

A MISSION TOO FAR ... PACIFIC COMMITMENT Bonus Chapter 14 [MTF-XIV]

1842 - 1843 The End of a Period

Pompallier back at his desk

On 26 August 1842 Bishop Pompallier was back home in Kororareka in the Bay of Islands, after an absence of thirteen months. He had left on 23 July 1841 on the mission schooner *Sancta Maria* to bring the newly arrived missionaries of the fifth band under Antoine Séon to their stations and for a visit to the South Island.¹ His original plan had been to continue to the Polynesian islands and from there to South America to sell the ship and go to Europe to seek more assistance. While in Akaroa he heard of the martyrdom of Peter Chanel and had to change his plans.² He went to Wallis instead and stayed there for five months after which he visited Futuna, Fiji and Tonga.³

On arrival in Kororareka he found only two priests there, Father Antoine Garin acting Provincial and manager of the mission, and Jérôme Grange who was learning English and Maori while waiting for an assignment. Also at Kororareka were the seminarian Jean Lampila studying theology, the lay missionary Jean-François Yvert waiting at the press to get definitive translations for the printery, the Brothers Luc Macé working on the buildings, Pierre Marie Pérénon teaching at the little mission school and Basil Monchanin who did the cooking and repaired the shoes. Three of them, Jérôme Grange, Luc Macé and Jean Lampila, Pompallier had not met before, they had arrived in his absence in the sixth group with Jean Forest.

Forest himself had already moved to Auckland when the Bishop arrived. Another man of that band, Euloge Reignier had moved to Maketu to replace Borjon. Brother Déodat had gone to Auckland to leave from there with Borjon for the new mission to be started in Wellington. Father Petitjean was still in Sydney. The other lay-missionary, Louis Perret had come and gone in the Bishop's absence. All by all a tidier and smaller community than the Bishop had left behind in July 1841.

There was a pile of letters on his desk, especially the mail that Forest had brought from Europe but he pushed it all aside for the moment. There was a ship in the port about to leave for Sydney and he wrote a quick letter to his pro-vicar Épalle who had left three months before for France via Valparaiso and whom a fast letter via Sydney might catch in France on arrival. He would have preferred Épalle to wait for his return, he wrote, but he approved all the same. He gave a short but colourful account of his travels and his achievements in the islands but his main concern was to stop Épalle from going to Rome before getting the information and instructions he promised to send him in week or two.⁴ He was especially anxious that Épalle would dispel the many rumours and misunderstandings in France. On the specific point of the mission ship, so he wrote, he

¹ Jan Snijders, *A Mission Too Far...Pacific Commitment* [MTF] (Hindmarsh SA: Australasian Theological Forum, 2012), 342.

² MTF, 348.

³ Jan Snijders, MTF Bonus Chapter 13 [MTF-XIII], *Action in the Pacific*, www.mariststudies.org, 4-7.

⁴ Charles Girard, *Lettres recues d'Océanie* [LRO] (Paris, Karthala, 2009) volume 2, Doc 193. Épalle got the letter on or shortly after his arrival in Lyon in January 1843.

had picked up a story that it cost a hundred Francs a day to run. Not so! Fifty-five! Nor had the trip to the islands cost £ 500 as was rumoured. The right figure, he wrote, was about £ 70.

Paying off debts

Garin was immensely relieved when Pompallier immediately took over the financial administration. During his long absence there had been rumours that he would not come back at all, or that he would go to France to get a diocese, or that he stayed away for fear of being arrested because of the outstanding debts. The creditors must have been pleased to see him back! It seems he went to see them all personally and, as so often before, his charm won the day. They accepted Promissory Notes and he wrote out at least a dozen of them to nine different people, together amounting to Fr 43,480.28 at least.⁵

During September and October Pompallier sent the notes one by one to Colin, each with a short covering letter.⁶ The covering letters are short and read like the instructions of a business manager to someone on his office staff. Disregarding the expenses of fitting out the missionaries and paying their fares he simply states that, as he has not yet received any of the allocations for 1841 and 1842 the Superior General would have all that money in hand by the time he received these notes and would therefore have no problem paying them off. He repeats earlier instructions on transferring money every trimester. Overlooking the loan for Fr 30,000 that he took out when Séon arrived in June 1841 to compensate for the amount lost in the bankruptcy, he says he is still waiting for the compensation promised.⁷

In contrast to his letter to Épalle, Pompallier tells Colin nothing about his travels, about the Marists he met or the successes and difficulties of the mission. He probably wanted to show his displeasure at Colin's letter to the missionaries of 20 October 1841 of which he must have received or at least seen a copy.⁸ In the letter Colin had described the task of the visitor Forest as including the 'general good of the mission', the best ways to spread the Faith, the possibility of opening a house of the Society in New Zealand, developing income on the spot, and so on. A month later, when Forest was back in Kororareka and had spoken with the Bishop he wrote to Colin: '[The Bishop] feels that you exceed your authority when you write about *the general good of the mission*. The good of the mission, general or particular is his business for which he has to account to the Holy See and to no one else. As the Holy See has entrusted him with the mission, he alone is responsible for it.'⁹ And, as the Bishop himself wrote a few days later to Maître-pierre: 'You can check in Rome and see that neither the Society as a whole, nor the

⁵ Ewen McLennan: £ 162.0.0 (Fr 4,536); Ewen McLennan: Fr 1,474.20; Eugene Cafler: £ 74.2.6; Poncet: Fr 795.00; Mayhew Fr 2,144.68; Louis Michel (the Captain of the *Sancta Maria*): Fr 8,316.00; Dunn: Fr 3,424.40; Wilson: Fr 3,262.00; Thompson: Fr 2,800.00; Thompson again: Fr 8,400.00; plus a note for Fr 6,253.00 for someone not mentioned by name. There is a second one for Mayhew on which there is no further information.

