

MARITAIN BEFORE THE HOLY OFFICE:  
THE ROLE OF FATHER GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, OP

BY  
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In this conference, I would like to return to the (non) condemnation of "Maritain's doctrine" by the Holy Office and to the (supposed) role of Father Garrigou-Lagrance in the investigation of the lawsuit brought against the author of *Integral Humanism*. I will do so in the light of the archives of the pontificate of Pius XII recently opened to researchers. I will therefore let the documents speak for themselves, in this case, mainly the documents produced by Father Garrigou-Lagrance himself. In a previous study, based mainly on Maritain's papers, I attempted to reconstruct the history of their complicated relationship from the years in Meudon until the Dominican's death in Rome in February 1964.<sup>1</sup> Without being able, for lack of access to the archives of the Supreme, to give a clear and documented answer to the initial question I had asked myself: was Father Garrigou-Lagrance, in this affair, Maritain's lawyer or prosecutor? The annotated copy of *Humanisme intégral* (in the second revised and expanded edition of 1947) kept in the library of the Angelicum and kindly put at my disposal by Brother Augustin Laffay revealed an attentive and, to say the least, critical reader of the controversial work.

The Vatican archives now accessible (the five large volumes of the Holy Office, but also the archives of the Secretariat of State, the<sup>1<sup>re</sup></sup> and 2<sup>e</sup> sections) show that he was, if not the only one, at least the main censor of the philosopher's works. It is worth noting in passing that his appointment as a consultant of the Holy Office (January 1955) was shortly before the mandate he was given, just as his appointment as a qualifier (February 1937) had been shortly before his appointment as a censor.

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<sup>1</sup> Philippe CHENAUX, *Jacques Maritain et le P. Garrigou-Lagrance*, in *Revue thomiste*, 111 (2011), pp. 263-277.

the publication & *Integral Humanism* and the outbreak of the Spanish War. Both bear the personal stamp of Cardinal and later Pope Eugenio Pacelli.<sup>2</sup> Before examining in detail the content of the two long *vota* drawn up at the request of the Congregation and their actual scope, it is appropriate to return briefly to two points: the evolution of their relationship and the political and ecclesial context of the 1950s.

### *An old and stormy friendship*

The friendship between Jacques Maritain and Father Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange went back to the early years of the century when the two young men attended Gabriel Séailles' philosophy course at the Sorbonne together.<sup>3</sup> In his *Carnet de notes* (1965), Maritain speaks of "the theological teaching" of Father Garrigou-Lagrange as "a light of grace and a blessing for our intelligences."<sup>4</sup> In one of his last letters to Cardinal Journet, he confessed, "What would I have become, Charles, without you! and without Father Garrigou, and without Father Dehau..."<sup>5</sup> On the part of the Dominican friar, there is no lack of affection and even admiration for the one whom Bergson considered to be "the greatest philosophical head in Europe". As proof of this, we have this letter to the same Abbé Journet of December 14, 1958:

"When you write to J. Maritain, tell him my religious remembrance and my wishes for him and all his people. If we differ on one point, we are in full agreement on many others. May the Lord make the talents he has given him bear fruit more and more."<sup>6</sup>

This friendship, as we know, was not without clouds, it was even a difficult friendship, crossed by powerful storms. Until 1937, Father Garrigou-Lagrange had been and had remained, in spite of the crisis of the Action française, the spiritual director of the Thomist Study Circles and the regular preacher of the annual spiritual retreats of Meudon.<sup>7</sup> Maritain's political positions, especially in the context of the Spanish war, were at the origin of the quarrel between the two friends at the end of the 1930s.

"The Father is very upset with me; he goes so far as to reproach me for wanting,

<sup>2</sup> Città del Vaticano, Archivio della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede (ACDF), Priv. S.O. 1937, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Rosaire GAGNEBET, *L'œuvre du P. Garrigou-Lagrange. Intellectual and spiritual itinerary towards God*, in *Nova et Vetera*, 39 (1964), pp. 273-278.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques MARITAIN, *Carnet de notes*, Paris 1965 (1994), p. 112.

<sup>5</sup> Letter of February 16, 1971, in Charles JOURNET - Jacques MARITAIN, *Correspondence. Vol. VI (1965-1973)*, Saint-Maurice 2006, p. 699.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, vol. V (1958-1964), Saint-Maurice 2006, pp. 160-161.

<sup>7</sup> See my book: Philippe CHENAUX, *Entre Mourras et Maritain. Une génération intellectuelle catholique (1920-1930)*, Paris 1999 (in particular chapters 2 and 5), as well as Michel FOURCADE's work, *Feu la modernité? Maritain et les mari-tainismes*, 3 t., Nancy 2021.

as a convert, to give lessons in the Christian spirit to "us others who have been Catholics for three hundred years". (And why not since the crusades? He forgets that he too was converted, by reading Ernest Helio)."<sup>8</sup>

The Dominican theologian opposed a "Maritain the<sup>re</sup> way, carried by Saint Thomas and his commentators" to the philosopher who had "wanted to begin to judge for himself the most different new problems that would require a rare competence in various fields, a competence that very few men can have."<sup>9</sup> The least one can say is that he had not appreciated the publication of Maritain's famous preface to Alfred Mendizabal's work *Aux origines d'une tragédie* (1937) in which the latter firmly rejected any idea of "holy war."<sup>10</sup> He had opened up to his confrere at the Angelicum, Father Mariano Cordovani, Master of the Sacred Palace since 1936:

"Maritain, despite my advice, insists too much in this preface on the faults of the Spanish Catholics before this civil war, faults which produced the discontent of the people. He does not see enough that this discontent was exploited by the Russian communists, he does not say enough that Franco used the right of self-defense, he does not even examine this capital question and he does not take enough account of the collective letter of the Spanish bishops (July 1937) which recognized that there was self-defense. If, however, this preface were denounced and there were a question of condemning it, I believe, Rev. Father, that it would be better, because of the great good that Maritain has done up to now, to avoid this condemnation and to be satisfied with a warning like that given to *Intellectual Life* in the OR."<sup>11</sup>

