

MINUTES OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE VII INTERNATIONAL DEHONIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINAR

Date: August 3, 2026

Place: Auditorium of the Faculdade Dehoniana / Convento Sagrado Coração de Jesus (Conventinho), Taubaté-SP, Brazil

Session theme: Father Dehon in his articles in *La Chronique du Sud-Est* (1889–1903)

Opening of Session 5

On the third day of August in the year two thousand twenty-six, at about 8:40 a.m., in the Auditorium of the Faculdade Dehoniana, in Taubaté-SP, Brazil, the Fifth Session of the VII International Dehonian Theological Seminar began, with all participants present. The moderator of this fifth session, Fr. Alain Martial Nguetsop, opened the morning's work and immediately gave the floor to Fr. Stefan Tertünte for a communication from the organizing committee of the Theological Seminar. Fr. Stefan affirmed that written material is very important for the dynamics of the Seminar and that, in addition to the summary of each session presented at the beginning of the work, the secretariat had also prepared a more complete set of minutes. Fr. Stefan indicated that the minutes of the sessions prepared by the secretariat are available on the Theological Seminar website. He also announced that a commission for the revision of the minutes had been formed, composed of Dr. Jeremy Blackwood, Fr. Joseph Famerée, and Fr. Rodrigo Arruda. He recommended that anyone with a suggestion or correction to the minutes address one of the members of this revision commission, recalling that the assembly of the Seminar should approve them on the last day of the event.

The moderator, Fr. Alain, then took the floor again and asked the secretariat team to present the summary of the preceding session. Fr. Nilson Helmann, on behalf of the secretariat, presented the Portuguese summary of the fourth session, on Father Dehon in his epistolary correspondence (the English and French texts were made available in the WhatsApp group).

Once the reading of the summary of Session 4 was concluded, Fr. Alain thanked Fr. Nilson for the work done by the secretariat and immediately invited the Asian Commission (CTDAS) to present the study that was to guide the session, considering Father Dehon in his articles in *La Chronique du Sud-Est* (1889–1903). Fr. Emmanuel Nanduri then took his place at the table to present the work carried out by the CTDAS.

1. Presentation of the CTDAS

Fr. Emmanuel Nanduri situated the presentation in four major moments: (1) an introduction considering the profile of Father Dehon; (2) the history of *La Chronique du Sud-Est* and the justification of the 1889–1903 timeframe; (3) a reading of Father Dehon in his articles, with attention to the implied author and the mock reader; (4) the contemporary relevance of Father Dehon's texts for the Dehonian Family.

1.1. Profile of Father Dehon

Fr. Emmanuel opened the exposition by recalling the multiplicity of faces of the Founder that emerges from his biography and his writings: student, priest, religious, founder, spiritual director, preacher, missionary, social reformer, Christian democrat, publicist, and defender of the weakest. Rather than isolating a single Dehon, the CTDAS proposed contemplating the unity of a vocation that joins contemplation and commitment, interiority and public presence, mysticism of the Heart and social justice.

Citing Albert Bourgeois, the presenter recalled that in 1889 Dehon founded the review *Le Règne du Sacré-Cœur de Jésus dans les Âmes et les Sociétés*, the beginning of an intense activity as a publicist. There he published the greater part of his writings and essays, and many of his works first appeared in the form of articles. In November 1903, Dehon decided to interrupt the publication of

Le Règne, which he had maintained for twelve years. After that, he collaborated with other social periodicals, his longest association being with *La Chronique du Sud-Est*. The CTDAS took this publicistic horizon as a gateway to the Dehon of the “social years.”

According to Fr. Emmanuel, the phrase chosen as the epigraph of the session, taken from the Founder’s memory of his commitment to the popular classes, summarizes the pastoral and social intention of the *corpus*: to contribute to the uplifting of the lower classes through the advent of justice and Christian charity. This is not generic philanthropy, but a structured charity, illuminated by the Heart of Jesus and faithful to the magisterium of Leo XIII.

1.2. History of La Chronique and the 1889–1903 timeframe

Before speaking of the history of the review, Fr. Emmanuel reconstructed the trajectory of Father Dehon’s social engagement. In 1870 he was already moving within the horizon of the press, the Patronage of Saint Joseph, and the Workers’ Circles. In 1871 he collaborated with Albert de Mun and René de La Tour du Pin in the movement of the Catholic Circles. In 1876 he spoke to the seminarians of Saint-Sulpice on the Social Question, which gradually led to the annual conferences at Val-des-Bois until 1901. In 1888 he obtained the Decree of Praise and received from Leo XIII the instruction that would mark his mission: “Preach my encyclicals.”