⁶ LRO 2, Docs 195, 197, 198, 199, 200, 203, 206, 207, 210, 211 and 213.

⁷ E.g. LRO 2, Doc 195.

⁸ Gaston Lessard, « *Colin Sup* » [CS] (Rome: Marist Fathers, 2007), volume 1, Doc 301. Cf. MTF, 329-30.

⁹ LRO 2, Doc 215, 4.

Superior General has been entrusted with the apostolic work of this mission. Their only task is to send us missionary personnel!’¹⁰

Reinforcing the Tonga mission

When Bataillon had challenged him for having broken his promises and for leaving them to their own devices there was no *mea culpa*. But he must have realised there was some truth in it all the same. Now, after leaving Father Chevron in Tonga with Brother Attale he could not leave them there the same way he had done on Wallis and Futuna. He immediately looked around for a way to reinforce the Tongan mission. Also, Brother Joseph Luzy on Futuna suffered from filariasis. He needed treatment and could not stay in the tropics.

Forest had brought two new priests with him: Euloge Reignier (31) and Jérôme Grange (35). Reignier had gone to join Comte in Opotiki,¹¹ Grange was still in Kororareka when the Bishop returned so the Bishop assigned him to join Chevron and Attale in Tonga. Brother Augustin Drevet who had proved to be an able weaver, he appointed to Wallis where people were successfully growing flax. The plan was for Captain Louis Michel to take Grange with the brother of the chief of Pea on the *Sancta Maria* to Tonga, then bring Augustin to Wallis, pick up Joseph and sail to Valparaiso where Joseph could seek treatment and Michel would sell the ship and continue to France. After treatment for his filariasis Joseph could come to New Zealand when an occasion arose and stay in its moderate climate. The ship sailed on 4 October.¹²

Writing to the Propagation of the Faith

Having taken care of the creditors and sent off the *Santa Maria*, Pompallier sat down to take care of his correspondence. The first fence to mend were his communications with the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon. In front of him lay a letter from the Association, dated 16 October 1841, complaining of his negligence in informing them of the progress of the mission. As he had done to Colin he laments the loss of the many letters he claims to have sent [7].¹³ In any case they should by now, he writes, have received a copy of the extensive report he had written while for anchor in Tauranga and mailed from Akaroa through Captain Lavaud before leaving for the islands [8].¹⁴

Pompallier tells the Association in great detail of his lengthy stay in the tropical islands and of the wonderful things he has achieved there: the two thousand seven hundred baptisms on Wallis, the visit to Futuna and especially to the site of the martyrdom. He tells them he has recovered the adze that killed Peter Chanel and wants to donate it to the Association [16]. He informs them of the new start of the mission on Futuna with the appointment of two priests and a Brother who speaks the language. He

¹⁰ LRO 2, Doc 218, 15.

¹¹ LRO 2, Doc 209, 36.

¹² LRO 2, Doc 161, 12. When the ship got to Wallis it found there a French Navy ship, the *Embuscade*. The doctors on the ship had treated Brother Joseph after which he found it not necessary to leave. The *Sancta Maria* went to Valparaiso without him.

¹³ LRO 2, Doc 217. Numbers in brackets refer to the numbering in LRO. Cf. MTF, 175, n. 99

¹⁴ MTF, 342-3, 349. It was dated 16 November 1841.

tells them of the visits to Oneata and Lakeba in Fiji and of the two missionaries he had been able to station in Tonga after promising contacts with the local chiefs [6].

The Bishop tells the Association he was forced to sell his ship because, he writes, he never knows when he will receive the next allocation. At the end of the letter he insists that he needs another ship, this time, he says, of some sixty tons, half the size of the *Sancta Maria*. Such a ship would cost twenty-five to twenty-eight thousand Francs which he hopes to cover with the sale of the *Santa Maria*.¹⁵ He estimates running expenditure at twelve to fifteen thousand Francs a year [40] which he should be able to handle from the annual allocations.¹⁶

He claims to have paid off all his debts in New Zealand thanks to the generous attitude of his (mostly Protestant) creditors. They wrote off his debts against Promissory Notes amounting to Fr 60,000 to be redeemed in Lyon from the unused allocations he reckons Procure was still holding, or from the 1843 allocations due to be granted around the time the Notes would be presented in Lyon.

Pompallier recognises that considerable amounts have to be paid in France for outfitting new missionaries, for their fares and for the goods they bring along. Nevertheless, he thinks that there should be still Fr 30,000 in cash from the allocation of 1840. The fourth band of missionaries under Father Pezant had arrived on the *Aube* in July 1840 with Fr 25,000 that he had used to buy the *Sancta Maria*.¹⁷ After that only two groups had come to the mission. The fifth one under Antoine Séon had arrived in June 1841. It had lost Fr 30,000 in the bankruptcy of Wright's in London and brought only Fr 7,000 from the advance of Cooper's agent in Sydney after paying for the fares to New Zealand.¹⁸ The sixth group under Forest had arrived during his absence and brought 17,000 Francs. Pompallier could therefore in all truth write that after July 1840, in fact in 28 months, he had received only 24,000 Francs in hand [32].¹⁹

He outlines a different system by which a quarter of the annual allocations should be sent every four months [44]. He acknowledges that part of the money left in the Lyon procure will be needed to cover the Promissory Notes (about £ 2,400 = Fr 60,000) and promises not to sign any other ones in the future.