On the same day (November 14, 1937), in fact, the Vatican newspaper had addressed a public reprimand, under the pen of Father Cordovani, to the Dominican review for having published Henri Guillemin's article, "Par notre faute."<sup>12</sup> In the following weeks, two articles by the same Cordovani questioned the attitude of French Catholic intellectuals in the conflict. If the first one attacked Bernanos, the second one explicitly targeted Mendizabal's work and the echo that the newspaper *La Croix* had given it. For the Italian Dominican, the freedom of political choice of

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<sup>8</sup> MARITAIN, *Notebook*, p. 232 (at the date of September 24, 1937). The last sentence in brackets does not appear in the original version of the notebooks published in *Cahiers Jacques Maritain*, 81 (2021), January, p. 96.

<sup>9</sup> Letter to J. Maritain, 30 October 1937, in *Cahiers Jacques Maritain*, 81 (2021), January, p. 114, n. 111.

<sup>10</sup> Jacques and Raïssa MARITAIN, *Œuvres complètes, Vol. VI (1935-1938)*, Paris Fribourg 1984, pp. 1215-1255. See also my study: Philippe CHENAUX, *Guerre juste ou guerre sainte? Maritain, Journal and the Spanish War (1936-1939)*, in *Guerres et paix. Mélanges offerts à Jean-Claude Favez*, under the direction of Michel PORRET - Jean-François FAYET - Carine FLUCKIGER, Geneva 2000, pp. 385-397.

<sup>11</sup> Letter of November 14, 1937, CFDA, S.O.187/37, R.V., 1938, vol. I, f. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Mariano CORDOVANI, *Per un articolo stampato su "Vie Intellectuelle"*, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 November 1937.

Catholics in the conflict was not appropriate. Anyone who publicly professed such an attitude deserved "no consent, but reprobation".<sup>13</sup> What was reproached to Bernanos and Mendizabal, but also, implicitly, to Maritain and to all his friends who were members of the *French Committee for Civil and Religious Peace in Spain*, was "to point out the crimes only on the side of Franco".<sup>14</sup> "The day when they will want to condemn or cordovanize, we will see; in the meantime, we will have done what we could for the Lord", wrote Maritain to Father Journet on March 11, 1939.<sup>15</sup>

Starting in Latin America, and particularly in Argentina, where the philosopher had given a triumphant lecture tour in 1936, the anti-Maritans' offensive quickly spread to Europe via Spain and reached the banks of the Tiber in the post-war period. The physical presence of the philosopher in Rome, as French ambassador to the Holy See between 1945 and 1948, favored the dissemination of his theses, notably through the first Italian translation of *Humanisme intégral* (1946). It is known, however, that the Secretariat of State (Tardini) had not hidden its reservations at the time of his appointment as ambassador, pointing out that it would have preferred a "personaggio che non fosse implicato in pub bliche controversie di partiti".<sup>16</sup> The rising wave of Maritainism was to reach a kind of climax at the first great congress of Pax Romana in Rome in April 1947 on the theme "Intellectuals in Christianity". In his report on the aims of the movement, the bishop of Bergamo, Adriano Bemareggi, made his own "the historical ideal of the new Christianity" proposed by Maritain, which "seems to us," he declared before a conquered assembly, "to respond to the historical truth of our time, as well as to sound Catholic doctrine."<sup>17</sup> The success of Maritain's theses on the new Christianity in the papal Rome of the post-war period should not, however, create any illusion. Anti-Maritainism continued to make its way into Roman ecclesiastical circles. The diffusion of the work of the Argentinean abbot Julio Meinvielle (*De Lamennais à Maritain*, 1945) contributed to rekindle suspicions. Maritain was affected by this in a letter to Abbé Journet:

"I don't beat myself up about all this, it is however unpleasant that there are whispers in *Rome*, and that in *Spain and South America* a crowd of people who

<sup>13</sup> ID, *I cattolici e la guerra di Spagna*, *ibid*, 16-17 gennaio 1939.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Mgr de Solages to Maritain, June 14, 1938: Yves FLOUCAT, *Lettres de B. Solages à J. Maritain*, in *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique*, (1998), January-June, pp. 199-200.

<sup>15</sup> Charles JOURNET - Jacques MARITAIN, *Correspondence. Vol. II (1930-1939)*, Paris-Fribourg 1997, p. 812. On the role of the Italian Dominican in the last years of the pontificate of Pius XI, see my article: Philippe CHENAUX, *Le P. Mariano Cordovani. Master of the Sacred Palace*, in *Le gouvernement pontifical sous Pie XI. Pratiques romaines et gestion de l'universel*, studies collected by Laura PETTINARGLI, Rome 2013, pp. 379-403.

