

#### *4.2 Divinely called to work*

In Cardijn's view, by virtue of their humanity, all workers bear the especial dignity of being created in the image of God. This is what gives them their 'unique, only, and true destiny, their *raison d'être*, reason for living, reason for working'.<sup>1</sup> From the 1930s onwards, Cardijn was referring repeatedly to the eternal and the temporal destinies of young workers: 'the magnificent divine destiny, which is ... the sole end of [their] temporal and eternal life.'<sup>2</sup> 'How often have I cried out at mass meetings' he observed to the French JOC chaplains in 1945, "You [Jocistes] are not machines, beasts of burden, slaves; you are human beings with an eternal destiny, a divine origin, a divine purpose..."<sup>3</sup> Just as the *ressourcement* scholars, such as Chenu and de Lubac, criticised the neo-scholastic separation of the natural and the supernatural, so Cardijn insisted that, 'this is not a dual destiny, eternal on the one hand, and temporal on the

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<sup>1</sup> "Le problème", 71-2.

<sup>2</sup> "YCW (1938)", 89.

<sup>3</sup> "Scale", 98.

other, with no connections or influence between the two', but rather, 'an eternal destiny which is incarnate in time, starting in time, developing, becoming concrete, becoming complete, and spreading through time', which is rooted in 'an entirely concrete, practical, day-to-day life'.<sup>4</sup> The eternal and temporal destinies, which he often described as the natural and supernatural aspects of human existence, could, and should, no more be separated from one another than the life of faith from daily life. Just as prayer and work were to be entirely integrated with one another, so were the heavenly and earthly realities and destinies to which each person was directed.

The eternal destiny reflects the call of the Trinitarian God to each and every person. 'From all eternity, God, through an infinite gift of his love, has destined every young worker in particular, and all young workers, to participate in his nature, his life, his love, and his divine beatitude.'<sup>5</sup> But the glory of this eternal destiny was set against the harsh reality of the temporal destiny of the 'real conditions of the existence of young workers'.<sup>6</sup> Cardijn argued that, by remaining 'with two eyes in heaven and two feet on the ground',<sup>7</sup> Jocistes could develop an awareness of the terrible problems of this temporal destiny in the context of industrial work – 'working conditions... isolation, abandonment... unemployment ...'<sup>8</sup> The Incarnation, in particular, was held up to young workers as a model of the divine life and love, in which all humanity might participate through faith. It is because 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us [that]

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<sup>4</sup> "Le problème", 72.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 71.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 72.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 73.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 73.

every person's eternal destiny is incarnate in temporal life, where it develops and becomes concrete'.<sup>9</sup> Cardijn's rhetorical gifts were put to full use with this aspect of dogma. He riffed cheerfully on the doctrine of the three persons of the Trinity in order to demonstrate that '[e]ach young working boy, each young working girl, each man, is a *person*, a person like the Three Divine Persons.'<sup>10</sup> This powerful image is not of course intended to fall into heresy, but merely to provide a useful analogy, on which Cardijn could build, for the importance of the work of every young worker, and for their inherent dignity as human persons created in the image of God.

The divine image in which each person is created was linked by Cardijn to the dual divine call to every human being: the call to work, and the call to be an apostle. 'When God calls a person into life, when he makes a person in his image and likeness, he gives them a vocation, an apostolate.'<sup>11</sup> Even though 'not everyone hears [this call] clearly, everyone is called personally by God to this vocation, *everyone without exception*.'<sup>12</sup> Cardijn was adamant that there was a distinctive lay mission and apostolate within the Church, which complemented the mission of the hierarchy. He repeatedly emphasised the unique nature of the vocation to the lay apostolate. It was

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 72.

<sup>10</sup> "The Human Person", in *Challenge to Action* (Chicago: Fides Publishers, 1955 (1950)) 114.

<sup>11</sup> "Dimensions de l'apostolat des laïcs", 104.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* 104.

an irreplaceable vocation which no-one else can fulfil. Neither Pope, Bishop, or Priest. A mission that is received from God, and without that mission... the work of Creation and Redemption cannot be completed.<sup>13</sup>

Only the laity could fulfil this mission, which was theirs and theirs alone. To fulfil it they depended on the hierarchy for doctrinal formation, spiritual guidance, and the Sacraments.

Not the least of the problems facing young workers, Cardijn suggested in 1939, was that most of them had no concept of themselves as 'a spiritual being, created by God in his likeness, to participate in his eternal beatitude.'<sup>14</sup> They were not 'beasts of burden or machines', but rather were gifted with 'intelligence and free will', and therefore required 'reasonable motives for action', which would enable them to act 'because they knew and wanted what was good.'<sup>15</sup> He blamed this lacuna in young workers' self-perception on an 'unconscious, unnamed apostasy, which begins with liberalism. Initially earthly life and its organisation was separated from the idea of God and the authority of God or religion.'<sup>16</sup> This separation had contributed to the divorce between faith and life which Cardijn consistently insisted must be overcome by Jocistes. It was a problem which 'must obsess the Y.C.W. leader. He must grasp it,

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<sup>13</sup> "Mission", 14.

<sup>14</sup> JOC, ed. *'Sauver la Masse.'* 9eme Semaine d'Etudes, Godinne 1939. (Brussels: Editions Jocistes, 1939) 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 3.



believe in it, be overwhelmed by it...'<sup>17</sup> It gave the workers' mission an urgency, which permitted Cardijn to talk about the 'conquest' of the masses for Christ.

From the mid-1930s, Cardijn would demand that the JOC 'reach to the ends of the earth for the conquest of the reign of Christ.'<sup>18</sup> Pope Pius XI had instituted the Feast of Christ the King in 1925,<sup>19</sup> citing the 'sixteenth centenary of the Council of Nicaea', which 'added to the Creed the words "of whose kingdom there shall be no end," thereby affirming the kingly dignity of Christ'<sup>20</sup> as the reason for its institution. In the encyclical promulgating the Feast, the Pope alluded a number of times to the difficulties of living in an increasingly secularised world, in which the Church was sidelined.<sup>21</sup> 'All', he proclaimed, 'whether collectively or individually, are under the dominion of Christ';<sup>22</sup> and when this is recognised, 'society will at last receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace and harmony'.<sup>23</sup> Horn suggests that Pius XI's 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* 'became the most systematic exposition of the features' of the Kingship of Christ.<sup>24</sup>

Cardijn made use of the image of Christ the King as the conqueror to dissuade Jocistes from radical political groups. As European politics became increasingly polarised during the mid-1930s, he made a direct appeal to the

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<sup>17</sup> Cardijn, "Scale", 98.

<sup>18</sup> "Les services jocistes", in *Semaine d'Études internationales*, ed. JOC (Brussels: Editions jocistes, 1935) 229.

<sup>19</sup> Pius XI, "Quas Primas. Encyclical Letter on the Feast of Christ the King, 11 December 1925", (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1925)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 5. Note however that it was the Council of Constantinople in 381 which added the phrase 'whose kingdom shall have no end'. 'The exposition of the 150 Fathers', in N.P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils. Nicaea I-Lateran V*, vol. 1 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990) 24.

<sup>21</sup> Pius XI, "Quas", 1, 4, 18, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>24</sup> Horn, *European Liberation Theology* 58, 57.

Jocistes to focus on their 'eternal destiny'. The image of Christ the King, the conqueror of all, was deployed to dissuade them from joining the radical groups on both sides of the political divide. Aware of 'the threat of war' and 'atheism, nihilism, and totalitarian materialism',<sup>25</sup> Cardijn's language shifted from seeking the transformation of society to aiming for the conquest of society. The JOC was now described as 'a school of the conquest of THEIR SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT, their lay environment...'<sup>26</sup> with the Jociste to be 'a conqueror of his own destiny; and at the same time, someone who gives of himself to conquer others for their eternal and temporal destinies.'<sup>27</sup> A hallmark of the 'conquest of the working world'<sup>28</sup> which the JOC was to spearhead, was the militaristic language Cardijn employed. "'Conquest'", explains Vos, 'had a triple meaning: recruitment, the formation of members, and action in society.'<sup>29</sup> Cardijn was determined to 'win back' for Christ the lost souls of the working classes, and the imagery of 'the conquest of the working-class masses'<sup>30</sup> formed part of his rhetoric during this period. The JOC – 'a movement to conquer young workers' – was described by Cardijn as his 'army of conquerors'.<sup>31</sup> They were to 'conquer their own social milieu' first in order to achieve a 'conquest of truth... a moral conquest... a spiritual conquest... and an apostolic conquest'.<sup>32</sup> The JOC 'established services to help young workers better realise this conquest', which included not just

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<sup>25</sup> J. Cardijn, "Allocution", in *Semaine d'Études Internationales de la JOC*, ed. JOC (Brussels: Editions jocistes, 1935) (64).

<sup>26</sup> "Le problème", 74; Cardijn's emphasis.

<sup>27</sup> "Formation", 157.

<sup>28</sup> Vos, "La JOC", 453.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 453.

<sup>30</sup> Cardijn, *Le laïcat ouvrier* 17.

<sup>31</sup> "Les services jocistes", 229.

<sup>32</sup> *Le laïcat ouvrier* 16.

education and religious formation, but also a savings club, support for the sick and unemployed, and re-training opportunities.<sup>33</sup> The Jociste 'army' was to be ready to fight 'an incessant battle, worse than trench warfare with grenade attacks and asphyxiating gases.'<sup>34</sup> The mid-1930s was a period when war was expected to break out imminently, lending credence to these metaphors of warfare. Cardin was a speaker given to rhetorical flourishes, and it is most likely that he adopted and mimicked the militaristic language being used by Fascist leaders (in particular) across Europe to appeal to Jocistes. Thils noted that the language of conquest, linked to Christ the King, 'raised alarm, and a renewed form of ecclesiastical totalitarianism was feared'.<sup>35</sup> It is noteworthy that when re-editing earlier texts for publication in 1963, Cardijn amended the more militaristic language of 'conquest' to his earlier language of 'transformation'.

The transformation of the workplace into something worthy of the human person was a key theme for Cardijn. Pre-empting John Paul II's move to make the human person the subject of work, rather than its object, Cardijn repeatedly stressed the inherent dignity of all workers, created in the image of God. His catch-phrase summed up this theological position as, 'worth more than all the gold in the world, for they are the children of God'. The dignity of each human person, derived from their divine creation in the image of God, was what raised all work to the same level of dignity, meaning that all work was of equal value in the eyes of God. Cardijn regarded all work as of value, insisting it be

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<sup>33</sup> "Les services jocistes", 230-2.

<sup>34</sup> *Le laïcat ouvrier* 16.

<sup>35</sup> G. Thils, "Le laïcat dans l'Eglise et le monde: aspects théologiques", in *Cardijn, Een Mens, Een Beweging/Cardijn, Un Homme, Un Mouvement. Handelingen van het colloquium/Actes du colloque, Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, 18-19.11.1982* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers/KADOC, 1983) 73. Note, too, that Chenu profoundly disagreed with the use of the 'conquest' vocabulary.

valued. A corollary of this was that the working environment needed to match the dignity of workers who bear the image of God. Cardijn's attention to the injustices of the workplace, combined with the educational opportunities offered by the JOC, enabled Jocistes to become workplace advocates for their peers and themselves, demanding workplaces worthy of humanity in the image of God. The advocacy was worked out in Jociste campaigns. These used research carried out at the local level to push for improved working conditions, such as the 1938-1939 campaign in Belgium on the deleterious effects of shift work.<sup>36</sup> Reports of shift workers too exhausted to eat, the detrimental effects on family life, and young women having to return from work late at night, led the JOCF to demand no shift work for women under 17, a minimum hours' break mid-shift, and no work between 8pm and 7am. During the same period, the JOC requested that employers include a 'youth delegate' on their employees' consultative bodies, and that young workers be given 3 weeks' annual leave, to compensate for unhealthy working conditions.<sup>37</sup>

The question of 'degrading' or 'unvalued' work is a thorny issue (at best) in theological discourse on work. As we shall see in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, it is a problem which no contemporary theologian writing on work has resolved satisfactorily. The trap is that 'drudgery divine' is regarded as acceptable if the worker transforms it by 'offering it to God'. Cardijn's response to this was a resounding 'No!'. It was not, he argued, the work which should be transformed, but rather society, and the conditions in which the work is carried out. Only

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<sup>36</sup> D. Mesnard, "Nouvelles campagnes jocistes", *La Vie Intellectuelle* 63/1 (1939) 34-36.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 36-38.

when the worker – the subject of the work – is truly valued as a ‘son or daughter of God’, will the task cease to be degrading. It is, in other words, not the work itself, but how we treat the worker, that denotes whether work is degrading or not. Cardijn therefore cannot be accused of colluding with employers to oppress workers.

The ‘Three Truths’, the theoretical underpinning for Cardijn’s ‘See-Judge-Act’ methodology, exemplify his understanding of the problem. They illustrate the chasm between the divine plan for all humanity – its ‘eternal destiny’ – and the often atrocious daily realities of the earthly existence of many young workers. Cardijn observed how the struggles of workers’ temporal existence often obscured their destiny to be ‘children of God’, collaborating through their work with both the Divine Creator and the Church hierarchy. His pastoral experience as a curate in the working-class enclaves of Laeken, combined with his personal observation and childhood experience of the dichotomy between the hope expressed through the life of faith, and the harsh daily reality of working-class life, led him to describe the ‘Three Truths’ of the life of young workers in inter-war Europe:

*Three Fundamental Truths* overshadow and shed light upon the problems of young workers...

1. *A truth of faith.* The eternal and temporal destiny of every young worker in particular, and of all young workers in general.

2. *A truth of experience.* The blatant contradiction which exists between the real situation of young workers, and this eternal and temporal destiny.
3. *A truth of pastoral practice or method.* The necessity of a Catholic organisation of young workers with the conquest of their eternal and temporal destiny in mind.<sup>38</sup>

Birck read the 'Three Truths' as 'the dialectic of the Christian life'.<sup>39</sup> According to this hermeneutic – no doubt influenced by Latin American Liberation Theology – Cardijn would have appropriated Hegelian/Marxist dialectic. The chasm between the truth of faith and the truth of experience was interpreted by Birck as the 'absolute contradiction' between the 'Trinitarian thesis' and the 'historical anti-thesis [of reality]', which are resolved by the synthesis of the pastoral method.<sup>40</sup> The SJA, whether carried out locally within the group, or as part of a national or regional campaign such as those in Belgium in 1938-1939, enabled Jocistes to improve their temporal destiny – and the destiny of their peers – making it more worthy of the eternal destiny for which they had been created.

#### *4.3 Cardijn's theology of work: your workbench is your altar*

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<sup>38</sup> Cardijn, "Le problème", 71; Cardijn's emphasis.

<sup>39</sup> Birck, "Um mundo" 52ff.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 54-55.

In his contribution to the Belgian bishops' *Festschrift* for Cardijn, Aubert pointed to the importance, for Cardijn, of the connection between theology and pastoral work. Indeed, he suggested, all Cardijn's theology was pastorally based, and had significant pastoral implications. 'For instance', he asked, 'who, before Cardijn, really talked about a theology of work?'<sup>41</sup> Of course it might be said that even Cardijn did not talk overtly about a theology of work. As usual, his theological discourse is heavily disguised in pastoral praxis. This thesis identifies three principal strands in Cardijn's theology. First, his ecclesiological understanding of the Church as the mystical body of Christ. Second, his theology of the Eucharist. Third, his theology of work, which grew from his ecclesiology and Eucharistic theology, combined with his understanding of and emphasis on the daily reality of the working life. All three strands emphasised the importance of human dignity and the role of work in the ongoing divine creation, and contributed to his reconception of the lay apostolate.

Cardijn's theology of work is rooted in the Eucharist.<sup>42</sup> Supported by his ecclesiology of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ – itself using a Eucharistic metaphor to promote an understanding of the Church in which all have a role to play – he emphasised the importance of Mass in the life of the young workers who were to be the Church's new apostles. Cardijn also stressed the connection between manual work and the Mass, since workers contribute to the very making of the Eucharist. Workers collaborate with God through and

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<sup>41</sup> Aubert, "Betekenis", 68-9.

<sup>42</sup> Parts of this research were presented as a short paper at the Theology Symposium of the International Eucharistic Congress 2012, published in P. Kelly, "Your workbench is your altar", in *Proceedings of the International Eucharistic Congress Theology Symposium*, ed. IEC (Dublin: Veritas, 2013)

in their work, in continuing the divine Creation and working towards the Redemption. The way in which Cardijn constructed his theological understanding of work supported his insistence on the 'apostolate of like to like' and the emphasis on the complementary roles of clergy and laity in the Church's mission. The Eucharist was central to the life of prayer, of such importance for apostles; its liturgical celebration required products which resulted from (often hard, manual) work; and it outflowed into the world of work, enabling work to be joined to the Eucharist, as a way for workers to participate in and complement the priestly sacrifice of the altar. Cardijn's linking of work to the Eucharist alludes indirectly (never directly in his writings) to the earliest Christian usage of *leitourgia* as the 'work of the *laos*'.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, Cardijn was concerned that religious faith should be more than a private opinion characterised by weekly and holy-day church attendance. In any case, even this bare minimum could be difficult for factory workers. It is noteworthy that Cardijn talks about the Eucharist and prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, but never mentions Novenas – perhaps the most popular parish devotion of the day – presumably because they required church attendance for nine successive days. Balenciaga has noted that the devotional life of the JOC in Valladolid during its early years was typical of the period, including at least weekly Mass, Marian devotions, and devotions to the Sacred Heart; again there is no mention of novenas.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Balenciaga, "Contribution" 425.



With the *ressourcement* theologians, Cardijn emphasised the need for faith to be totally integrated into daily life. It could not be an optional add-on, which would neither influence the person, nor transform their life.

We pray, go to Mass, receive communion; but this is not linked to *our lives* – working life, family life, our thoughts, our love. Thus for most people religious faith is no more than a collection of external gestures. Their faith is not a proper faith. *Religious faith is a life*, the life of our mind, our will, the life of the *whole* of our personalities and what is deepest within us.<sup>44</sup>

The Eucharist was, and is, the culmination of Catholic liturgical prayer. As a curate, Cardijn felt that it was vital for the young workers in the parish *Œuvres* to be able to see and understand the Mass, to encourage their attendance. His 'acting out' of the Eucharist in front of them during their evening meetings is an oft-neglected aspect of the liturgical developments which presaged *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. This eagerness to share the sacred mysteries with the laity was as revolutionary as the *Quickborn* 'dialogue Masses' celebrated by Guardini. A young Jociste noted the importance of Cardijn's teaching strategy. Jocistes, he observed, should not be pushed into over-zealous religious practice, but rather, taught to understand the 'importance and beauty of religion', and the reason for attending Mass and receiving communion. Only then, he declared, will the Jociste 'leave the house still fasting, in order to receive

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<sup>44</sup> Cardijn, "La Vraie Vie," 2. Cardijn's emphasis.

Communion at the church next door to the factory, or work through the night without eating, so that he can receive Christ in the Eucharist in the morning.’<sup>45</sup>

The interdependence of Eucharist and Mystical Body ecclesiology once again enabled Cardijn to adopt as his own a hallmark of *ressourcement* theology, the close linking and interdependence of Eucharist and Church. Boersma’s comments about the connection made by de Lubac may equally be applied to Cardijn:

De Lubac emphasized the reciprocal relationship between Eucharist and Church. On the one hand, the Eucharist made the Church: the Eucharistic body had for its aim the realization of the communion of the ecclesial body. On the other hand, the Church also made the Eucharist in the sense that clergy were required to produce the Eucharist.<sup>46</sup>

The centrality of the Eucharist, and its connection to the nature of the Church itself, placed it at the very heart of the apostolate. This ‘life of union with Christ, God, and the Church’<sup>47</sup> was so necessary for apostles, but also required a life of prayer rooted in the Eucharist. ‘Each morning, the young worker should be able to offer to his Creator and Redeemer, not the lives of others, but his own life ... the offering that is worth most in the sight of God.’<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> G. Sauvage, "La JOC conquérante", *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 61 (1934) 402.

<sup>46</sup> Boersma, *Sacramental Ontology* 34.

<sup>47</sup> Cardijn, "Formation", 162.

<sup>48</sup> "Ite, Missa Est", in *The Church and the Young Worker* (London: Young Worker Publications, 1948 (1933)) 20.

While he insisted he knew ‘thousands’ of young workers for whom ‘Sunday Mass is a communion’, and many more who ‘never miss coming to Mass in the early morning so that they can take Christ’ to work,<sup>49</sup> Cardijn also recognised that daily Mass attendance was particularly difficult for factory workers, who often experienced long working days, lengthy commutes, and shift working. Despite Sauvage’s enthusiasm, Cardijn was well aware too that the Eucharistic fast, even after it had been reduced to three hours, could make Communion impractical for those on shift work.<sup>50</sup> He noted that this posed a pastoral problem which the Church needed to take seriously.<sup>51</sup>

Even if Jocistes and young workers were unable to attend daily Mass and receive the Eucharist, they could nonetheless, he suggested, ensure that their work helped them to continue (*prolonger*) the weekly Sunday Mass at their place of work. ‘Mass is a point of contact to be able to bring Christ with one into the workplace and to be able to make one’s whole day or week a Mass.’<sup>52</sup> By continuing the Eucharist, so central to the life of prayer and the apostolate, in this way at work, each worker was able ‘to bring Christ to their friends at work’.<sup>53</sup> Thus could the whole of life, ‘like the Host, be consecrated to God’.<sup>54</sup> ‘Taking the Eucharist to work’ was a vital step for Cardijn in the transformation of the worker, whose work was now ‘transformed into the work of Christ himself, in a way that each can repeat Paul’s words: It is not I who work, but

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<sup>49</sup> "Lisieux," 4.

<sup>50</sup> "La formation des laïcs à leur apostolat", 158-159.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 159.

<sup>52</sup> "La Vraie Vie," 19.

<sup>53</sup> "Lisieux," 4.

<sup>54</sup> "Ite, Missa Est", 22. See also "Scale", 98: ‘Their life [is to become] a divine life, in constant union with Christ, so that their own life becomes the life of Christ in them, within that divine community ... which is the Church.’

Christ who works in me'.<sup>55</sup> The workplace could also be transformed by the Eucharist, and could be analogously described as a 'temple and shrine'.<sup>56</sup> This too raised up the value and dignity of the worker, and suggested their work was as precious as the work of the priest at the altar. Young workers now heard their work described as 'sacred' and a 'sacrifice'.

For the young worker, out of necessity as well as apostolic need, the workplace became his church and altar. 'He cannot handle his rosary or his missal while he is in the factory; he has tools in his hands and work to do. [He] must change his work into a prayer, a prolonged Mass, united to the priest at the altar.'<sup>57</sup> By raising work to the status of the Eucharistic sacrifice, Cardijn encouraged Jocistes in their apostolate. By describing their workbenches as altars, they were enabled to bring Christ and thus his Church into their places of work. 'It is the life of faith which must become more obvious; you are truly lay priests, you are Christ in the workplace; all your working life becomes a life of faith.'<sup>58</sup> The link between the Eucharist and the workplace was key to the development of a movement of lay apostles, reinforcing both their religious faith, and their role in the Church.

As both sacrament and sacrifice, for Cardijn the Eucharist was absolutely transformative of life, and this included working life. In 1937, during the French Eucharistic Congress, Cardijn was invited to preach at the solemn blessing of the new basilica at Lisieux (consecrated in 1951), in the presence of the Papal

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<sup>55</sup> "Lisieux," 1.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 1.

<sup>57</sup> "The Young Worker Faces Life (Godinne Lectures, 1949)", 80.

<sup>58</sup> "La Vraie Vie," 20. Note that 'lay' is added as a manual addendum to the typed text.

Legate, Cardinal Pacelli.<sup>59</sup> He took the opportunity to explain to the congregation how 'taking the Eucharist to work' might transform 'each worker into a lay-priest who can make his work, his workbench... an altar, united with priests at the altars of their churches...'<sup>60</sup> The use of the term 'lay-priests', both here and in 'La Vraie Vie', is particularly arresting. Cardijn's language is both important and deliberate. He was, as we have already seen, a master of the rhetorical flourish, which was often deployed with scant regard for theological propriety. By describing young workers as 'lay priests', Cardijn was not suggesting that Jocistes might confect the Eucharistic sacrifice themselves. On the contrary, as we shall see below, Cardijn was adamant that the priest's role was to support the lay apostolate by providing the laity with the Sacraments. But in establishing an analogy between often despised heavy, manual labour, and the priest's work of the altar, Cardijn was reinforcing the ecclesiology of the Mystical Body, and putting the Eucharist back at the heart of the life of prayer, which underpinned the apostolic work of the Jocistes.

There is a marked similarity between Cardijn's extension of the Eucharist to the workplace and Teilhard de Chardin's 'The Mass on the World'. 'Mass' was an extensively re-worked version of an earlier meditation, 'The Priest', which had been written on active service in July 1918 and circulated among friends and colleagues.<sup>61</sup> Written 'in the steppes of Asia' when its author had 'neither bread, nor wine, nor altar', 'Mass' described how Teilhard would 'make the

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<sup>59</sup> The invitation confirms that Cardijn, and the JOC, were highly regarded by this point, and gives the lie to his claim to be 'no theologian'.

<sup>60</sup> Cardijn, "Lisieux," 4.

<sup>61</sup> See T.M. King, *Teilhard's Mass. Approaches to The Mass on the World* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist, 2005) 11-15.

whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world.<sup>62</sup> King notes that Teilhard makes an offering of the hopes and sorrows of all those close to him, describing his 'soul' as his paten and chalice.<sup>63</sup> Of course the similarity is limited. Teilhard's Eucharistic theology, and indeed his theology in general, are closely connected to his scientific understanding of evolution and entropy. Cardijn simply viewed the lay workplace as a legitimate extension of the clerical 'workplace' of the altar, where the priest carries out the work 'proper' to his calling – the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Yet extending the sacrifice in this way, he noted,

enables every worker to come and place the host of his work on the paten. The Eucharist-sacrifice transforms each worker into a lay priest who can make his work, his work-bench, his stonework, or his scaffolding tower an altar, united by him with the priests at the altars of their church.<sup>64</sup>

Writing in the *Notes de pastorale jociste* in 1935, he used this image as a way of clarifying his revolutionary idea that the lay apostolate was complementary to that of the priest. Thus, he explained,

Mass offered on the altar is continued on all those altars, which are the work-table, the joiner's workbench, the typist's desk, the sewing machine, the lathe.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 145.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 99.

<sup>64</sup> Cardijn, "Lisieux," 3.

And the Gloria and Sanctus are not only sung by those attending Mass, but the whole Christian people truly sing it by their lives, which become a prayer...<sup>65</sup>

Later that year, meeting JOC chaplains at the International Study week, he told them that 'the JOC was full of saints, their workbench their altar...'<sup>66</sup> In a 1951 address to seminarians, he again turned to the importance of the Mass. Because 'all apostolate *derives from and converges on Christ's sacrifice*'<sup>67</sup> all life had, in some sense, to continue this sacrifice. And thus, he suggested, the final words of the Mass, *Ite, missa est*, should be interpreted as follows:

*"Ite, missa est."* When Mass has ended, the lay person should know it is this very sacrifice of redemption which pushes them to action in the world: "Go now, lay people, go to your mission, to your work, which is the ongoing sacrifice of Christ! Your machine, your workbench is the altar."<sup>68</sup>

For Cardijn, the Eucharist was truly the source and summit of the Christian life. The centrality of the Eucharist, supported by and supporting the ecclesiology of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, once again links him closely to *ressourcement* theologians such as de Lubac. Yet there is a risk associated with locating the Eucharist at the heart of theology, of which both Cardijn and de Lubac (and others) appear to have been unaware, although Cardijn had alluded to it in 1951. That is, that those who are either unable to

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<sup>65</sup> "L'apostolat 1", 36.

<sup>66</sup> "Formation", 159.

<sup>67</sup> "La formation des laïcs à leur apostolat", 159.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 160.

attend Mass, or, when attending, are excluded from receiving Communion, may find it difficult to relate to the concept of 'making the workbench their altar' and 'taking the Eucharist to work'.

Nonetheless, the Eucharist remained a central strand of Cardijn's theology. It formed the link between his ecclesiological understanding of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, in which all have a role to play, and his theological narrative on work. Underpinning all of Cardijn's theology were two convictions. First, that 'each young worker is worth more than all the gold in the world, for they are children of God'. Second, that 'the Eucharist gives human work the providential place that God has granted it in his plan for the world and in the economy of salvation.'<sup>69</sup> It is to the contribution of work to the celebration of the Eucharist that we now turn.

#### *4.4 Without work, no Mass*

Cardijn used the analogy of 'lay-priests' to describe how the faithful might make their work into a continuous Eucharist. At the same time, he reminded JOC members and chaplains alike, the fact that the Eucharist could be celebrated at all was entirely dependent upon the work of the laity. 'Without work', he preached in Lisieux in 1937, 'there is no host, no bread, no sacrifice; without work, there is no altar, no basilica.'<sup>70</sup> There would be no basilica to be solemnly blessed, he reminded the congregation, without manual labour. The theme was

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<sup>69</sup> "Lisieux,"

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 3.



not new to Lisieux. Cardijn had been developing it since the early 1930s and he continued using it until well into the 1950s. Already in 1934, he observed that the Eucharist 'gives human work [its] providential place' and relied upon human work to happen at all, for '[w]ithout work there is no wealth, no culture, no religion, no Church, no Pope, no places of worship, no altars, no host, no wine, no Mass, no priest.'<sup>71</sup>

Placing work centre-stage at the Eucharist fulfilled a dual function. First, it reinforced the dignity of the Jocistes, for their work, too, contributed to the Eucharist. The Eucharist was not simply 'confectured' by the priest at the altar, but was truly the work of the whole Church. Cardijn's focus on work contributing to the Eucharist emphasised the truth of de Lubac's words that 'the Eucharist makes the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist'.<sup>72</sup> Second, as the Eucharist is the liturgical memorial of the ongoing work of creation and redemption, in which humanity also participates, it acted as a reminder that work was not simply a part of 'human suffering', to be endured, but a God-given gift, which Jocistes were to make worthy of human dignity. In terms of the Tradition, this emphasis on the mundane origins of even the most sacred recalls both St Benedict's instruction that the tools of the monastic workshop be treated 'as vessels of the altar',<sup>73</sup> and the prayer over the gifts recited at every

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<sup>71</sup> "Le travail," (Leuven: KADOC, 1934) 9. See also "L'apostolat 1", 34: 'Without work there is no host, no wine, no paten, no chalice, no altar, no church, no religion'; "Missionary YCW", 33: 'Without work there is no host, not a drop of wine, no altar stone, no civilisation, no world possible'; "Mission", 16: 'Without work there is no Host, not a single drop of wine to consecrate, no altar stone, no vestments, no Church.'

<sup>72</sup> de Lubac, *Splendor*

<sup>73</sup> *RSB* 31.10; cf 32.2.

Mass, where the bread and wine are recognised as the ‘fruit of the earth/vine and work of human hands’.