Pompallier then launches into the future. Whatever the costs of outfitting new missionaries he will absolutely need Fr 50,000 for the period September 1842 to August 1843, Fr 65,000 for the same period 1843 to 1844, Fr 80,000 for 1844 to 1845 and Fr 95,000 for 1845 to 1846. During those four years he needs enough missionaries to open ten or twelve new stations in New Zealand. For the islands he needs at least three more priests and as many Brothers, not counting whatever is needed to open one or two new stations in the Tongan Islands. Two colleges are needed, one in New Zealand which would cost Fr 10,000 to start and six or seven thousand per year to run. A second college

¹⁵ The ship was eventually sold for Fr 17,500 of which Pompallier had received only Fr 7,000 in November 1843. LRO 2, Doc 279, 9.

¹⁶ LRO 2, Doc 217, 40. This estimate could be about right if the much larger *Sancta Maria* had indeed cost only about Fr 55 a day, i.e., around twenty thousand a year, as Pompallier claims in his letter to Épalle of 3 September 1842, LRO 2, Doc 193, 10. This figure is not too different from the Fr 18.500 he mentions a little bit further in [32]. How close it is to the facts, is difficult to say.

¹⁷ Cf. MTF, 218-24.

¹⁸ Cf. MTF, 278-84, 288-9 and 307-8.

¹⁹ This what he got through the new missionaries but on the arrival of Séon he took out a loan of Fr 30,000 to cover the money lost in the bank!

in the islands, Fr 5,000 to start and Fr 3,000 annually to run. Above all of that he needs another ship for twenty-five to twenty-eight thousand Francs to buy and twelve to fifteen thousand Francs a year to run [36-40].

He intimates that he has been asked about the advisability of a second Vicariate but he finds it too early. Another two years are needed to consolidate what he has started and to see if the annexation of New Zealand by Britain will not imply that he and the French priests must move to the islands and be replaced by a British bishop and English speaking priests [37]. Moreover, there would be two other Vicariates worth considering: Fiji with an estimated population of one to four million and Pohnpei in the Caroline Islands [45].

Writing to Maîtrepierre

When in October 1841 the full seriousness of the situation in New Zealand had dawned on the Marist leadership in Lyon they had decided to send Father Forest as an official visitor. Also, both Colin and his assistant Maîtrepierre had drafted strongly worded letters. The drafts have been found, the actual letters carried by Forest not.²⁰ What they conveyed we must reconstruct from the Bishop's reaction on 6 and 8 November 1842.²¹

Maîtrepierre's letter will not have differed much from his draft. Pompallier takes him to task for his unwarranted accusations: 'remember that is dangerous to fulminate as you do against the anointed of God's Church (...). I have no doubts that Mary's heart is pierced by a sword when one strikes at this mission.' [14] On this tone he continues for two pages in which he repeats among other things that neither the Society of Mary as a whole, nor the Superior General have any apostolic responsibility for the mission except to supply it with religious personnel.[15]

One of the things that had shocked the Marists in France was the disparaging tone on which the Bishop often wrote about his missionaries. Maîtrepierre had written: 'We all know (...) the missionaries who are with you. We know them as zealous and devoted priests and always ready to comply with the directives of their superiors. (...) Nobody here believes that they changed into the sort of men you describe.' [5] Pompallier now waives the accusation lightly aside and quotes Maîtrepierre's letter for saying that the Bishop had put himself as far as possible outside of the Society of Mary. He denies ever having written this. What he resents and refuses to accept is to be any longer the religious superior by delegation from the Superior General. It is contrary to the dignity of a Bishop to receive a delegated function from a Superior General.[18]

He ends his letter with the wish: 'let us put an end to these hostilities'. [21] He does not intend to write to the Superior but Maîtrepierre can show him the letter.[22]

Writing to Colin

Two days after telling Maîtrepierre that he would not write to Colin, 8 November 1842, Pompallier changed his mind and wrote all the same.²² He opens by saying that he has in front of him a letter of Colin, dated 22 October 1841. The Bishop's reaction shows that

²⁰ Maîtrepierre's draft in CS 1, Doc 302.

²¹ Pompallier to Maîtrepierre, 6 November 1842, LRO 2, Doc 218.

²² Pompallier to Colin, 8 November 1842, LRO 2, Doc 220.

Colin did not use Maîtrepierre's draft but sent something similar to the draft we have in his own handwriting.²³

Pompallier opens dramatically:

The way you have misunderstood my letter of May 1841 has filled me with a profound sadness. I am more distressed at seeing you sigh and weep before the Lord than at my own problems. What can I do, dearest Father, to console you? Will it be enough to tell you simply the full truth? Neither the letter nor the spirit of what I wrote wanted to convey what you have understood. With heart and soul I cherish the Society and your good self. My formal commitment is as firm as ever. My trust in Our Lady, so powerful and so loveable a refuge of sinners, is the source of all my strength and hope.[1]

He feels misunderstood where Colin had concluded that he wanted to break with the Society of Mary. This, he now says, is not at all his intention. On the contrary, he is attached heart and soul to the Society and its Superior. He had simply wanted to vent his anguish for the salvation of the souls entrusted to him.