<sup>16</sup> Tardini to Roncalli, January 18, 1945, in *Acts and Documents of the Holy See relating to the Second World War. Vol. 11: The Holy See and the World War (January 1944-May 1945)*, Vatican City 1981, p. 679. On Maritain's embassy, see Roberto FORNASIER's book, *Jacques Maritain ambasciatore. La Francia, la Santa Sede e i problemi del dopoguerra*, Rome 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Philippe CHENAUX, *"Humanisme intégral" (1936) by Jacques Maritain*, Paris 2006, pp. 91-92.

have never read my books look at me horn a *diabolus in Ecclesia*."<sup>18</sup>

Father Garrigou-Lagrange received no less than two copies of the work. Was it a question of using the Dominican to condemn Maritain's theses? In any case, his reservations about the "political Maritain" were well known in Latin American Catholic circles hostile to the latter. During a trip to Brazil before the war, he had "dampened" the enthusiasm of the philosopher's admirers who were assailing him with requests about him by declaring that "although he was a friend of Maritain's, he could not understand nor approve of the position he had taken in the face of the Spanish question, and could not explain how he could defend those who desecrated churches and murdered priests."<sup>19</sup> On the side of the philosopher's friends, the mistrust towards the right-wing sympathies of the theologian of the Angelicum was no less great: "Waldemar Gurian likes to say that if St. Thomas lived today he would be for Franco, for Tiso, for Pétain: it is obvious. Saint Thomas is Garrigou" wrote Yves Simon to Maritain in July 1941.<sup>20</sup> While repeating his "suffering" for Maritain's positions "since 1936", Father Garrigou-Lagrange nevertheless judged Meinvielle's criticism "excessive":

"The *deviation* of which you speak is far from having the proportion of that of Lamennais, who was more and more mistaken about the very end of the Church, as if it were to work above all, not to lead men to the eternal Life, but for the temporal well-being of the people and that it would be necessary to free them from all servitude."<sup>21</sup>

The letter of the Dominican theologian was widely circulated and even published, without his consent, in an Argentinian magazine. The whole of their correspondence with the articles of Father Meinvielle against Maritain was the object of a new publication in 1947.<sup>22</sup> Maritain responded to these attacks in two long letters to Father Garrigou-Lagrange, large excerpts of which were included in his work *Raison et raisons* under the title "Sur une forme de fanatisme césaro-

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<sup>18</sup> Letter of December 22, 1946, in Charles JOURNET - Jacques MARITAIN. *Correspondence. Vol. III (1940-1949)*, Paris-Fribourg, 1998, p. 481.

<sup>19</sup> *Pro-memoria in occasione del futuro viaggio del prof. Giacomo Maritain nell'America del Sud*, Roma, 3 giugno 1939: Città del Vaticano, Archivio storico della Segreteria di Stato, Affari ecclesiastici straordinari (AA.EE.SS.), V, Parte I, Francia 848, ff. 31-36. The report was sent to Cardinal Maglione by Cardinal Pizzardo (letter of 10 June 1939, *ibid.*, f. 30). On anti-Maritainism in Latin America, the work of Olivier COMPAGNON, *Jacques Maritain et l'Amérique du Sud. Le modèle malgré lui*, Villeneuve d'Ascq 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Letter of July 16, 1941, in Jacques MARITAIN - Yves SIMON, *Correspondence, T. 2 : Les années américaines (1941-1961)*, Paris 2012, pp. 64-65.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Father Garrigou-Lagrange to Father Meinvielle, n.d., in JOURNET - MARITAIN, *Correspondence. Vol. III (1940-1949)*, p. 486.

<sup>22</sup> Jules MEINVIELLE, *Correspondence with Father Garrigou-Lagrange about "Lamennais and Maritain"*, Buenos Aires 1947.

religieux".<sup>23</sup>

*The political and ecclesial context of the 1950s*

The Church of Pius XII, in the early 1950s, was a "besieged" Church, threatened on all sides by the political and military force of communism.<sup>24</sup> The arrest of the Cardinal Primate of the Hungarian Church, Joseph Mindszenty, and his sentencing to life imprisonment had been a bombshell for the Vatican. In July 1949, the Holy Office issued a decree forbidding Catholics to collaborate with communist parties or organizations, on pain of sanctions that could even lead to excommunication.<sup>25</sup> Faced with the unexpected violence of the protests, the Holy See sought to limit the scope of the decree to the religious sphere alone, but the very nature of the document - a disciplinary decree and not a text of a doctrinal nature like Pius XI's encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* - clearly showed the Holy See's intention to fight with all the means at its disposal against the spread in the West of an ideology that brought about the "forgetting of God".<sup>26</sup> All the currents of "Christian progressivism" of the post-war period, which had believed that such collaboration was possible after the common victory over fascism, found themselves delegitimized and struck with suspicion, both in the East and in the West. But Pius XII was too diplomatic, too convinced of the need to maintain and defend the independence of the Church from all forms of submission, not to measure the dangers of a too visible alliance with the United States of America. From 1951-1952 he sought, prudently but firmly, to distance himself from what has been called "the ideology of the West" (Antonio Acerbi), encouraging efforts in favor of European union and the coexistence of blocs ("coexistence in truth").<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, at least initially, the Pacellian Church clearly opted for the strategic choice of the American alliance. "There is no need to recall that the outcome of the fatal struggle between what remains of a free world and Godless totalitarianism rests primarily on the foreign policy of the United States," he wrote to President Truman in July 1948.<sup>28</sup> This recourse to the protection of America did not necessarily imply conversion to the values of civilization (religious liberty, civil tolerance) which the latter was the bearer of and which had been condemned in his time by Pope Leo XIII (apostolic letter *Testamentum benevolentiae*, January 22, 1899).

<sup>23</sup> MARITAIN, *Complete Works. Vol. IX (1947-1951)*, pp. 1102-1117.

<sup>24</sup> On this point, I refer to my book: Philippe CHENAUX, *L'Église et le communisme en Europe (1917-1989). De Lénine à Jean-Paul II*, Paris 2009, pp. 147-163.

<sup>25</sup> *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 41 (1949), p. 334.

<sup>26</sup> *Il Decreto sul comunismo*, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 27 July 1949.

<sup>27</sup> Antonio ACERBI, *Pio XII e l'ideologia dell'Occidente*, in *Pio XII*, a cura di Andrea RICCARDI, Bari-Roma 1984, pp. 149-178.

<sup>28</sup> Ennio Di NOLFO, *Vaticano e Stati Uniti (1939-1952). Dalle carte di Myron C. Taylor*, Milano 1978, p. 582.