The link between work or labour, and the material goods required for a church and for the Eucharist may seem obvious, yet Cardijn is unique among theologians in explicitly drawing out this connection. For most theologians of work, the focus remains on ministry and on the preaching and teaching of the Word, not the (no less skilled) labour required to construct and maintain those buildings in which the Word is heard, taught, and preached. Even John Paul II, the only modern pope to have experienced hard manual labour, who gave serious consideration to the question of work (in *Laborem Exercens*, *Centesimus Annos*, and *Sollicitudine Rei Socialis*, among other texts), did not explicitly make the link between ‘the work of human hands’ and the sacrifice of the altar. The only precedent appears to be the *Rule of St Benedict*, which, as noted above, requires that the tools for labour are to be treated with the same respect as vessels of the altar.

The link between Eucharist and work underpins Cardijn’s theological approach to work. First, workers ‘take the Eucharist to work’. Their work and their workplaces are sanctified by this continuation of the Eucharist. Cardijn drew a powerful analogy between the priestly sacrifice of the altar and the daily sacrifice ‘offered’ by the worker – their work, offered on the ‘altar’ of their workstation. We have seen how this analogy enabled him to refer to the Jocistes as ‘lay-priests’. There is also a link to Teilhard’s ‘Mass on the World’. This should not surprise us, for as we saw in Chapter 3, there were close links between the Jesuits and the young JOC in Belgium. There were a number of

Jesuit JOC chaplains, including Émile Mersch, and the annual study weeks were held at Godinne, the Jesuit college outside Namur.

Second, it is work itself which ensures that the priest's sacrifice at the altar – the Eucharist itself – can take place. For without work, there is nothing to offer and no means of making the offering. This is an important aspect of Cardijn's approach to work. It is one which is paradoxically both recalled at every Mass, when the offerings are described as the 'work of human hands', and ignored by most theological discourse on work.

The Eucharist, as the work of Redemption, was central to Cardijn's theological understanding of work. Yet he also viewed work as growing out of the theological doctrine of Creation. We now turn to examine how Cardijn understood and described human work in relation to Creation.

#### *4.5 Work as collaboration with God*

'For the Christian', Cardijn observed, 'work is a supernatural collaboration with God, since the work of the baptised is a divine work.'<sup>74</sup> This complex sentence requires some unpicking. First, we note that Cardijn perceives and describes Creation as an ongoing divine activity. This is no work of a 'divine watchmaker', but the action of a God who created and continues to be involved in his creation. Humanity is invited to participate in this divine activity. The human person is called through baptism to participate in the divine life. In Cardijn's description, this participation occurs through work – work, which, we have

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<sup>74</sup> Cardijn, "Le travail," 9.

seen, can contribute to redemption, for 'lay' human work is analogous to the 'priestly' work of the altar.

There is however a question about Cardijn's use of the term supernatural. Does this betray a neo-Thomist – rather than a *ressourcement* or *nouvelle théologie* – sensibility to grace, nature, and supernature? The problem with neo-Thomism, for theologians such as de Lubac and Chenu, was that, rather than returning to the writings of Thomas, it relied upon his interpretation by 'the commentators', and especially those of the sixteenth century. As Boersma explains, by questioning whether every human person enjoyed the '*desiderium naturale* for supernatural communion in the Trinitarian life',<sup>75</sup> the commentators, and their nineteenth- and twentieth-century disciples, ended up imposing a rift between nature and supernature. The fact that this move was made to try to protect the wonderful gratuitousness of divine grace was no excuse. The result was that, theologically speaking, nature could perfectly well exist without supernature, thus supporting, as many have noted, the development of the secular mind-set.

Cardijn may indeed be guilty of reinforcing, or at least repeating, just such a chasm. Yet his overriding concern, as we have seen, was to bridge this very gap, between faith and life, in the lives of young workers. Their lives should be an example of the total integration of faith and daily life. Here Cardijn mirrored *ressourcement* theologians such as Chenu and de Lubac. Work was rooted in the life of faith, expressed through the liturgy, and particularly through the Eucharistic sacrifice.

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<sup>75</sup> Boersma, *Heavenly* 65.

Faith is God speaking in us, wishing in us, acting in us; it is *our collaboration with God*, it is *our communication with God*. Faith is each one of you thinking with Christ, willing with Christ, speaking by Christ, acting by him, *until you become true Christs yourselves* for your work-mates and for our society. This is what faith is: the human person gradually uniting himself to God, communicating with God, loving God, being a collaborator of God.<sup>76</sup>

Young workers, he clarified, 'are not machines, or animals, or slaves', but rather 'God's children, collaborators, heirs', which gives them their 'unique, only, and true destiny, their *raison d'être*, reason for living, reason for working'.<sup>77</sup> It was important to understand that work was 'no punishment, curse, slavery', but rather, 'a collaboration with the Creator and Redeemer. At his work, the worker is the primary minister, God's immediate and intimate collaborator.'<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Jocistes were nothing less than 'collaborators with the Creator and the Redeemer'.<sup>79</sup> Thus was the analogy of the young worker as the priest continued. These 'lay-priests' were to continue or prolong the Eucharist in their places of work. But this was no mere passive activity of attending Mass and 'taking it to work'. More than this, Jocistes were to be God's 'primary ministers'. By making themselves the offering, they were not simply continuing, but re-making the

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<sup>76</sup> Cardijn, "La Vraie Vie," 7.

<sup>77</sup> "Le problème", 71-2. This was a much-repeated theme during 1935. See too, "L'apostolat 2", 46-7: workers are 'not machines, or animals, or slaves, but God's children, collaborators, heirs'; "Allocution", 63: 'Not slaves, not beasts of burden, not machines, but God's children, collaborators, and heirs!'; "Formation", 153, 'They are not machines, nor beasts of burden, but God's children, collaborators, and heirs.'

<sup>78</sup> "L'apostolat 2", 46.

<sup>79</sup> "Formation", 153.

priestly sacrifice on the altars of their own workbenches. In this way, 'each worker [became] the immediate, personal, and irreplaceable collaborator of God in the work of creation and the work of Redemption.'<sup>80</sup>

In a duplicated pamphlet from November 1951, Cardijn developed this idea more fully. Beginning with the account of creation in Genesis 1, with its emphasis on working the earth, he suggested that human work is a 'divine mandate', a 'mission given by God to humanity', from which flows the 'essential dignity of human nature'.<sup>81</sup> The next step took this further still. In order for God's plan for creation to come to fruition, human work, in all its manifestations – 'science, technology, the economy, education, politics'<sup>82</sup> – was required, alongside the supernatural gift of grace, mediated through the sacraments, liturgy, and the hierarchy. Again we note that Cardijn's understanding of grace tends towards that of the Neo-Thomists rather than the *ressourcement* scholars. However, Cardijn was no Pelagian. This human mission of work was utterly dependent on God, before any individual person took on the responsibility which this understanding of work entailed.<sup>83</sup> Of course, such a view of work could not remove 'the battles, temptations, difficulties, burdens' of working (and, especially, working-class) life, which could often, he acknowledged, be 'a way of the Cross'.<sup>84</sup> But at the same time, workers, in their working life, 'continued the mission of Christ the Worker', for 'their working-

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<sup>80</sup> "Lisieux," 1.

<sup>81</sup> "La mission terrestre de l'homme et de l'humanité", 68-9.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 71.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 72-3.

<sup>84</sup> "L'apostolat 2", 47-8.

class life was necessary for the redemption of the world.’<sup>85</sup> By modelling himself on the divine Worker – both the Word-Redeemer, and the Creator – the worker participated in, and indeed contributed to completing, the divine work of Creation and Redemption:

Who is the worker *par excellence*? Who is the one who is the source and the end of all work? Who is the one who is the architect, agent, rule, law, and supreme aim of work? God is the Worker and Labourer *par excellence*. ...

Through his work man is a labourer with God, through God, in God. The worker is a creator, an image of the infinite power and love [of God]. He completes the work of Creation and Redemption.<sup>86</sup>

How could Cardijn think it was appropriate to compare human work – and especially the factory work of most Jocistes – to the divine work of creation? As Banks shows, the Bible uses creative human activity to describe the activity of the ‘Worker *par excellence*’, whether in the making of things (metal, pots, garments, tents, buildings) or the ‘husbanding’ of things (gardens, orchards, crops, animals).<sup>87</sup> Life on the production line in interwar Europe, by contrast, required little creative thought. The lack of creativity in many jobs poses a problem for many theologians of work, who acknowledge the importance of work as participation or collaboration in the ongoing work of divine creation, but are then pulled up short by the creative lacuna of much

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 48.

<sup>86</sup> "Le travail," 6.

<sup>87</sup> R. Banks, *God the Worker* (Sutherland NSW: Albatross Books Pty Ltd, 1992)

work in the industrialised and post-industrial world. But for Cardijn, work was about more than simply the task in hand. The Jociste whose job was to hammer rivets into a sheet of metal might not have been able to plan creatively where and how to place the rivets. Yet if he was properly collaborating with God in his work, as Jocistes were called to do, he would use his creativity to view his place on the production line as his 'altar', the rivets, hammer, and sheet of metal as his 'chalice and paten', in order to prolong the Eucharist at work. He would be constantly looking for opportunities to evangelise his peers, by his demeanour in the workplace, his behaviour towards them, and his attitude to his work, rather than by his promotion of the Church's doctrine. As Sauvage noted, 'Simply by being chaste, conscientious, fair, and devoted, the Jociste is an apostle.'<sup>88</sup> Neither should we assume that Cardijn would permit making the workplace an altar to somehow 'glorify' work which he knew was often a Calvary. Jocistes were to be aware of their human dignity, created in the image of God, and to seek to make the workplace worthy of such divine icons.

In short, it was through their taking on of a 'priestly' role at work – making their workplace an altar on which they too might offer sacrifice, and evangelising their peers (and thus sharing in the hierarchy's mission of the apostolate) that workers could truly become collaborators with God.

#### *4.6 The complementary apostolates*

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<sup>88</sup> Sauvage, "Conquerante" 396.



The theology of the Eucharist and the ecclesiology of the Mystical Body enabled Cardijn to put work centre-stage in his theological discourse. Work thus became a blessing, rather than a curse, despite the often terrible working conditions Jocistes endured. It fulfilled a sacramental, and thus a redemptive role, by continuing the Eucharist. While the task itself may have been repetitive, the way it was re-appropriated to bring about evangelisation enabled Jocistes to participate in the divine work of creation.

It was in the workplace that they most fully played their role in the lay apostolate, which Cardijn described as '**essential** to the Church, and belonging to the very essence of the Church.'<sup>89</sup> Not only essential: 'we can never say this often enough: the lay apostolate is irreplaceable.'<sup>90</sup> Cardijn's concept of the lay apostolate lay at the heart of his insistence that a movement for young workers, distinct from the *ACJB*, was required. The apostolate to young workers had to be carried out by young workers, albeit guided and formed by the clergy. This revolutionary suggestion contradicted contemporary social conventions of class leadership, not only with regard to the *ACJB*, but also at a time when the majority of clergy and Religious came from the middle classes. But it also went against the underlying theological conventions of the nature of the apostolate, and the role (if any) of the laity. Here again, in his efforts to increase the role and the autonomy of the laity in the Church, we see Cardijn operating within '*ressourcement*' parameters.

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<sup>89</sup> Cardijn, *Le laïc at ouvrier* 7 (Cardijn's emphasis).

<sup>90</sup> "Collaboration en équipe: prêtres et laïcs", 126.

Cardijn insisted that the two spheres of the apostolate – that of the hierarchy, and that of the laity – were both complementary and entirely distinct. The role of the priest was to ensure that ‘the laity had the necessary graces’, administered by the hierarchy through reception of the sacraments, ‘to carry out this lay apostolate.’<sup>91</sup> The role of the hierarchy, in other words, was to form Jocistes in their faith, and to strengthen them through the grace received through the sacraments. So far, so conventional – including Cardijn’s understanding of grace.

The role of the laity, on the other hand, was to be an apostle in whatever situation he or she should find themselves. Usually this would be in the workplace, but it might also be where they lived, in the parish, or during leisure time. This concept of the apostolate of ‘like to like’ was given added authority by repeatedly quoting Pius XI: ‘The first and immediate apostles of the workers ought to be workers; the apostles of those who follow trade and industry ought to be from among themselves.’<sup>92</sup> Priests simply could not carry out such an apostolate. Their job was to form the workers; the workers were to be the apostles of their peers at work. The key was the integration of the life of faith into daily life. As Cardijn noted, the laity, ‘without leaving their lay life, without fleeing their lay environment, are the authorised office-holders and the true spokespeople of the Church’.<sup>93</sup> It was, he noted, personal contact and the

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<sup>91</sup> "L'apostolat 1", 35.

<sup>92</sup> Pius XI, "Q.A.", 225-6.

<sup>93</sup> Cardijn, "L'apostolat 1", 40.

personal example which converted Jocistes' peers, not books or 'superficial' events such as large gatherings.<sup>94</sup>

By the late 1950s, Cardijn – like his contemporaries Congar and Rahner – was striving for an accurate definition of what the lay apostolate might mean. A short address to chaplains gives a clear indication of his familiarity with Congar's work, referring to 'those who have written and spoken much in the last decade about the apostolate of the laity'.<sup>95</sup> He refers to Congar's discussion of the very meaning of the word 'lay' in Ch1 of *Jalons*.<sup>96</sup> Yet he notes that the apostolate is truly the work of the Church and the Hierarchy – the 'lay apostolate', he observes, is that apostolate which is carried out 'in the profane and temporal domain, in life and in the world... not to be confused with social action.'<sup>97</sup> The laity would be formed for this work by the hierarchy, and Cardijn continued to maintain the theological language of the apostolate as a work of the hierarchy, in which the laity participate. While he maintained this theological distinction, he understood the two apostolates to be complementary in their mutual interdependence. The hierarchy were to focus on their own apostolate, of teaching, forming, and administering the sacraments; the laity were to take the good news into their daily world.

The debate between Congar and Rahner about the nature of Catholic A/action demonstrates the theological questions at stake. Congar resolutely maintained that Catholic 'Action-with-a-capital-A' should be the formal

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<sup>94</sup> "L'apostolat 2", 50-51.

<sup>95</sup> "Confusions", 59. See Y. Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïc* (Paris: Cerf, 1953)

<sup>96</sup> Cardijn, "Confusions", 60.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 61.

grouping of movements of committed Catholics, organised according to social/professional status, guided and directed by the hierarchy and with a formal role alongside the hierarchy; this is present in all his major works on the laity.<sup>98</sup> Rahner, by contrast preferred to discuss Catholic 'action-with-a-small-a', that is, any evangelisation or apostolic action carried out by those members of the faithful who are not clergy. For Rahner, "Catholic Action" and the action of Catholics do *not* coincide.<sup>99</sup> Rahner was also critical of the Catholic Action movements, implicitly including the JOC. He argued that the focus of

formation of lay apostles is formation of the action of Catholics, not formation for Catholic Action; and education for the action of Catholics is formation for that true and full Christianity which is necessarily dynamic. Religious associations of lay people under the direction of the Church ought to reflect well on this.<sup>100</sup>

In other words, Rahner felt strongly that all Christians should be living 'life to the full' and being formed and educated by the Church to do so. It was not good enough to simply offer this to an 'elite'.

In a paper originally written for the chaplains to the *Jeunesse Agricole Chrétienne*, Congar reacted directly to Rahner's critique. While acknowledging that Rahner's attempt to provide a definition for the lay state was more

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<sup>98</sup> Y. Congar, *Lay People in the Church. A Study for a Theology of Laity*, trans. Donald Attwater (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1957); "Outlines for a Theology of Catholic Action", in *Priest and Layman* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967); Y.M.-J. Congar, "My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries", *Jurist* 32 (1972)

<sup>99</sup> K. Rahner, "The Lay Apostolate", in *Theological Investigations 2* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1963) 347.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* 343.

successful than his own had been in *Lay People in the Church*,<sup>101</sup> Congar nonetheless continued to understand the apostolate as ‘properly belonging to the hierarchy’,<sup>102</sup> although he allowed that all members of the Church might participate in that mission. Thus might the faithful be rendered co-operators with the Apostles – ‘it is given to the faithful only as a sharing-in’, he insisted.<sup>103</sup> Yet Congar perceived ‘no lessened esteem’ between Pius XI’s definition of Catholic Action as ‘participation of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate’ and Pius XII’s switch to ‘co-operation with’.<sup>104</sup>

Cardijn located the complementary lay and clerical apostolates within the Mystical Body ecclesiology, which represented the unity of the Church and the universal call to participate in the apostolate according to one’s role in the Church. He described the lay apostolate as ‘that which is proper to the laity by their lay state, by their lay life and their lay *milieu*, by the problems which arise from their lay vocation and their lay mission’.<sup>105</sup> He suggested that the Church comprised two entirely distinct, yet entirely complementary, apostolates: that of the clergy, and that of the laity. ‘Priests and laity have a shared mission, but *differing functions*’;<sup>106</sup> they are distinct, but complementary: ‘complementary because they are different, they are mutually dependent, and they are auxiliary to one another in the true sense of the word.’<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Congar, "Outlines", 303.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 314.

<sup>103</sup> *Jalons 1* 355.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 362, 364.

<sup>105</sup> Cardijn, "Point du départ", 23.

<sup>106</sup> "Prêtres et laïcs dans la mission de l'Église", 133.

<sup>107</sup> "L'apostolat 1", 36.

With Pius XI, Cardijn was adamant that 'there must be a Workers' Movement to make known to the working-class its mission, a Movement which will help it to be fulfilled.'<sup>108</sup> The foundation of all Catholic Action apostolate had to be 'this primary and immediate apostolate of the lay person to the lay person'.<sup>109</sup> The apostolate of like to like was considered to be the most appropriate because it was the working class who were rooted in

their daily life, their ordinary *milieu*, their state in life, for and in all the problems and responsibilities which this life throws up, and for the apostle themselves, for their closest neighbours, for whom they are responsible.<sup>110</sup>

Here, Cardijn's appropriation and development of Leo XIII's teaching in *Rerum Novarum* on 'associations of working-men'<sup>111</sup> is demonstrated most fully. Leo was full of praise for those 'who... have striven... to better the condition of the working class. ... They have taken up the cause of the working man, and have spared no efforts to better the condition both of families and of individuals'.<sup>112</sup> Yet he was a promoter of the paternalistic model of Social Catholicism, while Cardijn's initiative ensured that it would be, not 'men of eminence', nor clergy, but the workers themselves, who '[would strive] to better the condition of the working class'. The apostolate of the laity is rooted in the fact that 'all are

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<sup>108</sup> "Mission", 18.

<sup>109</sup> "L'apostolat 1", 34.

<sup>110</sup> "Dimensions de l'apostolat des laïcs", 106.

<sup>111</sup> Leo XIII, "R.N.", 54-56.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* 55.

personally called by God, *all, without exception*,<sup>113</sup> a call mediated through the Church and in particular through the Sacrament of Baptism. However, 'while all take part in the whole apostolate of the Church, there are some fields, some aspects, and some type of apostolate *which are proper to the laity*.'<sup>114</sup> The most basic aspect of this apostolate is the apostolate '*of daily life, of the ordinary environment, the state of life, for and in all the problems and responsibilities this life brings about*'.<sup>115</sup> The lay apostolate, 'organised by the laity, is always and everywhere a response to God's call and to the call of the world, in all problems, ancient and modern, which never cease to arise'.<sup>116</sup> The lay apostolate, 'it can never be said enough ... is irreplaceable.'<sup>117</sup>

While ensuring the role of the laity at the very heart of the apostolate, and allowing them autonomy in its organisation, Cardijn was careful to explain the nuances of this concept to the priests, Religious, and seminarians who acted as chaplains to the JOC. The belief that 'only the priest has an active role in the Church, that the lay faithful have only to listen and to receive... would be an erroneous conception of the hierarchical order.'<sup>118</sup> The priest 'cannot carry out the apostolate which belongs to the laity'; rather, his role is to 'ensure that the laity have the graces necessary to carry out the lay apostolate. This is his priestly ministry.'<sup>119</sup> Even within the JOC, the chaplain (a priest or at the very least, a Religious), 'does not exercise a lay apostolate, he does not fulfil a lay

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<sup>113</sup> Cardijn, "Dimensions de l'apostolat des laïcs", 104.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. 106.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 106; Cardijn's emphasis.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. 112.

<sup>117</sup> "Prêtres et laïcs dans la mission de l'Église", 126.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. 126.

<sup>119</sup> "L'apostolat 1", 35.

function.<sup>120</sup> The chaplain, rather, is 'the one who helps to discover, to awaken and to develop Y.C.W. vocations, and who helps in priestly fashion in the full training of the leaders and militants.'<sup>121</sup> His work in the JOC is 'to be a priest. It is not to be an organiser. ... His work is not to be a leader, but to sustain, form and help, and give to the leaders the teachings of Our Lord and the grace of Our Lord.'<sup>122</sup> It is 'to help the leaders of the working-class laity in their formation, in their spiritual life, in their apostolic mission.'<sup>123</sup> For Cardijn, the role of the clergy in the lay apostolate, and the apostolate to the workers, was to teach and preach: 'to reveal God's plan to the faithful'; 'to communicate the person of Christ to the faithful', through the sacraments; and to 'help, encourage, and guide' the laity in their specific apostolate.<sup>124</sup> Priests, in Cardijn's view, were to support the workers by their sacramental role of preaching and teaching: they were to 'give lay people Christ, the person of Christ, the grace of Christ, the doctrine of Christ; to help lay people incorporate Christ into their lay life ... so that they might reflect and spread him in their *milieu* and in their state of life.'<sup>125</sup>

#### 4.7 Worker Priests?

Given Cardijn's insistence on the complementarity of the lay and clerical roles in the Church's apostolate, and particularly on the unique and irreplaceable role of

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<sup>120</sup> "Priest", 108.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.* 108-9.

<sup>122</sup> "Missionaries", 31.

<sup>123</sup> *Le laïcat ouvrier* 20.

<sup>124</sup> "Prêtres et laïcs dans la mission de l'Église", 127.

<sup>125</sup> "L'apostolat 1", 35.



the lay contribution, it is unsurprising that he was at the very least suspicious of the Worker Priests. As we shall see in Chapter 6 below (where more detail on the development of the Worker Priests will be given), Chenu moved away from the JOC and towards the Worker Priests during the post-World War II period. Cardijn, on the other hand, while acknowledging the courage of those, mainly French, priests, who had volunteered to clandestinely accompany men sent to the forced labour camps in Germany – some of whom had died as martyrs – remained unconvinced that the proper place of the priestly mission, in the normal situation, was alongside the workforce. Quoting Pius XI's words to him in a private conversation:

I happily write encyclicals – but it's impossible for me to get them and all their content into workshops and factories because I'm not there! It's the lay people who are in these places who need to do this. Bishops and priests can't do it either, because they are not in these places

Cardijn asked in a footnote: 'And what about the Worker Priests?'<sup>126</sup>

In a *Note* prepared in 1953 on the vexed question of the Worker Priests and their relation – if any – to the JOC and to other Catholic Action movements, Cardijn appears to have been rather conflicted.<sup>127</sup> On the one hand, it was clearly important to record the influence of the JOC and other Catholic Action movements in the development of the Worker Priests through the missionary concern for the working classes. In particular, he acknowledged the key role of

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<sup>126</sup> "Prêtres et laïcs dans la mission de l'Église", 126.

<sup>127</sup> "Notes sur le problème des prêtres ouvriers," (KADOC archive: Cardijn microfiche 752, 1953)

Godin, one of the first JOC chaplains in France, and author of the 1941 *France, Pays de Mission*, whose shocking findings contributed to the French hierarchy's support for the Worker Priests during the Second World War.<sup>128</sup> Yet at the same time, Cardijn was deeply concerned about the effect of Worker Priests on workers' movements and unions, and on the Church. The desire of the Worker Priests to be 'fully in the working mass' in order to deal with the attraction of Marxism in this sphere is 'entirely understandable'.<sup>129</sup> However, the risk was that the priests would exacerbate tensions between members of the Marxist and communist unions, and the Catholic unions, in which former Jocistes were often very active. Priests elected to posts in unions not only displaced workers (often Jocistes and former Jocistes), but often ended up being a source of disunity and division, as anti-Catholic and non-Christian workers refused to cooperate with them.<sup>130</sup> Cardijn was only too well aware that over-enthusiastic union members could bring the Church into disrepute.

Of course, Cardijn could not have retained the integrity of the JOC as the movement he had founded in the 1920s and support the development of the Worker Priests in the aftermath of World War II. Despite the economic boom of the *trente glorieuses*, there remained a concern that, by working in factories and docks, Worker Priests were taking on jobs which a worker might otherwise have held. Yet Cardijn's objection was more profound. His concern was that they would replace – and displace – workers, not so much from employment, as from their multi-faceted role as Christians in the workplace, in the apostolate to

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* 3.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

their peers and in the transformation of the workplace into a locus worthy of workers created in the divine image. Many former Jocistes were active in the unions and other means of transforming the workplace. Cardijn could see that the presence of clergy in unions would lead to exactly the same problem as the placing of the JOC under the aegis of the *ACJB* in the 1920s, against which he had fought so adamantly. It was not the (unintentional) undermining of the laity at work which was his primary concern. For Cardijn, the lay apostolate of the laity depended upon lay access to clergy for formation and reception of the sacraments. This was precisely how the two complementary apostolates, of laity and clergy functioned. If the clergy were not 'doing their bit', by teaching, preaching, and administering sacraments, the lay apostolate would be weakened and dysfunctional. Cardijn's objections to the Worker Priests might prompt us to ask how this balance, between the lay and hierarchical apostolates, and the faith and life of the Church, is to be achieved in the contemporary Church.

#### *4.8 Cardijn's theology of work: conclusions*

Cardijn's theology of work can be perceived in all his writings, from the very beginning of the JOC until the late 1950s. Its very simplicity, and, particularly, the lack of clear signposting to indicate that it is 'theology' – citing other theologians, for instance – means that it is easy to miss. This no doubt accounts for too the general assumption that he was, in his own words, 'no theologian'. His theology of work is rooted in the creation of workers in the image of God.

Each young worker 'must be respected as God Himself ... because they are sacred like God Himself.'<sup>131</sup> Inherent in each worker is the dignity of being a child of God, and, indeed, having a unique vocation, 'a divine vocation in his work.'<sup>132</sup>

'There is no Kingdom of God without work and therefore work must be respected and treated with dignity, honour and justice.'<sup>133</sup> Cardijn demanded that work be put at the very centre of the Church's prayer and liturgy. It was work which ensured, after all, that liturgy – the people's work of worship – could take place, for 'without work there is no Host, not a single drop of wine to consecrate, no altar stone, no vestments, no Church.'<sup>134</sup> Like the *Rule of St Benedict*, Cardijn put a high worth on the workers' tools. Just as the *Rule* requires that tools be treated 'as vessels of the altar', so Cardijn suggested that 'the Mass offered on the altar can be continued on all those altars which are work-tables: the joiner's bench, the typist's desk, the tailor's table, the mechanic's tower...'<sup>135</sup> For the worker, 'the tools of his trade are what the chalice and paten are for the priest.'<sup>136</sup>

Work in Cardijn's vision is

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<sup>131</sup> "Mission", 16.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* 17.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>135</sup> "L'apostolat 1", 36.

<sup>136</sup> "The Young Worker Faces Life (Godinne Lectures, 1949)", 80.

not a punishment, a curse, or a slavery, but a collaboration with the Creator and Redeemer. At his place, at his work, the worker is the first minister, the immediate and intimate collaborator with God.<sup>137</sup>

Yet at the same time, Cardijn did not romanticise 'drudgery divine', and was strongly opposed to oppressive working practices. Work is, to a large extent, *the* realisation of God's creation: for creation to continue, we need 'human work, science, technology, the economy, education, politics'.<sup>138</sup> It is also the realisation of Redemption, for through work humanity may collaborate with God in divine creation. Work is also the place where humanity may bring the good news of salvation to their co-workers, supported by the hierarchy through its teaching, preaching, and administration of the Sacraments.

Yet the centrality of the Sacraments in Cardijn's theology of work is also its inherent weakness. The focus on the Eucharist potentially excludes those to whom the Eucharist is not readily available, whether for canonical or practical reasons. Despite the inclusivity of preaching the contribution of human work of all kinds to the liturgy, the concept of prolonging the Eucharist at work, or taking the Eucharist to work, is problematic for those who are not able to receive the Eucharist. In a similar way, Cardijn's focus on the importance of the Sacraments as particular transmitters of divine grace is, unsurprisingly, rooted in a late-nineteenth-century understanding of the interaction between grace and nature, despite his closeness to de Lubac and other *ressourcement* theologians on the need for faith and life to be more closely linked.

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<sup>137</sup> "L'apostolat 2", 46.

<sup>138</sup> "La mission terrestre de l'homme et de l'humanité", 71.

Nonetheless, in Cardijn's theology of work, work remains the privileged way in which the laity may combine their life of faith with their day-to-day life. The integration of faith and life, the attention to the Church and the Eucharist, the focus on the sacramental life, and the re-reading of work through the doctrinal lenses of Creation and Redemption, all demonstrate Cardijn working largely within the parameters of *ressourcement* theology.



## CHAPTER 5

### MARIE-DOMINIQUE CHENU – MEDIEVAL THEOLOGY AS *THÉOLOGIE ENGAGÉE*

#### 5.1 Introduction

Cardijn's approach to a theology of work was influenced by many of the questions central to *ressourcement* theology. We now turn to one of the foremost *ressourcement* theologians, the medievalist and *théologien engagé*, Chenu. The first section of Geffré's *L'hommage différé* describes Chenu as a *théologien engagé*, and consists of recollections about his *théologie engagée*, including his theology of work, collaboration with the JOC, and commitment to mission.<sup>1</sup> Chenu himself suggested that his theology crossed these 'two commitments', explaining that his understanding of theology was that 'its first law is that of unity – both speculative and practical, as the technical language of the Schools has it.'<sup>2</sup> As an academic theologian, and a priest committed to the Church's need to engage urgently with contemporary society, his theological reflection on work complements that of Cardijn. Cosden<sup>3</sup> and Volf<sup>4</sup> regard Chenu as the founder of twentieth-century theologies of work, for his 'application of the Thomist tradition to the problem of work's nature and meaning introduced into Catholicism a new paradigm for thinking theologically

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Geffré, ed. *L'hommage différé au Père Chenu* (Paris: Cerf, 1990)

<sup>2</sup> Chenu, 'Regard' in *ibid.* 259, 260.

<sup>3</sup> Cosden, *Work*

<sup>4</sup> Volf, *Spirit*



about work'.<sup>5</sup> They locate him decisively within the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching.