Maîtrepierre's reproach that he never said anything positive about his confreres must have struck home because Pompallier now praises Father Garin as an excellent missionary which is why he would like to put him in charge of a mission station. Without calling him a Provincial both drafts had announced that Father Forest was charged with visiting the confreres and to report directly to the Superior General. Maîtrepierre had reproached him for having appointed a Provincial without even notifying the Superior General. Pompallier now asks Colin to appoint Forest to be the Provincial to replace Garin: 'I would be pleased if you did'.[7]

The rest of Pompallier's three pages is filled with the story of the dirty and worn little prayer book that he is enclosing for Colin. It was the only thing he had been able to give to a chief he visited on the shore of Lake Rotorua in April 1840. In August 1841, without further visits and with nothing else in hand, the whole tribe of about 150 people had learned the prayers and committed itself to the Catholic Church: a tangible sign of God's grace at work! He wants Colin to accept it as 'a small token of my respect for you' and he says he 'will not be consoled until he has received Colin's forgiveness and a sign of his paternal affection'.[2-3]

By way of a postscript Pompallier asks Colin to receive Father Épalle not as someone who has fled from the mission but as a friend and as the pro-vicar of the mission. Given Épalle's poor health he prefers him to stay in Lyon. 'He always put up with my grumpiness and we got along well'. He adds that Épalle will be of more use to the mission as an informed advisor in Lyon.[8]

Épalle

Pompallier's postscript on Épalle may have been triggered by the arrival in the Bay of Islands of a ship from Valparaiso. Pompallier had been expecting a letter from Épalle but there was no mail. Five months had passed since Épalle's departure but not a sign of life!

²³ CS 1, Doc 304.

Pompallier wrote him on 7 November 1842, addressing it to Lyon via Heptonstall in London: 'I am getting worried about you. Did you not write to us from Valparaiso?'²⁴ Father Jean-Baptiste Épalle, Pro-Vicar of Western Oceania had sailed from the Bay of Islands on 23 May 1842. With the full agreement of his fellow missionaries he considered it his duty to go and report in person to the Superior General, Jean-Claude Colin. None of his letters tell us on which ship he travelled or how the voyage went. There was a rumour in New Zealand that he would go to Panama and travel overland which means the ship he took had been expected to go there.²⁵ Whatever happened, he got to Valparaiso only on or about 20 July, after two full months. According to the lay-missionary Louis Perret who reached the same port nine days later, Épalle had had a very bad trip across the Pacific.

In Valparaiso Épalle immediately set out to obtain a loan for the New Zealand mission and with the help of the Picpus Fathers with whom he stayed, he obtained loans against the Marist Fathers in Lyon from two French merchants in Valparaiso, a *Monsieur* Antoine Bordes and a *Monsieur* Louis Simonet, totalling Fr 30,000 (£ 1,080). There were four cheques, two for 5,000 and two for 10,000 each. He sent a copy of the Promissory Notes, signed in Valparaiso on 22 July 1842, to Colin with a short covering letter.²⁶ He also informed Pompallier.²⁷

While busy with these things he found out that the *Aube* under Captain du Bouzet was in port and on the point of leaving. Du Bouzet gave him a free passage as far as Rio de Janeiro and they left on 27 July.²⁸ Two days later Perret, who had left New Zealand on 3 June, arrived in Valparaiso and he too went to stay with the Picpus Fathers. They told him that Épalle had been in such a rush that he had not been able to send the cheques for thirty thousand Francs to New Zealand and had left them at the Picpus house.

Perret took it upon himself to look after the money. With the self-assurance of a man of the world he explained to Colin in detail how money can safely, quickly and cheaply be transferred from Chile to Australia.²⁹ What he then, in fact, did, was entrust the cheques to a young merchant travelling to Sydney who first forgot all about it and left them in Valparaiso! By the time they had been forwarded to Sydney the banks there became suspicious and insisted that they be sent to London to be endorsed first.³⁰

In Rio de Janeiro Épalle was the guest of the nunciature from where, on 20 September 1842, he could write to Colin that the sea voyage had done him well. He begged Colin to let him return to New Zealand as soon as possible. The *Aube* had received orders to proceed to the Antilles and Épalle was looking for another ship to Europe. He thought it would have to be a British ship and expected to reach France by the end of November or begin December.³¹

²⁴ Pompallier to Épalle, 7 November 1842, LRO 2, Doc 219. Épalle's letter had evidently not yet reached New Zealand.

²⁵ LRO 2, Doc 186, 3.

²⁶ LRO 2, Docs 179, 180, 181, 182, 188,8. The notes were redeemed by the procure in Lyon; no date given but booked under 1842, Anon. *Comptes-Rendus des recettes et emplois des sommes allouées aux missions étrangères confiées à la Société de Marie*, Archives of the Marist Fathers, Rome [APM], 512.01, 4.

²⁷ Pompallier to Épalle, 30 May 1843. LRO 2, Doc 259, 7.

²⁸ Date given by Épalle to Colin, LRO 2, Doc 196, 1.

²⁹ Perret to Colin from Valparaiso, 19 August 1842. LRO 2, Doc 188, 8.

³⁰ With the result that Pompallier had not yet received it even in November 1843. LRO 2, Doc 279, 9.

³¹ LRO 2, Doc 196, 1.