In 1889, on the centenary of the French Revolution and within the symbolic horizon of the bicentenary of the consecration of the Sacred Heart, Father Dehon launched *Le Règne du Sacré-Cœur de Jésus dans les Âmes et les Sociétés*. In 1891 he welcomed and disseminated the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII. In 1892 he reflected on the triad “*Liberté, Fraternité, Égalité*” in the light of the Heart of Jesus and of Christian democracy. In 1895 the social conferences moved to the College of Saint John in Saint-Quentin, with a true congress of about two hundred priests from more than thirty dioceses. In 1896 and 1897 Father Dehon took part in congresses of workers’ circles, meetings of the Franciscan Third Order, and gatherings of Christian democracy, often acting as a bridge-builder among conservatives, monarchists, and Rome. In 1900 he published *Rénovation Sociale Chrétienne*, a compendium of his Roman conferences. With the death of Leo XIII in 1903, Father Dehon’s public social apostolate diminished markedly, and the publication of *Le Règne* was interrupted. Collaboration with *La Chronique du Sud-Est* prolonged, for some time still, his voice in the Catholic social debate.

Fr. Emmanuel then justified the timeframe proposed by the CTDAS, articles from the years 1889–1903, on the basis of the texts of a major scholar of Father Dehon, Fr. Albert Bourgeois, who delimited these fifteen years of overflowing activity as the great years of Father Dehon’s social action, marked by congresses, conferences, and spiritual and social publications; fifteen years also of trials, from the summer of 1889 to that of 1893, through the General Chapter of 1896, until the expulsion of the Congregation and the forced emigration to Brussels in 1903; fifteen years of national and international commitment and of great development of the Congregation. In this period spiritual union and social reform, mystical experience and public engagement, response to the revelation of Paray-le-Monial and proclamation of the Social Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus are joined together.

The presenter further highlighted the symbolic density of the boundary dates. In 1889 the centenary of the Revolution, the memory of the consecration of the Sacred Heart, and the launching of *Le Règne* coincide, together with the founding of the school of Clairefontaine. In 1903 Father Dehon’s sixtieth birthday, the twenty-fifth anniversary of his religious profession, and the thirty-fifth of his priesthood are celebrated, at the same time as the death of Leo XIII, friend, guide, and spiritual father of the Founder. The arc 1889–1903 thus appears as a time of maturity of Dehonian thought, personality, and social mission.

For the study, the CTDAS worked with a set of articles from this period, especially those published in *Le Règne* and later taken up or prolonged in *La Chronique du Sud-Est*, with attention to themes such as the condition of the working class, socialism, Christian democracy, secularization, the Catholic press, and the Social Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus. The *corpus* was read as a chronicle of

an ecclesial and French history, and as a mirror of Father Dehon as author, priest, founder, disseminator of the encyclicals, and man passionate for France and for the Church.

1.3. Father Dehon in his texts: the implied author and the mock reader

In the second part, the CTDAS moved to the reading of Father Dehon in his texts according to the methodological proposal of Wayne Booth, beginning with the implied author. Fr. Emmanuel highlighted five principal traits.

First, the implied author is textual and historical. Father Dehon does not write in a vacuum: he reads history from the eighteenth century onward in order to frame secular liberalism, secularism, socialism, and unbridled capitalism as systematic philosophical errors. He is prophetic and visionary. He situates the Church not as an enemy of the times, but as a path of salvation; not as a problem of society, but as a remedy for true freedom and true happiness. At the same time, he affirmed that the CTDAS honestly recognized the presence, in some texts, of ambiguous and historically conditioned formulations concerning Jews, Freemasonry, Islam, schismatics, heretics, and idolaters, as well as the use of categories of national, social, and private apostasy. Such passages require a historical, critical, and charitable reading, distinguishing what is a diagnosis of the age from what cannot be received today without purification.

Second, the implied author is ecclesial, patriarchal, and apologetic. He appears as a faithful son of the Church, a strong supporter of the papacy, a promoter of the magisterium, especially of *Rerum Novarum*, and a thinker concerned with the preservation of Christian order and morals. He presents the Church as vulnerable and wounded before revolution, secularization, and laicization, and dares to challenge the powers and ideologies of his time. His apologetics is not merely defensive: he wishes to lead society back to the Kingdom of Christ.

Third, the implied author adopts a catechetical and dialogical form. He structures questions and answers, breaks down complex socioeconomic debates, and makes Christian social ethics accessible to workers, priests, and elites. The conversational style favors the formation of consciences and the passage from doctrine to practice.

Fourth, the implied author speaks a direct, succinct, and practical language. He does not lose himself in ornamental rhetoric. He prefers short and clear sentences, such as the appeal to leave the sacristy and go to the people. He grounds his argumentation in concrete observations of the industrial revolution, of poverty, and of factory life. The poor and the worker are not merely objects of discourse: they enter the horizon of the reader whom the text wishes to reach.