The perceived opposition between medieval theology and contemporary society led to some confusion, for 'during the 1930s, when I was not well known, some people thought that there were two Chenus.'<sup>6</sup> Invited to speak at a seminary, and realising that the Rector was unclear about which Chenu had arrived, he introduced himself:

'I am the more grateful to the Rector', I began, 'because he is none too sure whom he has invited. There are two Chenus. One is a medievalist of longstanding, quite well known, dealing with ancient texts, very erudite, attached to the early days of Christianity... The other Chenu is the dashing young man, fully immersed in the contemporary world, sensitive to its demands, quick to engage with the most difficult problems of church and world, discussed at length and to some suspect ... Yet there is but a single Chenu...'<sup>7</sup>

Chenu combined his expertise as a medievalist with an insistence that the intellectual and social context in which theology evolved was as important as the theology itself. He was also committed to the rooting of theology in faith. Such theology could no longer be – and never should have been allowed to become – a dry intellectual exercise. His theological reflection on work grew out of these two convictions. First, theology must be related back to its social

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<sup>5</sup> Cosden, *Work* 21.

<sup>6</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 61.

<sup>7</sup> Chenu 'Regard' in Geffré, *L'hommage différé au Père Chenu* 259.

context, therefore theological reflection on work must be rooted in the actual reality experienced in the contemporary workplace. Second, the study of the history of Christian doctrine ensures that new reflection grows out of, and is faithful to, the Tradition, central to which is a Christian anthropology which understands the human person to be created in the image of God.

In this chapter, we shall see how Chenu combined two key aspects of *ressourcement* theology – a return to the sources, and a profound engagement with the world. We turn first to his personal history and context (5.2) and then to his early work at Le Saulchoir (5.3). In Section 5.4 we look at Chenu the Regent of Studies, examining his manifesto for the teaching of theology, *Le Saulchoir: Une école de théologie*.<sup>8</sup> In Section 5.5 we turn to Chenu's *ressourcement* of Thomas, which helps us, in Section 5.6, to contextualise his insistence on the rooting of theology in faith. The central theme underpinning the chapter is Chenu's insistence that theology should be in contact with real life, through an *engagement* with the world, rooted in a belief in the Incarnation as the central event in human history.

## *5.2 History of a historical theologian*

Chenu did not belong to the upper-middle-class background of most French clergy and Religious at the time. His parents, millers and bakers, lived near Versailles and his grandparents financed his education at the local diocesan *collège*. By his final year there, Chenu had decided to enter the seminary, until

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<sup>8</sup> Chenu, *Une école*

he visited Le Saulchoir, the house of formation for the Dominican Province of Paris,<sup>9</sup> for the clothing of a classmate. Sixty years later, he recalled how, during that visit, he had been 'struck by the beautiful liturgy joined to a life of study and the discipline of community life', and after a year at seminary he asked to join Le Saulchoir.<sup>10</sup> Duval suggests that Chenu felt so strongly called to the Contemplative life that he briefly considered becoming a Carthusian, before making his Final Profession as a Dominican.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, he ended up embracing the combination of contemplation and action. Just as Cardijn's shocking encounter with his schoolmates in Hal on his return from seminary informed his life's work with young workers, so Chenu's brief excursions from Le Saulchoir helped him to realise that his Dominican life would be one in which contemplation would be combined with action among the working classes in industrialised France.

I went to Roubaix... This wholly industrial, poverty-stricken, filthy town, with its lanes full of sickly children, its blackened streets, its greyness, made a terrible impression on me. ... [Later] I went to Paris, and one afternoon somehow found

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<sup>9</sup> The Dominicans were restored to France in 1843. In 1865 the country was divided into two Provinces – that of Toulouse, with a *Studium* at Saint-Maximin, and that of Paris, with a *Studium* at Flavigny. A third Province was founded in Lyon to oversee the Dominican mission to the Middle East. Sorrel notes that following the Separation of Church and State in 1904, the Paris Province sent its novitiate to Le Saulchoir and the Lyons Province to Rijckholt (NL), while the Toulouse Province made an unsuccessful attempt to establish a novitiate at Viterbo. C. Sorrel, *La République contre les congrégations. Histoire d'une passion française 1899-1904* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2003) 198.

<sup>10</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 27.

<sup>11</sup> A. Duval, "Présentation biographique de M.-D. Chenu par ses œuvres essentielles", in *Marie-Dominique Chenu. Moyen-Âge et Modernité*, ed. G. Bedouelle, Les cahiers du Centre d'études du Saulchoir (Paris: Cerf, 1997) 14.

myself walking in the Sentier area. There were many dressmaking workshops there, and it was a lively area, swarming with people...<sup>12</sup>

Chenu completed his novitiate on 7 September 1914, but he and the community of Le Saulchoir had already fled the invading German army. His poor physical health had led to him being rejected for military service no fewer than five times, so he had no choice but to flee.<sup>13</sup> Duval notes that the community reached its pre-1904 home at Flavigny on 8 September, where Chenu made his First Profession. Both unofficial and uncanonical, it had to be repeated in Rome that December.<sup>14</sup> He spent the remainder of the war in Rome, studying at the Dominican university of St Thomas Aquinas, 'the ancient Dominican international college which had become a Pontifical Institution in 1909'.<sup>15</sup> Here he discovered his historical inclination, following the approach advocated by the (Dominican) founder of the *École biblique*, M.-Joseph Lagrange (1885-1938), in his biblical studies. In Lagrange's methodology, the context in which the text had been composed assumed a hitherto unheard-of importance. Chenu decided he wished 'to apply the historical method to the development of Christian thought', just as 'Lagrange had suggested doing for Scripture'.<sup>16</sup> His understanding of the historical method, he later explained, was about 'the history of the Christian people. ... Not just studying events and people, but also the mental attitudes which make events significant, and decide people's

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<sup>12</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 28.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 29; Duval, "Présentation", 13.

<sup>14</sup> "Présentation", 12-13.

<sup>15</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 29.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 122.

unconscious motivations.<sup>17</sup> Given the relatively recent condemnation of Modernism, his historical approach was regarded with suspicion by those around him. One of these was his doctoral supervisor, Garrigou-Lagrange, who 'detested the historically-contextualist approach to Thomas Aquinas. ... Situating Thomas in a historical context was likely only to make his doctrine seem relative to its time and thus of passing interest.'<sup>18</sup> Known as the '*doyen*' of Thomism during the early twentieth century, this 'Sacred Monster of Thomism' also led the charge against the 'New Theology' in the 1940s. Yet Chenu emphasised that Garrigou-Lagrange was a 'generous' supervisor, and 'a master of spirituality', who had 'restored in Rome the great tradition of teaching spiritual theology', was an expert on John of the Cross, and whose lectures were attended by 'crowds of young students'.<sup>19</sup>

Chenu completed his Roman studies with a doctorate on 'contemplation in Aquinas'. 'The subject of my thesis', he told Duquesne, was the 'psychological and theological analysis of contemplation'.<sup>20</sup> Conticello observes that it chiefly focused on 'contemplation in St Thomas Aquinas, but widens the perspective to include other medieval authors of greater or lesser importance, especially Franciscans.'<sup>21</sup> Kerr suggests that Chenu's

philosophical and theological analysis of contemplation, as found in Aquinas, [was] motivated, explicitly, by the desire to challenge that assumption ... that

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 119.

<sup>18</sup> Kerr, "Different World" 138.

<sup>19</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 38

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 38

<sup>21</sup> C.G. Conticello, "*De Contemplatione* (Angelicum, 1920). La thèse inédite de doctorat du P. M.-D. Chenu", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 75 (1991) 385.

spirituality was moralistic and concerned with the individual soul, rather than theocentrically concerned with the objectivity of God.<sup>22</sup>

‘Contemplating Aquinas’ would remain central to Chenu’s life as a Dominican, whose ‘assiduous familiarity with the work of St Thomas’ was sustained ‘by the contemplative and studious life of a Friar Preacher’.<sup>23</sup> Yet his thesis was also at the cutting edge of the new discipline of ‘spirituality’, at the forefront of which was Garrigou-Lagrange himself. Conticello notes the wider context of this new discipline. As Garrigou-Lagrange was giving his first classes at the Angelicum, the first Chair of Spirituality at the Gregorian University was appointed. At around the same time,

the Dominicans founded *La Vie Spirituelle* (1919), the French Jesuits *Revue d’ascétique et de mystique* (1920), and the Belgians opened the section on mysticism and asceticism of *Museum Lessianum* (1922).<sup>24</sup>

So impressed was Garrigou-Lagrange with his protégé, that, despite their disagreements about methodology, he sought to have Chenu appointed to teach alongside him in Rome. However, ‘at that very moment, Le Saulchoir was being re-established in Belgium’.<sup>25</sup> The faculty had requested that Chenu join the academic staff, and desperate to return to Le Saulchoir, he ‘felt that he had to go.’ Once there, he was appointed to teach ‘the history of Christian doctrine’.

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<sup>22</sup> Kerr, "Different World" 141.

<sup>23</sup> Chenu, *XIIIe Siècle* 10.

<sup>24</sup> Conticello, "De Contemplatione" 369-370.

<sup>25</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 39.

The choice of ‘doctrine’ rather than ‘dogma’ was ‘prudent ... imagine if we had mentioned history of dogmas, to situate dogmas in their historical perspective would have immediately had us suspected of relativism.’<sup>26</sup> Yet Congar much later remarked that ‘one of those who helped to make Chenu suspect once told me that Fr Chenu did not believe in metaphysics and took on board all sorts of relativisms.’<sup>27</sup> As Jossua points out, in his commentary on the 1985 re-edition of *Une École*,

this placing of first Thomas, then theology in general, and even dogmatic formulas, in their historical context, could not help but introduce a certain relativity – Chenu himself was not afraid to talk about “relativism” – which contrasted with the other Thomist currents of the time.<sup>28</sup>

Chenu’s approach was radically different from the start.

### 5.3 *The history of Christian doctrine*

Chenu’s historical approach to Christian theology formed the foundations of his work at Le Saulchoir. The seminary staff had founded the *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* in 1907. Chenu was a major contributor to this journal, providing both the ‘Bulletin d’histoire des doctrines chrétiennes’, and

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Y. Congar, "Le frère que j’ai connu", in *L’hommage différé au Père Chenu*, ed. Claude Geffré (Paris: Cerf, 1990 (1964)) 239-45 (239).

<sup>28</sup> J.-P. Jossua, "Le Saulchoir revisité: 1937-1983", in *Une école de théologie: le Saulchoir*, ed. Marie-Dominique Chenu (Paris: Cerf, 1985) 86.

publishing 18 articles, between 1924 until 1940. Its very title, he noted in 1937, 'demonstrated the founders' intention that it should respect a plurality of methods... in theology and philosophy.'<sup>29</sup> This intellectual openness within the Paris Province was further reflected in the founding of the *Institut historique d'études thomistes* at Le Saulchoir in 1921.<sup>30</sup> Chenu was appointed secretary to this research group, whose foundation meant that 'the application of the historical method to the study of St Thomas thus became one of the characteristics of Le Saulchoir.'<sup>31</sup> Such a centre had been the brainchild of Ambroise Gardeil OP (1859-1931), Regent of Studies at both Flavigny and Le Saulchoir between 1894 and 1911. Boersma has pointed to Gardeil's importance as a precursor of *ressourcement* theology, for, 'although [he] had remained within the neo-scholastic tradition, [his work] did prepare the way for *nouvelle théologie*.'<sup>32</sup> Gardeil's attempts to bridge the gap between nature and supernature, suggests Boersma, led him to 'make room for the Spirit-guided, subjective-element of the intuitive grasp of revelation'.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps Gardeil's most influential work was *Le donné révélé de la théologie*.<sup>34</sup> Chenu contributed a Preface to its re-issue in 1932,<sup>35</sup> in which he noted that Gardeil's aims were 'to explain the nature of theology, to prove its intrinsic consistency and its

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<sup>29</sup> Chenu, *Une école* 120.

<sup>30</sup> See the comprehensive account of the founding of the *Institut historique d'études thomistes* in A. Duval, "Aux origines de l' "Institut historique d'études Thomistes" du Saulchoir (1920 et ss.)", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 75 (1991)

<sup>31</sup> Chenu, *Une école* 113.

<sup>32</sup> Boersma, *Sacramental Ontology* 22.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 205.

<sup>34</sup> A. Gardeil, *Le donné révélé et la théologie* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1910)

<sup>35</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Le donné révélé et la théologie", in *La Parole de Dieu. I.* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1932))



autonomy, coordinate its transcendence and relativity'.<sup>36</sup> Chenu added that 'the more [Gardeil] held this often severely criticised position (on the development of dogma), the more he showed it to be truly and authentically Thomist', citing his 'regular publications' in the *RSPT*.<sup>37</sup> For Chenu, Gardeil's emphasis on the link between faith and theology was critical. Contemplation is 'the *locus*, the spiritual and logical place of theology...', he explained.<sup>38</sup> The link was also a key aspect of Chenu's own theology.

Before World War I, Gardeil had asked the Dominican superiors to clarify whether Le Saulchoir was 'a canonically instituted College ... or simply a major seminary'. This was no speculative question, but had major implications for its staffing.<sup>39</sup> It was his post-war successor, Lemonnyer, who successfully persuaded the Dominican authorities that an appropriately staffed College was vital. This would mean that Dominican novices could complete their academic education alongside their spiritual formation as friars at Le Saulchoir, rather than studying at Leuven.<sup>40</sup> But it was only with the arrival at Le Saulchoir of the great Dominican historian, Pierre Mandonnet (1858-1936), that the *Institut* was finally founded. Mandonnet may be regarded as the founder of modern Dominican historiography, and Chenu described himself as the 'heir' to this 'great Church historian, who taught at Fribourg'.<sup>41</sup> Murphy suggests that 'Chenu was Mandonnet's disciple in the historical understanding of the *Summa*: both of

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 277.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 278.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 280.

<sup>39</sup> Duval, "Origines" 427.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 423ff.

<sup>41</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 43

them were standing up for Thomas' *humanism*.<sup>42</sup> His most influential works included his posthumously published, two-volume biography of St Dominic,<sup>43</sup> and his establishment of a 'complete and convincing' 'authentic list' of the works of Thomas.<sup>44</sup> On its publication, *St Dominique* was variously described as 'one of the most important contributions to Dominican history',<sup>45</sup> 'a work of considerable importance',<sup>46</sup> and 'a worthy monument'<sup>47</sup> to 'the greatest of modern Dominican historical scholars.'<sup>48</sup> With his monumental biography of Siger de Brabant,<sup>49</sup> Mandonnet made 'an extremely valuable contribution'<sup>50</sup> to the re-interpretation of the thirteenth-century crisis at the University of Paris, in which 'it becomes clear that Siger was really the leader'<sup>51</sup> of the condemned Averroists. (As the controversy had all but resulted in the condemnation of Albert the Great and Thomas, it was not without interest to Dominican historians.) Mandonnet also regarded Dante as a theologian, and Chenu noted that, 'for him, Dante was made of the same stuff as the theologian-masters of

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<sup>42</sup> F.A. Murphy, "Gilson and Chenu: The Structure of the *Summa* and the Shape of Dominican Life", *New Blackfriars* 85, no. 997 (2004) 295-6; author's emphasis.

<sup>43</sup> P. Mandonnet, *St Dominique: l'idée, l'homme et l'œuvre* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer & Cie, 1938) The work was edited by Mandonnet's pupil M.-H. Vicaire.

<sup>44</sup> W.H.V. Reade, "Review, 'Des Écrits Authentiques de S. Thomas d'Aquin by Pierre Mandonnet'", *English Historical Review* 26, no. 103 (1911); Pierre Mandonnet, *Des Écrits authentique de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Fribourg: St Paul, 1910).

<sup>45</sup> W. Gumbley, "Review, 'Saint Dominique. L'idée, l'homme et l'oeuvre by Pierre Mandonnet'", *ibid.* 54, no. 214 (1939) 313.

<sup>46</sup> A.H. Sweet, "Review, 'Saint Dominique: L'idée, l'homme, et l'oeuvre by Pierre Mandonnet'", *Speculum* 14, no. 3 (1939)

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> A.G., "Review, 'Saint Dominique. L'idée, l'homme et l'œuvre by Pierre Mandonnet; M. H. Vicaire'", *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 27, no. 106 (1938) 325.

<sup>49</sup> P. Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant et l'Averroïsme latin au XIIIème siècle*, *Collectanea Fribourgensia* (Fribourg: Librairie de l'Université, 1899)

<sup>50</sup> I. Huisk, "Siger de Brabant et l'Averroïsme Latin au XIIIème Siècle. by Pierre Mandonnet", *The Philosophical Review* 20, no. 4 (1911) 426.

<sup>51</sup> H. Rashdall, "Review, 'Siger de Brabant et l'Averroïsme latin au XIIIème Siècle: Étude critique et Documents inédits by Pierre Mandonnet'", *English Historical Review* 17, no. 66 (1902) 347.

the 13<sup>th</sup> century, whose mindset he shared'.<sup>52</sup> The 'distinguished Director'<sup>53</sup> and founder of the *Bibliothèque thomiste* – a monograph series dedicated to the study of Thomas and his precursors – Mandonnet was regarded as a historian 'whose personal labours have done so much to encourage original mediaeval research'.<sup>54</sup> The first chapter of *St Dominique*, 'Christianity at the dawn of the thirteenth century', serves as an excellent metaphor for the aims of the *Institut*, whose members sought to research Thomas Aquinas and 'the Middle Ages as the cultural locus in which he lived', for 'to put [Thomas] back into the context of his time was to make him intelligible today'.<sup>55</sup>

Chenu was also influenced by the *Annales* school of history,<sup>56</sup> and was one of the first subscribers to its journal.<sup>57</sup> *Annales* historiography, which developed during the inter-war period, has been described as 'the most influential single orientation in historical research and writing in the twentieth century'.<sup>58</sup> It reflected a new approach to history, and was founded at a time when '[t]he need for a fusion of economic, social and cultural history was increasingly felt and the magic word "synthesis" was embroidered on the new flag'.<sup>59</sup> The *Annales* had two main aims.

<sup>52</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Le R. P. Mandonnet (1858-1936)", *Revue Thomiste* 4, no. 10 (1936) (697).

<sup>53</sup> 'P.H.', "Review, 'Mélanges Mandonnet, Tomes I & II'", *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 20, no. 80 (1931) 702.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 702.

<sup>55</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 49.

<sup>56</sup> *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, founded in 1929 by the historians, Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, retitled *Annales. Économies, sociétés, civilisation* in 1946. (F.R. Martin, A. Burguière, and J. Revel, "El Cincuentenario De Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations", *Reis*, no. 12 (1980), 10)

<sup>57</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 51; cf. Le Goff, "Le P. Chenu" 373.

<sup>58</sup> A. Megill, "Coherence and Incoherence in Historical Studies: From the "Annales" School to the New Cultural History", *New Literary History* 35, no. 2 (2004) 209.

<sup>59</sup> M. Harsgor, "Total History: The Annales School", *Journal of Contemporary History* 13, no. 1 (1978) 2.

First, that history should add to its subjects and methods by borrowing from neighboring disciplines and even by the temporary abolition of divisions between disciplines; and second, that it should nevertheless remain an all-embracing and ecumenical discipline, meeting the conditions required for the fullest understanding of social phenomena.<sup>60</sup>

It joins *historiografía* to *Weltanschauung*,<sup>61</sup> focusing on a 'total history', which 'expresses the ambition of providing a fuller perspective, a more exhaustive description, a more comprehensive explanation.'<sup>62</sup> Central to the *Annales* was the challenge of bringing the experience of previous eras to bear on contemporary problems. 'We shall be historians,' wrote Febvre, 'but that does not mean we intend to exclude the present day from our concerns.'<sup>63</sup> Like Bloch, Chenu emphasised the 'significant turning point of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries',<sup>64</sup> 'instinctively [introducing] economic and social dimensions ... into the history of the Christian phenomenon.'<sup>65</sup> Burguière observes that 'up until 1939, a third, some years even half, of all articles published in *Annales* were on the present', dealing with the social, political, and economic crises of the 1930s.<sup>66</sup> 'Every page ... bore the stamp of a global emergency, yet the editors aimed at inspecting the

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<sup>60</sup> F. Furet, "Beyond the Annales", *The Journal of Modern History* 55, no. 3 (1983) 392.

<sup>61</sup> cf. Martín, Burguière, and Revel, "Cincuentenario" 10.

<sup>62</sup> Furet, "Beyond the Annales" 394.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from Febvre to A. Thomas, 11/09/1928, cited in B. Müller, "'Problèmes contemporains" et "Hommes d'action" à l'origine des Annales. Une correspondance entre Lucien Febvre et Albert Thomas (1928-1930)", *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, no. 35 (1992) 81.

<sup>64</sup> Le Goff, "Le P. Chenu" 373.

<sup>65</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 51.

<sup>66</sup> A. Burguière, "Histoire d'une histoire: la naissance des Annales", *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 34, no. 6 (1979) 1354.

disasters of the day with the sense of distance appropriate to the historian's calling.<sup>67</sup>

The influence of the *Annales* on Chenu's theology may clearly be seen. His was a historical theology which demanded a rigorous understanding and integration of the social, political, and economic contexts in which the Schoolmen whom he made his own developed their theology. It was easily the equal of the precisely catalogued developments in the meaning of key terms in medieval philosophy which he contributed to the *RSPT* during the 1930s.<sup>68</sup> These articles demonstrate his interest in the theology which had developed out of the twelfth-century Nominalist controversy, and show the development of his reading of its importance in the history of doctrine. No arcane debate of interest to a few old medievalists, for Chenu this question, with its ideas about universality and (im)mutability, went to the heart of theology.<sup>69</sup> The focus on such questions led to Chenu being 'best known for his research on the theological method and philosophical lexicography of the Middle Ages' during the 1930s.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> G. Huppert, "Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch: The Creation of the *Annales*", *The French Review* 55, no. 4 (1982) 512.

<sup>68</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Notes de lexicographie philosophique médiévale. Collectio, collatio", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 16 (1927); "Notes de lexicographie philosophique médiévale: Antiqui, moderni", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 17, no. 17 (1928); "Notes de lexicographie philosophique médiévale: Sufficiens", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 22 (1933); "Notes de lexicographie philosophique médiévale: Disciplina", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 25 (1936); "Notes de lexicographie philosophique médiévale. Un vestige du stoïcisme", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 27, no. 63-69 (1938); also "'Imaginatio". Note de lexicographie philosophique médiévale", in *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati* (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1946)

<sup>69</sup> See for instance "Grammaire et Théologie au XIIe et XIIIe siècles", *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 10 (1936); and "Un essai de méthode théologique", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 24, no. 258-267 (1935)

<sup>70</sup> F. Stegmüller, "M.-D. Chenu, Une École de Théologie. Le Saulchoir", *Theologische Revue* 38, no. 2 (1939) 50.

Duquesne suggested to Chenu that he had 'become a medievalist because of modern concerns: you did not follow this path for nostalgic reasons'.<sup>71</sup> Chenu agreed with this analysis, pointing out that 'the history of theology is internal to theology itself ... culture integrates the past by making it present.'<sup>72</sup> Like the *Annales* scholars, the historians' 'distance' was brought to bear on the engagement of theology with contemporary questions and crises. This would include the world of work. Le Goff<sup>73</sup> and Jolivet<sup>74</sup> concur that Chenu was at the forefront of the attempt at Le Saulchoir to bring historical analysis to bear on theology, which, as Bedouelle notes, permitted 'a theology established in the Middle Ages to be in dialogue with a historical and exegetical modernity established at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.'<sup>75</sup> As Jolivet points out, 'it is not always easy to distinguish clearly [in Chenu's writings] between what relates to theology and what relates to the history of theology and philosophy [in the Middle Ages]'.<sup>76</sup> Yet his commitment to both the *Institut* and the *Annales* indicates the direction which his theology would take after Rome. As Philibert has observed, 'two themes ... unify the research of Chenu's entire work: the anthropological solidarity of man with the cosmos and the co-creative responsibility of man in an on-going creative order.'<sup>77</sup> These themes – the inherent dignity of the human person created *in imago Dei*, and humanity's role

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<sup>71</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 51.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 51.

<sup>73</sup> Le Goff, "Le P. Chenu" 371.

<sup>74</sup> Jolivet, "Les études consacrées par le Père Chenu au moyen-âge", 68-69.

<sup>75</sup> G. Bedouelle, "Présentation", in *Marie-Dominique Chenu. Moyen-Âge et Modernité*, ed. G. Bedouelle (Paris: Cerf, 1997) 7.

<sup>76</sup> Jolivet, "Les études consacrées par le Père Chenu au moyen-âge", 67.

<sup>77</sup> P. Philibert, "Faith and Theology by M.D.Chenu, O.P.", *Thomist* 33 (1969) 173.

in the ongoing creation – are evident in his medieval research, his forays into contemporary theology, and in his theology of work.

Chenu collaborated with the lay Catholic philosopher Étienne Gilson on the Institute of Medieval Studies.

In 1928, he explained, Gilson founded an Institute for Medieval Studies in the English-speaking part of Canada, in Toronto. Two years later, he asked me, through the French government, to establish a similar type of institute in Francophone Canada, in Montreal. ... [F]rom 1930, I went to teach for two or three months in Canada every year.<sup>78</sup>

Gilson was a historian of medieval philosophy who taught in the French state university system. His monographs included *Le Thomisme* (1919);<sup>79</sup> *La Philosophie au Moyen-âge* (1922);<sup>80</sup> and *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale* (1932).<sup>81</sup> Murphy points out that 'it was men like Étienne Gilson and Marie-Dominique Chenu who created the scientific study of mediaeval texts, in the first half of the twentieth century.'<sup>82</sup> Their shared interest in the study of the primary texts and the retrieval of medieval philosophy was central to their collaboration in Toronto/Montréal and their foundation of the *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* (AHDLM) series.

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<sup>78</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 50.

<sup>79</sup> É. Gilson, *Le Thomisme. Introduction au système de Saint Thomas* (Paris: Vrin, 1919)

<sup>80</sup> *La philosophie au moyen-âge* (Paris: Payot, 1922)

<sup>81</sup> *L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 1932)

<sup>82</sup> Murphy, "Gilson and Chenu: The Structure of the *Summa* and the Shape of Dominican Life" 290.

#### 5.4 Regent of *Le Saulchoir*: Une école de théologie

In 1932 the Dominican General Chapter was held at Le Saulchoir. In line with Dominican tradition, an academic debate was held before the Masters of the Order, for which Chenu was put forward by his colleagues. Despite his relative youth – he was 38 – his success, notes Fouilloux, was so brilliant that the Master General ‘immediately promoted him’ to ‘Master of Theology’ and, as he was now the most highly qualified member of staff, he became Regent of Studies by right.<sup>83</sup> Chenu’s own account is typically self-deprecating, noting that he was rather disconcerted to find himself ‘the successor to Thomas Aquinas’,<sup>84</sup> his illustrious predecessor having been Regent of Studies at the thirteenth-century Paris house, to which Le Saulchoir might reasonably be considered the heir.<sup>85</sup> Chenu added that ‘the Master General, himself an alumnus of Le Saulchoir, appointed me to be Regent of Studies’ some days after the debate.<sup>86</sup> Yet there is no doubt that the appointment was an outstanding success, and the new Regent was quick to build on the progress of the post-1920 developments. The *Institut historique d’études thomistes* was now relatively secure, and, thanks to Chenu’s collaboration with Gilson in Canada, its influence was spreading beyond the confines of the seminary. The Dominican influence also extended to missionary lands. When the Dominicans had arrived at Le Saulchoir after the expulsions of 1904-1905, the missionary institutes of La Salette and the

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<sup>83</sup> É. Fouilloux, "Le Saulchoir en procès (1937-1942)", in *Une école de théologie: le Saulchoir*, ed. Marie-Dominique Chenu (Paris: Cerf, 1985) 41-42.

<sup>84</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 54.

<sup>85</sup> See Ch. 1 of *Une école*.

<sup>86</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 54.



Barnabites had established their houses of formation nearby, enabling their novices to study alongside the Dominicans. These students included, Chenu noted, 'a whole generation of La Salette missionaries', one of whom was Claude Rolland, future Bishop of Antsirabé, who would ask Chenu to be his theological adviser during the Second Vatican Council.<sup>87</sup> Rolland later recalled that 'my missionary brothers and I from La Salette were the black habits in the lecture theatre' at Le Saulchoir, adding that he had 'always considered it a grace to have completed my philosophical and theological studies' there.<sup>88</sup> Chenu's interest in mission – both in 'traditional' mission territory and in France – was rooted in the intellectual ferment of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which had led to the founding of the Dominican Order itself. As well as teaching novices bound for the missions abroad, he was instrumental in the founding of the IDEO in Cairo in 1945.<sup>89</sup> He had met Cardinal Tisserant in Rome during the 1938 General Chapter, after which he began training the great Egyptian Dominican medievalist, Georges Anawati (1905-94), and his co-founders of IDEO, Jacques Jomier (1914-2008), and Serge de Beaureceuil (1917-2005), to lead a Catholic centre for Islamic study. In his contribution to *L'hommage*, Anawati observed that the Dominicans had had a house in Cairo since 1928, as an extension to the École biblique, which permitted students to 'travel to Egypt to visit the Egyptian antiquities and Sinai'.<sup>90</sup> Chenu, explained Anawati, had

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 56.

<sup>88</sup> Cl. Rolland, "Le Père Chenu, théologien au Concile", in *L'hommage différé au Père Chenu*, ed. Cl. Geffré (Paris: Cerf, 1990) 247.

<sup>89</sup> Duval, "Présentation", 15. The *Institut dominicaine d'études orientales* remains a centre of excellence for Arabic and Islamic studies.

<sup>90</sup> G. Anawati, "Le Père Chenu et l'Institut dominicain d'Études orientales du Caire", in *L'hommage différé au Père Chenu*, ed. Cl. Geffré (Paris: Cerf, 1990) 64.

gone to Cairo and Jerusalem, and met Cardinal Tisserant, 'then Prefect of the Oriental Congregation' in Rome on his return.<sup>91</sup> Of course, as Anawati notes, Chenu was fully aware of the importance of Arabic scholarship to the Dominican Scholastics, particularly Albert and Thomas. 'He knew, better than anyone, the importance of the Arabic sources for a technical study of the philosophical ideas of the Middle Ages.'<sup>92</sup> Once again, we see Chenu drawing together the medieval and the contemporary worlds. Just as Thomas and his contemporaries had drawn on Muslim thought in their theology and philosophy, so twentieth-century Dominicans should be working to understand and collaborate with the Muslim culture and philosophy of their time.

Le Saulchoir's openness, its vision of educating and forming missionaries, and its concern to share its excellence in scholarship overseas, were matched by Chenu's enthusiasm for helping the JOC. Some of the earliest groups in France were in the *département du Nord*, and 'around 1928, the young priests who were its leaders crossed the border for a retreat at Le Saulchoir' accompanied by the French founder, Fr Guérin.<sup>93</sup> Chenu, who had been asked to lead the retreat, was praised by Guérin for his understanding of the movement and its aims. By 1936, Chenu noted,

in the last six months, [Le Saulchoir has held] the annual retreat for some dozen JOC chaplains from Paris, six monthly days of recollection for chaplains from the Nord, ... a retreat for regional leaders from Le Borinage, two retreats

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 64.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 65.