In the letter of 7 November (addressed to Lyon), Pompallier sent him a long list of instructions:

- Try to get one or two English speaking priests.
- Ask the Minister of the Colonies in Paris, Monsieur de St Hilaire to make sure the missionaries in the islands, including Tonga, are visited regularly by a French man-of-war.
- Devise with the directors of the Propagation of the Faith an efficient way of transferring money regularly.
- The Superior can send us six priests and six brothers a year!

Pompallier then recalled that Épalle had written him on Wallis telling him of the accusations that were doing the round in France. He now asks Épalle to do what he can to put things right and convince people of the falsity of these accusations for none of which he ‘feels guilty before God’.

And, in a short sentence in between: ‘I see no reason for you to go to Rome’.[2] Mending his fences in Rome was something Pompallier evidently felt he would have to do himself!

Colin back in Lyon. A second Bishop for Oceania

While in Rome Colin had formally proposed that a new Vicariate be erected in Central Oceania and that Pierre Bataillon be appointed its Vicar Apostolic. He had also proposed that Guillaume Douarre be appointed his Coadjutor. The Holy See had been pleased to accept all his proposals including the unusual idea that a Coadjutor be consecrated first and sent out to consecrate his own Ordinary. It avoided the need for lengthy voyages and delays and built in a safeguard in case of unforeseen events.

As soon as he got home he asked Douarre, still a novice in La Favorite to come and see him. Colin called him to profession and asked him to make a retreat in preparation for his profession on 8 September 1842. After the profession he presented Douarre with his Bull of Appointment, avoiding thereby the ambiguous position Pompallier had always been in when he was appointed a Vicar Apostolic before the first professions in the Society of Mary.³²

Colin back at his desk

Now that he was back home Colin knew the time had come to write to Bishop Pompallier and put an end to what had become a chronic conflict. His last letter to the Bishop was from a year ago. With the forceful draft of Maîtreperrière in hand he had decided against it and written just a short letter dated 21 October 1841 deploring the discord between them and leaving it to his assistant Maîtreperrière to address the main issues in his own letter.³³

³² Jean Coste (ed.) *A Founder Acts* [FA], translated by William J. Stuart & Anthony Ward, (Rome: Marist Fathers, 1983) Doc 224. MTF, 47.

³³ Cf. above, p 6.

While Colin was in Rome Pompallier's hostile letter of 15 November 1841³⁴ had arrived in Lyon and Maîtreperre had informed Colin in Rome on 30 July 1842.³⁵ The message came too late for Colin to take it up with Cardinal Fransoni who in any case already had given wholehearted support to the Superior's right to appoint a Provincial, to recall a missionary from the mission, to insist that missionaries not be put on lonely posts and to call from time to time a missionary to France for consultation and information.³⁶

So, on 14 September 1842 Colin sat down at his desk to tell Pompallier of his visit to Rome and to share the results of a year's reflection.³⁷ The draft by his own hand makes ten points:

1° Don't be afraid. There will be no conflict between us. God is a God of peace and He is not in words of contention. I shall never challenge your rights and I will not even insist on my own.

2° There is no better way to destroy any undertaking than by blaming everything that goes wrong on one's collaborators as you appear to do.

3° So far we have done everything in our power to support you. Asking from us the impossible and blaming us if we cannot do miracles is not reasonable.

4° You have the right to dispense with further services from us as you appear to say in your letter of 18 May 1841.³⁸ At the same time you pour out over us a constant flow of Promissory Notes we have to pay for you! Do you really understand the import of your own words?

5° You have challenged our way of handling the money for the mission. I include a complete account for 1841. You want us to borrow more money in France. We shall certainly not do so. There are too many debts already.

6° In view of your letters of 18 May 1841 and 15 November 1841.

1. We shall no longer redeem Promissory Notes you may send in the future.
2. You no longer represent the Society and are no longer the Marist Superior.
3. We shall no longer deal with you on finances and matters of personnel.

7° Your constant complaints of being poor is not in line with the Gospel and the example of the Apostles.

8° In spite of our repeated insistence you have put our priests on isolated spots where they had to exercise the Sacred Ministry without having access to a confessor.

9° I have no doubt you could easily spend millions in the situation where you work but God does not want you to do more than the available means permit. Making huge debts is irresponsible.

10° Theologians we have consulted in France and in Italy disagree with what you have told your priests, namely that you can impose ecclesiastical censures on them if they leave the mission without your permission.³⁹

As a sort of postscript Colin strongly objects to Pompallier's infringement on the right of Marists to write directly to their superior without having their letters censored.

³⁴ LRO 1, Doc 116, MTF 346-8

³⁵ CS 1, Doc 386. Cf. Snijders, MTF Bonus Chapter 12, *1842, Reorganising Things* www.mariststudies.org [MTF XII], 22.

³⁶ CS 1, Doc 383. Cf. MTF XII, 19.

³⁷ CS 2, Doc 4 gives two drafts. B is in Colin's own handwriting. Draft A is of another hand and it is not clear when and by whom it is written.

³⁸ LRO 1, Doc 91 where it is dated 17 May.

³⁹ CS 2, Doc 4, draft B..

He has learned from the whole affair that it might be better for the Society not to provide the missions with bishops from its own ranks with whom it then has to deal directly. If in New Zealand Marists cannot fall under a Provincial as they do in France, then it would be better if they fall directly under the Superior General. 'From now on the Superior General will deal only with the Provincial'. We stop anyhow sending men to New Zealand.⁴⁰

Casually hidden in the large paragraph, there appears to be a significant shift of policy. For the first time Colin formally attributes the 'Provincial' in New Zealand - although so far appointed by the Bishop - a formal position and a function in the Society.