Fifth, the implied author integrates mysticism and social justice. Devotion to the Sacred Heart does not remain in the private sphere. The Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus must descend into the social life of peoples. Oblation, reparation, contemplation, and engagement are interwoven. The active vocabulary of transformation, movement, and salvation reveals a Father Dehon who unites interiority and reform, heart and structures, charity and justice.

The persuasion of this author articulates moral reason, ecclesial doctrine, and concrete social experience. His ultimate horizon is the Social Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus: not a political theocracy, but a civilization of charity, in which the justice and love of Christ order economic, familial, and public relations.

Fr. Emmanuel then distinguished the mock reader of yesterday and the reader of today, as well as the specific publics of priests and religious.

The mock reader of that time is informed and formed. He receives news about the magisterium, the position of the State, the rise of socialist and liberal ideologies, and the challenges of the working class. He is called to allow the Social Doctrine of the Church to shape his daily moral choices and to take an active part in Catholic social action and Christian democracy. Among the addressees figure congress participants, workers, clergy, religious, children, and the youth of the time. The text wants awakened consciences, not resigned spectators.

The reader of today is invited to a holistic integration: to value the Dehonian premise that true devotion to the Heart of Jesus requires practical justice, education, and economic reform, and not only private piety. At the same time, he perceives paternalistic limits, excessively top-down

hierarchies, and a politics at times anachronistic before modern democratic pluralism. The contemporary reader admires the defense of the weak, but needs to translate the proposals into categories of participation, subsidiarity, and structural transformation.

For priests and religious of that time, the texts functioned as a practical guide: how to face strikes, elections, associations, usury, the press, and the formation of the clergy. They were urged to leave apathy behind and to place at the center the human person, the common good, and the protection of the weak. For priests and religious of today, the reading requires sobriety before prejudices of the age, including antisemitic statements present in some secondary or polemical texts, and attention to interreligious tensions. Understanding the context avoids both idealization and simplistic condemnation, and allows one to discern the pastoral intention of the author.

1.4. Contemporary relevance of Father Dehon's writings

At the end of the CTDAS exposition, Fr. Emmanuel developed the contemporary relevance of the *corpus* in several parallelisms.

The textual and contextual parallelism shows that the logical progression of ideas, the use of concrete data, and the passage from diagnosis to remedy lessen the distance between the nineteenth century and the present. The socio-spiritual parallelism deepens the social dimension of the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus: social transformation is not sustained by legal mechanisms alone, but requires interior conversion to love. The Heart of Jesus becomes a theological symbol of a social order animated by compassion, self-gift, and justice.

The theo-anthropological parallelism underlines the centrality of human dignity, justice, peace, and the concrete experience of suffering. Father Dehon avoids abstract moralism and situates theology on the ground of life. The socioeconomic parallelism updates the critique of the conflict between capital and labor, of economism, and of the “economic Darwinism” that reduces the person to a commodity. His proposal of profit-sharing and of association between capital and labor dialogues with current debates on social responsibility, cooperativism, and an economy centered on the person.

At the same time, the CTDAS named the difficulty of religious pluralism. In Asian contexts, marked by ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, certain affirmations of supremacy and absoluteness, as well as polemical passages of the age, generate estrangement. Reading Dehon today in Asia requires creative fidelity: to keep the charismatic core of social charity and of the Kingdom of the Heart, purifying historically conditioned languages.

Father Dehon's questions remain pertinent. Can a society last when God is systematically excluded from legislation, culture, and public life? Why does material progress coexist with existential emptiness, family fragility, and new poverties? How can one prevent the worker from being treated as a cheap instrument? How can serious study and concrete charity be united, being at once “physicians and nurses of society”? How can one pass from lamentation to action, from the sacristy to the people, from private devotion to the Kingdom of the Heart in souls and in societies?

The Dehonian answers remain fruitful: participation and partnership in the world of work; formation of consciences; responsible use of the press and of associations; option for the poor; and, at the deepest level, the Social Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus as the reign of charity. It is not a matter of restoring a vanished world, but of allowing the oblation love of Christ to reorder relations, institutions, and hopes.

Fr. Emmanuel Nanduri concluded by affirming the importance of reading the text and the opportunity it offers of understanding Father Dehon from his own thoughts, recorded in his writings. His thoughts continue to inspire, and his legacy endures throughout the world through the various pastoral and social ministries of his disciples. His mission, which remains alive, continues to serve the needy and the most disadvantaged classes of society who seek justice and human dignity.

After Fr. Emmanuel's exposition, at 9:30 a.m., the moderator Fr. Alain thanked the CTDAS for the work done and presented, and announced the break in the session's activities, with resumption of the work at 10:00 a.m.

2. Response of the CTDAL to the CTDAS

After the break, at 10:00 a.m., Fr. Alain invited the participants to resume the work and invited the Latin American Commission (CTDAL) to present its response to the work of the CTDAS. Fr. Manuel António Teixeira, on behalf of the CTDAL, set forth the commission's reflection.