<sup>93</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 57.

for leaders and members from Tournai, fourteen days of recollection for regional leaders from Tournai [and the surrounding areas].<sup>94</sup>

At the same time, 'three Fathers regularly help[ed] out' with the movement, and there were also retreats and days of recollection for Jocistes from Brussels.<sup>95</sup> As Regent of Studies, Chenu committed himself and Le Saulchoir to supporting the nascent JOC. He saw a close connection between 'my work situating St Thomas in history, and these encounters with people engaged in apostolic, even social, warfare.'<sup>96</sup> Within the social and political turbulence of the 1930s<sup>97</sup> Chenu was convinced not only of the need for theologians to understand and engage with apostolic movements such as the JOC, but also to understand the political and economic forces which were driving such needs. As a result he was 'the first to introduce a class on Marx' at Le Saulchoir, which, despite its limitations, marked, he said, 'an initial awareness'.<sup>98</sup>

Chenu's Regency of Le Saulchoir was not only characterised by his generosity towards Montreal, the missionary orders, and the JOC. Perhaps most infamously, it was also marked by the publication of his manifesto for the teaching of theology.

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<sup>94</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "La J.O.C. au Saulchoir", in *La Parole de Dieu 2. L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1936)) 272.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 272.

<sup>96</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 57-8.

<sup>97</sup> The contents of the Dominican journal *La Vie Intellectuelle* during the 1930s give a flavour of the turbulence of the times, with frequent articles on the arms race, the polarisation of politics, the rise of both Fascism and Marxism, the Spanish Civil War, and the economic crisis.

<sup>98</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 66. Chenu's knowledge of Marxism, and the risks he perceived it posed to the Church, are detailed in 'L'homo œconomicus et le chrétien' (1945), and 'Le devenir social' (1947), both reprinted in *Pour une théologie du travail* (1955).

There was a tradition of organising a celebration for St Thomas' day, and it was an excellent opportunity to take stock of the conviction which inspired us. This was what I did in a speech which I gave as Regent.<sup>99</sup>

It was so well received that he was persuaded to lengthen it and publish it as a short book. The tiny print run – certainly no more than a thousand and perhaps as low as 800<sup>100</sup> – and restricted sales, as it was only available at Kain for a few months, meant that it received remarkably little attention. Alberigo suggests there was but a single review.<sup>101</sup> Fouilloux has uncovered some 29 'reactions' among Chenu's papers, 27 of which (including notes from de Lubac, Gilson, and Dominicans at Toulouse) were positive, and 2 negative (both from Dominicans who had moved from Le Saulchoir to the Angelicum).<sup>102</sup> Quisinsky has recently suggested that the influence of *Une école* rippled further than had previously been thought. He points to a note by the liturgist Odo Casel, in his 1941 *Glaube, Gnosis, Mysterium*, in which he refers approvingly to Chenu's recovery of an older concept of theology, in which the Incarnation is central.<sup>103</sup> Like Stegmüller, Casel praised Chenu's openness to the nineteenth-century Catholic Tübingen school, and especially the work of Möhler and Drey. Chenu claimed to

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 120. Fouilloux cites the College diarist (Henri-Marie Féret), 'Today, a magnificent presentation by Fr Chenu at High Mass'; Fouilloux, "Le Saulchoir", n.2.

<sup>100</sup> F. Kerr, "Chenu's Little Book", *New Blackfriars* 66 (1985) 109; Fouilloux, "Le Saulchoir", 4.

<sup>101</sup> Stegmüller, "M.-D. Chenu, Une École de Théologie. Le Saulchoir" 48-51; see G. Alberigo, "Christianisme en tant qu'histoire et "théologie confessante"", in *Une école de théologie: le Saulchoir*, ed. M.-Dominique Chenu (Paris: Cerf, 1985) n.1.

<sup>102</sup> É. Fouilloux, "Autour d'une mise à l'Index", in *Marie-Dominique Chenu. Moyen-âge et modernité*, ed. G. Bedouelle (Paris: Cerf, 1997) 29.

<sup>103</sup> M. Quisinsky, "Échos allemands à Une école de théologie. Le Saulchoir (1939-1941). Les réactions de F. Stegmüller, O. Casel et A. Deissler", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 94 (2010) 124, citing Casel, p. 25, n.25.

have 'rediscovered', with Congar, the Catholic Tübingen scholars,<sup>104</sup> who were still regarded with some suspicion in the interwar period.

Stegmüller picked out a number of key themes of what he suggests are Chenu's 'theological method' as described in the text: the primacy of the 'data of revelation' and of the sources of Scripture and Tradition; the importance of history in theology, linked to its future, which lies in the life of the Church; and the close links between the 'data of revelation' and theology as a science.<sup>105</sup> As Murphy has pointed out, 'the message [of *Une école*] is in the lay-out, and the third chapter, on theology, comes before the chapter on philosophy'.<sup>106</sup> The message in the lay-out not only mirrored Chenu's understanding of how Dominicans, and by extension, seminarians, should be educated and formed. *Une école* is also a 'type' of Chenu's own theological methodology, setting the context first, before moving in to analyse the theological and then the philosophical questions at stake. Hence Chapter 1 gives the context and history of Le Saulchoir, from the first Dominicans sent to the University of Paris in 1217 by Dominic himself. The house on rue St-Jacques was closely associated with the University of Paris until Religious were expelled during the Revolution. Le Saulchoir itself was 'a former Cistercian monastery, at Kain-la-Tombe, just outside Tournai', crucially just over the Belgian border.<sup>107</sup> '[A]fter various

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<sup>104</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 55.

<sup>105</sup> Stegmüller, "M.-D. Chenu, Une École de Théologie. Le Saulchoir" 50-51.

<sup>106</sup> Murphy, "Gilson and Chenu: The Structure of the *Summa* and the Shape of Dominican Life" 298.

<sup>107</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 41.

peregrinations, the studium generale of the French province established itself a short distance from Lille, near Tournai, at Le Saulchoir (1904)...<sup>108</sup>

Chenu objected forcefully to the imposition of the Neo-Thomist 'way of doing theology that prevailed and indeed was mandatory for clergy, seminary professors and suchlike, from the late nineteenth to the mid twentieth centuries, from the First to the Second Vatican Councils, throughout the Roman Catholic Church'.<sup>109</sup> It was his contention that such a methodology effectively removed theology from the context of faith, by which it should be nourished, leaving it as a dry intellectual activity. He pointed out that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century commentators on Thomas (whose work formed the foundations of neo-Scholasticism), 'faced with Luther's religious revolution, Galileo's scientific revolution, and Descartes' philosophical revolution, had strengthened themselves in their traditional truths to resist the assaults of the new mentality.'<sup>110</sup> The 'siege mentality', he declared almost fearlessly, had led Early Modern Thomism to 'treat truth like a possession', and to seek to 'refute adversaries by the counter-position to their conclusions',<sup>111</sup> rather than, as Thomas and the Scholastics had done, seeking to explain a changing world in theological terms. He sarcastically observed that academic excellence should not be 'a question of becoming specialist teachers each in their own closed world', but rather, 'of composing ... a school of theology, in other words, a thinking organism in which the light of faith' works alongside Revelation.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Chenu, *Une école* 112.

<sup>109</sup> Kerr, "Different World" 128.

<sup>110</sup> Chenu, *Une école* 122.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* 123.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* 122.

Theology, ‘θεο-λογία, the “word of God”’, Chenu insisted, was no ‘catalogue of propositions listed in some Denzinger, but a living, copious subject, always in action in the Church which holds it, pregnant with divine possibility.’<sup>113</sup> Neither was it a ‘utilitarian apologetic, the science of valets charged with defending the holy ark against heretics and those who deny dogma’.<sup>114</sup> We should observe Chenu’s scathing attack on those who were the object of his criticism, and the implied superiority of the Dominican Order, successful in the fight against the Cathars. On the contrary, theology is ‘faith working on theological understanding, truly and properly a factor of the spiritual life.’<sup>115</sup> Faith is ‘the only place where documentation and speculation, “authorities” and “reasons” can join one another psychologically and scientifically.’<sup>116</sup> He absolutely rejected what he referred to as ‘baroque neo-scholasticism’. Congar recalled a conversation between himself, Chenu, and Feret, in which, ‘chatting at the entrance of the old Saulchoir, we found ourselves in profound accord ... on the idea of undertaking a “liquidation of baroque theology”’.<sup>117</sup> Theology, whether the theology of Aquinas and the Schoolmen, or contemporary theology, was for Chenu indisputably rooted in faith, and could not be removed from its context.

The ideas contained in *Une école* were hardly being published for the first time. Chenu had been publishing on the teaching and methodology of theology since his appointment as Regent in 1932,<sup>118</sup> and had touched on the

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* 131, 132.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* 132.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* 145.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* 134.

<sup>117</sup> Congar, "The brother I have known" 499.

<sup>118</sup> Chenu, "Le donné révélé", 279; "Les yeux de la foi", in *La Parole de Dieu I* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1932)); "La psychologie de la foi dans la théologie du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Genèse de la doctrine de S.

methodology of theology in his 'Préface' to Gardeil's *Le donné révélé*,<sup>119</sup> which he described in *Une école* as 'the breviary of the theological method and intellectual work at Le Saulchoir.'<sup>120</sup> In 1932, Chenu had already emphasised Gardeil's assertion that theology should grow out of faith: 'the person who has no faith cannot do theology'.<sup>121</sup> Gardeil's desire that theology be regarded as an academic discipline in seminaries, explained Chenu, accounted for the foundation of the *RSPT* from Le Saulchoir in 1907, which 'for twenty years has witnessed to ... that organic conception of 'sacred doctrine' which, through Fr Gardeil, is in reality rooted in the spirit of St Thomas Aquinas.'<sup>122</sup> Chenu followed Gardeil in his insistence on the possibility of the development of dogma; the nature of theology as a 'scientific enquiry'; and his emphasis on the importance of faith. The scientific enquiry of the theologian was but one step further along from the assent of the believer to a question of faith.<sup>123</sup> Little wonder that, throughout *Une école*, Chenu actively sought to place his theories within the line already established by his predecessors, and Gardeil in particular.

The principal themes of *Une école* reflected Chenu's own concerns in the teaching of theology, evident from the start of his career. First, the establishment of the *Institut historique d'études thomistes* encouraged the teaching staff at Le Saulchoir to teach from the historical perspective, thus

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Thomas, Ilallae q.2.a.1", in *La Parole de Dieu I* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1932)); "Position de la théologie", in *La Parole de Dieu I* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1935)) 115.

<sup>119</sup> "Le donné révélé", 277-82.

<sup>120</sup> *Une école* 119.

<sup>121</sup> "Le donné révélé", 280.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* 281. Gardeil had also been a co-founder of the *Revue Thomiste* in 1907 (see C.G. Conticello, "Métaphysique de l'être et théologie de la grâce dans le médiévisme contemporain", *Revue Thomiste* 9, no. 11 (1991) 450) as a further support for the scientific study of theology which he and Chenu promoted.

<sup>123</sup> Chenu, "Le donné révélé", *passim*.



ensuring the 'application of the historical method to the study of texts and doctrines of the Middle Ages.'<sup>124</sup> This was, as Chenu himself recognised, viewed as dangerous by 'Rome'. Putting Aquinas in his historical context might be seen to be 'relativizing' him, thus shattering the foundations of the entire neo-Thomist edifice of seminary theological education. 'At the Saulchoir [*sic*] ... St Thomas was not isolated from his historical context, an isolation which sometimes tended to relativize many of his subsequent interpretations, rendering them either too dated or too dry.'<sup>125</sup> Potentially equally dangerous was Chenu's insistence – related to his historical approach – that theology had to be *engagée*, involved in the reality of daily life. Just as Thomas and his contemporaries had responded to the urgent needs of the thirteenth century, so it was incumbent upon twentieth-century theologians to ensure that their theology offered solutions to the lives of their twentieth-century contemporaries. In 1937, he compared the apparent collapse of the world order – 'the Hitler-Mussolini accords, the bombing of Shanghai',<sup>126</sup> not to mention the collapse in 1936 of the Popular Front, and the outbreak of civil war in Spain – with the founding of the Order of Preachers by Dominic in the early thirteenth century, against a similar background of 'agitation; not just external violence, worrying in itself, but that disconcerting mix of mystical aspirations and vulgar material demands.'<sup>127</sup> Dominic had offered prayer – the Rosary – to his contemporaries as his only 'weapon': now, the 'white robes' of his followers

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<sup>124</sup> *Une école* 125.

<sup>125</sup> É. Fouilloux and C. Dupont, "Friar Yves, Cardinal Congar, Dominican. Itinerary of a Theologian", *US Catholic Historian* 17, no. 2 (1999) 67.

<sup>126</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Saint Dominique et le communisme", *La Vie Intellectuelle* 52, no. 10 October 1937 (1937) 31.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* 32.

should also 'proclaim the Our Father to be just as effective today'.<sup>128</sup> As Dominic had responded to the needs of his time, so, said Chenu, the French Dominicans of 1937 should be proud to respond to the needs of theirs, by being *engagés* in the world.

The message, and perhaps the messenger, proved to be rather too revolutionary. Almost immediately, Chenu was summoned to Rome to defend *Une école*, or at least, the ideas contained within it, before a panel of Dominicans at the Angelicum, including his former professor Garrigou-Lagrange. He was obliged to sign a series of propositions to confirm his theological orthodoxy, before being permitted to return to Le Saulchoir to continue as Regent and oversee the move to Étiolles. Yet in 1942, his 'fateful little book'<sup>129</sup> was condemned and placed on the Index – infamously, Chenu heard the news on the radio. He was immediately removed from his post as Regent, and from Le Saulchoir, moving to live in the Dominican house in the 13<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* of Paris, from whence, as we shall see below, he worked with the JOC, the *Mission de Paris*, and eventually, the Worker Priests.

### 5.5 *The ressourcement of the twelfth-century renaissance*<sup>130</sup>

As we have seen, Chenu's theology was absolutely rooted in his study of Aquinas and the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Schoolmen, who provided the

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid. 34.

<sup>129</sup> Kerr, "Book" 109. Chenu himself referred to *Une école* as his 'opuscule', or 'tiny work' in Duquesne, *Un théologien passim*.

<sup>130</sup> Parts of the research for this section contributed to P. Kelly, "Chenu's Recovery of Theology as a Science", in *Faith and the Marvellous Progress of Science*, ed. Brendan Leahy (New York: New City Press, 2014)

context in which the great Dominican had worked. The context, for Chenu, naturally included both social and economic factors such as the collapse of feudalism, as well as the intellectual background. Chenu's bibliography is overwhelmingly weighted towards the medieval. Duval's 1967 bibliography listed 355 works.<sup>131</sup> Jolivet, who based his account on Duval's, points to some 70 works which are purely medieval in focus, noting that most of these were published between 1921 and 1959.<sup>132</sup> Potworowski's 2001 bibliography (which includes translations, re-editions, and even a handful of posthumous publications)<sup>133</sup> lists 1396 titles, approximately half of which are medieval in theme. In addition to the 18 'Bulletins' in *RSPT*, 199 of the 391 titles Chenu published between 1921 and 1945 relate directly to medieval theology. His two monographs, *Introduction à l'étude de St Thomas d'Aquin*, and *La théologie au XIIIe siècle*,<sup>134</sup> focused on the development of Scholasticism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Chenu's earliest articles focus on Thomas, either exclusively, or in the light of his interaction both with early Dominican scholars and his and their twelfth-century precursors. Two early publications, 'Contribution à l'histoire du traité de la foi'<sup>135</sup> and 'La raison psychologique du développement du dogme'<sup>136</sup> demonstrate that already, 'the problem of the unity and immutability of the

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<sup>131</sup> Duval, *Mélanges* 9-29.

<sup>132</sup> Jolivet, "Les études consacrées par le Père Chenu au moyen-âge", 70ff.

<sup>133</sup> Potworowski, *Contemplation & Incarnation* 237-321

<sup>134</sup> Chenu, *Introduction*, 11; *La XIIe siècle*, 45

<sup>135</sup> "Contribution à l'histoire du traité de la foi. Commentaire historique de la IIa-IIae, q.1, a.2", (originally published in *Mélanges thomistes* 3 (Paris: Vrin, 1923), 123-40.)

<sup>136</sup> "La raison psychologique du développement du dogme", in *La Parole de Dieu I* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1924)) (originally published in *RSPT* 13 (1924), 44-51).

faith'<sup>137</sup> was at the heart of Chenu's historical theology. Jolivet comments that, 'while hardly 25 pages between them, [they] are full of meaning and promise',<sup>138</sup> adding that from this point onwards there was 'not a single year' in which Chenu did not publish on the medieval period. Chenu, he surmises, 'never stopped being a medievalist, but practical urgencies imposed their own demands.'<sup>139</sup> This early pair of articles, suggests Alberigo, are 'given over to the distinction which Thomas introduced between the object of faith considered as such, and its expression by the believer, who is conditioned by his own cultural context.'<sup>140</sup> He adds that

the years that followed [the publication of these articles] were full of research on medieval theology, which would be brought together in *La théologie comme science au XIIIe siècle* in 1927,<sup>141</sup> *La Théologie au XII siècle* in 1957, and the wonderful *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin* in 1950.<sup>142</sup>

Even the 1957 *St Thomas et la théologie*,<sup>143</sup> which Chenu regarded as 'perhaps the best thing I have written',<sup>144</sup> sought to demonstrate not only the continuing relevance of medieval studies to contemporary theology, but also that faith lies

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<sup>137</sup> "Contribution à l'histoire du traité de la foi. Commentaire historique de la IIa-IIae, q.1, a.2", 34.

<sup>138</sup> Jolivet, "Les études consacrées par le Père Chenu au moyen-âge", 70-1.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. 71.

<sup>140</sup> Alberigo, "Christianisme", 20.

<sup>141</sup> This was initially a lengthy article, re-published as a small book in 1943, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> edition in 1957. All citations are from the 3<sup>rd</sup> printing of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (1969).

<sup>142</sup> Alberigo, "Christianisme", 20.

<sup>143</sup> Published in English in 2002 as M.-D. Chenu, *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*, trans. Paul Philibert (Collegeville MN: Michael Glazier, 2002)

<sup>144</sup> Jolivet, "Les études consacrées par le Père Chenu au moyen-âge", 80; cf 'Author's Preface' in Chenu, *Aquinas*

at the heart of theology. In 'Contribution', for instance, Chenu turned to Aquinas' discussion of the question of faith as expressed in *ST II.IIae.1.2*: 'Whether the object of faith is something complex by way of a proposition'. Already he did not restrict his analysis to Thomas, but also examined how the question had been dealt with by his immediate predecessors, such as Richard Fishacre (1200-1248), Hugh of St-Cher (1200-1263), Philip the Chancellor (1160-1236), William of Auxerre (*flor.* 1230s-1240s), and Robert of Melun (*flor.* 1150s). Aquinas was placed in his wider intellectual context – here, that of the twelfth-century renaissance – from the very beginning of Chenu's academic career.

Chenu's historical intuition and focus led him to propose that there had been 'a three-stage renaissance of Antiquity of which the Italian quattrocento was simply the completion'.<sup>145</sup> The first phase of this renaissance, he suggested, had taken place during the late Carolingian period, the second during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>146</sup> Chenu argued that, from the early twelfth century onwards, the arts of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* merged with the theological study of the Scriptures to begin the development of a mature theology as an intellectual and academic discipline in its own right. He observed that theology 'made use of the ways and means of the textual pedagogies of contemporary culture.'<sup>147</sup>

Chenu assigned this dramatic change in the nature of theology almost entirely to 'the discovery of Aristotle and the assimilation of Greek

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<sup>145</sup> "Nature and Man - The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century", in *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 1.

<sup>146</sup> *XIIIe Siècle* 16.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

reason by Christian theology' in the West.<sup>148</sup> It went back as far as the Carolingian renaissance of the ninth century led by 'Alcuin and the masters of the School at [Charlemagne's] Palace', and the development of the 'seven liberal arts' which 'made up the programme for theology at that time', of which 'grammar, or the science of words, was the most important, and the most used'.<sup>149</sup> Where de Lubac focused on the effect of grammar and rhetoric on the Eucharistic controversies at Corbie and Tours (*Corpus Mysticum*), Chenu was attentive to the impact on the key theological term, 'grace'. Grace, Chenu observed, had been understood etymologically as 'something given freely'. It marked 'an essential aspect of this gift, its gratuitousness, but did not make sense of this gratuitousness.'<sup>150</sup> The recovery of Aristotle, and thus 'the notion of *nature*' meant that grace was defined 'no more by its gratuitousness ... by its supernatural object, life participating in God, and thus ontologically'.<sup>151</sup> (De Lubac, of course, also focused on the question of grace in relation to nature.)

The application of the liberal arts to theology during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was strongly contested. The risk of heresy – as during the Eucharistic disputes of the ninth and eleventh centuries – meant that the overt use of tools such as logic and grammar in theology was highly suspect. By the early thirteenth century, there was concern at the University of Paris about 'the intrusion of philosophy'<sup>152</sup> into the study of theology. In his 1228 letter to the faculty of theology at Paris, Gregory IX had expressed particular concern about

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* 101.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* 18.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* 31.

the use of Aristotle in the sacred science of theology. Yet already the pope was fighting a losing battle, for by the late thirteenth century 'Aristotle's epistemology had been boldly settled in the sacred territory of revelation'.<sup>153</sup> But it was no coincidence, Chenu asserted, that this establishment of Aristotelian science as a tool for theology came about at precisely the same moment as the religious recovery of evangelicalism, a fruit of which was the founding of the Dominican order. He argued that, from the mid-eleventh century onwards, theology had been less concerned with the grammatical and dialectical disputes exemplified by the discussions about the Eucharist, and more concerned with the meaning of faith and revelation, questions about God and salvation, a recovery of the importance of the Scriptures, and a new spirituality focused on the *vita apostolica*.

This very shift enabled Chenu to describe one of the features of twelfth-century intellectual life as 'an essentially religious discovery of the universe through the discovery of Nature'.<sup>154</sup> It was precisely the rediscovery of Aristotle, he argued, rather than observation, which had 'revealed nature and humanity' to the Schoolmen.<sup>155</sup> Chenu linked the twelfth-century recovery in the West of Greek works to what he described as the 'discovery' of nature, evident in the work of 'the naturalistic artists who [now] sculpted little scenes of animal or human life on the capitals of cathedrals',<sup>156</sup> 'rational proofs in courts of law instead of the mystical expedient of trials by ordeal',<sup>157</sup> and theologians

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* 101.

<sup>154</sup> "Renaissance", 48.

<sup>155</sup> *XIIIe Siècle* 22.

<sup>156</sup> "Renaissance", 10.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

themselves, whose study of the Greek classics had, more often than not, led to a changing world view. They now perceived 'the universe as an entity ... a cardinal point among the Ancients, [which] was now revived.'<sup>158</sup> The recovery of the ancient understanding of the workings of the universe led to disputes among scholars even within the Schools. 'The creation narrative in Genesis was interpreted as recounting the natural play of the elements ... God was not absent, but it is the very laws of nature that reveal his presence and his action.'<sup>159</sup> The praise of and search for understanding of nature was understood to be the praise of the divine creator, an attempt to understand him. The wonder of 'life's ordered energies, its instincts, its laws, and its freedoms, the rhythmic movement of the seasons ...'<sup>160</sup> described for instance in Alain of Lille's (d. 1202) *De Planctu Naturae*,<sup>161</sup> was in itself a way of pondering the wonder of God.

Chenu located the beginning of the twelfth-century renaissance at the School of Chartres, whose heyday was in the mid-twelfth century with notable scholars including Bernard of Chartres, Thierry of Chartres, and Gilbert de la Porée. He suggested that the study of ancient texts which began this renaissance was 'touched off by a native interest in the scientific exploration of the universe'.<sup>162</sup> He recognised the importance of the prolific twelfth-century theologian and poet-philosopher Alain of Lille, thought to have taught in Paris before his retirement in Montpellier. For Alain, he observed, 'Lady Nature', the

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>161</sup> Alain of Lille, *De Planctu Naturae* PL 210 429-481.

<sup>162</sup> Chenu, "Renaissance", 3.



personification of creation was a poem to 'life's ordered energies, its instincts, its laws and its freedoms...', adding that, '[t]o thus exalt these powers of Nature was not at all to detract proudly from the omnipotence of God', since to praise the wonder of Nature was indeed to praise God himself.<sup>163</sup> Elsewhere, he described Alain's *De ars praedicandi*<sup>164</sup> – 'undoubtedly based on missionary experience among the Cathari' (of which his *De Fide Catholicae*<sup>165</sup> is also a product) – as a vital contribution to the increasing awareness of the need to dramatically improve preaching. This need had of course 'led to the founding of an Order of Preachers'.<sup>166</sup> He dedicated four articles alone to the English Dominican Richard Kilwardby (1215-79).<sup>167</sup> Kilwardby, a contemporary of Thomas, taught at Paris and Oxford and was an early commentator on Aristotelian logic. 'In his day, he was famous for his knowledge of Augustine's works, and shows an equally assiduous reading of Aristotle's'.<sup>168</sup>

Yet Chenu's achievement was his ability to demonstrate that medieval theology was not an arcane series of disputes in some long-distant past, but a serious engagement with a fast-changing world, which was of great relevance to, and instructive for, twentieth-century theology. He 'agreed with Marc Bloch about the idea of a major turning point in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>164</sup> PL210 109-197

<sup>165</sup> PL210 305-428

<sup>166</sup> Chenu, "Awakening", 247.

<sup>167</sup> "Kilwardby", in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1926); "Le De spiritu imaginativo de R. Kilwardby O.P. (†1279)", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 15 (1926); "Le De conscientia de R. Kilwardby O.P. (†1279)", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 16 (1927); "Les réponses de S. Thomas et de Kilwardby à la consultation de Jean de Verceil (1270-1)", in *Mélanges Mandonnet. Etudes d'histoire littéraire et doctrinale du Moyen-Age* (Paris: Vrin, 1930) During the same period he wrote a single article on Albertus Magnus and on Gilbert de Porres, and a handful on Thomas.

<sup>168</sup> *XIIIe Siècle* 50.

which he examined from the intellectual perspective'.<sup>169</sup> His desire to 'understand Thomas in his own time' in order to find him 'true today'<sup>170</sup> was vital in an intellectual environment in which Aquinas was the *sine qua non* of Catholic theology. Far from 'relativising' Thomas, as the detractors of Le Saulchoir insisted, Chenu made Aquinas and his role in theology ever more vital to his contemporaries. Of course many contemporaries, such as Pietro Parente, disagreed profoundly with this assessment. Writing about the condemnation of *Une école* in 1942, Parente claimed that Chenu's work 'discredits scholastic theology, its speculative nature, its method, and the value of the conclusions which it draws from the revealed data; and thus in turn discredits St Thomas.'<sup>171</sup>

The *ressourcement* of Aquinas and the Scholastics practised by Chenu demonstrated that medieval theology was both firmly rooted in a living faith and responsive to the reality of everyday life. Aside from his own historical appreciation of Thomas, Chenu was also, as Kerr notes, pioneering an entirely new reading, which appreciated that 'Thomas' theology ... was never separated from continuous study of scripture [*sic*], liturgically performed as well as in *lectio divina*.'<sup>172</sup> This is precisely why Chenu, in his efforts to understand Thomas as a man of his time as well as a theologian, was not relativising his theology. On the contrary, he was returning it to the context in which it originally developed, as far from the arid neo-scholastic method as can be imagined. He claimed as his own Anselm's definition of theology as faith seeking understanding,

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<sup>169</sup> Le Goff, "Le P. Chenu" 373.

<sup>170</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 49.

<sup>171</sup> See Parente's condemnation of *Une école*, cited in Chenu, *XIIIe Siècle* p. 9 n.2.

<sup>172</sup> Kerr, "Different World" 144-5.

rephrasing it as ‘the demanding appetite which grows in the believer, for the *intellectus fidei*’<sup>173</sup> and going on to explain that the “‘loci” of the believer and of the theologian are both the positive life of the Church.’<sup>174</sup> These, he explained, included mission, the pluralities of human cultures and civilisations, the Eastern Churches, ecumenism, the ‘social fermentation’ of the 1930s, and a ‘militant Church’: all are ‘Christianity at work’, the place from where the theologian draws life.<sup>175</sup> Late in his career, explaining the focus of an article on heresy between 1130 and 1215, he remarked that

I chose this period ... because the transformation that occurred then derived ... from an evangelic [*sic*] shock to the Christian people in and through their solidarity with an economico-political social development.<sup>176</sup>

The urgency for theologians was, he insisted from the earliest days of his career, ‘to be present to our days, just as Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure were to theirs’.<sup>177</sup> Aquinas and the Schoolmen thus became, for Chenu, examples for modern theologians to follow, demonstrating how they were to be *engagés* in their contemporary world.

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<sup>173</sup> Chenu, *Une école* 134.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* 134.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* 142.

<sup>176</sup> "Confrontation without Schism in the Medieval Church", *Concilium* 89 (1973) 50.

<sup>177</sup> *Une école* 123-4.

## 5.6 La théologie, intelligence de la foi<sup>178</sup>

The underpinning of theology by the life of faith is a further demonstration of the centrality of contemplation and incarnation to Chenu's whole approach. It is noteworthy that this is clearly identifiable in two key texts, written over 20 years apart, and in very different circumstances. The first, *Une école*, dates from 1936. The second, *La Théologie est-elle une science* (1957), was published in Fayard's 'Je Sais – Je Crois' series of 'twentieth-century Catholicism'.

Undoubtedly more populist in nature and approach, it takes as its starting point the first question of the *Summa*, investigating the nature of theology, and how its study should be undertaken. Yet in both cases Chenu vigorously rejects the concept of theology as a merely academic exercise, and insists that it is to be a praxis rooted in a living faith.

Chenu's focus on twelfth-century philosophers and theologians, such as the Schools of Chartres and St Victor, and Alain of Lille, had enabled him to chart the crucial shift in medieval theology from *sacra pagina* to *sacra doctrina*: theology as *scientia*. It is, of course, a very particular *scientia*, one which is intrinsically linked to the life of faith. 'He who loses the faith', warned Chenu, 'loses theology.'<sup>179</sup> It is a *scientia* through the study of which the student grows, for 'theology is a participation in God's own knowledge of himself.'<sup>180</sup> Chenu's study of Alain of Lille's *Regulae theologicae*<sup>181</sup> enabled him to demonstrate this very *scientia* at work in the twelfth century. He described the *Regulae* as '[t]he

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<sup>178</sup> *La Théologie est-elle une science?* 22.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.* 24.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.* 24.

<sup>181</sup> PL 210 617-686

method according to which faith-knowledge, like any other intellectual discipline, was organized and built upon internal principles which gave it a scientific turn and value'.<sup>182</sup> Theology was thus the application of scientific methodologies acquired during the twelfth-century renaissance, 'based on newly retrieved ancient texts'<sup>183</sup> which Alain and his contemporaries studied, to the life of faith.