The beginning of the 1950s was marked by a doctrinal stiffening, illustrated by the publication of the encyclical *Humani generis* (August 12, 1950) against certain "false opinions" in religious and moral matters. Unlike previous encyclicals condemning liberalism (*Quanta cura*, 1864) or modernism (*Pascendi*, 1907), *Humani generis* was not accompanied by any syllabus that would allow the identification of the culprits. After the Dominican school of Le Saulchoir, it was nevertheless the turn of the Jesuit school of Fourvière (de Lubac, Daniélou, Bouillard) to be sanctioned and "dispersed" by the Roman authorities in the name of a double requirement of fidelity: fidelity to Thomism and fidelity to the Magisterium.<sup>29</sup> If the spread of "erroneous opinions" in matters of dogmatic theology worried Roman circles, the spread of new doctrines concerning the relationship between Church and State was no less worrying. This doctrinal stiffening strengthened the position of the opponents of the author of *Integral Humanism*. In March 1950, the Holy Office received a note (*appunto*) from the Secretariat of State denouncing the errors of Maritainism.<sup>30</sup> Written anonymously "by a serious and competent person" (according to Monsignor Dell'Acqua), it had been seen by the Holy Father and was entitled *Proposizioni della nuova tesi proposta da alcuni cattolici intorno alla libertà religiosa e alle relazioni tra Chiesa e Stato*. The new "thesis declined in the form of twenty-five erroneous proposals in the manner of a new Syllabus, was that of a State "perfectly neutral and indifferent" on the confessional level and recognizing "equal rights" to all the cults independently of "their creed". If Maritain was the main author targeted, he was not the only one: the Frenchman Yves Congar, the Belgian Jacques Leclercq, the German Max Pribilla, the American John Courtney Murray were also implicated. The publication of a magisterial document of a doctrinal nature (encyclical, decree) on the principal errors of the present time in the juridical-social domain, a sort of practical complement to *Humani generis*, was envisaged from this period. Salvatore Lehner (*Civiltà Cattolica*) and Father Marie-Rosaire

Gagnebet (*Angelicum*), were examined and then abandoned.<sup>31</sup> Other anonymous texts denouncing "the immense danger of Maritainism" reached the Holy Office in the early 1950s.<sup>32</sup> In an article in French, unsigned and undated, entitled *Une idole contemporaine: Jacques Maritain*, one could read that the "great Catholic thinker" had "become the complacent object of an idolatry analogous" to that which had benefited Marc Sangnier, "the dictator of the Sillon", at the beginning of the century, "no longer restricted this time to the frontiers of France, but extended to the scale of the planet".<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cfr. Étienne FOUILLOUX, *Une "école de Fourvière"*, in *Gregorianum*, 3 (2002), pp. 451-459.

<sup>30</sup> Tardini to Ottaviani, March 8, 1950 (ACDF, R.V. 1951 n. 69, f. 1).

<sup>31</sup> CFDA, R.V. 1951 n. 69, f. 93.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, C.L. 1953, *Jacques Maritain. Opere giuridiche e sociali*, vol. I, ff. 91-92. The document is already quoted in the article by Jean-Dominique DURAND, *La grande attaque de 1956*, in *Cahiers Jacques Maritain*, 30 (1995), June, pp. 7-8.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 99.

The offensive took a new, more official turn with the conference given by Cardinal Ottaviani at the Pontifical Lateran Athenaeum on March 2, 1953. Indirectly attacking the proponents of the "new thesis" mentioned above, the pro-secretary of the Holy Office recalled "the duties of the Catholic State towards religion", setting up as a model the Francoist State with which the Holy See was preparing to sign a concordat:

"Il concetto di parità di culto e di tolleranza è un prodotto del libero esame e della molteplicità delle confessioni. È una logica conseguenza delle opinioni di coloro che ritengono, in fatto di religione, non esservi posto per i dogmi, e che soltanto la coscienza dei singoli individui dia il criterio per la professione della fede e l'esercizio del culto."<sup>34</sup>

The pope responded indirectly, in an important address to Italian Catholic jurists (December 6, 1953), by advocating civil tolerance:

"The duty to repress moral and religious deviations cannot therefore be an ultimate norm of action. It must be subordinated to higher and more general norms, which, in certain circumstances, permit and perhaps even make it appear as the best course of action not to prevent error, in order to promote a greater good."<sup>35</sup>

A few months later, the same Ottaviani asked Father Garrigou-Lagrange "to write a *votum* on the integral humanism of J. Maritain:

"As I had time in Santa Sabina for this, I have reread this volume in its entirety, pen in hand, and have written the attached *votum* which I submit to you; I have done my best to proceed in the most objective manner."<sup>37</sup>

The autograph bill is dated Easter Wednesday 1955. The trial against Maritain had entered its second and most striking phase, since it was to lead to the famous article by Father Antonio Messineo in the columns of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, Starting from this first *votum*, it is good to wonder about the role played by the theologian of the Angelicum.

### *The votes of Father Garrigou-Lagrange*

When he wrote his first *votum* on Maritain, the Dominican had just been named consultor of the Holy Office. He was no longer young. Almost a contemporary of the reigning pope, he was about to celebrate his seventy-eighth birthday. Should we see a link, as I suggested at the beginning of this conference, between this promotion and the task he had just been given? It should be noted that it was not he who was asked to

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<sup>34</sup> Alfredo OTTAVIANI, *Doveri dello stato cattolico verso la religione*, Roma 1953, pp. 18-20.