Fr. Manuel António presented the reaction to the reading proposal offered by the CTDAS, affirming that the CTDAL response had been elaborated on the basis of a preceding text that was less complete than the one the Asian commission presented at the beginning of the session.

2.1. *Strengths and weaknesses*

Fr. Manuel António began his response with a critical appreciation of the CTDAS work, first recognizing its principal merits and strong points. He highlighted that the text offers a useful historical and biographical context concerning Father Dehon, situating his thought within the pontificate of Leo XIII and the social and political debates of his time. He also recognized the adequate identification of central themes of his reflection, such as the social question, Christian democracy, the Social Kingdom of the Sacred Heart, the critique of capitalism and socialism, and the search for a Christian form of justice and charity. He likewise considered pertinent the section dedicated to the contemporary relevance of Father Dehon, for relating his thought to contemporary questions such as economic inequality, consumerism, political division, and the environmental crisis.

Fr. Manuel António then presented some analytical limitations of the document. The principal one concerns the fact that, although the text proposes to work with the categories of the implied author and the implied reader, following the method proposed by the Seminar on the basis of the theories of Wayne Booth, it does not develop them in a systematic way. The CTDAL observed that the CTDAS study remains predominantly in the description of Father Dehon's themes, without sufficiently deepening the analysis of his language, his pronouns, imperatives, rhetorical questions, direct appeals, and the different voices present in the texts. It was also underlined that the long period studied tends to be treated in an excessively homogeneous way, without adequately distinguishing the evolution of Father Dehon's tone and strategy over the years.

The discussion further drew attention to the need to distinguish the different editorial spaces in which Father Dehon wrote. In particular, the difference was stressed between *Le Règne du Cœur de Jésus*, a review founded and directed by Father Dehon, and *La Chronique du Sud-Est*, in which he acted as a collaborator. This difference modifies the position of the author and, consequently, the interpretation of his voice. In the first case, Father Dehon writes as owner and editor; in the second, his voice is inserted into a publication with its own editorial identity. Fr. Manuel António likewise pointed out as questions deserving greater depth the treatment of antisemitism, the importance of the regional identity of the French Southeast, and the rhetorical function of electoral statistics, which do not appear simply as informative data, but as instruments of alarm and mobilization of the reader.

2.2. *A proposal of reading*

On the basis of these observations, Fr. Manuel António presented a proposal of reading elaborated by the CTDAL, centered on the figure of the implied author as mediator among Rome, France, and society. In this perspective, Father Dehon does not limit himself to reproducing pontifical teachings, but seeks to interpret them and translate them into a program of social and political action for French society. As an example, the affirmation of 1898 was taken according to which the democratic movement ought to be Christianized so that it would not become socialist: "*Comprendrons-nous?*"

Fr. Manuel António's analysis continued with consideration of the public to whom Father Dehon addresses himself. He observed that, although he remains explicitly Catholic, his interlocutor is not necessarily restricted to practicing Catholics. In *La Chronique du Sud-Est*, he addresses the readers of the review and seeks to form a public capable of understanding industrial society, the conditions

of labor, wages, and political conflicts. Attention to the concrete causes of the workers' movement, such as large-scale industry, working conditions, female and child employment, urban concentration, and the instability of wages, shows that the intention is not merely to condemn the workers' movement, but to form the reader to understand the social question and to respond to it from a Christian perspective.

Fr. Manuel António also analyzed the use of history as an instrument of political argumentation. Father Dehon presents an interpretation of the Christian past, especially of the Middle Ages, as a counterpoint to modern civilization. The reference to Gothic monuments and to the way in which modern culture would have depreciated them is presented not as a simple historical or artistic observation, but as part of a broader argumentation on the relation among Christianity, society, and civilization.

Another aspect highlighted by the CTDAL response was the construction of a European horizon. Father Dehon compares the French experience with that of other countries, particularly Belgium, Italy, Germany, and Rome (the Holy See). The Belgian experience appears as a stimulus to the organization and continuity of French Catholic action. In later texts, the very reading of the foreign press is presented as an instrument for broadening the understanding of reality and learning from other experiences.

Fr. Manuel António finally identified a progressive evolution of the reader imagined by Father Dehon. Initially, it is a Catholic mobilized by unity and by the defense of the Church; later, this reader is called to understand the social question, interpret political data, organize himself, take part in democratic life, and know international experiences. This evolution appears in the texts from 1898 to 1903: from enthusiasm before Catholic unity, one passes to the alarm provoked by the electoral growth of socialism; then, to the appeal to the young, to the need for organization, and finally to formation for Christian democracy and for a broader understanding of European Catholic experiences.