Once again, this was no arcane medieval debate, but a question which went to the very heart of the nature of theology, and who may be described as a theologian. The theologian, declared Chenu, 'is an adult Christian who, being aware of what he has, reflects upon it, measures the complex content of his faith, builds it up, and unifies it.'<sup>184</sup> The *scientia* of theology was careful and reasoned reflection on faith. To this extent at least, Chenu insisted that any Christian, whether thinking about the location of the altar for the Eucharistic sacrifice, reading the Scriptures, doing spiritual reading, or reflecting on world events in the light of the Gospel and teaching of the Church was 'doing theology without knowing it'. Theology lay in the reflection upon and the attempt to understand the faith a person practised.

You are involved in a Catholic Action group, and your behaviour has been marked by a particular Christian vision of the salvation of the world, not only through apostolic fervour, but by a characteristic perception of the conditions of grace in Christ... You are involved in labour organisations, concerned about

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<sup>182</sup> Chenu, "Renaissance", 48.

<sup>183</sup> *XIIIe Siècle* 16.

<sup>184</sup> *La Théologie est-elle une science?* 18.

the economic and political development of under-developed countries... You probably do not go to a college, and this is not necessary, ... [but] you are doing theology, just as Monsieur Jourdain spoke prose, without knowing it.<sup>185</sup>

In this way Chenu showed how theology grows out of the human response of faith to divine revelation. As we saw above, Chenu noted the Scholastic tendency to see revelation in the natural world. But the primary source of revelation, he insisted, was Scripture, which was ‘the living and always new soul of theology.’<sup>186</sup>

Chenu emphasised the ‘primacy of revelation’<sup>187</sup> in theology, rather than the ‘catalogue of propositions listed in some kind of Denzinger’<sup>188</sup>, which was his criticism of contemporary neo-scholastic methodology. Scripture and Tradition were ‘not primarily sources for arguments in the Scholastic style and conclusions reached by its disputations’, but rather the ‘data’ to be ‘known and loved for itself’.<sup>189</sup> Theology, we might say, arises out of a contemplation of a two-fold incarnation: the ‘incarnation of the Word of God in the human words of Scripture’ just as much as in the Word made flesh.<sup>190</sup> The key for Chenu is that the theologian not only seeks to better understand revelation – in both Scripture and Tradition – but also matures personally through this increased understanding of the faith. This ‘science of God’ relies both on ‘the light of God’

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid. 15-18. The allusion is to Molière’s *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, who famously discovers that he has been speaking prose all his life without knowing it (Act II, scene iv).

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. 44.

<sup>187</sup> *Une école* 130.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. 132.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. 132.

<sup>190</sup> *La Théologie est-elle une science?* 30.

and on the theologian's faith, to enable the theologian to 'participate in God's own self-knowledge'.<sup>191</sup>

Theology is a three-fold process, beginning with divine revelation. Faith is the necessary response for the theologian, Chenu argued, because it is only through faith that the theologian will come to know God.<sup>192</sup> Yet faith in itself is not sufficient for the theologian. Revelation must also be accepted and integrated into life, so that 'an internal assent to the Word of God is developed'.<sup>193</sup> Thus, Chenu argues, a non-believer cannot truly become a theologian. This is due not to a lack of reason, but because without faith 'the interior light which brings about the real understanding [*intelligence*] of the facts analysed will not flow'.<sup>194</sup> Put simply, it is faith within the ecclesial Tradition, combined with assent to the divine command, which enables the theologian properly to understand the revelation which is his 'primary data'. The theologian 'dares to speak the Word of God in human terms' and must therefore have listened to the Word and allow himself to be possessed by it. Faith is a 'habitus' which, through theology, leads to the 'new man'. Theology thus becomes a sort of 'initiation', 'or, as Denys said, in his untranslatable Eastern way, the theologian is a mystagogue'.<sup>195</sup>

### *5.7 Conclusion: Theology as la foi engagée*

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<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.* 85.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.* 39.

With Chenu, as with Cardijn, we can see how personal biography comes to influence theology. Just as the friars of the thirteenth century had been both contemplative and deeply involved in the daily urban life which surrounded them, so Chenu, influenced by the Dominican tradition with which he had fallen in love at such a tender age, lived the contemplative and active sides of Dominican life. His contemplation encompassed his academic medieval studies, as well as his life of faith. As a medievalist he was also a key early supporter of *Annales* historiography, focusing not only on the context of the development of ideas, but also emphasising the need for contemporary theologians to be knowledgeable in fields beyond theology, whether that be the study of Arabic or of Marxism. This in turn furnished theologians with a stronger grasp of the contemporary Church's missionary requirements.

Chenu's programmatic manifesto for theology, *Une école*, emphasised the need for a theology which was both historical and *engagée*. Here the medievalist drew on early and pre-Scholastic sources to chart the development of theology from *sacra pagina* to *sacra doctrina*, precisely through that very engagement with the world which he preached to his own students. In thirteenth-century Paris it had been Islam, Aristotle, and grammar which contributed to the evolution of theology; in twentieth-century Belgium it was the needs of the JOC and other work-based missionary movements which would inspire theologians.



At the very heart of Chenu's theology was the insistence that 'theology flows from faith: it is born in and through faith'.<sup>196</sup> Such faith is itself rooted in the reality of life, and 'in the historical and spiritual reality of the life of the Church',<sup>197</sup> and he emphasised that anyone reflecting on their faith during their daily life was a theologian, '*sans le savoir*'. What an affirmation for Jocistes and those like them, full of faith and yet who had often received only the most basic education: they, too, were theologians! Theology must be fed by an ever-growing faith, and this faith should be *engagée*, rooted in and involved in the reality of everyday life. The 'medievalist of long standing' was also thoroughly engaged in the modern world. He unashamedly sought to reconcile theology with contemporary life. Just as Scholasticism had grown with the rise of urban life, so twentieth-century theology had to respond to the urgencies posed by the twentieth-century world. His assessment of the theological discourse on work – or rather, the lack of such a discourse – was one such urgency, and it is to this that we now turn.

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<sup>196</sup> *Une école* 135.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* 141.

## CHAPTER 6

### *POUR UNE THÉOLOGIE DU TRAVAIL*

#### *6.1 Introduction*

Chenu's study of the early Scholastic period, influenced as it was by *Annales* historiography, led him to emphasise the need for theology to be rooted in the realities of daily life. Chenu's approach to theology of work was grounded in his 'acute and enthusiastic sense of the *Incarnation* of the Word of God' which is the 'golden thread which ensures the unity of his life, his work and his commitments'.<sup>1</sup> Chenu regarded thinking theologically about work as being as much a part of the *ressourcement* project as his recovery of Thomas and the Schoolmen. Louis Augros noted that Chenu pointed to the 'return to the sources of revelation' as key to the Church's ability to be 'present to humanity'.<sup>2</sup> Cardijn pointed out that, for Chenu, the 'theology of temporal realities' required a starting point rooted in reality. Otherwise the solution would be 'dis-incarnate' and would end up breaking the link between nature and supernature.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, Chenu's theological reflection on work goes much deeper than *Pour une théologie du travail*,<sup>4</sup> a collection of 3 articles published together in 1955. This short text consists of the 1955 title article, a 1945 article, 'l'homo œconomicus', and a 1947 article, 'le devenir social'. All too often, this (relatively late) publication is cited as his principal, or indeed only, contribution to the

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<sup>1</sup> Cl. Geffré, "Introduction", in *L'hommage différé au Père Chenu*, ed. Cl. Geffré (Paris: Cerf, 1990)p. vii. Author's emphasis.

<sup>2</sup> L. Augros, "Le P. Chenu et la Mission de France", *ibid.* 31.

<sup>3</sup> J. Cardijn, "Théologie du travail, théologie pour l'homme", *ibid.* 21.

<sup>4</sup> Chenu, *Théologie du Travail*

question of theology of work. Yet Chenu was discussing work theologically with JOC chaplains from the movement's earliest days in France, having 'followed what Cardijn was doing in Belgium a little.'<sup>5</sup> Cardijn noted that, 'Chenu was talking to [JOC chaplains] about theology of work from the very beginning of the JOC'.<sup>6</sup> In this chapter we shall trace Chenu's theology of work in his writings.

The theological discourse on work may be perceived in Chenu's writings from the interwar period until the start of the *trente glorieuses*. It may be seen in the articles he wrote during the 1930s about the 'new' Christianity brought about by industrialisation. It is evident in his examination of the response of the thirteenth-century Scholastics to new economic and social situations. It is also visible in his engagement with the JOC, and his work in the industrial 13<sup>ème</sup> *arrondissement* of Paris with the Mission de Paris and the Worker Priests. His theology of work was articulated in reaction to all of these theological commitments across this quarter of a century time-span.

We begin by looking at how Chenu's approach to theology of work was rooted in his incarnational approach to theology (6.2). We then turn to his understanding of how the Church should take the Incarnation to the world, as '*l'Eglise en état de mission*' (6.3). For Chenu, the 'shift from tool to machine' brought about by industrialisation was what required a new approach to theology of work, and it is this which we consider in Section 6.4. In Section 6.5 we examine his theology of work itself, before, in Section 6.6 examining how,

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<sup>5</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 57.

<sup>6</sup> Cardijn, "Travail", 19.

during the post-war period, Chenu shifted from supporting the JOC to promoting the Worker Priests.

## 6.2 *Work as part of the Incarnation*

Chenu's approach to theology may be summarised, as Potworowski's title has it, as 'Contemplation and Incarnation'.<sup>7</sup> As noted in Chapter 5, for Chenu, theology must first grow out of faith (contemplation). In harsh terms he described theology 'constructed outside of the experience of faith' as 'a still-born theology'.<sup>8</sup> Theology must also, he insisted, be rooted in the reality of the context in which it is done (incarnation). He could not, argues Le Goff, 'conceive of a theology, nor of a history of theology, working outside of the history of the societies in which this theology acted and expressed itself.'<sup>9</sup> This emphasis on theology acting in history applied equally to biblical studies, late antiquity, and modern theology. He complimented his fellow Dominican, Pope, for including the 'external setting of Augustine's life: Roman Africa, Christian life in that Africa, and Augustine's biography itself'.<sup>10</sup> As Mettepenningen and Boersma have observed,<sup>11</sup> these two aspects informed Chenu's 'historical methodology' of *ressourcement*, which linked his study of the Schoolmen to the contemporary social developments to which theology should be attentive. Potworowski suggests that,

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<sup>7</sup> Potworowski, *Contemplation & Incarnation* .

<sup>8</sup> Chenu, "Position de la théologie", 118.

<sup>9</sup> Le Goff, "Le P. Chenu" 371.

<sup>10</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Bulletin", *ibid.* 27 (1938) 272. Hugh Pope OP (1869-1946) was an English Biblical scholar based at the Angelicum.

<sup>11</sup> Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie* 49; Boersma, *Sacramental Ontology* 137.

'[f]or Chenu, the doctrine of incarnation provided a theological model with which he viewed the advent of modernity, a framework within which the various movements of Action catholique acquired their theological significance ... [it] involved extending the traditional teaching on incarnation to include the social, historical, and economic dimensions of humanity.'<sup>12</sup>

Geffré points to the difficulty in drawing out a systematic theology from Chenu's work. Nonetheless, he insists, 'there is one constant issue which underpins his theological reflection... the *law of the incarnation*'.<sup>13</sup> This issue was guided by Chenu's insistence that 'the theologian works on a history ... his data are events, the response to an *economy*'.<sup>14</sup> Such a theology would be involved in and committed to contemporary problems; in other words, it would be *engagée*.

As Chenu commented to Duquesne, his search for a theology which was *engagée* led to the 'desire for apostolic engagement at the level of the world of work' as 'a further witness of the truth of our theology' at Le Saulchoir.<sup>15</sup>

Already in 1937, he was writing about the need for a 'new Christendom' to take on a 'new dimension, matching that humanity in which it is incarnate.'<sup>16</sup> The Incarnation, he clarified in 1944, meant that 'the economy of salvation is

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<sup>12</sup> Potworowski, *Contemplation & Incarnation* p. xiii.

<sup>13</sup> Cl. Geffré, "Le réalisme de l'incarnation dans la théologie du Père M.-D. Chenu", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 69, no. 3 (1985) 389.

<sup>14</sup> Chenu, "Position de la théologie", 129 (originally published in *RSPT* (24 (1935) 232-57).

<sup>15</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 57.

<sup>16</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Dimension nouvelle de la Chretiente", in *La Parole de Dieu 2. L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1937)) 89.

involved in history'.<sup>17</sup> Key to the meaning of the Incarnation was the 'beautiful spiritual theme [of] the Christian doctors of Alexandria',<sup>18</sup> that the Incarnation of Christ – the God-becoming man – is what enables the salvation – the 'man-becoming-god' – of humanity. 'Thanks to this incarnation, man can live divinely.'<sup>19</sup> Yet, added Chenu, 'if God becomes incarnate to deify humanity, he must take up *everything* in humanity' in order to ensure humanity's redemption.<sup>20</sup> Turning once more to the mid-twentieth-century Church, he criticised what he perceived as an over-emphasis of Christ's divine nature at the expense of his human nature. This emphasis on the divine meant some aspects of human life appeared to be excluded from salvation. 'It is the whole person, with all his resources and all his works, who is assumed by grace.'<sup>21</sup> Everything, including industrialised life, must be incorporated by theology into the theandric mystery of the Incarnation, for if not, 'this is a whole section of humanity simply thrown out with the rubbish'.<sup>22</sup> Chenu insisted, rather, that the Incarnation implied 'the very transformation of the world: the deification of humanity in the transformation of the cosmos. The economy of salvation takes place in history.'<sup>23</sup>

Part of the problem, suggested Chenu, was the Church's post-Trent focus on the parish and the buoying up of family life ('sanctified by the

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<sup>17</sup> "La foi en Chrétienté", in *La Parole de Dieu 2. L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris Cerf, 1964 (1944)) 114.

<sup>18</sup> "Dimension", 91.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 91.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 91-92.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 92.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 92.

<sup>23</sup> "La foi en Chrétienté", 114.

sacrament of marriage'<sup>24</sup>) at the expense of the reality of the world of work.

Rather than 'protecting the Christian against his environment', he argued, the new Christendom should be going out into the places where life was lived: 'the workshop, the office, the factory, the neighbourhood'.<sup>25</sup> His criticism of the contemporary Church was clear: by establishing the parish as a 'bastion' of Christendom, secure against the world, while 'abandoning the damned and shameful paganised proletariat to its misery', it was 'committing a sin against the reality of the Incarnation.'<sup>26</sup> Arnal observes that '[s]harp criticism of the parish [structure] was rampant among the Church's avant-garde leaders, but all of them were convinced that the neighbourhood church could have a significant impact upon the industrial ghettos of France.'<sup>27</sup> In both 'Dimension' and 'La foi en chrétienté', Chenu was being deliberately provocative with his critique of the Church. This is particularly noticeable when he attacks the 'siege mentality' of the contemporary Church and demands that it move away from this mind-set, in order to deal with pressing contemporary issues.<sup>28</sup> He was highly critical of a Church which, even in the mid-twentieth century, appeared to define itself by its opposition to the theology and churches of the sixteenth-century Reformation, and the modernity it had condemned in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Augros' paraphrase of Chenu notes, such a Church, 'fixed on defensive positions' was focused on 'discerning the error and danger it

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<sup>24</sup> "Dimension", 93.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 96.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 97.

<sup>27</sup> O. Arnal, *Priests in working-class blue. The history of the Worker Priests 1943-1954* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist, 1986) 26.

<sup>28</sup> Chenu, "Dimension", 88.

risks and condemning them.' Such an attitude meant it was 'impossible to be missionary'.<sup>29</sup>

Chenu recognised that it was the structure of the post-Tridentine Church, and its inflexibility not only in dogma but also in worship, mission, and administration of the Sacraments, which made it incapable of facing up to the challenges posed by industrialisation. In 1948, he returned to the theme, asking whether the Church really understood the full meaning and implication of the Incarnation, for it was this which should be the solution to the dualism central to Western thought, privileging the spiritual over the material.<sup>30</sup> As he observed, for the Christian, the Incarnation should mean that the 'resurrection of the flesh is included in the resurrection of Christ'. The saving of the 'material' would go hand in hand with the saving of the 'spiritual'. Of course, this would also include the entirety of human life, even work and the economy.<sup>31</sup>

In his usual provocative manner, Chenu was turning the question of 'the Church and the workers' on its head. With all those involved in the mission to the workers during the interwar period, he was adamant that the Church must recover the workers who were lost to it. But his account went against that of his contemporaries. The usual narrative, as seen in Chapter 2, was that the workers had fallen away from the Church under the influence of the 'Marxists and socialists' who, with the workers themselves, were held to blame for such apostasy. Chenu, however, argued that the workers had, for the most part,

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<sup>29</sup> Augros, "Mission", 27.

<sup>30</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Matérialisme et spiritualisme", in *L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1948))

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 461-464.



never been part of the Church. It was not, he suggested in a powerful (and relatively late) article, a question of 'de-Christianisation' but rather one of 'non-Christianisation'.<sup>32</sup> This was not simply a question of word-play. The use of 'de-Christianisation' implied personal apostasy as a deliberate act, and held the workers themselves responsible for the perilous state of their souls, as blameworthy as the Marxists and Socialists who lured them away from salvation. Chenu maintained that this situation was due 'purely and simply to the fact that the working classes live in an environment which is not Christianised.'<sup>33</sup> The workers, he argued, were in no way living in 'the remnants of a civilisation which had once been baptised'.<sup>34</sup> On the contrary, the change in the 'human condition' brought about by industrialisation, 'a civilisation in which work has become the strategic location of all political, social, and economic constructions', revealed the 'inability of a certain kind of Christendom' (again the veiled attack on the Church) to evangelise a huge section of the population.<sup>35</sup>

The real danger for the working class was not atheism, or even Marxism. Rather, it was that '[t]he working class has not apostasised: it has not yet been able to be evangelised, at least in the real evangelical and human way that word means.'<sup>36</sup> The solution for the Church was twofold. First, it should stop misusing the term 'de-Christianisation', and accept the reality of an un-evangelised working class. Second, if the workers were not going to the Church, then the

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<sup>32</sup> "Dechristianisation ou non-Christianisation", in *La Parole de Dieu 2. L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1960))

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 248.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 248.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 249.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 250.

Church should revert to its missionary beginnings, and take the Church to the workers.

The structures which Chenu advocated most strongly and worked with most closely were the JOC, the *Mission de France/Paris*, and the Worker Priests. All were involved, with slightly differing emphases, in evangelising the working classes by effectively bringing the Church to the workers. As we have seen, the JOC sought to form young workers in their faith, and turn them into advocates to improve working and living conditions. From 1942, following the condemnation of *Une école*, Chenu was based in the Dominican convent on the rue St-Jacques in Paris. Here he was perfectly able, as Routhier notes, to move with ease between the encounter with the thirteenth century, the world of Thomas Aquinas, to the 13<sup>ème</sup> *arrondissement* of Paris, where he met his contemporaries: base communities in homes and young workers.<sup>37</sup>

Augros explains that Chenu now became one of the leading lights of the *Mission de Paris*, which grew out of Godin and Daniel's 1942 report, *La France, pays de mission*. 'France, pays de mission? The very word was shocking...'<sup>38</sup> Both the *Mission de Paris* and the *Mission de France* had at their heart the need to evangelise 'those sectors [of France] which must absolutely be treated as pagan regions, by which we mean those social areas which, in industrial cities which are home to large numbers of the working classes are literally outside of

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<sup>37</sup> G. Routhier and F. Nault, "Un très grand siècle pour la théologie", in *Les grandes révolutions de la théologie moderne* ed. F. Bousquet (Paris: Bayard, 2003) 127.

<sup>38</sup> Chenu, "Godin", 244.

Christianity.<sup>39</sup> The *Mission de France* seminary was founded in Lisieux by Cardinal Suhard and supported by all the French bishops in 1941, with Augros as the first Rector. Arnal has observed that new teaching methods such as group discussion were used, and the history of revelation and Marxism were included on the curriculum.<sup>40</sup> The shock of the Godin-Daniel report galvanised further response. Cardinal Suhard had been a supporter of the JOC as Bishop of Bayeux, where he was deeply concerned about the un-Christianised population of the Caen basin. Now he was inspired to found the *Mission de Paris* which would specialise in training clergy for the Paris region. He proposed an incarnational approach, which would move the response out of the parish and into the *milieu*.

Chenu's involvement with the Worker Priests had a longer hinterland. As far back as 1934, he had been sending Dominican novices from Le Saulchoir on 'work placements' to mines and factories.<sup>41</sup> The formation at the *Mission de France* and the *Mission de Paris* included a similar *stage* in heavy industry, which would give the priests an understanding of the daily reality lived by their flock. When in 1942 the *STO* was imposed, with thousands of Frenchmen – including many former and current Jocistes – sent to work for the German war effort, Chenu supported the clergy who volunteered to accompany them as incognito chaplains. (As they were not technically prisoners of war, French chaplains were not permitted.) Some 300 priests volunteered; some were discovered and returned to France; some imprisoned; some martyred. All

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 244.

<sup>40</sup> Arnal, *Blue* 25.

<sup>41</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 144.

experienced 'the harsh life of the working classes first hand'.<sup>42</sup> On their return to France, many wished to continue this mission of, as they saw it, solidarity with the workers, leading to the movement's heyday in the post-war period and Chenu's role as a theological advisor. Chenu was closely involved in all three of these specialist missions in his search to bring the Church to the workers. It is to his understanding of the Church in a state of mission that we now turn.

### 6.3 L'Église en état de mission<sup>43</sup>

For Chenu, it was vital that the contemporary Church be 'in a state of mission'. The working classes were lost to the Church, not because of their own de-Christianisation and apostasy, but because they had not been Christianised by the Church in the first place. For the medievalist, the key example in Church history analogous to the situation of crisis in which the French Church found itself in the interwar period was the evangelical fervour which was the context for the founding of the Friars, at the start of the thirteenth century.<sup>44</sup> Just as the mendicant orders of Dominic and Francis had been a response to the collapse of the feudal structure which dominated early medieval Europe, so the twentieth-century Church in crisis required new missionary structures. Such organisations as the JOC, the *Mission de France*, the *Mission de Paris*, and the Worker Priests,

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<sup>42</sup> Arnal, *Blue* 55.

<sup>43</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Le sacerdoce des prêtres-ouvriers", in *La Parole de Dieu 2. L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1954)) 277.

<sup>44</sup> "Laïcs en chrétienté", in *La Parole de Dieu 2. L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1945))

would ensure that the working classes would be Christianised rather than pagan.<sup>45</sup>

The importance of the JOC on Chenu's development as a *théologien engagé* cannot be underestimated. Chenu himself noted its importance to him and his Dominican contemporaries. For the Dominicans at Le Saulchoir, he observed in 1936, the interaction with the JOC through retreats and chaplaincy was life-giving and restorative of the Dominican charism. It was 'the most certain witness... of the Order's vitality and the ongoing nature of the spirit of St Dominic.'<sup>46</sup> He noted the importance for the spirituality of the novitiate of the regular presence of Jocistes and JOC chaplains in the seminary. The presence of these workers' apostles demonstrated the flip side of the Dominican life to their 'austere study',<sup>47</sup> for they were not only theologians, but also missionaries. The contribution was two-way. The JOC, observed Cardijn, had been 'fortunate enough, from its very beginnings, to be enlightened, guided, and supported by great theologians', including Chenu.<sup>48</sup> Guérin suggested that it was Chenu who 'brought the weight of theology to bear on Cardijn's initiative'.<sup>49</sup> Yet as we shall see, even early on Chenu was not uncritical of the JOC. During the Second World War period he moved further away from the movement as he began to question whether this was the most appropriate missionary activity for the Church among the workers.

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<sup>45</sup> "Dimension",

<sup>46</sup> "JOC", 273-274.

<sup>47</sup> *Une école* 143.

<sup>48</sup> Cardijn, "Travail", 21.

<sup>49</sup> G. Guerin, "Un théologien à la JOC", *ibid.* (Paris ) 23.

Let us first look at how Chenu understood the contribution of the JOC to the much-needed mission of the French (and Belgian) Church during the interwar period. In 'La dimension nouvelle', an article dedicated to the JOC chaplains he had come to know through his work with the still-young movement, he turned once more to the importance of theology being aware of and engaged with the reality of daily life. As we have seen, the new reality of human life in industrialised Europe required the Church to treat even France as mission territory. But this mission, Chenu argued, needed to take place where the people themselves were to be found. It was no longer enough, he insisted, to assume that they would make their way to the churches. The parish could not serve as the missionary base, as it had done for so long. Rather, the work of evangelisation had to be carried out wherever the people were, by the people who were there with them, not the clergy. In a Church ever on the defensive against modernity, the apostolate had 'increasingly been a work reserved to the priests, as though it were not the natural influence of the Christian *tout court*.'<sup>50</sup> Catholic Action in general, and the JOC in particular, had effected a *ressourcement* of the 'apostolic sense in the Christian soul', ensuring the Jocistes were 'the yeast once again added to the dough'.<sup>51</sup> Approvingly – it appears – he paraphrased Cardijn and Pius XI, citing 'the apostolate of the *milieu* by the *milieu*'.<sup>52</sup> Yet Chenu was not one to use rhetorical flourish for dramatic effect. This was no 'lay priesthood', who would be making their 'sacrifice' at the 'altar' of their workbench. It was rather, he clarified, 'a

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<sup>50</sup> Chenu, "Dimension", 97.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 97.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 96.

participation by the lay person in the apostolate of the Church's hierarchy.<sup>53</sup>

For all the urgency of 'new and complementary apostolates', he was insistent that they should be guided by this 'governing principle', itself reiterated by the Pope.<sup>54</sup>

The JOC was so key to the Church's mission precisely because it carried out this activity in the workplace, which Chenu described as 'the privileged place of the Incarnation.'<sup>55</sup> He was highly critical of the inflexible parish structure, which he accused of being inappropriate for the new type of mission required. In 1944 he again observed the chasm between the social structures imposed by the advent of industrialisation and the ecclesial structures of the French Church.<sup>56</sup> With Godin, Daniel, Cardijn, and Pius XI, he recognised that the apostolate of like to like in the workplace was the way forward. In modern economies, he suggested, 'work has been and remains the subject in which the incarnation of grace has initially rediscovered its authority.'<sup>57</sup> It was not about 'tending to the individual's ascetic development [with] pious practices and an apostolate of prayer',<sup>58</sup> but rather about 'making incarnate the life of grace in social environments.'<sup>59</sup> It was the very success of the JOC,<sup>60</sup> which put work centre-stage,<sup>61</sup> which demonstrated the urgency of this 'new dimension' of Christianity. The JOC, he observed, was 'a locus for theology which was well

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 98.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 98.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 98.

<sup>56</sup> "Godin", 244.

<sup>57</sup> "Dimension", 100.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 101.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 101.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 104.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 101.

able to reveal the march of Christendom in the contemporary world.<sup>62</sup> The Incarnation meant 'the transformation of the world, the deification of humanity in the transformation of the universe.'<sup>63</sup> Work (and *la jeunesse ouvrière*) was the environment in which this new theology could be worked out through the apostolate.<sup>64</sup>

Yet Chenu was not entirely positive in his assessment of the JOC. He was profoundly concerned about whether a 'Christian-worker' (hyphenated in French) might be equally balanced in both aspects of his life. Was it not the case, he wondered, that the 'Christian' would outweigh the 'worker', to such an extent that '[in order] to remain in the Christian community, he comes out of the community of work, rather than being a bearer of grace into this profane community?'<sup>65</sup> He regretted those workers who had, 'having become Christian, been gradually exiled from their working-class life, their environment, their community.'<sup>66</sup> Again, he was critical of the sclerotic and inflexible parish structure imposed by the Counter-Reformation Church which he felt implicitly encouraged this. Rather, the body of the Church should be 'constructed according to all the economic, family, social, and political requirements of a humanity which lives in fraternal communities.'<sup>67</sup> Only thus would the Church return to the evangelisation of its first days and of the time of the new awakening of the thirteenth century.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>63</sup> "Corps de l'Église et structures sociales", in *La Parole de Dieu 2. L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1964 (1948)) 161.

<sup>64</sup> "Dimension", 107.

<sup>65</sup> "Corps", 167-168

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 168.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 169.



Chenu's criticism of the JOC would ultimately lead him to prefer other means to bring the Church to the factories. His reservations were not limited to the possibly deleterious effects of deracination on JOC members, who, like Cardijn, risked finding themselves neither part of their working-class roots, nor truly part of the middle-class Church. It was also about the most appropriate way for the Church to bring its message into the factories in order to evangelise the working classes it had lost. For Cardijn, this was undoubtedly via the JOC. The role of the *Jociste* was to bring the Word to their peers at work, while being supported 'behind the scenes' by their chaplains, mostly priests, who taught them their faith, explained the Gospel, and administered the sacraments. Yet, as Augros observed in his recollection of Chenu at the time of the *Missions*, 'in order that the Church is present to the world, the priest must also be engaged in in the world alongside the lay person'.<sup>68</sup> This in itself demanded 'a new type of priest', who would be 'able to take on this presence to the world', so that 'the Church might assume its mission in the unity of its body and the diversity of its members.'<sup>69</sup> The *Mission de France*, Chenu observed approvingly, was a prime example of how this might be achieved, with its seminary at Lisieux, 'on the margins of traditional regimens and the usual canonical status'.<sup>70</sup> Such a 'reformation' (Chenu's word) in formation – this 'institutional reformation, at the very heart of the Christian soul'<sup>71</sup> – was precisely what would permit the return to the Gospel and the internal mission which even a 'Christianised'

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<sup>68</sup> Augros, "Mission", 30.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>70</sup> Chenu, "La foi en Chrétienté", 125.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 125.

country such as France so desperately required. Again Chenu turned to history to support and exemplify his argument. Just as Francis had responded to 'the feudal revolution and the revolution of the communes in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries',<sup>72</sup> so the French Church, at the critical juncture in which it found itself in 1944, should be similarly daring. Yet Chenu cautioned against over-enthusiasm. Even Francis, he pointed out, for all his rebelliousness, had 'cast himself at the feet of the bishop',<sup>73</sup> and despite his own wishes had submitted to pressure from Rome to formalise his 'fraternity' as a religious congregation.<sup>74</sup> Luther, by contrast – whom Chenu acknowledged had also 'rediscovered this evangelical ferment' – had 'misunderstood the Incarnation', which demands that change is accomplished in the Christian community which is the Church.<sup>75</sup> In other words, explains Augros, Chenu was insisting on the need for the *Missions* to work with, not against, the institutional Church, which, for all its failings, remains the place where the Spirit works to accomplish the ongoing Incarnation.<sup>76</sup>

The insistence that theology should be closely connected to, even informed by, the life-context in which it developed, was something which Chenu attributed, not to himself, but to the great Dominican theologian, Aquinas, and to his predecessors in the Schools, particularly those of Chartres and St-Victor. Already in the twelfth century, Chenu indicated, Religious were responding to the growth of towns: the house of the Canons Regular at St Victor grew up at

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 116.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 126.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 128-129.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 126, 129.

