

# Study commission and scientific committee

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## Objectives and operation

### **Introduction:**

The revelations about Jean Vanier from the results of the independent inquiry have aroused considerable emotion. The inquiry was carried out at the request of L'Arche International and its findings were published on 22 February 2020. They came as a real shock to those within L'Arche and widely outside as well, and have prompted many questions and interpretations.

After the initial period of devastation and emotion, now is the time for analysis. These revelations do not bring an end to the important questions they have raised but rather call for serious and comprehensive understanding on the part of L'Arche. This will enable it to draw all possible lessons with regard to its history, culture and the way it operates now and did in the past.

The stakes are high for L'Arche since, following the death of its founder and revelations which mark a break in its history, there is a need to reread the past, which will help it to move forward and deepen its particular mission and charism. This rereading should make it possible for the L'Arche leaders to identify what is problematic and that which continues to be meaningful for L'Arche today.

An in-depth study is to be carried out to gain a better understanding of the personality and input of Jean Vanier and the relationship dynamics at work between the founder and those who knew him. This is also to help establish where L'Arche members derived (and still derive today) their sense of belonging.

Because this work concerns all members of L'Arche, the selected process must be appropriated by and involve a large number of people.

This work will also make it possible to share common analysis and lessons learned with other institutions and organisations which are directly or indirectly concerned: e.g. the Catholic Church, the Dominicans and the Brothers of Saint John.

The aim of this paper is to propose objectives and a methodology and how the process should be organised, which is to be led by the study commission appointed by L'Arche International. It also defines the role of the scientific committee, which has been set up to support the project.

## **1) Objectives of the study commission:**

In light of the evidence uncovered concerning Thomas Philippe and, subsequently, Jean Vanier, the following questions are to be answered:

- How can we shed light on the history of our foundation and where it drew its inspiration?
- What cultural and institutional dynamics have been at play within L'Arche? To what extent was the abuse perpetrated by Thomas Philippe and Jean Vanier systemic?

The evidence and analysis produced by the Commission will relate to the history and to the founding myth; to the role and place of the founder; to the values and spirituality at play and to the discourse and vocabulary employed. They should also concern modes of operation: governance; the exercise of authority; conflict management; recruitment approaches and the accompaniment of core members and assistants.

## **2) Work streams of the Commission**

To meet these objectives, more specific questioning will be needed so that all the material required for analysis can be collected. Specialists from outside L'Arche will have to be involved.

The Commission's work streams will centre on two questions:

- In light of our new knowledge, how can we explain the path of Jean Vanier?
- For many, Jean Vanier was the cement holding L'Arche's identity together, the L'Arche that he founded. What forms of relationship existed between Jean Vanier and the members of L'Arche, how did they operate and what trace did these leave behind on the identity, culture and organisation of L'Arche today?

While the first work stream is mainly focussed on Jean Vanier and involves gaining more knowledge about him, it is also essential to understand the context in which he lived and acted: his path and history; his psychology, his intellectual outlook and sources of philosophical inspiration; his relationship with others; his connection to Father Thomas and the level of his belief in the deviant mysticism in which he had been initiated (the term "mystic" will need to be better understood and defined with the help of the Dominicans); his relationship with the Church, authority and confrontation; with sexuality and the body and the place of the community environment in this deviant behaviour and the lack of regulation from which he appears to have "benefitted", etc.

Analysis of his writings and talks will form part of the work to be carried out in this work stream.

The second work stream will involve further analysis of the relationships between Jean Vanier, as charismatic founder and a major spiritual figure, and his environment: how was the founding story and spirituality of L'Arche built (the question of what this spirituality is will also be addressed); the perceptions and motivations of assistants and core members at different periods; rules and rituals; invisible links; the influence of the man and the influence

of his discourse and how he fitted into the social and religious environment. In this regard, it may be useful to link the experience of L'Arche and its founder to that of other post-conciliatory and post-1968 communities or movements, analysing parallels in the misbehaviour of many of their founders.

### **3) Composition of the study commission**

The study commission will be made up of academics and specialists, coordinated by Erik Pillet, mandated by L'Arche International and supported by Alain Cordier. (See biographies in the Appendix)

There are four main disciplines involved:

History: Antoine Mourges and Florian Michel

Sociology: Claire Vincent-Mory

Psychiatry/psychoanalysis: Bernard Granger and Nicole Jeammet.

Theology : Gwennola Rimbaut

### **4) How the Commission will operate and be organised**

The members of the study commission are free to organise their work based on the workplan that they will draw up and the manner in which they have agreed to collaborate. They will work using archive documents, written testimonies and individual or group interviews.

Monthly plenary meetings will be held to ensure that essential information can be shared, and to coordinate actions and to examine points in more depth as a group.