In conclusion, Fr. Manuel António affirmed that there is an articulated evolution both of the figure of the implied author and of that of the implied reader. Father Dehon appears initially as mediator of pontifical authority and defender of Catholic unity; progressively, he assumes the function of social analyst, critic of French passivity, strategist of organization, and interpreter of European Catholic experiences. In parallel, the reader is led from a predominantly Catholic and patriotic identity toward a more conscious participation in the social question, in political organization, in Christian democracy, and in the European horizon. It was underlined, however, that this evolution must always be read considering Dehon's concrete position in *La Chronique du Sud-Est*, a publication that did not belong to him, avoiding the attribution to his voice of an editorial authority that it did not possess.

Fr. Alain thanked the CTDAL for the response sent to the CTDAS and invited the participants to the work in linguistic groups, as in the preceding sessions, considering the significant and most important aspects of the presentations for a better understanding of Father Dehon through his texts in *La Chronique du Sud-Est*. He said that the groups would have thirty minutes available for discussion and that the assembly would reconvene at 11:00 a.m. for the presentation of the group secretaries and the discussion in plenary assembly.

3. Group discussion and dialogue on the theme of the session

After the group work on Father Dehon in his writings in *La Chronique du Sud-Est*, the moderator of the fifth session, Fr. Alain Martial, invited the secretaries of the linguistic groups to compose the discussion table in order to present the results of the work done, recalling the need to send to the secretariat of the Theological Seminar the synthesis of the responses.

3.1. Portuguese-language Group 1 – Fr. Fernando Teckler

The group drew attention to the pioneering way in which Father Dehon addressed a broad and diverse public, in specific situations. He made structural criticisms of the government and of the

social system, involving labor, legal, and union questions, in harmony even with initiatives not linked to the Catholic Church. In the face of this, the question was raised as to what the consequences and repercussions of his writings would have been in the European context of the early twentieth century.

Second, it was affirmed that Father Dehon believed that social actions had a spiritual foundation, guided by Christian principles of love, justice, human dignity, and communion. He succeeded in articulating spiritual and social aspects in a mature and profound way, being a prophet even when treating polemical subjects such as social injustice, Freemasonry, and usury. The theology of the Heart of Jesus appears as a point of support for temporal questions, interpreted in the light of spiritual principles. It was perceived that the *theologia cordis* runs through different moments of the Founder's life and different texts, such as the Social Catechism, the letters, and the chronicles.

Third, the group considered that Father Dehon's experiences and thought can be a light in the present Brazilian ecclesial and social context, marked by the growth of secularism, religious indifference, relativism, and polarization.

3.2. Portuguese-language Group 2 – Fr. Cristiano Francisco de Assis

The group highlighted, first, that in Father Dehon spirituality and social commitment are inseparable. He cannot be understood only as a spiritual author or promoter of devotion to the Sacred Heart. In his texts, spiritual experience necessarily leads to commitment to social reality. The Kingdom of the Heart of Jesus must not remain only in souls, but must also reach societies. Devotion needs to produce concrete consequences: defense of human dignity, justice in labor relations, protection of the poorest, care for families, and transformation of unjust structures. Dehonian spirituality is not intimist: it is born of the contemplation of the love of Christ and leads to the encounter with the wounds of the world. For this reason Father Dehon denounces long working days, low wages, the exploitation of women and children, and the reduction of the worker to an instrument of production. To be faithful to Dehon today means to ask whether one's own spirituality produces practices of justice, welcome, respect, and human promotion. It is not enough to speak of the love of the Heart of Jesus; it is necessary to make it visible in the way of treating persons, administering works, and placing oneself at the side of the most vulnerable.

Second, the group valued Father Dehon's pastoral method: a Church that knows reality and goes out to meet the people. Inspired by the appeal of Leo XIII, Dehon did not desire a Church closed in the sacristy. Priests ought to know closely the life of the workers: wages, food, housing, family life, sufferings, and forms of organization. He did not limit himself to writing about the social question: he created works, promoted congresses, formed seminarians and priests, collaborated with laity and entrepreneurs, encouraged associations, and used the press as an instrument of formation. The texts thus offer not only answers, but a method: to draw near to reality, to listen to persons, to study problems, to illuminate them with the Gospel, and to organize concrete responses. "Going to the people," today, means proximity, listening, participation, and presence in the places where life happens.

Third, the group affirmed that reading Father Dehon today requires critical fidelity and creative updating. His texts possess prophetic intuitions, such as the defense of workers and the critique of inhuman capitalism, but also limits of the age, including certain anti-Jewish expressions, excessively combative language, and paternalistic traits. Fidelity does not consist in literally repeating all his words, but in preserving the evangelical core of the proposal and translating it for present challenges: precarization of labor, inequality, the throwaway culture, automation, artificial intelligence, the weakening of community bonds, and new forms of exclusion. Three attitudes are required: to understand historically, to discern critically, and to update creatively, so that Father Dehon may continue to inspire a Church that contemplates the Heart of Christ and recognizes it in the wounded heart of humanity.