<sup>76</sup> Augros, "Mission", 32.

the gates of Paris.<sup>77</sup> Elsewhere he drew attention to the 'conjunction' of the development of the 'new urban class, tied to the economy of the market and trade' with the growth of both the Canons Regular during the twelfth century and the Mendicants in the thirteenth.<sup>78</sup> He observed that in a 'feudal society based on territorial stability',<sup>79</sup> merchants could be marginalised by society. Yet the Church, he pointed out, had responded at that time to the social dislocation of vulnerable members of society. The implication – not spelled out – was that the contemporary Church should do likewise for the vulnerable and marginalised, such as young workers in the industrial heartlands of France and Belgium.

#### *6.4 Tool to machine*

When in 1955 Chenu rather dramatically proclaimed that 'there was no theology of work' and that any such theological discourse had only begun 'in the last 5 or 6 years',<sup>80</sup> he was not disregarding Tradition. As we saw in Chapter 1, human work is indeed discussed, albeit often obliquely, in both the biblical and magisterial sources of Catholic theology. Chenu's concern was more precisely the lack of theological discourse on work in an industrial society. The advent of the assembly line had irrevocably changed both the nature of work and its impact on the worker. Chenu consistently described this as 'the shift from tool

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<sup>77</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Civilisation urbaine et théologie. L'école de Saint-Victor au XIIIe siècle", *Annales* 29, no. 5 (1974) 1254.

<sup>78</sup> "Awakening", 242-3.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 242-3.

<sup>80</sup> *Théologie du Travail* 10, 12.

to machine'. Since the 'radical transformations' of the industrial revolution, he observed, 'work confronted humanity – both physically and spiritually – as a new reality, whose conditions and structures profoundly modified not only the standard of living, but also the way of living.'<sup>81</sup> Yet the theological response, he lamented, remained at the level of the requirement to 'do work well'. This was not good enough for Chenu. Rather, he insisted, 'it was necessary to get to know this new human field which is work from the beginning'.<sup>82</sup>

Of course, Chenu's claim was also rather disingenuous and self-effacing. He, along with Cardijn and other theologians engaged with the JOC, Catholic Action, and the mission to the workers during the interwar years, had been considering this change in working patterns from a theological perspective since at least the 1920s. The focus on the shift from tool to machine enabled him to engage openly with Marx's analysis and critique of capitalism. While Chenu only ever critiqued Marx, the influence of *Kapital* on this aspect of his thought is clear. In his 1948 article, 'Civilisation technique', for instance, he tackled head-on the problems which assembly-line labour and the 'efficiencies' demanded by capitalism bring in their wake. In this discussion of mechanisation, he was highly critical of how the process all too often became a 'mental slavery of tiny tasks',<sup>83</sup> comparing it to the physical and legal slavery of history, where many were condemned to labour for the material benefit of the few.<sup>84</sup> While he observed that the search for efficiency was not of itself bad, he was concerned

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 13-14.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>83</sup> "Civilisation", 142.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 148-50.

that all too often, this was at the expense of the welfare of the human workers.<sup>85</sup> Chenu was particularly critical of 'Taylorian' working practices, regarding those repetitive, enslaving, 'tiny tasks' as dehumanising.<sup>86</sup> Can such work, indeed, be sanctified, or a source of sanctification? Yet Chenu rightly pointed to the 'religious foundations' necessary for any discussion of contemporary working practices. The human person, after all, is both body and spirit, so the material world – including the totality of human work – must be 'good'.

In 1955, Chenu expressed similar concerns, and a similar engagement with Marx. The change brought about by mechanisation, the shift from tool to machine, marked not only a quantitative, but also a qualitative, change in work.<sup>87</sup> 'The images of the potter, the forge-worker, the farmer, with which the Bible nourished theologians of old',<sup>88</sup> would no longer do: the qualitative shift demanded a new kind of theological discourse. The shift from tool to machine may also be described as the shift from *homo artifex* to *homo aeconomicus*. As Sailer-Pfister has noted, this marks an 'anthropological paradigm shift'.<sup>89</sup> Throughout this essay on industrialised work, Chenu engaged with Marx's philosophy of work, making use of Marxist concepts such as means of production and capital to construct his argument. Yet he insisted that Marxism itself was not the answer. It appeared attractive, suggested Chenu, because the dehumanising work which took place in industry brought in its train a loss of

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. 152.

<sup>87</sup> *Théologie du Travail* 15-16.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>89</sup> Sailer-Pfister, *Theologie der Arbeit vor neuen Herausforderungen: Sozialethische Untersuchungen im Anschluss an Marie-Dominique Chenu und Dorothee Soelle* 163.

religious sense and of faith. Marxism also appeared to offer paradise on earth, with an end to inequalities of wealth and status brought about through a focus on work. It was Christianity, not Marxism, however, which taught that 'there was neither slave nor free', and that God's love and eternal life are available to all, regardless of wealth or status. Sailer-Pfister notes that Chenu emphasises the importance to human life of contemplation, insisting that work and contemplation are not opposed, but rather two sides of the same coin.<sup>90</sup> The Incarnation had ensured the 'deification' and therefore the salvation of everything that is human; but the corollary is that only what is fully human can be saved. Work which is 'dehumanising', therefore, contributes directly to atheism – and thus implicitly to Marxism – for it removes any religious meaning or significance to work.<sup>91</sup>

In this article, Chenu suggested four key ways in which the shift from tool to machine changed the meaning of contemporary work. First, there was the qualitative change which, he claimed, marked 'a new era in human history'.<sup>92</sup> Second, what he critiqued as 'the dogmas of liberal industrialisation',<sup>93</sup> in which profit was put first at the expense of the worker. Theology of work, Chenu argued, needed to move beyond the 'moderation of profit'<sup>94</sup> (i.e., the ban on usury) and engage instead with a new understanding of work, which would place the human worker – rather than capital, means of

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 169.

<sup>91</sup> Chenu, *Théologie du Travail* 28.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. 21.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 21.

production, and profit – centre-stage.<sup>95</sup> Here, we may note the similarity with John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens*, written some 40 years later, in which the Polish Pope discusses the 'subjective' and 'objective' approaches to work. Like Chenu – who is neither mentioned nor acknowledged in the encyclical – John Paul II opted for the subjective approach to work, insisting that the human worker is the most important factor. The third development Chenu identified as growing out of mechanisation was the concentration of resources. Not only did industrialisation and industrial work require a hitherto unheard of concentration of capital; it also required a dramatic movement of people, to ensure that the factories had sufficient workers.<sup>96</sup> Marx had ascribed the growth of the proletariat to this factor. Chenu felt rather that, while Christian anthropology would suggest the new population densities in industrial centres would ensure work became a communal effort, the brutalising nature of industrial work led instead to class warfare.<sup>97</sup> Finally, Chenu noted that industrial work risked separating the human 'mind' from its 'matter'. Once more turning to his favourite pre-scholastic Alain of Lille, he pointed out that creation had to include the material in order to express the totality of divine love.<sup>98</sup> Human persons, unlike angels, expressed that totality by being both mind and matter. Human work thus needed to engage both the body and the spirit, in order to contribute to the fullness of creation, and the re-creation which the 'new heavens and new earth' will bring about. The scholastic focus on the link

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 21.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 22.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. 23.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 25.

between nature and humanity should, he argued, remind contemporary theologians that all work should be both 'a natural and a spiritual place',<sup>99</sup> bringing nature and grace back together.

By 1959, Chenu was extending the discussion about the shift from tool to machine into territory which is familiar in 2015 – the autonomy of the machine over the human worker. Here he quoted extensively from Guardini, who had noted that the more technologically advanced the machinery, the fewer workers, or the less human intervention, were required.<sup>100</sup> Of course in many ways this argument reflects the optimism of the late 1950s and 1960s with regard to 'labour-saving devices', both at home and at work, and prophecies of a 3-day working week and significant leisure time for all. Chenu's interest, while partially socio-economic, was primarily theological. The increasing use of the machine in work meant that 'the human eye, hand, imagination and ... *skill* no longer left their mark' on whatever was produced.<sup>101</sup> Not only would the human person no longer 'make their mark' on whatever was being made; they in turn now became part of the 'machinery' or 'means of production'.<sup>102</sup> This shift in turn led to a loss of dignity for the worker. The machine 'depersonalised' the work, and the skill required to master the tool was no longer necessary.<sup>103</sup> Yet Chenu – almost unawares – was writing about the deskilling effects of mechanisation at the point when mechanised labour was becoming increasingly highly skilled. Workers may no longer have been

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 26-27.

<sup>100</sup> M.-D. Chenu, A de Bovis, and H. Rondet, eds., *L'enfant et son avenir professionnel* (Paris: Editions Fleurus, 1959) 18-19.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 20; Chenu's emphasis.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 22.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 39.



using tools, but there was nonetheless a significant amount of skill required to master and operate increasingly complex machinery, a trend which continues to this day.

Meanwhile, the turn to the machine led Chenu to ask a further question. As workers no longer worked for those they knew well – producing a wheel, shoe, pot, or loaf of bread for their neighbour, or their neighbour's neighbour – there was a social implication. Bluntly, he enquired, 'who is my neighbour now', in this new world of work, 'where I don't know who I am working for, and where the 'end' – and the benefit – of what I produce escapes me, where the dividing up of tasks deprives me of understanding their precise content...'<sup>104</sup> His own hope was that this new way of working, while it had fractured the bonds between the maker of the goods and their purchaser and user, would be the source of a new kind of community. This would be a community of those working together – 'a socialist civilisation'<sup>105</sup> – which would bring about not only solidarity among workers, but also be a new locus for evangelisation.<sup>106</sup>

Chenu's key concern with the shift from tool to machine was the theological implication. There were, of course, significant and massive social changes which had come about because of industrialisation. Like Marx – although for rather different reasons – Chenu was also exercised by the effects of mechanisation on the worker. Where Marx warned of alienation, Chenu warned of a dual risk, each part of which was rooted in a Christian anthropology which understands the human person to be in the divine image of the Creator.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 41.

First, he wanted to know about the effects of deskilling on the human worker, as the machine took on ever-increasing levels of skill. Second, he warned about the effect on the community of mechanised work. Underpinning both questions was a real desire to see a theology of work which would respond to these and other anxieties about industrialisation. We now turn to Chenu's search for a theology of work for the industrial age.

### 6.5 Pour une théologie du travail?

In the articles which comprise *Pour une théologie du travail* and his unattributed article 'Y-a-t-il une théologie',<sup>107</sup> Chenu was identifying the need for a new type of theology of work. As we saw in Chapter 5, Chenu had focussed much of his research on the implications for theology of the dramatic social and economic changes of the twelfth century. This period, he noted, was

a turning point in medieval civilization; so marked was the transformation that took place in the material conditions of life that it has been possible to speak of a "technological revolution."<sup>108</sup>

His understanding of this 'turning point' was wide-ranging. He observed that technology had also influenced the renewed interest in and appreciation of nature, pointing to the vast array of technological improvements during the

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<sup>107</sup> "Y-a-t-il une théologie du travail?", *Lumière et vie* 20 (1955); see also R. Pereto Rivas, "Acedia y trabajo. El justo equilibrio", *Cauriensia* 6 (2011) who agrees that Chenu authored this anonymous piece.

<sup>108</sup> Chenu, "Renaissance", 39.

twelfth century. These included mills, ploughs, navigation aids, the mechanical clock, and even bridge design.<sup>109</sup> Once again, nature's laws and order came to define the new world view. 'The knowledge to which man could attain included the knowledgeable mastery of nature.'<sup>110</sup> The 'twelfth century followed this command [to subdue the earth, Genesis 3]',<sup>111</sup> but it did so in a mindset of an appreciative understanding of the laws of nature which regulated the universe. Those who worked to master nature could find their work described in the same terms as that of the Schoolmen. Chenu cited John of Salisbury's suggestion that the artisan 'exercised his craft as [the Schoolmen] do dialectic'.<sup>112</sup> *Homo artifex*, 'man-the-maker', worked 'in relation to God's creative work' and 'the work of nature',<sup>113</sup> thus paving the way for human work to be perceived as participation in the divine creation. Crucially, the rediscovery of nature led to its control by knowledge, whether of the laws governing the universe, or of the technology which might better subdue it. For Chenu, this was summarised by the 'two extremes that the twelfth century brought together' – humanity as 'simultaneously an image of the world ... and an image of God'.<sup>114</sup> This informed his theological account of work, which he argued should reflect both the dignity inherent in humanity created *in imago Dei*, and work as participation in the ongoing divine creation.

Not only the Church, but theology itself had adapted, claimed Chenu, to the twelfth-century development of the mercantile classes and the new urban

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* 43.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* 44.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* 44, n.93.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* 40.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* 33.

culture. He notes the attention paid by Hugh of St-Victor, in his *Didascalion*, to the *artes mechanicae*,<sup>115</sup> pointing out that Hugh, in contrast to the 'discredit in which these arts were held', a reflection of the 'scorn of ancient philosophy for manual labour',<sup>116</sup> adds these *artes* to the *artes liberales* which were at the root of education. Likewise, he demanded, the contemporary Church – led by theologians – should be responsive to the 'new world' of industrialised Europe. Work, Chenu insisted in 1955, must be considered by theology because 'it is the opportunity for the perfection and meritorious perfection of the worker',<sup>117</sup> contributing to Creation which itself is 'being brought to perfection by Christ'.<sup>118</sup> Starting with the Scholastics, Chenu decisively located human work of every kind within the divine Creation and, therefore, within the economy of salvation. A theology of work, he argued, must be attentive to the Christian anthropology of the human person as a 'maker' (*homo artifex*) but also to the shifting laws of economics, including ensuring the just distribution of wealth to best ensure the Common Good. Above all, it must be sensitive to the context in which work is carried out.<sup>119</sup> It would be too easy to accuse Chenu of relativism here, to imply that his insistence on the proper contextualisation of a theology of work means that he suggested that such a theology was contingent on its circumstances. On the contrary, however, Chenu was seeking to establish ground rules and first principals from which a theology of work might develop. It would, he noted in

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<sup>115</sup> "Urbaine"

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* 1255-6.

<sup>117</sup> "Y-a-t-il une théologie du travail?", 225.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.* 225.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* 228.

'Y-a-t-il', be 'premature' to 'try to compose a treatise' given the theoretical nature of the conclusions.<sup>120</sup>

Chenu's theology of work was rooted in his reading of Genesis, with the important focus on 'humanity as God's partner in Creation'.<sup>121</sup> He attributed this shift, from Genesis 3, with its traditional focus on 'the painful and penitential nature of work' to a 're-discovery of Genesis [during] the 1930s'.<sup>122</sup> For Chenu, the most important factor in this shift of focus was that work was now seen as part of the human condition, rather than something to be endured and 'offered up'. Cardijn suggested that Chenu was a 'great precursor' in this 'positive transformation of theological thinking about work'.<sup>123</sup>

The most important theme of Chenu's theology of work was his understanding of human work as a cooperation in the ongoing divine creation. As DePierre asked, 'could anyone else have explained any better how work was a participation in Creation?'<sup>124</sup> Even industrial work 'should free human beings, increasing their awareness of their humanity and their capacity for love'.<sup>125</sup> Yet the problem, as Chenu was only too well aware, was that this kind of language had always relied on the 'traditional' theological description of work as artisanal, which 'to young adults, already in the factories and working at their machines, appears to be part of an archaic civilisation'.<sup>126</sup> How, then, was work to be described as part of the divine creation, while reflecting the contemporary

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid. 230.

<sup>121</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 113.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. 113.

<sup>123</sup> Cardijn, "Travail", 20.

<sup>124</sup> A. Depierre, "Les fenêtres de l'espérance", *ibid.* 40.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>126</sup> Chenu, Bovis, and Rondet, *L'Enfant* 20.

reality of industrial work, and remaining true to the theological tradition? In this 1959 conference paper, Chenu showed himself to be both part of the *ressourcement* tradition, reclaiming nature and supernature as intrinsically connected, and at his most creative as a theologian.

His first step was to repeat, albeit perhaps more clearly than before, a central theme.

God has called the human person to be his co-operator in the gradual organisation of a universe in which the person, the *image of God*, must be ... the master and builder of nature.<sup>127</sup>

He noted that this emphasis on the 'cosmic role' of humanity was a recovery, not of Augustine, but rather, of the Antiochene tradition.<sup>128</sup> In other words, continued Chenu, the vocation of the human person is to work in order to find the proper 'end' of human nature. Chenu rooted his theology of work in the very theology of Creation which, later in his life, he regretted not having written, when he told Duquesne that 'I dreamed of writing a theology of creation'.<sup>129</sup> Yet here it is, as he wished – 'clearly expressed, and without footnotes, ... free of theological or intellectual jargon, in order to reach the widest public possible'<sup>130</sup> in the midst of a public conference on the education of young people for the workplace.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid. 26; Chenu's emphasis.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>129</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 116.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 116.

Chenu's second step in this theology of work was the rejection of dualism, and the recovery of the concept of the whole human person, body and soul (*matière et esprit, matière-esprit*).<sup>131</sup> Again, this was a recovery of Thomas and the early Dominicans, who were at pains – as befitted their history – to reject the Cathar understanding of humanity, and thus emphasised the importance of the human body and soul.<sup>132</sup> The human person was a creature made of matter and spirit. In this understanding, human work becomes 'the encounter between humanity and Nature',<sup>133</sup> or the encounter between two different aspects of Creation. In this reading, 'the harder I work, the more God is the creator'.<sup>134</sup> If God the Creator is the 'prime mover', the human worker has now become the 'second worker' – yet Chenu insists that acknowledging this does not take away from, but rather gives greater glory to, the prime mover.<sup>135</sup>

It was in an earlier article that the full implications of this were drawn out. In 1944, Chenu had explained that

we have lost the sense of the grandeur of creation for the Christian, and the sense of the Christian to take possession of this world in the name of God and, through this transformation to complete the work of Creation.<sup>136</sup>

For Chenu, it was indeed through work that the human person would participate in the ongoing divine work of Creation, thus bringing it, and the

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<sup>131</sup> Chenu, Bovis, and Rondet, *L'Enfant* 28.

<sup>132</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 115.

<sup>133</sup> Chenu, Bovis, and Rondet, *L'Enfant* 29.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* 31.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.* 31.

<sup>136</sup> Chenu, "La foi en Chrétienté", 130.

world, to completion. Work, in this understanding, is not only part of Creation, but part of the inexorable trajectory of Creation towards the Eschaton. Chenu's understanding of human work, sanctified by the Incarnation, is truly cosmic.

Chenu's generally optimistic attitude about the world of work in his articles on theology of work during the 1940s and 1950s, attracted criticism, even from himself. In 1975, he acknowledged that he had 'given into the optimism of the times',<sup>137</sup> and suggested that his articles were now 'somewhat out-dated', as 'production methods had evolved considerably', meaning that 'a more precise economic analysis was required'.<sup>138</sup> Quoting Congar, Ahoua observes that Chenu was over-optimistic, not only with regard to human nature, but also about the possibilities which work and socialisation offer the Christian churches.<sup>139</sup> Keller, too, has observed that Chenu is over-optimistic about work.<sup>140</sup> Yet his suggestion that Chenu limited himself to comparing the twelfth- and thirteenth-century attitudes to work with industrialised society<sup>141</sup> does not stand up to scrutiny. On the contrary, Chenu chose to focus on the two time periods – contemporary and scholastic – because he considered that the industrialisation about which he was writing was a contemporary manifestation of the socio-economic upheavals which marked the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As he observed himself in 1975, this was a way of making Thomas contemporary.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 115.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* 114.

<sup>139</sup> Miessan Ahoua, "Le travail humain à la lumière de la Pâque du Seigneur : à partir de la contribution de Marie-Dominique Chenu" 128.

<sup>140</sup> Keller, "Towards a Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology of Work"

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 49.



### *6.6 The Church goes to the factories: Christian Workers or Worker Priests?*

The final stage in Chenu's theological reflection on work, to which we now turn, is the very personal shift which he made in his own personal understanding of how the Church should go to the factories. As we have noted, Chenu was closely involved with the JOC in its infancy in Belgium and France, offering retreats and theological reflection on this very particular apostolate to members and chaplains alike. In his contribution to *L'hommage différé*, Cardijn drew attention to Chenu's vital contribution to the theological underpinnings of the JOC, 'at the head of a phalanx of Dominicans', among the many 'great theologians who enlightened, guided, and supported' the movement from the beginning.<sup>143</sup> Guérin, the founder of the French JOC, concurred that Chenu had 'brought the weight of theological study' to bear on the nascent movement.<sup>144</sup>

Chenu's experience with the JOC continued to be key, not least because it kept him in close contact with those at the helm of his next missionary project. He was, according to Depierre, one of the prime movers of the beginnings of the *Mission de France/Mission de Paris*, along with Suhard, Augros, and Godin.<sup>145</sup> All of these men had worked closely with the JOC during the 1930s, and were well aware of the service it offered the Church, as well as its limitations, in only working with an 'elite', and with young people. Chenu noted the 'sometimes painful tensions', during the meetings of the *Mission de*

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<sup>143</sup> Cardijn, "Travail", 21.

<sup>144</sup> G. Guérin, "Un théologien à la JOC", *ibid.* (Paris) 23.

<sup>145</sup> A. Depierre, "Les fenêtres de l'espérance", *ibid.* (Paris) 38.

*France/Paris*, between Godin, who saw the acute need for a general mission to working-class France, and Guérin, founder of the JOC in France, who, according to Chenu, saw everything in terms of the JOC.<sup>146</sup>

As we have seen, a number of streams of priestly experience and pastoral work during the Second World War came together in a post-1945 aftermath and developed into what we now know as the Worker Priest crisis of 1953-54. As Depierre observed, some of these priests had spent the early 1940s as Prisoners of War, living alongside and as equals to, laymen; others had volunteered to serve as clandestine chaplains to the Frenchmen chosen for the *STO*; and many were involved in the JOC/ACO as chaplains.<sup>147</sup>

The original agreement between the hierarchy, led by Suhard, and the Worker Priests had been that they would be able to spend a month, at most two, with their comrades in the factories and docks, but that this was to be a 'stage' or placement, rather than a permanent way of life. For the hierarchy – both the French episcopate and the Roman Curia, including the Pope – it was essential that the work undertaken by the Worker Priests did not 'water down the priesthood'.<sup>148</sup> At this period, as Chenu explained to Duquesne, priests were understood to be literally 'a race apart'.<sup>149</sup> They were expected to maintain their distance from the laity, not to live alongside the people. Taking on the 'smell of the sheep' was an unheard-of, possibly scandalous, thought. There was a further concern, that of the need 'to safeguard for (the Worker Priests)

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<sup>146</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 136-137.

<sup>147</sup> Depierre, "Les fenêtres", 38-39.

<sup>148</sup> F. Leprieur, "Justice, Peace and Dominicans 1216-1999. VII France in 1953-4: Do the baptized have rights? The Worker-Priest Crisis", *New Blackfriars* 80, no. 943 (1999) 390.

<sup>149</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 390.

the readiness to meet all the exigencies of their priestly state'.<sup>150</sup> The Worker Priests needed to not be so exhausted by industrial labour that their spiritual life suffered. Simone Weil's experience, discussed in Chapter 7.2 below, shows that this question was not unimportant.

The issue plays into the question, discussed in Chapter 4 above, of how the distinct roles of laity and priesthood may collaborate in the work of the apostolate. Writing in 1942 on 'Priestly Existence',<sup>151</sup> Rahner offered a useful way into understanding attitudes towards priesthood at this period. Taking as his starting point the concept of *Beruf*, the 'calling' or 'station in life' accorded such importance by Luther, he drew attention to the two very separate meanings of the term for Catholic theology. It could refer to a part of the 'division of labour' which allows society to function.<sup>152</sup> But it could also be an 'essential' calling, which, in changing the essence of a person, also changed his whole existence.<sup>153</sup> Because priesthood 'lays claim to the *whole* existence of the person',<sup>154</sup> the *Beruf* of the priesthood – which comprises the preaching of the Word and the work of the Sacraments<sup>155</sup> – could not leave room for any temporal work. As Lynch has observed, the 'general rule' in the Latin Rite continues to be that 'the priestly ministry shall be a full-time occupation'.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> J.E. Lynch, "The Obligations and Rights of Clerics", in *The Code of Canon Law. A Text and Commentary*, ed. J.A. Coriden, T. J. Green, and D. E. Heintschel (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) 222.

<sup>151</sup> K. Rahner, "Priestly Existence", in *Theological Investigations 3* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974)

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* 239.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* 239.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* 257.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* 244-245.

<sup>156</sup> Lynch, "Obligations", 223.

The concern to protect the spiritual integrity of the priesthood was only one aspect of the difficulty the question raised. Even when they sought anonymity, worker-priests were never fully accepted by all the workers in many workplaces, because the way of life was a temporary choice, rather than a permanent necessity, with all the protection their exit-clause implied.<sup>157</sup> They often found their work through contacts with the local ACO or JOC, which complicated the role further: were they to be chaplains to the ACO/JOC workers, 'industrial chaplains' to the whole factory, or workers-who-happened-to-be-priests?<sup>158</sup> The involvement in unions was the final straw, and particularly, as Arnal notes<sup>159</sup> when the hostility between the Christian CFTC union, and priests involved in the Marxist CGT, caused a national scandal. The movement was formally condemned in January 1954, with a small group continuing to work for up to 3 hours a day until 1959, when the experiment came to a formal end.

Chenu's involvement was critical, and he paid the price as much as those who were employed in industry. He had been advising the Worker Priests for some time, and, in his own account, encouraged them to 'submit' to the episcopal demands<sup>160</sup> in January 1954. As the condemnation gathered pace towards the end of 1953, Bishop Ancel and Cardinal Liénart turned on Chenu, whom they held responsible 'not only for today's deviations but also for current acts of resistance.'<sup>161</sup> Ancel in turn grouped Chenu among '[those] theologians

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<sup>157</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 146.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.* 144-145.

<sup>159</sup> Arnal, *Blue* 148.

<sup>160</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 156.

<sup>161</sup> Leprieur, "Crisis" 391, citing a letter from Liénart to Worker Priests in Lille.

who have constructed a novel theology to reassure them'.<sup>162</sup> Chenu suffered further from his 'entirely innocent'<sup>163</sup> decision in October 1953, to pen an article on the priesthood of the worker-priests,<sup>164</sup> which was published in *La Vie intellectuelle*, following peer review, in March 1954. For once, he was not being deliberately provocative, but merely demonstrated exceptionally poor timing.

In this article, Chenu responded to the hierarchical concerns about the priestly life of the Worker Priests, and reflected on how a theological justification could be provided for their work. As he pointed out, if the ministerial priesthood was to be understood as 'adoration in prayer, celebrating the sacrifice of the Mass, administering the Sacraments, and offering catechetical and pastoral teaching',<sup>165</sup> then of course 'the priesthood of the Worker Priests appears to be a diminished priesthood'.<sup>166</sup> Such an 'amputation' would, he continued, have terrible effects on the persons involved. As we saw in Chapter 4.7 above, Cardijn emphasised the importance of just such a priesthood in order to properly support the lay apostolate. Yet, Chenu argued, this was not the primary role of the ministerial priesthood. On the contrary, he emphasised the 'primacy of the witness of faith', arguing that sacraments (for instance) could only be administered to those who hear the Word of God and believe. In a missionary Church – and the French working classes were as much 'missionary territory' as anywhere overseas – there was a need for priests to bear witness to Christ, rather than focus on the sacraments. 'Priesthood is not defined solely

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid. 391; note the similarity to '*nouvelle théologie*'.

<sup>163</sup> Duquesne, *Un théologien* 158.

<sup>164</sup> Chenu, "Sacerdoce",

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. 275.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. 275.

by its function of sacramentally continuing the Mystery of Christ',<sup>167</sup> he argued, but must also bring the Good News to non-Christians. Turning to Thomas (*ST* I.IIae.100.4.1), he noted that such a missionary role was required by the 'theological primacy' of 'the virtues of faith, hope, and charity'.<sup>168</sup> If the French Church were to fulfil its obligation of the theological virtues towards the working classes, it needed to start its mission among them by being 'present' to them. 'How can we baptise a culture without being part of it?' he plaintively demanded. The presence of the Worker Priests in the industrial workplaces, then, was a truly 'priestly' presence, 'a true evangelisation [and] the visible face of the Church'.<sup>169</sup>

Chenu's understanding of the theology of priesthood as expressed by the Worker Priests appears to be dramatically at odds with that of the hierarchy, as expressed by Rahner. Yet perhaps all is not as it first appears. For Chenu, the primary demand on the priest is that he be present to the world, as a witness to the Mystery of Christ. This, surely, is also what underpins Rahner's understanding that the priestly *Beruf* changes the essence, and thus the existence, of the person.

### 6.7 Conclusion

Chenu's theological discourse on work was a key dimension of his writing, and as wide-ranging as his theological interests would suggest. It encompassed far

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<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* 279.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* 279.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.* 279.

more than the three brief articles published together in 1955 as *Pour une théologie du travail*, traversing his theological output from retreats and pastoral articles in the 1930s, to discussions on the appraisal of work of some of the early Scholastics, to nuanced theological articles on the nature of priestly work in the 1950s.

Absolutely central to his theology of work is the doctrine of the Incarnation, and his insistence that it is through the Incarnation that the whole of human experience, including industrial work, is graced, becomes part of salvation history, and contributes to the human person reaching that perfection which is her true end. He was therefore convinced of the need for a 'new' theology of work, which could consider how industrial work could be part of creation, perfect the worker, and give glory to God. Such a theology needed to be attentive to the working practices of industrialisation, such as the deskilling of the worker and the unprecedented size of the workplace.

It also demanded a new approach from the institutional Church. Not only was a serious – albeit critical – engagement with Marxism urgently required, but the very structure of the Church, with parish-based evangelisation, needed interrogating and reforming for a new age. Chenu favoured work-based mission structures, initially the JOC, and later the Worker Priests.

It is here that he and Cardijn diverged from their earlier close collaboration. Where Cardijn emphasised the importance of the lay apostolate of like to like, with the laity supported by the Sacraments and the teaching provided by the clergy, Chenu argued for a priesthood that was first and

foremost a witness to the Christian faith in the workplace, only then moving to evangelise and preach the Good News of salvation to the workers and thus to the modern world.

Chenu's theology of work, like Cardijn's, has too often been unacknowledged and under-rated. Our final chapter takes us on a tour of theologies of work over the last 75 years, searching not only for the usable and the un-usable, but also for the impact and influence of our two theologians.





## CHAPTER 7

### THEOLOGIES OF WORK: A REVIEW

#### *7.1 Introduction*

Having examined the theologies of work of Cardijn and Chenu, we have noted that both were motivated not only by a desire to see an improvement in the physical conditions of industrial labour, but also by a deep concern for the salvation of the working masses, so often ‘non-Christianised’, as Chenu argued. We have also noted how their theological methodologies were influenced by and rooted in *ressourcement* theology. We now turn, in this chapter, to review late-twentieth-century theologies of work. We will discover, perhaps unsurprisingly, that Chenu is considered to be a major influence on theologies of work of this period. Cardijn, on the other hand – whom we have now established was a theologian, and a theologian of work influenced by *ressourcement* theology – is rarely if ever mentioned, although there are allusions to his work.