<sup>35</sup> *Pontifical Documents of His Holiness Pius XII*, 1953, pp. 615-616.



prepare, at first, the draft decree against Maritainism. Although he was a friend of the philosopher and a critic of his theses on the new Christianity, he did not appear to be a specialist in the juridical and social questions addressed in the work. He had especially drawn the attention of the Vatican authorities in the immediate post-war period by his repeated warnings against the dangers of the "new theology".<sup>36</sup> In the archives of the Secretariat of State, two letters are preserved that he personally addressed to Pius XII to "communicate to him several pieces of information that I have received from France on the errors contrary to the faith that continue to spread".<sup>37</sup> While the first, dated April 11, 1947, concerned especially the thought of Father Teilhard de Chardin and his harmful influence in French seminaries, the second, dated November 1948, echoed a long article by Father Louis Bouyer in *La Vie intellectuelle*.<sup>TM</sup>

"One is relieved to read these pages, against a false optimism according to which God should adapt himself to the present world, rather than assimilating it, as if he were more passive than active. Without realizing it, the roles are reversed and the words of the Savior are forgotten: "*Cibus sum grandium; cresce et manducabis me. Nec tu me in te mutabis, sicut cibum carnis tuae. Sed tu mutaberis in me.*"<sup>38</sup>

More than these warnings to the supreme authority, in which there was no question of Maritain, it was a *votum* on the ecclesiological work of Father Journet that had attracted the attention of the Holy Office. The qualifier pointed out that one of the reproaches addressed to the author of *The Church of the Incarnate Word* was "to have an unmeasured cult for M. J. Maritain, who is constantly quoted in this volume and in the previous one, from beginning to end, as the Thomists quote Saint Thomas". Noting that "the last books [of the philosopher] since *the integral Humanism*, books that are quite debatable", could not "be approved without reserve", he added:

"M. Maritain is not a theologian by profession, he is a philosopher who approaches the most difficult subjects of theology by wanting to advance these problems from the point of view of philosophy, without noticing enough that the greatest theologians have studied them for several centuries. He is thus led to paradoxes, to assertions which seem reckless to many theologians. The Reverend Father Cordo vani O.P. Master of the Sacred Palace said to me before he died: "I would not ask for the condemnation of J. Maritain's *integral humanism*, but I could not approve of it, and I fear that his followers would deduce errors from it."<sup>39</sup>

Father Garrigou-Lagrange did not fail to reproduce the judgment of his eminent

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<sup>36</sup> Réginald GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, *La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle*, in *Angelicum*, 23 (1946), pp. 126-145.

<sup>37</sup> AA.EE.SS, V, Parte II, Affari generali, 12, ff. 9 sv.

<sup>38</sup> AA.EE.SS, V, Parte II, Affari generali, 12, ff. 114 sv.

<sup>39</sup> *Votum* dated 16 November 1952, CFDA, C.L. 1952, 272/1952, ff. 14-23.

confrere (which, in fact, was his own, as we have seen) in his first *votum* on *Humanisme intégral*. The criticism pointed in particular to the central thesis of the book, namely the historical ideal of a new Christianity, judged to be contrary to the divine order. For the Dominican, it was "always a *duty* for man to *receive divine Revelation*, and this duty is always the same and is *obligatory* not only for the individual man but for *temporal society*, which cannot establish, for example, laws on the family, divorce, school, which are contrary to the divine laws that remain immutable, in the order of eternal truths. However, not everything was negative in his appreciation of the work: the theologian recognized "the profound pages of J. Maritain on the abuses of capitalism, on the causes of Russian communism, on the Christian heroism which alone could bring the world back to the paths of truth". But he noted that the book, "since 1936" had done "more harm than good, especially to seminarians and young priests. The fault, according to him, lay with "Maritainists, especially in Brazil, and in France the editors of the *Revue Esprit*", who went "much further than Maritain himself in the direction of a *dangerous liberalism* which is born of *indifference* in matters of religion and which considerably increases this indifferentism, even though Maritain sincerely wants the opposite". Dismissing the solution, judged impracticable in his eyes, of a complete revision of the work, he recommended "*not to reprint this book*, and even, if it is still on sale, to *withdraw it from the market*, because it does more harm than good, in particular to the young clergy, in several countries of Europe and America. He also suggested that this decision "be published so that Catholic writers do not constantly continue to quote this book by Maritain, which since 1936 has unfortunately set the tone in these matters."<sup>40</sup>

In April 1955, the Cardinals of the Holy Office, in a special congregation, requested a second *votum* from the Dominican on Maritain's other works.<sup>41</sup> In handing over his copy to Cardinal Ottaviani in February 1956, Father Garrigou-Lagrange specified that he was abandoning his idea of making public the warning addressed to Maritain "because of the secular offensive which is being urgently prepared in France at the Palais-Bourbon". A "private letter" from the commissioner of the Holy Office might suffice.<sup>42</sup> The suggestion, one will see it, will be taken again one year later, but without being carried out. This second *votum* on "the last books since 1930" (from *Religion and Culture to Man and the State*, including *On the Temporal Regime and Freedom, Letter on Independence, Christianity and Democracy, The Rights of Man and Natural Law*) did not differ much from the first in its conclusions: "the author still maintains the same doctrine as that which he set forth in *Integral Humanism*. He recognizes it himself and no one doubts it" he noted in the introduction. More than in the first one, however, he insisted on the thesis of the Christian State opposed to the secular State, referring explicitly to the teachings of Leo XIII, which are abundantly

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Jacques Maritain. *Opere giuridiche e sociali*. Voi. V, f. 22.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, Voi. Ili, f. 46.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, Garrigou-Lagrange to Cardinal Ottaviani, February 10, 1956, Voi. I, f. 151.

quoted:

"The progressive secularization of the modern state leads, as Leo XIII said, to the *dechristianization of Christian peoples*, as we see today in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and all the peoples dominated by Russia and its communist regime. This dechristianization itself leads to the *apostasy of the nations as nations*. Then it is not only the "*sacred*" character of medieval Christianity that disappears, but its *Christian* character, because the *subordination of the temporal common good to the spiritual common good is no longer really maintained*, and the modern state thus secularized is no longer a Christian state, but a secular or even atheist or agnostic state, in which there are Christians who do what they can to improve an increasingly unstable situation. The firm basis for an agreement between Church and State no longer exists [...]."