With this draft still on his desk Colin will have received the decree of 31 August signed by Cardinal Frasoni that was dispatched by mail after Colin's departure from Rome.⁴¹ It contained the new ruling whereby reports from the Vicars Apostolic to Propaganda and important correspondence between Propaganda and the Vicars Apostolic should pass through the Superiors General of Institutes to which the mission is entrusted. Colin did not like it all and knew Pompallier would strongly object. Moreover, it was not in line with what he had just written (6°, 3). He put the letter aside for the moment and went to Belley for the annual retreat.

The retreat lasted from 20 to 27 September 1842. It was preached by Father Julien Favre and was attended by about eighty Marists, Fathers, novices and Brothers. Although Colin had not yet recovered of the fatigue of his voyage and did not feel well during the retreat, he did address the professed confreres on his recent visit to Rome. He told them of the resistance he met against having the Teaching Brothers approved as part of the Congregation of the priests and how in the end he had withdrawn the request.⁴² As to Oceania he told them of the support he got against the placing of missionaries alone on isolated spots and of the right of the superior to recall a missionary every fourth year to report on the state of the mission. He told them he had refused to accept the stipulation that the Superior could recall a missionary only on condition that he be replaced. Of the problems with Bishop Pompallier he seems to have said only that while the Society had obligations towards the Vicar Apostolic, the Vicar Apostolic also had obligations towards the Society. He repeated the postscript of his recent draft that perhaps the Society should not provide Bishops for the missions. It was better for the Society to have houses of its own in the Vicariates.⁴³

By that time the erection of the new Vicariate of Central Oceania and the appointment of the two Bishops were public knowledge. The promotion of Bataillon would have been seen as a natural follow-up of his successful work on Wallis. The promotion of Douarre must have surprised some people, given that he was only just professed. Colin explained to the professed retreatants in detail how he had consulted in council and come to the decision. They must have been pleased by his openness.⁴⁴

After the retreat Father Colin stayed in Belley for a further rest. He took the opportunity to talk at ease with the local Marists and to deal with local problems.⁴⁵ On 17 October he left and the confreres thought he would be going down to Lyon for the

⁴⁰ CS 2, Doc 4, 31. It is not clear when the postscript was added.

⁴¹ CS 2, Doc 1. MTF XII, 21. Mail from Rome took ten to twelve days.

⁴² Jean Coste, *Origines Maristes* [OM] (Rome, Marist Fathers, 1961), volume 2, Doc 544, 11-21.

⁴³ CS 2, Doc 8, 15-23.

⁴⁴ FA, Docs 225, 228.

⁴⁵ CS 2, Doc 12.

consecration of Bishop Guillaume Douarre. As they discovered later he did not go to Lyon at all but went up to the Capuchins in Yennes in Savoy for a few days of retreat, but more to avoid becoming the centre of attention at what was bound to be a major event of public interest. In the absence of the Superior General, Guillaume Douarre was consecrated a Bishop on 18 October 1842 by Cardinal de Bonald in St. John's Cathedral in Lyon.⁴⁶ Later Colin regretted not having arranged for the consecration to be done in Rome where no-one would have noticed or in Sydney.⁴⁷

Correspondence

While still in Belley a letter was forwarded to Colin from Bishop Étienne Rouchouze, Picpus missionary and Vicar Apostolic of Eastern Oceania who was on a visit to France. Rouchouze told Colin he had met with a young sea captain, Lejeune who had served in the Pacific under Dumont d'Urville and visited New Zealand where he had met with Bishop Pompallier. Lejeune had offered his services to sail a ship with missionaries to the South Seas and be of service to them out there. Rouchouze would have taken him on himself had he not already contracted a Captain for his new ship built by a shipyard in Saint-Malo.⁴⁸ He recommended Lejeune to Colin who returned the letter to Poupinel in Lyon to pass it to Douarre. Perhaps Douarre could do something with the offer. Poupinel was to write a letter of thanks to Rouchouze.⁴⁹

When Colin got back to Lyon he found the Decree *Ut foveatur animorum concordia*, dated 16 September.⁵⁰ The covering letter of Cardinal Fransoni presented it as a Decree of the Sacred Congregation but, in contrast to the Decree of 31 August, this one was signed by Pope Gregory XVI himself. The Pope had disapproved of the earlier one that had introduced a regulation according to which important correspondence of Propaganda to and from all missionary bishops should pass through the Superiors of the religious institutes to which the missions were entrusted. As we have seen, this extraordinary stipulation had, unknown to Colin, been inserted on the instigation of Father Johannes Roothaan, Superior General of the Society of Jesus.⁵¹ In the amended text of 16 September the Pope restricted the regulation to the Marist missions in Oceania and a few other missions mentioned by name. Fransoni asked Colin to forward the Decree to Bishop Pompallier.

Laying aside the letter of 14 September that he had not yet mailed,⁵² Colin wrote two new letters for Bishop Pompallier on 20 October. The first one deals mostly with the spiritual aspects of Pompallier's behaviour,⁵³ his lack of respect and appreciation for his

⁴⁶ FA, Doc 230, 9-11.

⁴⁷ Jean Coste (ed.), *A Founder Speaks* [FS], translated by Anthony Ward, (Rome: Marist Fathers, 1975), Doc 90, 3.