Our analysis of the development of theology of work since the Second World War indicates that there have been a number of waves of theology of work. We begin, in Section 7.2, by examining the ‘first wave’ of twentieth-century theologies of work, where Cardijn and Chenu are themselves to be located. Here too are found the Anglican lay theologian, Dorothy L. Sayers, and the French philosopher, Simone Weil. This period of reflection came to a close with the end and immediate aftermath of the Second World War. In Section 7.3, we turn to the ‘second wave’, which may be considered to correspond to ‘the

magical postwar years referred to in France as the “Trente Glorieuses”, the thirty glorious years from 1945 to 1975’.<sup>1</sup> This period, marked by full employment and hitherto unknown prosperity, was reflected in a certain optimism in contemporary writing on work. We noted in Chapter 6 that Chenu’s *Pour une théologie du travail* is marked in places by just such optimism. In Section 7.4, we analyse the ‘third wave’, which developed in the 1990s, spurred on by John Paul II’s encyclicals on work, especially *Laborem Exercens*, a deep recession in the West, and the collapse of Eastern European Marxism. We begin this section with the Reform theologians Miroslav Volf and Darrell Cosden, both of whom were inspired by Jürgen Moltmann, John Paul II, and Chenu. We then turn to R. Paul Stevens, whose theology of work is inspired by Congar, Esther Reed, and John Hughes. Finally, we examine what Brown refers to as ‘sermonic reflection’.<sup>2</sup>

It remains to be seen whether a fourth wave will grow during the twenty-first century, driven both by reflection on the economic crash of 2008, and the recovery of earlier theologies of work. Such a fourth wave might be inspired, for instance, by texts from the Magisterium, such as *Caritas in Veritate* and *Laudato Si’*, and incorporate an ecological dimension.

## 7.2 First-wave twentieth-century theologies of work

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<sup>1</sup> T. Piketty, *Capital*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Harvard University Press, 2014) 11.

<sup>2</sup> Fletcher, *Artist* p. x.

Cosden<sup>3</sup> and Volf<sup>4</sup> locate the beginnings of a twentieth-century theology of work with Chenu, whose 'application of the Thomist tradition to the problem of work's nature and meaning introduced into Catholicism a new paradigm for thinking theologically about work'.<sup>5</sup> Such new thinking is crucial, argues Cosden, for it provides an alternative methodology to the vocational model which for so long dominated theological discussion about work. Volf finds the first use of the term 'theology of work' in 'the early 1950s ... introduced to express an important shift in the theological approach to the problem of work.'<sup>6</sup> Roos' suggestion, that 'French theologians after World War II were the first to ask whether there was a "theology of secular realities" and thus also a "theology of work"',<sup>7</sup> also implies a major development in theology of work during the post-war period. As we have established, however, Cardijn and Chenu had been applying theology to secular reality since at least the mid-1920s, with their engagement with industrial work through the JOC, the *Mission de Paris/Mission de France*, and the Worker Priests. For both Chenu and Cardijn, such theology was located in the concept of human work as a participation in the ongoing divine creation. For Chenu this in turn was rooted in the Tradition of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Schools, the study of which he made his own.

This idea of human work as participation in the ongoing divine creation was also at the heart of the theology of work developed by the lay Anglican theologian Dorothy L. Sayers (1893-1957), who, although best known for her

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<sup>3</sup> Cosden, *Work*

<sup>4</sup> Volf, *Spirit*

<sup>5</sup> Cosden, *Work* 21.

<sup>6</sup> Volf, *Spirit* 71.

<sup>7</sup> Roos, "Theology of work" 102.

detective fiction, also wrote extensively on Christian doctrine.<sup>8</sup> 'Sayers sees our vocation as work. Man is *homo faber*; he bears the image of God in his image and desire to create.'<sup>9</sup> Her theology of work was rooted in the understanding of the working Creator, whose image humanity bears; human work is the acting out of the divine image in which humanity is created. Sayers made powerful and effective use of the analogy of the artist creating a work of art, to describe the Creator in whose image humanity is formed. Like Chenu and Cardijn, it was Sayers' theological anthropology which formed the basis for her theology of work. 'Man was made in the image of God ... man is most godlike and most himself when he is occupied in creation.'<sup>10</sup> Much of her theological output, which included both essays and broadcasts, was produced during World War II, and is coloured by the question of women's work (were women able to work in factories?), and the likely need for massive post-war reconstruction, which would require yet more industry. In 'Are Women Human' and 'The Human-not-Human',<sup>11</sup> Sayers enquires whether women may do 'men's' work, answering that the best worker for each task is simply the best worker, regardless of gender or other attributes. In these essays she also argues that industrialisation had removed much of the most creative and responsible roles of medieval

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<sup>8</sup> Although Sayers was one of the first women to graduate from Oxford University, she had no formal theological training. From the 1930s onwards, and particularly during the Second World War, she produced many short articles, talks, and radio broadcasts on Christian doctrine. In 1943, in recognition of her apologetic writing, she was offered a Lambeth DD by Archbishop Temple, which she turned down (perhaps anxious that, as the first female recipient, her non-religious writing might reflect badly on the Church); she later accepted an honorary DLitt from Durham.

<sup>9</sup> Fletcher, *Artist* 55.

<sup>10</sup> D. L. Sayers, "What do we believe?", in *Unpopular Opinions* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1946 (1940)) 18.

<sup>11</sup> *Are Women Human?* (Cambridge: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2005 (1971))

women from the home, although it should be noted that she is here referring to women of the middle and upper classes only.<sup>12</sup>

Work, Sayers argued, should be something for which each person lives. By this she meant that the work of any person should be so tailored to that person's humanity, that it would be fulfilling and enjoyable for that person. Yet, 'I will not attempt', she said at the end of that particular broadcast, 'to produce a cut-and-dried scheme for taming machinery to the service of man.'<sup>13</sup> While deeply concerned about the deleterious effects of industrial work on the worker, she conceded that she did not know 'whether it is possible for a machine-worker to feel creatively about his routine job'.<sup>14</sup> Her theology of work was profoundly rooted in her anthropology – that work is part of the *imago Dei* in which humanity is created – which led her to the powerful analogy of the artist as the c/Creator. Yet Sayers' almost wilful ignorance of the reality of industrial work and life, her utopian ideals about how industrial workers should approach their work, and her focus on the work of the privileged are serious weaknesses.

If Sayers may be criticised for a utopian vision of work based on artistic production, the same cannot be said of her near contemporary, Simone Weil (1909-1942). Born, like Sayers, into a prosperous middle-class family, the philosophy teacher was deeply committed to the politics of the Left, and 'had become convinced that the reason socialist leaders were so out of touch with working people was that none of them knew what it was like to work in a

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 31-32; 61-62.

<sup>13</sup> "Living to Work", in *Unpopular Opinions* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1946) 126.

<sup>14</sup> *The Mind of the Maker* (London: Mowbray, 1941) 178.

factory.’<sup>15</sup> As a result she spent part of a sabbatical year working in factories, recording her experiences in the *‘Journal d’Usine’*.<sup>16</sup> Here she catalogued the difficulty and exhaustion of factory work (see Chapter 6.7 above); the poor pay coupled with financial penalties for mistakes or slow work; the powerlessness of the worker before the foreman; the solidarity – or lack thereof – between workers. The time allotted for each task she described as ‘a fantasy’, adding that it was this which ‘makes one really feel a slave, humiliated to the depths of one’s being’.<sup>17</sup> She noted that the experience at one factory had cost her ‘the feeling that I have not a single right ... the ability to survive ... to live in this state of perpetual semi-humiliation, without feeling humiliated in my own eyes.’<sup>18</sup> She was convinced that workers were disadvantaged by their poor education. This prevented them from understanding the machines they worked (often ‘a mystery to the worker’<sup>19</sup>), and from visualising how each part of the factory cooperated. The workers therefore – in a classic Marxist analysis – were unable to see how their task contributed to the final product. In a 1936 correspondence with a local factory owner, Weil expressed her thoughts about factory work more lucidly. ‘A few weeks of this existence was almost enough to transform me into a docile beast of burden’.<sup>20</sup> From her experience, she had learned that oppression led, almost unnoticed, to submission, and that the feeling of counting for nothing ‘outside’ was rapidly internalised.<sup>21</sup> Her wish was to

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<sup>15</sup> S Plant, *The SPCK Introduction to Simone Weil* (London: SPCK, 2007 (1996)) 8.

<sup>16</sup> S. Weil, *La Condition Ouvrière* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951)35-107.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.74

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.106.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.72.

<sup>20</sup> Letter dated 31 January 1936, in *ibid.*132.

<sup>21</sup> Letter dated 3 March 1936, in *ibid.*136.

improve workers' wellbeing, both by asking them to articulate and describe their experience of work, and by offering classes on '*civilisation*' (she suggested Sophocles and the Iliad). She pointed out that 'the first pedagogical principle is that, to raise up a person – child or adult – one must first of all raise them up in their own eyes'.<sup>22</sup> We may here note a parallel with the aims of Cardijn and the JOC to improve workers' education, in order to enable them to advocate for themselves and their peers.

Where Sayers' theology of work, rooted in Christian anthropology, errs on the side of utopian idealism, Weil's description of work is at the opposite end of the spectrum, full of detail about the violence done to the person of the worker in the name of industrialisation. In some ways the two complement each other. Where Sayers' demonstrates the need for work to be understood within and secured by Christian anthropology, Weil's focuses on the dehumanising aspect of industrial work. The lay Anglican theologian, unaware of the complexity of work, posited the artist as the model through which humanity might understand and join the creative work of God; the philosopher and convert to Christianity noted the deleterious effects of industrial work on workers, and demanded action to alleviate this, while failing to reflect on the chasm between industrial work and the worker created *in imago Dei*. Yet at the heart of the writings of both is a concern that the worker should be first and foremost perceived as a human being. This understanding of the human person as the subject at the centre of all discussion on work is the key Christian anthropological kernel to their discussions on work, as with Cardijn and Chenu.

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<sup>22</sup> Letter dated 13 January 1936, in *ibid.*125.



However, the rooting of the theological discourse on work in the Tradition offers the theologies of work of Cardijn and Chenu a more solid foundation, which is to be expected given their fuller theological formation.

### *7.3 Second-wave twentieth-century theologies of work*

Roos posits a ‘French “theology of work”’ developed in the 1950s, by theologians concerned ‘to illustrate, beyond all the philosophical possibilities [of *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Annos*] what the faithful could “understand” about their work.’<sup>23</sup> He rightly argues that, in addition to the off-putting theological language – either too pious or too speculative – the ‘rapid economic recovery after World War II with its optimistic expectations for the future’ effectively ‘stymied’ the desire to discuss work theologically.<sup>24</sup> The French theologians to whom Roos refers include Chenu, whose *Pour une théologie du travail* he no doubt has in mind. Also in 1955, the Jesuit theologian Henri Rondet published an essay on theology of work,<sup>25</sup> and the Dominican journal, *Lumière et vie*, dedicated an issue to work as a ‘human reality’. In 1959, Chenu and Rondet, along with the Jesuit André de Bovis, contributed to a conference on ‘theology of creation and work’ sponsored by the *Bureau internationale catholique de l’enfance*.<sup>26</sup> On the other side of the English Channel, a symposium was being held in the same year on ‘Work: Christian

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<sup>23</sup> Roos, "Theology of work" 103.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.103-4.

<sup>25</sup> H Rondet, "Eléments pour une Théologie du Travail", *Nouvelle revue théologique* 77, no. 1 (1955)

<sup>26</sup> The proceedings were published as Chenu, Bovis, and Rondet, *L'Enfant*

thought and practice'.<sup>27</sup> Volume 8 of the Jesuit journal *The Way* dedicated to work in July 1968, and Gideon Goosens' brief 1974 monograph on theology of work,<sup>28</sup> also belong to this second wave of theologies of work.

Like Cardijn and Chenu in the inter-war period, and Sayers and Weil in the 1930s and 1940s, the theologians of the *trente glorieuses* were perplexed less by work itself, than by how to construct a theological account of work which would still hold its integrity within the industrial workplace. For Rondet, whose 1955 article on theology of work was reproduced at Lisbon in 1959, 'human work is first and foremost a cooperation with the divine work [of revelation]'.<sup>29</sup> In the Genesis 1 account of creation, 'science/technology are potentially present in the gift God gives humanity of understanding and free will ... In discovering the universe, working with the earth, experiencing free will, humanity also discovers itself.'<sup>30</sup> Such reflection recalls the connection drawn by Chenu between the early scholastic rediscovery of nature and twelfth-century theologising about work. Rondet noted the risk of optimism ('one should not have too many illusions [about work]'),<sup>31</sup> while simultaneously emphasising the importance of Christian hope, for 'the world is a redeemed world in which Christ's grace operates.'<sup>32</sup> Yet too often, he suggested, work – dehumanising, over-mechanised, a means to live – became separated from real life – the full Christian life. A 'supernatural' understanding of work links it to Christ's sacrifice.

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<sup>27</sup> Published as J.M. Todd, ed. *Work. Christian Thought and Practice* (London/Baltimore MD: Darton, Longman & Todd/Helicon Press, 1960)

<sup>28</sup> G. Goosen, *The Theology of Work*, Theology Today (Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1974)

<sup>29</sup> Chenu, Bovis, and Rondet, *L'Enfant* 156.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 157.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 163.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 163.

Rondet's observation that 'every one of our churches, be they a cathedral or a village parish church, is a sort of summary of human work'<sup>33</sup> echoes (without acknowledgement) Cardijn's repeated emphasis on the contribution of work to the Eucharistic sacrifice: 'without work no host, no wine, no paten, no chalice, no altar, no Mass, no church, no worship'.<sup>34</sup>

Bovis' contribution to the same volume described the range of what is considered work: creative, intellectual, manual, 'forced labour, production line, school work, artisanal work, the work of the inventor'.<sup>35</sup> Disappointingly, there is no reference here to 'women's work', such as home-making, childcare, caring, cleaning. For Bovis, the key to human work was that God commanded humanity to work in Genesis 1-3. God himself works as Creator and as Incarnate Son, both of which should enable humanity to realise that work is part of its created role.<sup>36</sup> He emphasised that creation *in imago Dei* means, in the image of a creator God,<sup>37</sup> yet how, he asked, can that happen? His response was twofold – 'work is necessary to human equilibrium',<sup>38</sup> and 'work is redemptive ... leading humanity from Paradise Lost to the sacrifice on Calvary... humanity at work, raised by divine Grace, becomes a collaborator in Redemption.'<sup>39</sup>

Volume 20 of *Lumière et Vie* (1955) contains a range of articles on work, from both a philosophical and a theological perspective. Most pertinent to this thesis are the articles by Benoit, on 'Work in the Bible', and the anonymous 'Y-a-

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 167.

<sup>34</sup> Cardijn, *Le laïcat ouvrier* repr. as "L'apostolat 1", (34).

<sup>35</sup> Chenu, Bovis, and Rondet, *L'Enfant* 60.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 63.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 68

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 75.

t-il une théologie du travail?' The anonymous article was of course penned by Chenu, as is clear from its opening words, which locate work within the mystery of the Incarnation, and has been analysed in Chapter 6.<sup>40</sup> Benoit notes that biblical authors largely have a positive view of work, understanding toil as post-lapsarian,<sup>41</sup> whereas the divine work of creation is ongoing and a model for human work. Above all, he emphasises that the same terms for 'work' in both New and Old Testaments may refer both to toilsome manual labour and to 'the work of God', or what he describes as 'spiritual work'.<sup>42</sup> That work is perceived biblically as a service to God and humanity is emphasised by the focus on Sabbath rest and, in the Christian dispensation, the looking forward to the Eschaton.<sup>43</sup>

The 1959 Downside Symposium consisted of reflection on work from the classical and early Christian traditions to accounts of contemporary work (factory, housewife, civil service, priestly), a section on structures of work, and observations on theology of work. It is pleasing to note here that domestic work is included in the analysis. McCabe emphasised that work must have existed prior to the Fall, for 'Adam digging his garden is the image of God as creator and of all human work.'<sup>44</sup> McCabe linked work to the Eucharist, quoting Cardijn that 'the workbench becomes an altar on which the lay priesthood prolongs the

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<sup>40</sup> "Y-a-t-il une théologie du travail?",

<sup>41</sup> P. Benoit, "Le travail selon la Bible", *ibid.* 73-78.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 78-80.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 80-86.

<sup>44</sup> Todd, *Work* 216.

sacrifice of the Mass.<sup>45</sup> This is a most unusual reference to and acknowledgement of Cardijn's contribution to the debate.

It should be noted that none of these articles and collections sought to be a full theology of work. Rather the authors and contributors concerned were engaging with the new (to them) phenomenon of industrial work, and asking questions about how theological discourse might be applied to this phenomenon.

Goosen's 1974 *Theology of Work* is written in the light of Vatican II, and so his 'attempt'<sup>46</sup> includes a number of references to *Gaudium et Spes*. Pre-empting John Paul II and *Laborem Exercens*, he suggests that work may be defined in terms of the worker and the thing-worked-upon – the way the thing is worked upon therefore becomes key.<sup>47</sup> Comparing his readings of the understandings of work in Marxism and Maoism with that of Christian theology, he suggests that theological accounts of work may come from a creative, eschatological, or ascetic theology.<sup>48</sup> While he is correct to identify these three tendencies, it is the case that all three aspects of theological discourse are required in order to offer a satisfactory theology of work. Rightly, Goosen is concerned by the spectre of dehumanising work, which he particularly associates with industrialisation. He suggests that underpinning such work with the concept of service may offer a solution, although he does not dwell long enough on the idea to demonstrate satisfactorily that this would not rather end

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 220; c.f. Cardijn, "Lisieux,".

<sup>46</sup> Edward Yarnold refers to the need for a theology of work, 'such as Dr Goosen attempts in this book.' Goosen, *Work* 9

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 43.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 55.

up glorifying degrading work.<sup>49</sup> Despite an engagement with Marx, Goosen fails to make the connection made by Cardijn and overlooks Cardijn's solution, of valuing the worker fully as a child of God. Goosen seeks to move work into the eschatological realm, and makes use of *Gaudium et Spes* to bridge the two extremes of eschaton: transformation and annihilation. He arrives at the interesting suggestion that 'positive and redeemed work will continue into eternity',<sup>50</sup> while the rest of work will be destroyed. Yet without a clear indication of what work(s) will be seen as positive and redeemed, and what annihilated, it is difficult to take such a suggestion seriously. Goosen's work, in summary, offers some interesting ideas on work, but is fundamentally flawed by his refusal to pursue the more interesting ideas to their conclusion.

A common thread running through these second-wave theologies of work is the attempt to engage with the mid-twentieth-century industrialised workplace. The urgency is to offer a coherent account of work which will fit with such ways of working – indeed, as Cardijn and Chenu had been quietly doing since the 1920s and 1930s. Yet these cannot be described as theologies of work. There is an interest in how theological discourse might relate to the 'new' phenomenon of industrial work (already a two-centuries-old phenomenon by this time), and a particular interest in Biblical texts including Genesis 1 and 3. However, there is very little attempt to draw the Tradition into the discussion, and still less interest in seeking the systematic underpinnings necessary for a true theology of work, such as those provided by Cardijn and Chenu.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 68-69.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 75.

#### 7.4 A new Reform: contemporary Reformed theologies of work

It is to the third wave of theologies of work that this chapter now turns. We start with the most important and influential, Miroslav Volf. Volf's 1991 reflection on work consciously takes as its starting point the link between work and eschatology as expressed by Jürgen Moltmann.<sup>51</sup> However, it should be noted that Moltmann does not directly consider a theology of work, except as it forms part of the *polis* which is his theological concern. With Moltmann, Volf insists that human work is part of the *imago Dei*,<sup>52</sup> so that 'through their work ... [people] serve not only with the creating God; they also work together with the redeeming God.'<sup>53</sup> Theology of work, asserts Volf, must grow out of a theology of creation, for work is part of human participation in the *imago Dei*, indeed it is '*cooperation with God*'.<sup>54</sup> Yet Christian faith must act alongside hope in the *new creation*,<sup>55</sup> granting work an eschatological function. Working with two understandings of the eschaton, the *annihilatio Mundi*,<sup>56</sup> and the *transformatio Mundi*,<sup>57</sup> Volf suggests that while an eschatological theology of work is not incompatible with the *annihilatio Mundi*, work is only meaningful within the *transformatio Mundi*. A strength of Volf's locating work within the

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<sup>51</sup> In particular, J. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity. Political Theology and Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1984) although Volf also refers to *Theology of Hope. On the ground and the implications of a Christian Eschatology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967) and *God in Creation. A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985).

<sup>52</sup> *Dignity* 41.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 57.

<sup>54</sup> Volf, *Spirit* 98. Emphasis in original.

<sup>55</sup> Moltmann, *Hope* 19ff.

<sup>56</sup> Volf, *Spirit* 88-90.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 91ff.

*transformatio Mundi* is that such a theology of work is not dependent on the particulars of work, but can be flexible enough to reflect even work which is as yet unimaginable.<sup>58</sup> He is perhaps the only theologian of work, contemporary or earlier, who takes seriously the question (to which we will turn in our Conclusion) whether a single theology of work, applicable to all kinds of work, is possible.

Following Moltmann, Volf is rightly critical of the dependence on *Beruf* which is often present in Reformed theologies of work. 'Today this vocational ethos is still possible only in a very limited way', Moltmann notes, 'the Lutheran vocational ethos was only possible in a class society in which each person already at birth had a fixed position'.<sup>59</sup> Volf concurs that in a 'dynamic' society in which social and geographical mobility are the norm, 'the dead hand of "vocation" [needs] to be lifted from the Christian idea of work.'<sup>60</sup> For both Moltmann<sup>61</sup> and Volf, the problem with the vocational model goes beyond modern working practices. The indifference to 'the inherent quality of work' found in this understanding of work<sup>62</sup> implies that any kind of work, however mindless, dehumanising, or alienating – provided it 'does not transgress the commandments of God'<sup>63</sup> – may be described as vocational. Work as vocation may easily become an ideology, and, pointing to twentieth-century German history, Volf has observed that '[i]t has proven difficult for Lutheran theology to

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 86.

<sup>59</sup> Moltmann, *Dignity* 47, 48.

<sup>60</sup> Volf, *Spirit* p.vii.

<sup>61</sup> Moltmann, *Dignity* 45-48.

<sup>62</sup> Volf, *Spirit* 107.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 107.



reconcile the two callings in the life of an individual Christian when a conflict arises between them.<sup>64</sup>

Volf next draws on Marx to point to the risk of that work which is inherently alienating being 'ennobled' by the application of vocation. Importantly, he observes that such a view excludes the unemployed and those whose work is unpaid,<sup>65</sup> and risks reducing '[the] significant activity of human beings to employment'.<sup>66</sup> He advocates instead a Spirit-filled approach which would value the unemployed, the volunteer, the homemaker. This pneumatological leap depends on theology of work being understood within the eschatological framework of the *transformatio Mundi*, for 'one cannot talk about the new creation without referring to the Spirit'.<sup>67</sup> For Volf, work 'in the Spirit' is the overarching solution to the development of a theology of work. It should be noted that the subtitle of his monograph is 'Toward a theology of work', implying a sense of development. A theology of work 'in the Spirit', suggests Volf, would remove the vocational matrix and its attendant problems. He argues persuasively that since there is neither hierarchy nor sacred-secular divide in the *charismata* granted by the Spirit to all Christians, a pneumatological approach to work would avoid the misunderstanding of the hierarchy of callings.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, '[s]ince an unemployed person has not

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 107-109.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 156.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 102.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 111-113.

been deprived of all charisms', understanding work to be 'in the Spirit' prevents human activity being reduced to [paid] employment.<sup>69</sup>

Volf stresses the importance for theology of work to find its home first in systematic theology, and then in ethics, for 'a theology of work is a dogmatic reflection on the nature and consequences of human work.'<sup>70</sup> As we shall see below, too much recent 'theology' of work is rather a very general spiritual approach to the workplace, and lacks strong foundations in either systematic or moral theology. The pneumatological foundation is arguably Volf's most important contribution. Here, work ceases to be a *duty* (as in the vocational model), becoming instead a *response to the call* of the Spirit to transform the *saeculum*. Work functions within the Spirit's eschatological realm, the gathering of all creation to the Father 'to become *his world*.'<sup>71</sup> The 'new life' to which the Christian – indeed, all humanity – is called is a life 'in the Spirit'. '[T]he general calling to enter the kingdom of God and to live in accordance with this kingdom ... becomes ... a call to bear the gifts of the Spirit.'<sup>72</sup> It is, Volf argues, the gift of the Spirit which enables humanity to cooperate with God through work, and only a pneumatological theology of work, rooted in creation, will enable us to fully understand this.

If Volf's insistence on the need for a systematic theology of work, his focus on its pneumatological foundations, and his openness to changes in work beyond current imagination, are strengths, his theology of work is not

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 156.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 74.

<sup>71</sup> J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 89.

<sup>72</sup> Volf, *Spirit* 113.

unproblematic. A fuller theology of work, such as those of Cardijn and Chenu, would root human work firmly within the Christian doctrine of Creation, with humanity, *in imago Dei*, participating in the ongoing divine creation through work – whatever that work may be. Work is therefore a response to the divine call – truly vocational, in other words. Volf is right to mistrust the Reform tendency to identify theology of work with *Beruf*, but this suspicion does not mean ‘vocation’ needs to be abandoned altogether. The response to the divine call is lived out through the fullness of Christian life, which includes worship – both public and private. A theology of work which lacks this sense, however secure its foundations in creation and pneumatology, risks returning to the hierarchy of callings and the misunderstanding of vocation, of which Volf is so critical.

Cosden’s theology of work, described in his 2004 monograph, *Theology of Work*,<sup>73</sup> and the more popular *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (2006),<sup>74</sup> also draws on the work of Moltmann, and especially his essay, ‘The Right to Meaningful Work’. Cosden correctly distinguishes between ‘theological reflection on work’,<sup>75</sup> which is to be found within the Christian tradition, ‘work ethics’, and the theology of work itself. As noted elsewhere, Cosden identifies Chenu as the founder of ‘real’ theology of work, rightly observing that Chenu’s theology of work builds on the shift in the nature of theological reflection on work after industrialisation.

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<sup>73</sup> Cosden, *Work*

<sup>74</sup> *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Peabody MA/Milton Keynes: Hendrickson Publishers Inc./Paternoster Press, 2006)

<sup>75</sup> *Work* 5, 19.

Cosden's focus in *Work* is whether work can and should be meaningful, and what that might imply, which leads him to a lengthy critical engagement with John Paul II (*Laborem Exercens*), Moltmann, Alisdair MacIntyre, Colin Gunton, and Oliver O'Donovan. Ultimately, he decides, human work must of necessity be meaningful, and this requires a teleological framework. Following MacIntyre, he insists that humanity must be situated within a teleological understanding in order to accomplish the move from 'what-it-is' to 'what-it-should-be'/'what-it-is-to-become'. If the purpose of human endeavour is to give glory to God, argues Cosden, 'human purpose will necessarily include concepts involving work.'<sup>76</sup> In this view, work becomes a way by which humanity may perfect both itself and creation, as preparation for and a contribution to the new creation in which all will be transformed and made anew. Such an approach permits Cosden to focus on the transformative aspect of work in creation and the new creation. Like Volf, Cosden insists that a theology of work may only be correctly understood and constructed when it is rooted within an eschatological understanding which begins with divine creation and conceptualises the eschaton as a *transformatio Mundi*, now 'made anew' and restored to its original state and intention.

Much of *Work* is concerned with explicating and justifying the building blocks Cosden uses to construct his theology of work. The reader may thus be left feeling short-changed, since the book concentrates more on his critique of other theologians and less on his own theology of work. For this, we must turn to *Heavenly Good*, a popular account of theology of work, drawing on both his

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 139.

research and his pastoral experience as a Reformed pastor and missionary in post-Soviet states in the 1990s. For instance, Cosden discusses the perplexity and confusion among Soviet converts in response to the preaching about work by many Reformed Evangelical missionaries, which he sums up as, “‘Isn’t it amazing that God would call an ordinary person like me, release me from the daily grind of my meaningless job back home ... and send me here to be a missionary to spread the gospel.’”<sup>77</sup> This experience has informed Cosden’s desire that all human work should be understood as meaningful, both in the here-and-now, and in eternity. The ‘hierarchy of callings’ which he identifies as prevalent in the Western Church,<sup>78</sup> which privileges (ordained) ministry and ‘church work’ over ‘ordinary’ work, has, he argues, led to a crisis of work among Christians. He notes that a poor theology of work, in which ‘ordinary’ work is not valued or given meaning, leads to poor work wellbeing: trying to achieve ‘worth’ through work, materialism, presenteeism, and workaholicism.<sup>79</sup>

For Cosden, the meaning of human work resides in its teleological nature. It is this which enables the construction of a theology of work. It is, he argues, ‘a fundamental facet of our human and created existence’,<sup>80</sup> for ‘our imaging [of God] is our essence of humans [and...] the working activity is the expression and realization of that essence.’<sup>81</sup> So our work – whether caring, volunteering, or paid – is, in Cosden’s view, an activity through which humanity fulfils its destiny to be in the image of God.

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<sup>77</sup> *Heavenly Good* 127.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* 22.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 105 ff.

<sup>80</sup> *Work* 177.

<sup>81</sup> *Heavenly Good* 88.

The questions of salvation, justification, and grace are never far from the surface in Cosden's work. After all, he asks, might it not be 'a dangerous bit of theological speculation'<sup>82</sup> to suggest that 'earthly work' might have an eternal meaning and purpose? 'Is it not dangerous for your spiritual health, or even heretical'<sup>83</sup> to even suggest such a thing? Cosden weaves a paradoxical path: we may not be 'justified'<sup>84</sup> by or through our work, yet 'what a person does (including work) in some qualified way, contributes either positively or negatively to what he or she is or becomes'.<sup>85</sup> His teleological foundations for a theology of work, in other words, enable him – indeed, force him – to allow that work may have a sanctifying role.

Cosden's theology of work is successful to the extent that he permits work to have a sanctifying role, views it as teleologically and ontologically part of the human *imago Dei*, and suggests that 'it is through our work that we reflect God's image and cooperate with him in bringing people and the whole creation' to their ultimate eschatological end in the new creation.<sup>86</sup> Yet the over-focus on developing the teleological and ontological foundations for his theology of work in *Work* leave it as an outline of building blocks, rather than a successful theology *per se*; and *Heavenly Good* gradually drifts away from theology toward spirituality and the need for a new theology of mission. In the end, therefore, we must conclude that, while Cosden offers useful parameters – the need for work to be meaningful; its contribution to salvation; its ontological

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 1.

<sup>84</sup> By which I understand him to mean, 'made acceptable for salvation'.

<sup>85</sup> Cosden, *Work* 70.

<sup>86</sup> *Heavenly Good* 129.

and eschatological functions – his theology of work is ultimately lacking. It may best be described, in the manner of Congar’s monumental work on the laity,<sup>87</sup> as *Jalons* for a theology of work. Just as Congar sought to establish ‘ground rules’ for a theology of the laity, and Volf concedes he is moving ‘towards’ a theology of work, so Cosden appears to be setting up markers for a theology of work which is yet to come.