Denying any accusation of clericalism, he continued:

"To make a path that leads easily to the Church is not to oblige men to take it to go to Mass. It remains for each one the freedom to obey or not the divine law. But the State can and must recognize the *subordination of the temporal common good to the spiritual common good* (this is the thesis), and if it recognizes this subordination in practice *it receives the greatest benefits, otherwise it goes to its own ruin* and no longer succeeds in having its own authority recognized. Successive governments constantly show their instability and impotence. This is what made Cardinal Pius say to Napoleon III: "*If the time has not come for Jesus Christ to reign, then, Sire, the time has not come for governments to last*. Some time later came the disaster of Sedan and the fall of Napoleon III."<sup>43</sup>

It was in this context that the publication of the famous article in the *Civiltà Cattolica* against the theses of the New Christianity took place. In reality, as the documents of the Holy Office now available show, the article did not originate with Maritain's controversial work, but with "the question of atheistic humanism in Holland".<sup>44</sup> The Dutch bishops had reacted against the spread of such a current of thought, "which rejects God and wants to build a society without God", in their pastoral letter *De catholica in vita publica* (1954). In March 1956, the Cardinals of the Holy Office decided to follow suit by passing a decree providing for the publication of an article in the Jesuit review intended to "promote a campaign by the Catholic press to enlighten public opinion."<sup>45</sup> The pope approved their decision.<sup>46</sup> At this stage, there was no question of a direct challenge to Maritain. It was only in a second stage, after it had been decided to entrust the writing of the article to Father Messineo, that it appeared to him that it was not possible to make the economy of a trial of Maritainism, Messineo

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, Vol. V, f. 23.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, C.L. 1955 322/1955, *Maritain. Movimento maritainiano in America Latina*, Vol. I, if. 164-165.

<sup>45</sup> CFDA, C.L. 1955 322/1955, f. 164v.

<sup>46</sup> During an audience with Bishop Tardini on March 24, 1956 (*ibid*).

that it appeared to him that it was not possible to avoid a trial of Maritainism, because "at the root of the current movement of the Umanesimo in Olanda are the Maritenian concepts that deny the Church the rights inherent in the divine constitution".<sup>47</sup> The Pope and the Secretariat of State were apparently not informed of the exact content of the article, which was approved by the Holy Office alone.<sup>48</sup> Simply entitled *L'umanesimo integrale*, the article was intended to discredit a system of thought that "many minds" tended to consider "as a system of reference" (*punto di riferimento*) "to which they then sought to conform their way of conceiving social life". Less than the theses & *Integral Humanism*, it was their mobilizing value among a certain Catholic intellectual elite called "progressive" that was at issue. The Jesuit's criticism focused on three points: the idea of a progressive awareness of man through history (presented as "an unconscious Hegelianism"), the overcoming of the medieval model by recourse to analogy (assimilated to an "integral historicism"), and finally and above all the temporalization of religious values, which led him to conclude that Maritain's integral humanism was "a humanism that was only extrinsically Christian", that is to say, "an integral naturalism".<sup>49</sup> The archives confirm what was already known, namely that a second article on the subject was forbidden from publication at the last moment by Pope Pius XII following a double note of vigorous protest from the French ambassador (Wladimir d'Ormesson) and the Argentine ambassador to the Holy See, dated September 10 and 12, 1956 respectively.<sup>50</sup> When, at the beginning of the following year, the cardinals of the Supreme Court (Pizzardo, Piazza, Ottaviani) tried to return to the charge by asking the Pope to authorize the publication of this second article, they were disavowed: "non sembra ora il momento più opportuno per pubblicarlo" estimated Pius XII during an audience with Monsignor Antonio Samoré on April 8, 1957.<sup>51</sup> The proceedings against the "Maritainian doctrines" did not stop there.

### *The ultimate offensive*

In July 1957, the Consultors of the Holy Office met again (*Feria II<sup>a</sup>*) to deliberate on the question of Maritainism (*Giacomo Maritain e la sua scuola*). Unanimously, the fifteen members present decided in favor of the publication of a document (without specifying its nature, for lack of agreement among them) condemning the ideas of

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

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, Jacques Maritain. *Opere giuridiche e sociali*. Vol. II, f. 211.

<sup>49</sup> Antonio MESSINEO, *L'umanesimo integrale*, in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1<sup>er</sup> September 1956, pp. 449-463

<sup>50</sup> ACDP, Jacques Maritain. *Opere giuridiche e sociali*, Vol. II, ff. 207-210. The second article, entitled *Umanesimo integrale e organizzazione sociale*, was published by Jean-Dominique DURAND, *La Civiltà Cattolica contre Jacques Maritain. Le combat du père Antonio Messineo*, in *Notes and Documents*, 30 (2005), pp. 34-71, here pp. 62-71.

<sup>51</sup> ACDP, C.L. 1955 322/1955, *Maritain. Movimento mariteniano in America Latina*, Vol. I, ff. 163, 166.