⁴⁸ The *Marie-Joseph* on which he sailed in December 1842 with six Picpus Fathers, one Deacon, seven Brothers and nine Sisters. It disappeared in March 1843 without a trace somewhere off South America with the loss of all aboard. Ralph M. Wiltgen, *The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania, 1825 to 1850* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1979), 319.

⁴⁹ CS 2, Doc 13.

⁵⁰ CS 2, Doc 5.

⁵¹ CS 2, Doc 1, 2. Cf. MTF XII, 20.

⁵² Cf. above, page 9.

⁵³ CS 2, Doc 18.

collaborators [4], the importance he assigns to material means in the missionary work [5], the danger he has put Marists in by putting them on lonely posts [6], his illegal insistence on censoring their letters [7], the reckless ways of getting into large debts, his lack of care for his men to the point that they were forced to beg at the doors of Protestants [8], his alleged right to punish priests wishing to leave the mission [9] and the unreasonable demands he makes on the Society [10, 11]. He states that the Bishop no longer represents the Society, that the Society will no longer accept his Promissory Notes and that the Society will no longer deal with him directly on matters of personnel or material support [17-19].

The second letter deals with material matters: 'Let us see if there are any reasons for the bitter complaints you have repeatedly directed at me and other people...' And piece for piece he refutes Pompallier's complaints about money being kept back in France. He squarely puts the blame for the situation on the Bishop himself, his chaotic administration and his lack of accountability towards the Society of the Propagation of the Faith.⁵⁴

He includes a final rendering of accounts that he begins by pointing out that the financial year 1841 of the Propagation of the Faith runs from 1 June 1841 to May 1842. The money of the collections comes in during October or even later and takes at least six months to reach New Zealand. 'Judge for yourself if you can complain on 15 November 1841 that you have not received the allocation for 1841!'[2] Moreover, he continues, you did get money against the Promissory Notes we refunded here for you and that he lists at the end of the letter.

'Your constant referral to the bank failure in London is unfounded.' The mission had lost thirty thousand Francs⁵⁵ but during the three months after Father Séon arrived, Colin wrote, 'you drew against our account forty thousand Francs from local sources'. The allocations for 1841 were raised with more than forty thousand and 'you then recovered ten thousand from the Wright's Trustees.'^[4]

The Propagation of the Faith decides on your allocation on the basis of a budget and on information of expenditure that I have to submit. How can I do that if I get from you only vague and general reproaches, often in abusive terms. You did send an account to the Cardinal Prefect in Rome who passed it on to the Propagation of the Faith. It was terribly incomplete. You do not mention the cost of outfitting your missionaries, their fares and the things we sent on your request. The directors were very disappointed and their commitment to you mission is seriously affected.^[5]

You ask us to transfer to you every three months a regular amount from the allocations. But how can we do so if you do not tell which bank to transfer it to, if you indicate in each letter another procedure and thwart all plans by raining on our desk unpredictable Promissory Notes. You yourself frustrate any systematic approach.^[6]

He decides as he did in the letter of 14 September: from now on we deal exclusively with the Provincial and we stop sending missionaries to New Zealand. It would be better if Bishops in the missions did not come from among our own men in the future.

⁵⁴ CS 2. Doc 19.

⁵⁵ MTF, 288-90.

The severing of relations becomes if anything even more definitive with the formal ending: 'I have the honour to be, with the deepest of respect, the very humble and most obedient servant of your Grace...' [8]

In a separate note he lists payments made as from September 1840 and during 1841 on promissory notes and other expenses. Altogether 146,010.15 Francs.

Sparring with Cardinal Fransoni

Father Colin fully realised that he took a risk sending these letters to Pompallier so he decided to submit them first to Cardinal Fransoni. In the covering letter of 27 October 1842⁵⁶ he recalled in detail how he had acted and why.

He reminded the Cardinal that, on 18 March 1842⁵⁷ he had acquainted him for the first time with the sad story of Bishop Pompallier's treatment of the missionaries and of his financial mismanagement, quoting at length from Pompallier's rude letter of 17 May 1841.⁵⁸ Fransoni had written a severe letter to the Bishop leaving it to Colin's own discretion to forward the letter or not.⁵⁹ Colin now explains that he had not done so because, as he writes, it would not have had any effect and would only have led to another wave of complaints of false reporting and so on. Instead of that he had decided to go to Rome and submit to the Cardinal the whole file. However, he says, the moment I arrived at Propaganda I got the feeling that my letter of March had not been well received in Rome and that some people in the curia had considered it an infringement on the Bishop's authority. At that point, he continues, I gave up hope of getting a solution.

Back in France, Colin writes, I received a parcel with letters in which there was another one from the Bishop, dated 15 November 1841⁶⁰, on the same tone. 'It made me abandon the road of forbearance and in consultation with my senior advisors I have now written the two letters that I hereby submit to you before sending them off.'

Colin then gets to the results of his Roman visit. I already saw great difficulties, he writes, with the Decree of 30 June but had considered them 'private responses to my questions.' He was ready to follow them but had not planned to make them public. Back in France he had received the printed Decrees of 31 August and of 16 September.⁶¹ Colin regrets that they do not resolve all difficulties and asks permission not to forward them to the Bishops Pompallier and Bataillon and not to publish them until he has had an opportunity to be heard on the matter.

He ends his letter with informing the Cardinal that Guillaume Douarre has been consecrated a Bishop and is preparing to leave for the missions with five priests and four Brothers.