Stevens’ *The Other Six Days*<sup>88</sup> takes as its starting point Congar’s search for a ‘total ecclesiology’.<sup>89</sup> Stevens is rightly critical of the dichotomy between lay and clerical created by the ‘hierarchy of callings’, especially the serious weakness in some Evangelical Churches of the focus on ministry and/or mission as the only calling.<sup>90</sup> He proposes work as the alternative ‘calling’ which will lead to a ‘theology of the people of God’. Stevens’ suggestion that all of Christian life – worship, faith, life, work – should be fully integrated recalls the insistence of both Cardijn and Chenu to this effect. Yet despite his allusion to the ‘theology being done today by ordinary people [who are] like the character in Molière’s play’,<sup>91</sup> Stevens does not acknowledge either Chenu or Cardijn and indeed appears to be unfamiliar with either. Rather, he is influenced by Moltmann and Volf, and in particular he draws on Moltmann’s use of the perichoretic relationship of the Trinity as an image of both ministry and work. Ultimately,

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<sup>87</sup> Congar, *Jalons* The sense of *jalons* – used to ‘mark out’ or ‘stake out’ ground before, for instance, digging foundations or establishing planting – is sadly missing from the English title, *Theology of the Laity*.

<sup>88</sup> R.P. Stevens, *The Other Six Days. Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999)

<sup>89</sup> ‘At bottom there can only be one sound and sufficient theology of laity, and that is a “total ecclesiology”.’ (Congar, *Jalons* 1 p.xxviii)

<sup>90</sup> Stevens, *Six Days* 82.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* 18.

Stevens' principal concern is overcoming the lay-cleagy divide. Yet he offers some useful insights to a theology of work. While he questions the appropriateness of the term 'co-creation',<sup>92</sup> he does acknowledge that it includes all human activity – artistic, manual, political.<sup>93</sup> If the perichoretic life of the Trinity can be a model for human work,<sup>94</sup> as he suggests, then humanity can also be co-workers with God in the bringing about of the Eschaton.<sup>95</sup> His models for theology of work are again rooted in the Tradition – the human worker as co-creator, and the life of the Trinity. Yet for Stevens, theology of work is simply a means by which the 'end' of a total ecclesiology may be achieved.

Stevens nonetheless offers a vital insight, which is that Biblical revelation does not deal with the question of 'structural unemployment', that long-term unemployment which has become a feature of post-industrial societies. Both Chenu and Cardijn allude to the search for work as work, for despite the decimation of the male populations following two World Wars in a generation, and the full employment of the *trente glorieuses*, both had lived through and witnessed the deprivation of mass unemployment in the interwar period. The consideration of unemployment and the search for work must be included in any successful theological discourse on work, along with the acknowledgement that work in the future may be very different, indeed, unimaginable.

Esther Reed's *Work, for God's Sake* grew out of her 2007 Sarum Lectures. With the subtitle, 'Christian ethics in the workplace', this is at first

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 97.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. 98.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 118.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 123.



glance a ‘search for ethics’, although Reed’s appreciation of *Laborem Exercens*, her suggestion that worship should be seen as work, and her understanding that ‘the hope of heaven gives eternal significance to earthly work’,<sup>96</sup> put her more firmly in the theology of work camp. Her anthropological and liturgical approaches bring her tantalisingly close to Cardijn and Chenu, although neither is referenced. Reed is exercised by the need for ‘Decent Work’, and the deleterious effect of what may be termed ‘structures of sin’ in the global workplace.<sup>97</sup> Yet the underpinning anthropology key to the theologies of work of Cardijn and Chenu – that humanity is created *in imago Dei* and thus work should match that image – is curiously opaque here. Reed rightly notes that a major, and often ignored, problem with ‘vocation’ vocabulary is its emphasis on the individual. A correct hermeneutic of the Biblical roots, she observes, would pull vocation back to the relationship between the (worshipping) community and God.<sup>98</sup> This enables her to correctly argue against the relegation of work to the private sphere which astonishingly can occur in the Christian life. Cardijn and Chenu, too, argued for an integrated life in which the weekly task of the worker was not separated from their Sunday worship. Worship, Reed argues, should also be an opportunity to reflect upon one’s work in the light of the Scriptures. What she refers to as ‘liturgical reasoning’<sup>99</sup> is reminiscent of Cardijn’s See-Judge-Act, although applied to the daily life of the individual,

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<sup>96</sup> E.D. Reed, *Work, for God's Sake* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2010) 94.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 15ff.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* Chapters 4 and 5, although note that her point about the community only becomes clear in Chapter 5.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* 37ff.

rather than reflected on by a group. It is a shame that this connection is missed, as Cardijn's influence here is surely key.

For Reed, the key to Christian theological reflection on work is 'thinking about patterns of repair, restoration and renewal found in Holy Scripture'<sup>100</sup> and a focus on the transforming eschaton which is to come, both of which should lead Christians to 'struggle for decent, humane work'.<sup>101</sup>

Where Reed's *Work* offers an accessible and concise account of the urgency of the need for a theology of work, Hughes' *The End of Work* is in a different category. Hughes' stated aim in this book was to identify 'the role of the Aesthetic in critiques of modern labour',<sup>102</sup> and to this end he offered readings of a range of nineteenth- and twentieth-century interpretations of the Marxist account of labour. These range from Weber and the Frankfurt School to those of socialist artists including Morris, Ruskin, and Gill. Confusingly, this search for a philosophical aesthetic of work begins with an account of four twentieth-century theologians' theologies of work: Barth, Chenu, John Paul II, and Volf. Yet this first, theological chapter suffers from a narrow and ideological approach. Hughes' critique of Chenu's theology of work is fundamentally flawed. Relying exclusively on the 1957 *Pour une théologie du travail*, he was apparently unaware that this was not a single text written in the 1950s, but comprised four separate articles penned during the previous decade. There is no reference to Chenu's considerable writing on work and workers from the

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 110.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 111.

<sup>102</sup> J. Hughes, *The End of Work. Theological Critiques of Capitalism*, Illuminations (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007) 100; c.f.110.

1920s onwards. The irony of a hermetically sealed reading of a single text outside the context of Chenu's *œuvre* is compounded by the lack of reference to the historical context in which Chenu was writing these short articles. For the articles which comprise *Théologie* are, as Hughes observes, optimistic in their understanding of work.<sup>103</sup> As we saw in Chapter 6, the articles are less 'in the spirit of the "*aggiornamento*" ...' as Hughes claimed,<sup>104</sup> and more in the spirit of the *trente glorieuses*.

While Chenu would no doubt have been amused at Hughes' description of him as a 'Modernist theologian', playing Chenu off against Barth simply does not work. Chenu was not writing in response to Barth. He was writing within his own tradition, recovering the scholastic understanding of work and seeking to apply it to the twentieth-century situation. Phrases such as 'against Barth', and 'territory that would have appalled Barth'<sup>105</sup> simply confirm that here, Chenu was being read out of context. This misreading unfortunately continued with Hughes' account of John Paul II and *Laborem Exercens*. The Polish pope was attempting neither to move 'beyond Barth' nor to move 'towards Barth'<sup>106</sup> in the account of work he offered in *Laborem Exercens*, or indeed his other reflections on work. Hughes' attempts to file Chenu as a Hegelian and John Paul II as a Kantian are the more extraordinary given that a later chapter in the book examines the twentieth-century Catholic Thomists Pieper and Maritain – contemporaries of Chenu, although a generation older than John Paul II. At last

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 15. Incidentally, why claim '*aggiornamento*' rather than acknowledge Chenu's importance as a *ressourcement* theologian?

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. 16, 17.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 18, 19.

the Thomism which underpins both Chenu's scholarship and *Laborem Exercens* is acknowledged. 'Here, finally,' claims Hughes, 'the foundational question of *teleology* ... comes to the foreground.'<sup>107</sup> It is an extraordinary and unfortunate claim to suggest that the question of 'the end of work' is absent from either Chenu or *Laborem Exercens*.

Hughes concluded by emphasising the theology at the heart of social theory,<sup>108</sup> which led him to suggest that Marx's critique of labour is based on an ideal which 'is actually an idea of what labour is like for God'.<sup>109</sup> He rightly concluded from this that work cannot be understood in purely utilitarian terms, and proposed theology as the solution, based on the 'analogy between divine and human making'.<sup>110</sup> True work, Hughes suggested, 'participates in God's work',<sup>111</sup> although he fails to say how. Particularly given the work he has considered throughout the book – 'the responsible craft of an artisan, the liberal arts vision of education ... the religious community'<sup>112</sup> – simply to suggest that work should be more ethical ('just wages and conditions of working, fair prices, and honest trade'<sup>113</sup>) and less utilitarian, will not do. It places Hughes remarkably close to Sayers, with all the insufficiency her approach involved – looking solely at 'creative' work, an idealistic approach, and no consideration of how this might be applied more widely in contemporary work, or in the unknowable work of the future.

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* 163.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* 213-215.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* 215.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* 227.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* 228.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* 230.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* 231.

Finally in this section, we turn to ‘spiritualities’ of and ‘sermonic reflections’ on work. As we have discovered, a theology of work will only be successful when it is rooted in a solid theological anthropology, which understands humanity to be created *in imago Dei* and therefore human work to be participatory in the ongoing divine creation. Further, a successful theology of work views work as part of the Christian response to the divine call to salvation, and thus permits work to contribute to salvation. Finally, a successful theology of work has a social or liturgical function. As Cardijn and Chenu describe it, faith, by which they mean faith experienced within the community, must be wholly integrated into daily life, in order that work may be construed both socially and liturgically.

The writings to which we now turn approach the question from a ‘how-should-a-Christian-work’ perspective. Jensen,<sup>114</sup> Ryken,<sup>115</sup> and Larive,<sup>116</sup> writing within the North American Reformed context, identify the ‘Sacred-Secular Divide’ and the ‘hierarchy of callings’ which derives from it, as profoundly damaging to Christian theological reflection on work.

As a whole, these writings focus less on the theological underpinnings of the Tradition, and more on the ethics of the workplace and questions about how work itself is carried out.

Like Stevens, Jensen argues that work should be understood within the perichoretic model of the Trinity, which he describes as ‘a statement about

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<sup>114</sup> D.H. Jensen, *Responsive Labor. A theology of work* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006)

<sup>115</sup> L. Ryken, *Redeeming the Time. A Christian Approach to Work & Leisure* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1995)

<sup>116</sup> A. Larive, *After Sunday* (New York: Continuum, 2004)

God's work of redemption.<sup>117</sup> Work, he argues, is central to the economy of salvation. 'The Bible assumes that God works. Creation, covenant, redemption, and consummation do not occur effortlessly by God's inexorable will, but are the result of divine work to maintain relationships.'<sup>118</sup> It is from the Trinitarian foundation that he draws the assumption that each worker is uniquely irreplaceable, and therefore that 'structural unemployment' should be theologically regarded as a 'waste',<sup>119</sup> for its ignoring of the unique offerings of some workers. For Jensen, the liturgy in general and the Eucharist in particular are important loci for the theological consideration of human work, and even the Eucharistic elements are 'the products of human labor.'<sup>120</sup> Jensen's theological account of work has a Trinitarian foundation (as opposed to an anthropology rooted in creation) which is relatively successful, and acknowledges the import of the liturgy and the Eucharist. The placing of the Eucharist on the first day of the week from the earliest days of Christianity, he argues, 'encourages us to see our daily work as infused by Christ, the Lord of time'.<sup>121</sup>

Jensen is rightly critical of the Sacred-Secular Divide and the hierarchy of callings which have been derived from the Reformation emphasis on *Beruf*.<sup>122</sup> He notes, correctly, that an over-emphasis on work as salvation risks 'that we

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<sup>117</sup> Jensen, *Labor* 50.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* 47.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* 53.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 80. Yet note that Jensen here makes no reference to or acknowledgement of Cardijn's contribution here.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* 77.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

become our work and hence incapable of rest, worship and play.<sup>123</sup> The assumption that we will be 'saved' by our work, far from bringing heaven to earth, contributes to a lack of well-being in the workplace.

Jensen's approach is weakened by his shift, in the final chapter, to a less theological framework. Here he is more concerned with questions about the market and the organisation of labour, rather than how human work itself may reflect the divine work of ongoing creation in which humanity should participate.

Larive's *After Sunday* suffers immediately from a lack of clarity in argumentation, and an over-emphasis on background ideas. In general, Larive seeks to follow Volf in focusing on a Trinitarian or Spirit-based theology of work. Yet the central chapters of his work, which claim to deal with this subject, are sufficiently unclear that it is not evident how he understands a Trinitarian or Spirit-based model to work, or which model he prefers. Like Stevens, Larive links the theology of work to theology of laity. He takes the opposite approach, unsuccessfully arguing that a theology of work requires 'a different doctrine of the laity' on the grounds that 'it is principally the laity who work with creation.'<sup>124</sup> Rather than using theology of work to contribute to the establishment of a theology of the people of God, thus removing the schism between the two, Larive suggests that theology of work should be used to privilege theology of laity over a theology of clergy. Like much else, this argument is less than cogent, and it is further weakened by an impoverished

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

<sup>124</sup> Larive, *Sunday* 63.

understanding of Catholic theology on the subject, as evidenced in Congar, *Lumen Gentium* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.

While Larive's attempt to establish a theology of work is both unsuccessful and problematic, he should be commended for his attempt to link work to the exercise of the virtues. If his suggestion in Chapter 2, that vocation is about being not doing, is confused and confusing, he is nevertheless on the right track.<sup>125</sup> What Larive never quite fully explicates is why the idea that 'good work, done well', should be both an appropriate response to the divine call to work, and the way in which work contributes to our salvation.

Ryken's contribution is the most unsettling. Deeply judgemental about 'idleness' and a 'lack of work ethic',<sup>126</sup> Ryken explicitly aims to 'set the record straight regarding the much maligned Protestant work ethic' and the 'unjustly maligned Puritans'.<sup>127</sup> One way in which he does this is to suggest that 'the Puritans would have loved' *Laborem Exercens*, on the grounds that 'the encyclical ranges over exactly the same biblical and doctrinal data' as the sixteenth-century Protestants.<sup>128</sup> Ryken also demonstrates some confusion in his analysis of the 'division of work into sacred and secular', which he blames on the medieval period, suggesting that this was resolved temporarily by the 'Protestant work ethic', until the Enlightenment secularised work.<sup>129</sup> Yet, as Gregory has recently shown, it was the 'privatizing religion and separating it from society' in the sixteenth century which 'unintentionally precipitated the

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid. 28ff.

<sup>126</sup> Ryken, *Redeeming the Time* 20, 32.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. 95, 7.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. 110. Of course John Paul II also relies on Tradition, which Ryken fails to acknowledge.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 74-6.



secularization of religion *and* society.’<sup>130</sup> Gregory also critiques the commonplace that the sixteenth-century Reformation ushered in modern consumerist attitudes, noting that ‘attitudes about the proper human relationship to material things and acquisitiveness are much closer to those of medieval Christianity’ than to contemporary Western thought.<sup>131</sup>

The repeated emphasis that salvation is dependent on faith not works puts those writing about work from a Reformed tradition in an awkward position. On the one hand, they concede that human work matters within the divine economy of salvation. Equally, they understand human work, with all creation, to be moving towards the New Creation of the end-times, and acknowledge that it has some contribution to make to the eschaton. On the other hand, they display a profound anxiety about the ‘dangerous’, ‘heretical’, even ‘unchristian’<sup>132</sup> suggestion that human work might have some ‘ultimate meaning’ in the economy of salvation. The suggestion that work(s) might contribute to salvation appears as heretical as the idea that Christ is not fully human and fully divine. Yet as Cardijn and Chenu both noted, human work is as much a response to the divine call to salvation as the response of faith. Both our theologians understood work is an opportunity to exercise the virtues and live the Christian life to the full. As has been noted above, Cardijn and Chenu were formed within the neo-scholastic theology and philosophy of their time. For all Chenu’s serious critique of neo-scholasticism and its discontents, it nonetheless

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<sup>130</sup> B.S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation. How a religious revolution secularized society* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2012) 243.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* 269.

<sup>132</sup> Cosden, *Heavenly Good* 1-3.

provides the theological hinterland to his thinking, and that of Cardijn. The recent recovery of virtue ethics by Catholic philosophers and theologians may offer a useful insight into the approach of Cardijn and Chenu to theology of work.<sup>133</sup> This recovery of Thomism sheds light on the underpinnings taken for granted by theologians of the early twentieth century, such as Cardijn and Chenu. It is worth pausing momentarily to consider how a virtue ethics approach might draw on the insights of Cardijn and Chenu and solve the discomfort so apparent in Reformed theologies of work.

For Cardijn and Chenu, work was not only part of what it meant to be a human person created in the image of God. Human work – the job – could also contribute to salvation, through being done ‘well’ – cheerfully, promptly, honestly, etc. The unarticulated – because obvious, to Cardijn and Chenu – intellectual background to this position is Aquinas’ teaching in *ST I-II* that virtue may arise from the practice of a good disposition. Since ‘virtues involve good acts that make the person good’,<sup>134</sup> the exercise of the virtues in our job – being just, prudent, charitable, honest, and so forth – will further develop those virtues and propel us further towards the goal of human life – happiness, which

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<sup>133</sup> In particular, for instance, the work of MacIntyre and Davies, as well as the more recent project by Cessario and his disciples to recover a Thomist virtue ethics for theology. See e.g., A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (London: Duckworth, 2007 (1981)); B. Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); R. Cessario, *The moral virtues and theological ethics* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009); M. Levering, R. Huetter, and R. Cessario, eds., *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life. Essays in Honor of Romanus Cessario, O.P.* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010)

<sup>134</sup> C.S. Titus, "Moral development and connecting the virtues", in *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments and the Moral Life. Essays in honor of Romanus Cessario OP*, ed. Matthew Levering, Reinhard Huetter, and Romanus Cessario (Washington DC: CUA Press, 2010) 334.

'is nothing less than God.'<sup>135</sup> Titus argues that Aquinas also sees that 'the potential for moral development is in human nature'.<sup>136</sup> It follows that the more we seek to do our jobs 'well' by right use of the virtues, the greater our possibilities for salvation, as we will have developed morally through the job. The solution Cardijn and Chenu offer is that it is how we do the job, and for Cardijn, how the worker is valued – whether our job be lecturing in theology at a university, searching for work, caring for the sick, or sweeping the streets – not the job itself, which contributes to salvation. By allowing grace to work within us – through participation in the Christian life of prayer and the Christian community – we may grow and develop in our exercise of the virtues, and thus be led to salvation. This understanding of work, as an opportunity for moral development, and therefore the increase of virtue, is the crucial key to the model of theology of work offered by Cardijn and Chenu. Without it, the 'job' cannot make any contribution to salvation, and trying to make work divinely willed risks glorifying work which is deleterious to human dignity. With it, a theology of work has the possibility of being universal (or at least, more universal). Further, because work is a place where the virtues may be developed, 'decent' work which reflects the inherent dignity of humanity becomes part and parcel of this approach.

### *7.5 Conclusions*

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<sup>135</sup> Davies, *Thought* 228.

<sup>136</sup> Titus, "Development", 337.

This chapter has reviewed twentieth- and twenty-first-century contributions to the discussion of theology of work. What we described as ‘first-wave’ and ‘second-wave’ theologies of work mark the start of attempts to engage with work as it was experienced by an increasing majority of the population in industrialised Western Europe. Theologians became increasingly aware of the need to deal with such questions during the inter-war period and again during the post-war years, as industrialisation and technological development spread ever further. The integration of industrial working practice and Christian theology proved problematic for Sayers and Weil, while de Bovis, Rondet, and Goosen critique the de-humanising aspects of industrial work, which is so opposed to the Christian picture of the fully human person, without really offering a satisfactory solution.

For some third-wave contemporary theologians of work, the question is equally problematic. A suspicion of any suggestion that salvation may be dependent on work(s), leads to an unsolvable struggle with the conviction that work is part of the *imago Dei* and a necessary part of the new creation to which the redeemed world moves. Cardijn and Chenu solved this problem with the application of virtue ethics, which they owed to their understanding of medieval theology.

A successful theology of work will start from the creation of humanity *in imago Dei*, understanding that part of that divine image entails work as participatory in the ongoing divine creation. In this view, work is a response to the divine call to each human person, and has a role to play in our salvation, both individually and collectively, dependent on whether we choose to develop

ourselves as virtuous beings through our work. Finally, the worker, as a human person, must be the subject of the work, and, ideally, should be helped to flourish and grow as a person through their work.

In our Conclusion in Chapter 8, we turn to examine the question raised by Volf – and implicitly by Chenu and Cardijn. Can there be a single theology of work, which is both satisfactory from the perspective of systematic theology, and also is truly applicable to all forms of human activity, which are regarded as work – including those which have not yet been considered?

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters have advanced a sustained scholarly comparison of the theological narratives on industrial work developed by Cardijn and Chenu during the interwar and immediate post-war years of the twentieth century. We have also seen that their important contributions remain largely unknown and unacknowledged by late-twentieth-century and contemporary writers on the theology and spirituality of work in an industrial and post-industrial era. This is true regardless of these authors' traditions, with even John Paul II making no reference to either of our theologians in his considerable output on human work.

Yet both theologians, and particularly Cardijn, have much to offer such a theological discourse on industrial and post-industrial working practices. Blending the key insights of the *ressourcement* project, especially the vital link between a lived and living faith and the daily reality of life, with a development of the *Œuvres* of nineteenth-century Social Catholicism, they strove for a theological account of work which would resonate more fully with those working in industrial workplaces.

#### *8.1 Summary of the thesis: foundations for theology of work*

For Cardijn, the rooting of theology of work in the ecclesiology of the Mystical Body – forerunner of the *communio* ecclesiology favoured at Vatican II – enabled a drawing out and positive re-evaluation of the role of the laity in the

Church, particularly their vital contribution to bringing the Gospel to the workers. This was reinforced by his revolutionary methodology, the See-Judge-Act. This method put young people 'in the driving seat' of their movement, which was run by young people, with young people, for young people. In a society where we see an increasing crisis for millennials, marked by lack of access to housing, high unemployment, poor prospects for secure work, and alarming rates of mental ill-health, here is a timely reminder of the importance of giving young people responsibility and enabling them to take the lead, whether in bringing the Gospel to their peers, lobbying to improve living and working conditions, or successfully claiming a stake in society.

Cardijn's theology of work was rooted in his appreciation of the creation of every human person in the divine image. From this arose his concern that young people should be enabled to be apostles, as well as the demand that each and every worker be accorded the dignity of being such an icon of divinity. He argued that only a focus on the inherent dignity of each person would ensure that their work could be raised to their dignity as a human being.

For both Cardijn and Chenu, human work was the means of perfecting and completing the divine work of creation and redemption. They argued that each and every worker is called to participate in this ongoing creation by collaborating with God in their work. By evangelising their peers and working excellently, they would give glory to God (Chenu) and bring about the Kingdom (Cardijn). As Chenu emphasised, the Incarnation includes and involves the whole diversity of human activity in grace and redemption.

Chenu's use of medieval texts enabled him to critique the Church of his day and the deficiencies he identified in its structure, demanding that theology should be *engagée*, involved with and engaged in the world around it, as it had been in the days of the Schools. Most important, he insisted that theology should be nourished and nurtured by a deep, living faith. Chenu's historical scholarship led him to demand a 'new' theology of work which would respond to contemporary needs.

Thus Cardijn and Chenu demonstrate the key foundations for a successful theology of work. First, it must be rooted in the Christian doctrines of the Creation, Incarnation, and Redemption. In particular, it must be deeply attentive to the creation of every person in the divine image. Second, work must be perceived as a human collaboration with the ongoing divine work of creation. This can ultimately bring about both the perfection of the worker – the end to which all humanity is called – and the perfection and completion of creation. Grace, redemption, and the Kingdom may be achieved by every worker, and in every workplace.

Such foundations will ensure that theology of work remains rooted in Christian doctrine, while also being flexible enough to accommodate a variety of working practices. Work itself has changed significantly in the half-century since Cardijn and Chenu were writing; it is likely to change dramatically in the next half-century and beyond. As Ross<sup>1</sup> has recently observed, technological innovation has the capacity to change human working lives beyond all recognition. While visions of robotics replacing all human work are reminiscent

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<sup>1</sup> A. Ross, *The Industries of the Future* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2016).



of the utopian visions of the 1950s and 1960s of the end of human labour and a life of leisure for all, there are serious questions to be addressed. How can theology claim that work is intrinsically part of what it means to be human, if all human work is carried out by our own, non-human, 'creations'? Reed<sup>2</sup> and Pieper<sup>3</sup> have both pointed to the role of liturgy in marking out leisure as time which is sanctified by being 'not-work-time'. What implications are there for liturgy in a world where all human activity is 'leisure'?

### *8.2 The work of the Gospel: areas for further research*

Chenu's theological reflection on work culminated in his support for and reflection on the Worker Priests. He argued that the evangelisation of the unchurched working classes should be entrusted to priests who would labour alongside the workers, bearing witness in their lives to the truths of the Christian faith. Aside from the canonical issues in the Latin Catholic tradition, where clerical 'work' continues to be understood as centred on the altar, Chenu's proposals effectively undermine all that Cardijn was working for with the JOC.

Chenu's proposals fail to consider the question of where Worker Priests leave the lay apostles of the JOC and other similar work-based movements. Indeed, a significant weakness of Chenu's argument is that his focus was on the priests as workers; the effect on the laity's contribution to the Church was

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<sup>2</sup> Reed, *Work*.

<sup>3</sup> J. Pieper, *Leisure, the basis of culture*, trans. Alexander Dru (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1963).

ignored. The current canonical norms are disciplinary rather than doctrinal: priests in the Eastern Catholic Churches often have jobs and fulfil their priestly duties, and Permanent Deacons in the Latin rite are expected to support themselves (and their families, where appropriate) by their work. Worker Priests in the Latin rite are therefore not impossible. However, any such disciplinary amendment would have to maintain and protect the role of the laity in the Church. Further research is required to investigate how Worker Priests might be successfully integrated into the Western Catholic Churches for the twenty-first century and beyond, without undermining the gifts the laity bring to the Church.

Cardijn's focus for theology of work is both less controversial and more pertinent. The emphasis is firmly on the Eucharist, both the lay 'continuation' of the Eucharist at work, and the vital contribution human work makes to the celebration of the liturgy. Yet, while 'taking the Eucharist to work' and 'making your workbench your altar' are powerful and attractive concepts for communities whose worship is based on the Eucharist, it is easy to see why this model might not be taken up by those for whom worship is less Eucharistic-centred. At the same time, we must note that it is astonishing that such a model was not pursued by John Paul II, in, for instance, *Laborem Exercens*, particularly when one also considers the importance he accorded the Eucharist in the life of the Church (cf., *Ecclesia de Eucharistica*). For the Catholic Church in particular, notwithstanding the potential problems of its appeal to those excluded from the Eucharist, this is a valuable model which offers much scope for further theological reflection.

The second strand of Cardijn's Eucharistic focus is the contribution of human work to the celebration of the liturgy – the public prayer which is the 'work of the people'. It is indeed extraordinary that not one theologian of work has yet pursued this model, which is applicable to every Christian community, regardless of denomination, and indeed to every faith group. Any place of worship is entirely dependent upon human work both for its construction and for the worship celebrated therein. The human work of worship cannot be achieved without the contribution of human labour. The universality of this concept indicate that this is a rich vein for further research and consideration. Particularly interesting would be research demonstrating the breadth of its scope across a range of religious traditions, texts, and practices.

Thus far we can identify four areas for further research. First, whether there is enough room for manoeuvre in the current Latin-rite *Code of Canon Law* to enable Worker Priests in the Latin Catholic tradition, while not undermining the lay contribution. Second, how the 'complementary apostolates' identified by Cardijn of the laity and the clergy may continue to function within the Latin Catholic tradition. Third, how to model Cardijn's concepts of 'taking the Eucharist to work' and 'making the workbench your altar' in the contemporary Church. Finally, how Cardijn's emphasis on the contribution of human work to worship and liturgy may be further drawn out both ecumenically and in an inter-faith context.

### *8.3 The future of work*

Finally, we must acknowledge that the world of work itself holds dramatic challenges for the theologian of work. We have already alluded to the possibilities of technological innovations, and the replacement of human workers by robotics in relatively unskilled labour. The term 'structural unemployment' has been coined to describe

unemployment that remains in place even when the economy grows, due to inflexibility in the labour market or other economic, regulatory, cultural or political impediments.<sup>4</sup>

The rapid advance of technology in industry is one such 'impediment'. That machines are more efficient than human beings has been a maxim of industrialisation for 200 years. Yet as Wacquant has pointed out,

post-industrial modernisation translates, on the one hand, into the multiplication of highly skilled positions for university-trained professional and technical staff and, on the other, into the deskilling and outright elimination of millions of jobs for uneducated workers.<sup>5</sup>

In his history of British unemployment over the last two centuries, Burnett sketches the history of twentieth-century structural unemployment, and its devastating effects on the local economy. As early as 1929, he argues, long-term

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<sup>4</sup> "Structural Unemployment," in *FT Lexicon* (<http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=structural-unemployment>) (accessed 3/10/15).

<sup>5</sup> L. Wacquant, "Urban Marginality in the Coming Millennium", *Urban Studies* 36, no. 10 (1999), 1641.

unemployment, resulting from the collapse of industries such as coal-mining, steel, and ship-building, was becoming the norm, and normalised' in those regions known as the 'depressed areas'.<sup>6</sup> It remains noteworthy that structural unemployment is a more significant risk for the unskilled and semi-skilled, and this catastrophe, with its terrible ripples into poverty, deleterious impact on public health, and poor mental health,<sup>7</sup> raises entirely new questions for the theologian of work. Volf has pointed to the need for a theology of work to be flexible enough to include as yet unimagined ways of working. But what are the implications if, instead, the future of work includes non-working for huge swathes of the population?

McLoughlin and Clark have proposed that technological developments should be based on what they term 'human-centred design'. Technological advances, they point out, should be seen as complementing, rather than replacing, the human worker, regardless of that person's skill set. We may think here of how the modern surgeon is aided, but not replaced, by the use of robotics in the operating theatre. Such an approach, putting the human person at the centre of working developments, is one of which Cardijn and Chenu would heartily approve.

The challenges then for the theologian of work of the twenty-first century are focused around structures. How to account, theologically, for the rise of structural unemployment? How can this fit with a Christian doctrine of work as part of Creation, Incarnation, and Redemption? And how may

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<sup>6</sup> J. Burnett, *Idle Hands. The experience of unemployment, 1790-1990* (London: Routledge, 1994), 205-212.

<sup>7</sup> Bamba, *Work*.

theologians influence the developments of work, to ensure that the ongoing technological changes put the human person first, seeking to improve, not to replace, the human worker? By constructing our theological approach to contemporary work firmly on the foundations raised by Cardijn – centred on the human person, integrated into the doctrines of Creation, Incarnation, and Redemption, aware of the reality of the lack of work, and enabling workers to have their say – we will be able to develop a theological narrative of work fit for the twenty-first century and beyond.



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*Taking theology to work:*

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