Maritain (but without mentioning him by name) and suggested that Father Garrigou-Lagrange intervene with the philosopher "so that he would make a declaration or a retraction discouraging his disciples. If the latter refused, eleven of them (including the theologian of the Angelicum, but not Father Michael Browne, Master of the Order, nor the Jesuit Augustin Bea) demanded that the work *Integral Humanism* be "withdrawn from commerce."<sup>52</sup> In the minutes of the meeting of July 15, 1957, it was specified that the Dominican had "added personal remarks" (*Garrigou-Lagrange addit propria animadversiones*). Written in Italian, these concerned the *votum* of another consultor, Mgr Pietro Parente, archbishop of Perugia and former professor of dogmatic theology at the Lateran, judged by him as "excellent" (*ottimo*). Maritain was "of good faith" and had "good intentions", but several points of his doctrine deserved to be censured: his theory of analogy which risked leading to an "intrinsic evolution of Christianity and of the Church", his conception of the Church which lost "its essential character of a divinely constituted Society" (*Senza volerlo Maritain subisce l'influsso di una concezione individualistica del cristianesimo, che risale a Lutero. Maritain è rimasto protestante fino a 23 anni...*), his theory of the secular state recognizing pluralism and freedom of worship, "as if error had the same rights as truth" (*Si salva così la libertà dei cittadini, ma si mortifica la libertà della Chiesa'*). Garrigou-Lagrange did not draw the same conclusion on the practical level: the preparation of a "new encyclical" (let us recall that Bishop Parente was considered the editor of *Humani generis*) "would require time" and, in the meantime, Maritainism would continue to spread with the translation of 'Integral Humanism' and other works. In the meantime, Maritainism would continue to spread with the translation of *'Integral Humanism'* and other works by Maritain (in the second manner) into the different languages of Europe and Latin America. Clearly, it was necessary to act without delay. That is why he said he was proposing again the practical conclusions of his previous *vota* (*Ideo rursus propono conclusionem voti miei*).<sup>53</sup> On July 24, 1957 (*Feria IIP*), the cardinals of the Supreme Council approved the recommendations of the *Consulta* and decided to enjoin the leaders of the Italian Catholic University Federation (FUCI) not to proceed with new editions of the work.<sup>54</sup> The brake was to come, once again, from Pius XII himself. It is worth reproducing here the note written by Archbishop Samoré following a new papal audience on July 31, 1957:

"This position of the Holy Office concerns the destiny not only of Maritain (and his school), but also of others, for example, Fr. On the other hand, Maritain has notable merits, not only for the impulse given to the philosophy of St. Thomas, but also for his living faith and piety. Non si può negare però che le sue opere contengano equivoci ed errori in materie politica e sociale, che si sono largamente diffusi con grave danno per gli interessi della S. Sede e della Chiesa. In order to remedy this problem, he should draw up a series of proposals that are

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, Jacques Maritain. *Opere giuridiche e sociali*, Vol. V, f. 16.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, ff. 27-28.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, f. 16.

taken from the publications of him and of the other authors, which contain the fundamental errors, without entering into minute questions and without quoting the works from which they were taken, or the names of the authors, and then issue a decree of the Holy Office, nel quale si proponga il dubbio, se quelle proposizioni possano essere ritenute, difese, insegnate; dubbio al quale il S.O. risponderrebbe negativamente, perché elle sono contrarie alla dottrina della Chiesa."<sup>55</sup>

If the Pope had pronounced himself, out of respect for the person of Maritain and in consideration of "his great merits" in the philosophical field, against a decree targeting his work, he had said nothing, in

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 16v.

Garrigou-Lagrange to the philosopher in order to obtain a retraction from him. The handwritten letter on the letterhead of the Angelicum prepared by the Dominican is dated November 1957. Here again, it is worth quoting its contents in full because it illustrates the position of the theologian, both firm in substance and friendly, even affectionate, in form, towards Maritain:

My dear friend,

Remembering the most intimate retreats of Meudon, I come to you, according to the will of the Holy Father, to soften a pain that the Lord will make, I ask him, very meritorious for you and for others.

From all that is being written for you and against you, you must have sensed that your book *Integral Humanism* has been examined very carefully and at length here in recent years by various theologians and by the higher authorities charged in the Church with overseeing teaching.

In spite of the profound pages on many of today's most difficult questions, this book has not been found to be sufficiently in conformity with the Encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI on the relationship between Church and State. Moreover, the doctrine it expounds is found more or less developed in other publications, such as those of Fr. Congar, Fr. Pribilla and others. You have followers who reproduce your teaching, going far beyond what you yourself have said, especially in Argentina, Brazil and in France in the review *Esprit*.

As a result, errors and misunderstandings have spread in many countries, which the Holy Church must correct for the defense of the revealed Truth and for the salvation of souls.

On the other hand, the Holy Father remembers your lively faith, your piety (these are his expressions), and all the services you have rendered for the diffusion of the doctrine of St. Thomas in places where it was almost unknown.

In these conditions, in order to remedy the more or less serious deviations that have occurred, the Holy Father has prepared a list of erroneous or reckless propositions, extracted from the various works in question, but without citing these works, nor the names of their authors. The Holy Office will answer the question: can these propositions be taught, are they in conformity or not with the doctrine of the Church? Thus your name will not even be mentioned.

The Lord will answer your prayers for this intention, and he will give you to respond with an act of filial obedience and faith in the authority of the Church.

You may say that your intention has always been to keep the doctrine of the Church in its entirety and to show how its application is possible today. But, add that you have not always taken sufficient account of certain principles of this doctrine, and that many of your followers have notably exceeded what you have propagated.

In order that your answer may enlighten those who have followed and surpassed you, it would be appropriate to publish an article in a major magazine in which you would highlight the principles of the great Encyclicals of Leo XIII, *Libertas* and *Immortale Dei*. This would be a very noble and beautiful example given to those who have followed you. It would also be the best way to prevent *integral humanism* from being taken out of circulation, if it continued to spread.

This article would be, and I hope will be, one of your best, perhaps the one that will have cost you the most, but the one that will be the most meritorious. Your love of the Truth and of God himself will inspire you to do it and to do it very well.

This, dear friend, is what I am charged to tell you for the Holy Father himself. With a special mass I ask our Lord to help you as only He can.

My religious memory to Madame Maritain and her sister.