The Commission may request ad-hoc collaborative sessions with specialists from different disciplines, such as philosophy, semiology and law, for example, but also with reflection groups, to go deeper on one point or other.

We will pay particular attention to the quality of the Commission's relations with all the organisations with which it will need to collaborate and to the independence of the Commission vis-à-vis L'Arche or any other institution concerned by these issues.

Because the majority of the documents and the people who are directly concerned by this work are in France, the Commission will mainly work in French. Resource people from other countries and, in particular, from Canada, the UK or USA, will be involved.

It goes without saying that the field of analysis goes beyond France and that many individuals or documents outside France will be consulted.

## **5) Scientific committee**

The role of the scientific committee is as follows:

- To ensure and report on the methodological rigour of the process
- To arbitrate any tensions between the Commission and the client
- To suggest modifications to the work presented at the milestones
- To provide an opinion before the study commission draws up its report

Made up of well-known figures, it will meet every six months.

Its members may be consulted individually or as a group based on the needs defined by the Commission or some of its members, as the work progresses or at certain key points.

Members of the scientific committee: Véronique Margron, Marie Balmary, Céline Béraud, Jean Guillem Xerri, Christian Salenson, Karlijn Demasure, Guillaume Cuchet

## **6) Schedule and work programme**

The Commission's work is anticipated to take two years, based on the following schedule:

- a. Preparation phase: April-September 2020
- b. Official launch of the Commission: November 2020
- c. Progress report: May/June 2021 - November 2021 - May 2022
- d. Conclusions submitted: October 2022

## **7) Final report:**

This research will form the subject of a summary report submitted to the L'Arche International leaders, supplemented by detailed reports from each discipline.

It will fall to the two International Leaders of L'Arche, in conjunction with the International Leadership Team and the International Stewardship Board, to decide the type of suitable internal and external communication and to draw up follow-up recommendations and actions for this work.

The scientific committee will be asked to provide a public opinion on the quality of this study.

Once the report and the external communication following it have been published, the researchers will, in a timeframe agreed with the L'Arche leaders, each be able to publish the results of his or her research under their own responsibility.

### Contact:

If you would like to contribute to the Commission's work (e.g. through a testimony, or documents and correspondence), please direct your email to:

[commissionai2020@gmail.com](mailto:commissionai2020@gmail.com)

If you would like to contact a particular member of the Commission, some of their email addresses can be found with their biographical details.

## Biographies of the members of the study commission and the scientific committee

### Study commission

Alain Cordier is an honorary inspector general of finances, and a director for *France Parkinson (French Association for Parkinson Disease)*, for the *Amis de l'Arche* and for the Immunopathology innovation fund. He is a member of the French Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Church (CIASE).

He was, in particular, a member of the *Collège de la Haute Autorité de Santé (Health Products Evaluation Agency)* and Chair of the *Commission des stratégies de prise en charge (Care Strategy Committee)*, vice-chair of the *Comité consultatif national d'éthique (National Consultative Ethics Committee)*, Chairman of the steering committee of the *Agence de Biomédecine (Biomedical Research Agency)*, chair of the Board of the *Caisse nationale de solidarité pour l'autonomie (National Solidarity Fund for Autonomy)*, chair of the Management Board of *Bayard Presse* and Director-General of *Assistance Publique - Hôpitaux de Paris (University Hospital Trust for the Paris hospitals)*.

Bernard Granger is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, a professor at the University of Paris and Head of the Psychiatry Department at Cochin hospital, and is a member of the *Association française de thérapies cognitives et comportementales (French Association for Cognitive and Behavioural Therapies)*. He founded and edited the journal *Psychiatrie, Sciences humaines, Neurosciences*. He has been a member of the stewardship board of *Assistance Publique - Hôpitaux de Paris* since 2015. He is a member of the independent expert commission advising bishops who are faced with priests accused of paedophilia in their diocese. He is also a member of the national mediation body for staff of public health, social and medical-social institutions. His work deals, in particular, with psychological harassment in the professional environment and on personality disorders.

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Nicole Jeammet trained both as a psychoanalyst and theologian. She is an honorary lecturer in psycho-pathology at Paris V and taught at the Sèvres Centre. She practised as a psychotherapist for mothers and children at the Centre de Guidance du Pr M. Soulé and at the Vallée Foundation. What makes a good life, what does it mean to love, what is a fair relationship with another person and the question of God are all themes which she explores in her many works; in particular: *La Haine nécessaire (Necessary hatred)* (PUF: 1989) ; *Les Destins de la culpabilité (Destinies of Guilt)* (PUF: 1993) ; *Les Violences morales (Moral violence)* (Odile Jacob: 2001) ; *Amour, sexualité, tendresse : la réconciliation ? (Love, sexuality and tenderness: a reconciliation? )* (Odile Jacob: 2005); *Le célibat pour Dieu (Celibacy for God)* (Le cerf: 2009). With Ph. Jeammet *Lettre aux couples d'aujourd'hui (Letter to the couples of today)* Bayard (2012) and forthcoming in February 2021 *Sommes-nous tous violents ? (Are we all violent?)* (ed. Eyrolles) co-written with Ph. Haddad, GH Masson and Tarik Abou Nour.