3.3. French-language group – Fr. Michel Simo Temgo

The group registered, with joy, Father Dehon's international openness. Although he is known in his writings as a patriot, the citations reveal a welcoming and socially engaged man, capable of going beyond chauvinism and of analyzing with objectivity the themes of society. The image was valued of a Father Dehon who takes risks, by allowing his thought to be evaluated in another periodical, contributing to a journal that was not exclusively his. A parallel was also noted between *La Chronique* and the social works: Father Dehon is aware that his contributions touch the industrial world and manifests great sensitivity to human reality.

Second, the group addressed the question of antisemitism and anti-Judaism. It considered that the concept requires a new understanding, for Father Dehon's denunciation takes place in a precise context and one does not identify, in the Founder, a hatred of the Jews. It was recalled that the theme has already been discussed in a colloquium in Paris on the Jewish question. In order to clear up misunderstandings, the group proposed that the Congregation might organize a colloquium or a conference on Father Dehon and love for the Jews.

Third, from the methodological point of view, a distinction was made between *Le Règne du Sacré-Cœur de Jésus dans les Âmes et les Sociétés*, a periodical proper to the Congregation, and *La Chronique du Sud-Est*, of a more public and international horizon. A certain discrepancy was also observed between the density of the written text and some aspects of the oral presentation, which reinforces the need to continue the study with rigor.

3.4. English-language Group 1 – Prof. Dr. Jeremy Blackwood

The group affirmed that Father Dehon faced the social evils of his time independently of ideologies. He was a social prophet, involved, studious, and analytical: he not only knew the problems, but examined them in depth. If the Congregation wishes to act as he acted, it needs to know in a profound way the experiences of persons and the causes of those experiences, which requires drawing near to concrete society. For Father Dehon, the Sacred Heart is the antidote to social problems, both consumerism and socialism and other questions. He is not merely a social worker or an activist: he always remains united to the Heart of Jesus.

Second, the question was raised whether, in the texts of *La Chronique*, Father Dehon offers the systematic link between the Sacred Heart and social action. The connection is realized concretely in his life and in his way of living, but it does not appear in the texts as a finished systematic theology. The Congregation inherited this articulation by the practical path and continues to live it in the exercise of the charism, even without a systematic theology that explains exactly how and why the connection works. It is necessary, therefore, to go beyond a merely textual interpretation in order to reach the way in which the spirit of Father Dehon lives in the community.

Third, the group interrogated the very purpose of exploring these writings. Formerly Father Dehon was known above all through biography; today practical solutions, examples, or models are sought. Distances of time and of style present challenges. A true message remains true, but if one does not sufficiently understand what one reads, the reading can be more dangerous than useful. At the same time, dialogue with the past helps to form present identity. Perhaps this is a question that the Congregation still needs to answer with greater clarity: what, in fact, is sought in the texts of the Founder?

3.5. English-language Group 2 – Fr. Zbigniew Morawiec

The group underlined that Father Dehon succeeded in reconciling ecclesial orientation, doctrine, and social experiences with mysticism, cult, and interior life. Today this kind of integration is very difficult, and for that very reason remains challenging. He knew how to integrate the Kingdom of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in souls and in societies, not only by thought and writing, but by the way of acting.

On the basis of the CTDAL response, Father Dehon's choice to publish also outside the strictly Catholic environment was valued, seeking to reach other groups and other forms of thought, in an

effort of dialogue. Because he was not the principal editor of *La Chronique*, he seems to have enjoyed greater freedom of expression. The comparison between *Le Règne* and *La Chronique du Sud-Est* reinforces the conviction that Dehon cannot be understood without the social dimension: this is the overall vision that emerges from the texts.

It was further affirmed that Father Dehon speaks intensely of diverse realities, but seeks to build a better world, in which the Kingdom of the Sacred Heart may come about. He proposes this construction with conviction and courage. He was a man involved with the social, political, religious, formative, and educational question. Dehonians cannot be indifferent to the world that surrounds them. It is necessary to care for the spiritual and sacramental aspects of consecration, but to be truly consecrated to the Sacred Heart means, as in Father Dehon, attention to those most in need and responsibility before what happens in history.

3.6. Spanish-language group – Fr. Délio Ruiz

The group first pondered the richness of *La Chronique du Sud-Est* and the relevance of Father Dehon's long period of collaboration in this periodical. It recognized the value of the CTDAS work, while at the same time observing the need for greater concrete reference to the articles, considering the set available for study. In a spirit of collaboration and in the application of the Seminar's methodology, it proposed that the South American Commission continue to deepen *La Chronique du Sud-Est* in dialogue with the Asian Commission.