Religiously to you as in the best hours of the retreats of Meudon,

Fr. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.<sup>56</sup>

The letter will remain forever buried in the files of the Holy Office. The Pope decided to do so during the audience granted to Archbishop Tardini on November 12, 1957.<sup>57</sup> But the idea of a magisterial document was not abandoned. Father Gagnebet was charged "personally" by the Cardinal Secretary, Archbishop Pizzardo, to prepare a draft decree against Maritainism.<sup>58</sup> The project (39 proposals) was submitted to the consultors and then to the cardinals of the Supreme in June 1958. It was decided to revise the preamble and to rewrite the proposals. The task of rewriting the text was entrusted to the Gregorian theologian, Father Sebastian Tromp. Pius XII approved these decisions, but the death of the pontiff suspended the course of the procedure. In 1960, however, the Council's Preparatory Theological Commission listed "Maritain's doctrine" among the errors to be condemned by the Council. In the archives of Vatican II, a long *votum* of the same Father Gagnebet, to whom the commission had entrusted the preparation of the outline on the Church and the State (*de Ecclesia et Statu*), is preserved.<sup>59</sup> Sick and weakened, Father Garrigou-Lagrange did not play any further role in this last phase of the trial against Maritain:

"I have learned much in the Holy Office and I regret that my health no longer allows me to take part regularly in the Consulta. I am very grateful to you, Eminence, for retaining the title of Consultor for me. I will still do what I can to be of service with a few *vota*."<sup>60</sup>

In the light of this first investigation into the archives of the Holy Office, it is possible to make some conclusive considerations on the doctrinal policy of the Church under Pius XII. The first concerns the anti-Maritain obsession of those in charge of the congregation, shared by both its secretary, Cardinal Giuseppe Pizzardo, who was also prefect of the Congregation for Seminaries and Universities, and his assessor (and later pro-secretary), Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani. Both turned first to the theologians of the

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 55-58.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 50.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 40.

<sup>59</sup> The *votum* is (partially) reproduced and commented in Piero DORIA's book, *La condanna della "dottrina Maritain"*, Rome 2008, pp. 103-131.

<sup>60</sup> Letter to Cardinal Ottaviani, 12 November 1959, ACDF, Priv. S.O. 1937 n. 2, f. 15.



Angelicum to examine "the doctrine of Maritain": the first to Father Gagnebet, the second to Father Garrigou-Lagrange. If they could not carry out their offensive against Maritainism, it was because of the braking role of the Secretariat of State, interpreter in this case of the prudence of the pope himself. If the initial impulse came from her, the negative reaction to Father Mesineo's article was partly orchestrated by her. The prevailing impression, then, is not only of competition between these two internal poles of Vatican power, but also of a certain indecision in the conduct of this policy. Far from confirming the reputation of authoritarianism often attached to the image of Pius XII, the archives consulted rather highlight the hesitations and scruples of a pontiff inclined to procrastination and anxious to distinguish between doctrines and persons. Through the trial of Maritain and other authors (such as the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray, the future editor of the conciliar declaration *Dignitatis humanae*, "silenced" by the Holy Office),<sup>61</sup> it is indeed the question of the secular state and religious liberty, and not so much that of communism or progressivism, that seems to have mobilized the energies of the censors of the Supreme Court in the fifties. On this point, one cannot help but notice a certain difference between the

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<sup>61</sup> ACDF, R.V. 1951 n. 69, Vol. I. See also the study by Joseph A. KOMON-CHAK, *The Silencing of John Courtney Murray*, in *Cristianesimo nella storia. Saggi in onore di Giuseppe Alberigo*, Bologna 1997, pp. 657-702.

position of the Holy Office and the more open position of the Pope and his closest collaborators in the Secretariat of State (Montini, Dell'Acqua). If Father Garrigou-Lagrange was indisputably in the doctrinal line of the congregation, he did not share less fully, and for the same reasons (respect and friendship, in his case, for the man, recognition of the Thomist philosopher "the<sup>re</sup> way"), the reticence of Pius XII to condemn Maritain. In this sense, he was both prosecutor and advocate for the author of *Humanisme intégral*.

### *Abstract*

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the role of Father Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange in the process brought by the Congregation of the Holy Office against the philosopher Jacques Maritain, the author of the book *Humanisme intégral* (1936). The Vatican archives demonstrate that Garrigou-Lagrange was, to a certain extent, if not the only one, the principal censor of the works of the Thomist philosopher, as exhibited in the now accessible five large volumes of the Holy Office and the archives of the Secretariat of State, first and second sections. After examining the evolution of the friendly relations between the two men and the political and ecclesial context of the 1950s, the article analyzes the two *vota* on Maritain's work written by the Dominican theologian, who was named a consulter of the Supreme Pontiff in January 1955. In these *vota*, he spoke in favor of warning the author, without, however, recommending public condemnation of his writings. He, therefore, remained a stranger to the publication of Antonio Messineo's article in the *Civiltà Cattolica* against the "umanesimo integrale", but agreed to write a letter to his friend asking him to retract his statement and disavow his many followers. The said letter, as later decided by the pope, was never sent to its addressee. The theses of "Maritainism" were not condemned either, despite the existence of several drafts of magisterial documents (encyclicals, decrees) preserved in the archives. The Maritain affair illustrates the hesitations and uncertainties of the Church's doctrinal policy during the pontificate of Pius XII.

<sup>31</sup> AA.EE.SS., V, Parte II, Santa Sede 4, ff. 99-111.

<sup>37</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange to Cardinal Ottaviani, Easter Wednesday 1955 (ACDF, C.L. 1953, *Jacques Maritain. Opere giuridiche e sociali*, Vol. I, f. 135).

<sup>40</sup> Louis BOUYER, *Christianisme et eschatologie*, in *La Vie intellectuelle*, 16 (1948), pp.6-38.