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Florian Michel is a historian with a doctorate in history and religious science. He is a lecturer in history. He has been Director of the Pierre-Mendès-France centre since June 2016. He is a member of the Faculty of History at the Sorbonne, where he is attached to the Centre for Research in North American history and to UMR-SIRICE (Sorbonne Identities, international relations and European civilisations). He teaches North American history, the history of international relations and the history of religions and of secularism. His publications include, in particular *La pensée catholique en Amérique du Nord (Catholic thought in North America)* (2010), *Traduire la liturgie (Translating the liturgy)* (2013), *Diplomatie et religion (Diplomacy and religion)* (2016), and a biography of Étienne Gilson (Vrin: 2018), a work awarded a prize by the Académie française). He is vice-chair of the Jacques and Raïssa Maritain Research Group.

Antoine Mourges is a secondary school history and geography teacher. He lived in a L'Arche community from 2001 to 2005 (Le Caillou Blanc near Quimper). In 2009, under the supervision of Michel Fourcade, he completed a Masters in the History of Religion on the genesis of the L'Arche communities founded by Jean Vanier. This work led him to write the first historical study on the "l'école de sagesse" [*school of wisdom*] at l'Eau Vive (1946-1956), initiated by Father Thomas Philippe (o.p.). In September 2017, he began his doctorate on the history of the Little Brothers of Jesus congregation (1926-1966). He is the author of the report on the prehistory of L'Arche from 1952 to 1963 commissioned by L'Arche International following the revelations about Jean Vanier.

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Erik Pillet is retired and recently stood down as community leader of L'Arche in the Toulouse region, which he founded in 2012 with his wife. He spent the majority of his career in human resources for large companies (Alcatel, France Telecom and Airbus). He has accompanied L'Arche on its journey for 40 years and was President of L'Arche in France from 2004 to 2011.

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Gwennola Rimbaut a doctorate in theology, the subject of her thesis being the Christian expression of spiritual anthropology. In addition to her role as lecturer in practical theology at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Angers, France (UCO), she has held various pastoral responsibilities in the hospital and healthsector. At present, her theological reflexion focusses on the voice of people in situations of hardship, working especially with the Centre Sèvres (the Jesuit Faculty in Paris) and with several charitable bodies in the field. Her publications, (in French) include:

- *Les pauvres interdits de spiritualité? La foi des chrétiens du Quart Monde*, l'Harmattan, 2009
- *Soutenir une démarche spirituelle en milieu hospitalier*, Novalis/Lumen Vitae 2006.
- *Qu'est-ce qui fait vivre encore quand tout s'écroule? Une théologie à l'école des plus pauvres*, GRIEU Etienne, RIMBAUT Gwennola et BLANCHON Laure (dir.), Lumen Vitae, 2017.

Claire Vincent-Mory holds a doctorate in sociology and is a researcher attached to the Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics (CEE) at Sciences Po and is member of the Institut Convergences Migrations. Her research lies at the intersection between transnational studies, the sociology of the voluntary sector and of public policy and the political philosophy of gratitude. Since her doctoral thesis, which she defended in 2018, her research has mainly focused on the political representation of marginalised groups (in particular migrants, ethno-racial or religious groups and people with disabilities) in the European public sphere, but also the intersections between religious and ethno-racial backgrounds. On this, she co-edited a work entitled *Le religieux au prisme de l'ethnicisation et de la racisation (Looking at religion through the prism of ethnicisation and racialisation)*, which was published by Petra in 2019.

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### **Scientific Committee**

Marie Balmory is a psychoanalyst and essayist. Her thesis in clinical psychology focused on Freud's first discovery, which he abandoned (sexual abuse as the cause of hysteria). This thesis was rejected by the University. Published: *L'Homme aux statues, Freud et la faute cachée du père (The man with the statues: Freud and the father's hidden guilt)*, (Paris: Grasset, 1979).

She then embarked on research into the origins of speech and reopened the Scriptures for our cultures (Hebrew Bible and the New Testament) in their languages. This resulted in several books, including *Le sacrifice interdit, Freud et la Bible (Forbidden sacrifice: Freud and the Bible)* (Paris: Grasset 1986). She is continuing to explore the sources of human speech and mankind's laws (men and women).