Second, the group identified in Father Dehon's action a reflection of the method of seeing, judging, and acting. In his itineraries he perceives reality; the magisterium of the Pope functions as illumination of that observed reality; then Father Dehon moves to action, seeking concrete responses. This is reflected in the chronicles as an invitation to Catholics and, in a special way, to the young and to citizens in general, to see the situation and to respond to it. A more political character of the Dehon of the chronicles was also discovered, particularly concerned with French reality.

Finally, it was observed that Father Dehon works along two lines: on the one hand, subsidiarity, with attention to associations, corporations, and committees at the local level; on the other, a broader perspective that opens to the history of the Church in a more universal horizon.

3.7. Free interventions and dialogue with the presenters

After the presentations of the group secretaries, Fr. Alain Martial invited the presenters of the CTDAS and the CTDAL to take their places at the table again, in order to begin the discussion in plenary assembly.

Fr. Joseph Kuete addressed two questions to the commissions. First, he asked how to explain the change of Father Dehon's interests in the field of social engagement around 1903: whether such a change was due to the death of Leo XIII, to other interests of the Founder, or to advancing age. Second, he observed that, in the texts and in the context of the time, Father Dehon and other Christian democrats were criticized and at times accused of being revolutionaries or socialists. He asked whether the commissions' research had found, in the Founder's writings, responses to these accusations and mentions of ecclesiastical or lay leaders who opposed his action.

Fr. Emmanuel Nanduri, on behalf of the CTDAS, replied that Father Dehon did not interrupt his writing or his engagement with social questions at the death of Leo XIII. His collaboration and his response to social problems continued, including in *La Chronique du Sud-Est* and in other periodicals, for some years still. As for the criticisms and the relations with democrats and socialists, he affirmed that there was an evolution in Dehonian thought: at the beginning, Father Dehon opposed socialism with greater clarity; progressively, he came to recognize the possibility of collaboration on certain social questions, without adhering to socialism as a system. He recalled contacts and collaborations with figures linked to Christian democracy, such as Albert de Mun and René de La Tour du Pin, even when there were divergences, a sign of a permanent capacity for dialogue.

Fr. Manuel Antônio Teixeira, on behalf of the CTDAL, situated the origin and evolution of *La Chronique du Sud-Est*. He explained that the publication was born with a more restricted character, linked to social initiatives and to the dissemination of other works, and later developed as a true review, reaching a broader public. In this new context, Father Dehon collaborated with texts and editorials, but was neither owner nor director of the publication. This condition was considered decisive for understanding his writing: because he did not directly control the review and because he addressed more diverse readers, he needed to adapt language and argumentation. From this, he proposed understanding *La Chronique* as a space in which Dehonian spirituality opens to a broader social and civic dimension. The Heart of Jesus does not remain circumscribed to the life of the Congregation: it can inspire laity and people committed to building a better society. He further observed that Father Dehon, although critical of socialism, knew its positions and, in certain writings, even came to cite or recognize elements coming from socialist environments—an attitude of listening and discernment, and not of absolute opposition. He underlined, finally, that collaboration with Victor Berne and with *La Chronique* also responded, in part, to publications of a different orientation, such as *La Croix*, and aimed at laying the foundations of Christian democracy in France.

Fr. Joseph Famerée expressed particular interest in the figure of the implied author presented in the CTDAL response, especially in the idea of Father Dehon as mediator between the French Church and Rome. He asked that the bases on which this mediation is affirmed, and among which poles it is exercised, be made explicit in a synthetic way. He considered the category of the mediator fruitful for interpreting Dehonian participation in the review: not mere transmission of pontifical thought, but an effort to translate that magisterium for the concrete reality of French society and for the debates of his time. He likewise valued the construction of a European horizon in Dehonian discourse, a dimension he judged infrequent and theologically promising.

Fr. Jacinto Weizenmann observed that Father Dehon spoke, wrote, and acted a great deal, which naturally generated criticisms. He asked whether, in the Founder's writings, there appears any reaction or counter-reaction of his to the criticisms received when he denounced those responsible for social ills, such as the government, Freemasonry, and the Jews. The question pointed to the need to consider not only what Father Dehon said about social and political actors, but also the way in which his action was perceived and contested by contemporaries.

Fr. Victor de Oliveira Barbosa insisted that one must not affirm, in a simplified way, that Father Dehon's social apostolate ceases with the death of Leo XIII. Other elements of the Founder's own life must be considered. First, the exile in Belgium, the change of historical situation, and the new configuration of the Congregation, expelled from France and in strong missionary expansion, required greater dedication to the government and organization of the Institute, especially around the definitive approval. Second, the Dehonian social apostolate was always lived, to a great extent, as a service of spokesperson of the Pope; this role continues in Dehon's work as consultor of the Index, including in the analysis of doctrinal problems linked to the *Action Française* and to the case of Charles Maurras, according to the historical study of David Neuhold, still little known in the Congregation. In synthesis, there would not be an abandonment of social concern, but a change of perspective and of form of service from 1903 onward, with missionary and ecclesial emphasis. Not by chance, at the end of his life, in the last annotations of the *Notes Quotidiennes*, Father Dehon recalls the collaboration with Victor Berne and with *La Chronique*, a sign that that experience remained alive in his spiritual and apostolic memory.

Fr. Charles Aimé Koudjou thanked the presentation of the different movements and transformations in Father Dehon and asked that the spiritual sphere and the social dimension of his life not be separated. He asked whether the experience developed in social questions and in Christian democracy could not also be read as a passage from a more individual spirituality to a form of action oriented to the collectivity and, further, as a refinement of the Founder's political face. *La Chronique*, with an editorial line that was open and at the same time oriented, would invite one to perceive Father Dehon also as a contributor in the political field, without dissolving the primacy of the Heart of Jesus.

Taking the floor again, Fr. Manuel António recalled the teaching of Leo XIII in the encyclical *Au milieu des sollicitudes*, addressed to the Church of France, which proposed to Catholics that they assume the republican reality. Father Dehon welcomed this orientation and, in *La Chronique*, sought to translate it for the concrete situation: to understand the Republic, to work for a Christian democracy, to exercise the right to vote, and to support candidates coherent with this line. It was not a matter of mechanically repeating the Pope, but of interpreting him pastorally so that France would not be lost. The Dehonian conviction was recalled that, if Catholics persisted only in monarchical nostalgia, they could “lose everything.” Fr. Manuel António further highlighted Father Dehon’s openness to the European reality, particularly to the experience of Italian Christian democracy and to figures such as Giuseppe Toniolo. Observing how Christians of other countries took part in political life served to help France find its own paths. The European dimension did not distance the French question: it illuminated it. He mentioned, finally, that the condition of exile may have limited, at a certain moment, the freedom to speak directly of French politics, which also helps to understand changes of tone and of emphasis.

Fr. Emmanuel Nanduri added that there is, in fact, a displacement and development of thought between the writing in *Le Règne* and the collaboration in *La Chronique*. The historical time changes, the situation of the Church in France, the expulsion, and the transfer to Belgium. In *Le Règne*, the voice tends to be more authorial and internal; in *La Chronique*, Father Dehon appears as a collaborator, with greater thematic freedom and a broader public, not restricted to religious or priests. In this horizon, he can also be read as an influencer and social reformer, always in fidelity to the magisterium. The evolution of Christian social-democratic thought, under the impulse of Leo XIII, helps to understand the passage from more rigid oppositions to forms of collaboration and of Christian proposal in the face of socialism.

Fr. Emerson Marcelo Ruiz considered as a great merit of the CTDAS the fact of having unveiled the relatively homogeneous set of articles of *La Chronique du Sud-Est*. It is a peculiar treasure: dozens of brief texts, many of an editorial character, in which Father Dehon seeks to awaken the youth of the South of France to urgent social commitment. He recalled that, on the eve of the Founder’s death, Victor Berne sent him a letter of thanks for the collaboration. Until the departure for Brussels, Father Dehon wrote about twelve articles a year; afterward, the frequency diminished, but the collaboration continued until about 1908. Victor Berne described Father Dehon as a “trumpet”: someone who calls to combat and awakens Catholics to a necessary struggle. This struggle took place on several fronts. First, against the laziness, fear, and resistance of French Catholics before social work; for this reason Father Dehon stirs national pride and compares French timidity with initiatives of Brussels, Germany, Brazil, and the United States. Second, in the confrontation with the socialists, he recognizes what is positive in their practices, such as cooperatives and rural banks, and proposes Christian equivalents. Third, he faces internally the immobilism of conservative sectors of the clergy, the “old canons” who distrusted the young engaged in the social field. Thus *La Chronique* reveals a Father Dehon who intervenes at once against Catholic passivity, against socialist opposition, and against the ecclesial fear of launching into the social mission.

Fr. Manuel António added the historical importance of the publication: the bulletin developed and gave rise to the *Chroniques Sociales de France*, with continuity until approximately 1991. This duration helps to dimension the editorial space in which Father Dehon collaborated and the relevance of his writings in it. The editorial line, initially more strictly Catholic, gradually opened to a broader political and social horizon, which makes the Dehonian presence in that milieu still more significant.

The discussions having been concluded, at about 12:10 p.m., the moderator of the session, Fr. Alain Martial, declared the work closed and convened the beginning of the afternoon session at 2:30 p.m.

Fr. Eduardo Nunes Pugliesi
Fr. Nilson Helmann
Fr. Victor de Oliveira Barbosa