Céline Béraud is director of studies at EHESS (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) [*School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences*]. Her main areas of research relate to questions of gender and sexuality in Catholicism, religion in public institutions, the sociology of Catholicism in France and from a comparative European perspective (Belgium, Spain, Italy and Portugal) and with Quebec, and also the sociology of religious authority. Together with Claire de Galember and Corinne Rostaing, in 2016 she published *De la religion en prison (About Religion in Prison)*, (Presses Universitaires de Rennes), and, with Philippe Portier, *Métamorphoses catholiques. Acteurs, enjeux et mobilisations depuis le mariage pour tous (Catholic metamorphoses: figures, challenges and mobilisations since the equal marriage law)*, published by MSH Editions in 2015. Her upcoming book is entitled: *Le catholicisme français à l'épreuve des scandales sexuels (French Catholicism tested by sex scandals)* (Paris: Seuil, "La République des Idées").

Karlijn Demasure has a doctorate in theology. She is a professor at the University of St. Paul in Ottawa, Canada, where she leads the Centre for Safeguarding Minors and Vulnerable People. She was Chair of the International Society of Practical Theology and Director of the

Canadian Society of Theology. Madame Demasure worked for a long time on issues around pastoral ministry to families and on the Image of God. She then turned her attention to issues of safeguarding and support in relation to sexual abuse in the family, and subsequently in the Church. Her publications (in Dutch) include: *Liefde ingebed. Bakens voor een duurzame relatie*, Halewijn, 2009, (on long-term relationships and the 10 commandments); and (in English) *Safeguarding. Reflecting on Child Abuse, Theology and Care*, Peeters, 2018.

Véronique Margron is a Dominican sister and moralist theologian. She is a professor in the Faculty of Theology at the université catholique de l'Ouest, where she is an Honorary Dean. She was trained at the Catholic Institute in Paris, especially by the Salesian Xavier Thévenot. She has considerable experience of supporting people who are suffering, which is also a legacy of her first career when she worked with young offenders or vulnerable young people through the Youth Judicial Protection Service. As a theologian and ethicist, she has for many years listened to people who have been victims of sexual abuse and aggression. She holds a doctorate *Soutenir la vie bouleversée (Supporting a life in upheaval)* and, specifically, a thesis on "le sentiment de solitude" (*The feeling of solitude*). She is currently a provincial prioress in France and has also been chair of the *Conférence des religieuses et religieux de France* since 2016.

Her latest work is *Un Moment de vérité, Abus sexuels dans l'Église, une théologienne s'engage*, (*A moment of truth: Sexual abuse in the Church, a theologian speaks out*) (Albin Michel 2019).

Christian Salenson is a theologian and priest in the diocese of Nîmes. Following a time as superior at the inter-diocesan seminary in Avignon and as vicar general in the diocese of Nîmes, he is currently Director of the Institute of Science and Theology of Religions at the Mediterranean Catholic Institute in Marseille. He has particularly worked on the spirituality and thought of Christian de Chergé, on whom he has commented and published several books. He also worked with L'Arche towards the latter part of the previous decade to help L'Arche find the words to express the spiritual experience lived within it. This resulted in a book, *Bouleversante fragilité (Overwhelming fragility)* (Nouvelles cités: 2016).

Jean Guilhem Xerri held a residency at Hôpitaux de Paris and graduated from the Institut Pasteur and the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce (*Paris Business School*) in Paris. He is a psychoanalyst, medical biologist and essayist. He works in the hospital sector. For many years, he was Chairman of the "Aux captifs la libération" association (*an association for homeless people*) and is a member of the Board of Office chrétien des personnes handicapées (OCH). He is the author of several books, including *A quoi sert un chrétien? (What is the use of a Christian?)* (French Christian humanist prize 2015), *Prenez soin de votre âme (Care for your soul)* (2019 Prize for Religious Literature) and *Revivez de l'intérieur (Relive from within)*.



Guillaume Cuchet studied at the École Normale Supérieure-LSH and has a doctorate in history. He is a holder of the *agrégation* teaching qualification and is an honorary member of the Institut Universitaire de France. A professor of contemporary history at Université Paris-Est Créteil (UPEC), he also teaches the history of the Church in the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic Institute of Paris. At UPEC, he is attached to the Centre for Research on Comparative European History (CHREC). He is a member of the editorial committees of the journals *Études*, *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, *Études* and of the international committee of the *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* (Louvain). He has published several works (in French), including *How our world has ceased to be Christian. Anatomy of a collapse* (Seuil, 2018) and, most recently, *Another history of religious sentiment in the XIXth century* (Le Cerf, 2020)