Colin's letter went astray in the offices of Propaganda and got on Cardinal Fransoni's desk only at the end of November. He hastened to answer on 10 December 1842.⁶² The Cardinal forcefully rejects (*sorpresa ed il grave dispiacere*) Colin's complaints about the way he has been received at Propaganda. He maintains that Colin

⁵⁶ CS 2, Doc 20.

⁵⁷ CS 1, Doc 330, MTF XII, 11.

⁵⁸ LRO 1, Doc 91. MTF 310-12.

⁵⁹ MTF XII, 11.

⁶⁰ LRO 1, Doc 116. MTF, 346-8.

⁶¹ CS 2, Docs 1 & 5. MTF XII, 20-1.

⁶² CS 2, Doc 27.

has been given ample opportunity to state his case and has received a sympathetic hearing. Propaganda has done everything in its power to accommodate Colin's concerns.

No less was his surprise and displeasure, he writes, at the letters Colin intends to send to Bishop Pompallier. He sees in them an open break (*aperta rottura*), a cessation of further relations and an abandonment of the mission. The Cardinal understands that the Bishop's behaviour is unacceptable and has severely reprimanded him. The last letter, of 15 November, may be equally bad but, he adds, when the Bishop wrote it he had not received the monition of Propaganda.⁶³ He urges Colin absolutely not to send the threatening letters (*astenendosi assolutamente dall'inviare le minacciose Sue lettere*) but to forward immediately the Decree of 16 September signed by the Holy Father. The Cardinal cannot believe that the Bishop will not change his ways when he receives the monitions. If he does not, the sacred Congregation can attempt other measures but what Colin now proposes would do serious damage to the spreading of the Faith (*con sommo danno della Religione*). All ways to reconciliation must be attempted with a Bishop who - it must be admitted - has founded this flourishing flock of Christ in spite of incredible difficulties.

The Superior may be tempted, the Cardinal argues, to think that collaboration between institutes and Bishops is not possible but in actual fact it works quite successfully in many places. He urges Colin to continue writing to Pompallier on the same gentle and peaceful tone he had done so far (*con lo stesso spirito di mansuetudine, dolcezza e di pace*) even in answer to the most unpleasant letters. On his side he assures Colin that Propaganda will continue to do its utmost to change things for the better. He asks Colin to investigate seriously if there is perhaps someone in the mission or at home who is fomenting the discord and if that proves to be the case, to take the necessary measures by removing the culprit from the mission or even from the Society.

Colin reacts to this firm monition in two letters. The first one is from 23 December 1842, which means Colin wrote immediately on receiving the Cardinal's one.⁶⁴ He rejects the suggestion that he had written in some sort of anger. He had written in the hope that a letter of the kind might have opened the Bishop's eyes for the consequences of his demeanour and make him decide to make the voyage to Europe where things could have been talked out in the Cardinal's presence. He had realised it was a risky thing to do which is why he had submitted the drafts for the Cardinal's approval first. On his advice Colin gladly (*avec le plus grand plaisir*) withdraws the letters and promises to mail the Decree of 16 September as he had been asked to do.

He apologises if his letter has in any way shown lack of gratitude for the way he was received in Rome but he firmly rejects the suggestion that anyone in the Society could have fomented discord as Fransoni had written (and Pompallier had suggested⁶⁵). Colin had kept the problems with Pompallier strictly to himself, he wrote, and even in his immediate circle people did not know about them. In New Zealand not just one but all missionaries have the same complaints, some asking for a transfer to another mission, others wanting to return to Europe.

Colin tells the Cardinal that Father Épalle has written that he is on his way to France. In Valparaiso he has taken out a loan of thirty thousand Francs against

⁶³ MTF XII, 11.

⁶⁴ CS 2, Doc 31.

⁶⁵ For example on 17 May 1841, LRO 1, Doc 91, 20.

Promissory Notes debited to the Marist procure in Lyon. Epalle had written not to send further missionaries for the time being. The time is not ripe. We must first solve the financial problem.

On 2 January 1843 Father Épalle arrived in Lyon. He carried Forest's first report⁶⁶, the letters of Petitjean of 18 May⁶⁷, the supporting letter of the confreres in Kororareka, as well as letters from various priests and Brothers.⁶⁸ Colin had Poupinel make copies and excerpts for Cardinal Frasoni to underline his case, specially the recent reports of Forest and Petitjean as well as the letters of Catherin Servant and Maxime Petit of 26 and 27 April 1840 that had first alerted Colin to the problems in New Zealand.⁶⁹ Poupinel must have spent days writing! On 14 January 1843 Colin could mail the lot and announce to the Cardinal the arrival of Épalle. He explained that he had wanted to send Épalle to Rome straight away but that Épalle himself preferred to wait for the instructions that Pompallier had promised.

Echoing the oral reports of Épalle (and the gossip in the Bay of Islands!) Colin told Frasoni that Pompallier was remaining on Wallis, afraid to be arrested in New Zealand because of his debts. He explained that debts had been the main reason for Épalle to leave for Valparaiso. Petitjean had gone to Sydney for the same reason but he had not succeeded in getting more than ten thousand Francs because people knew of the financial plight of Bishop Pompallier.⁷⁰

Colin sends the enclosed letters, he wrote, to acquaint the Cardinal with the full seriousness of the situation. He can do nothing further. 'The remedy for the ills can no longer come from us, we await it from your Eminence only.'⁷¹

Épalle in action

As soon as Father Jean-Baptiste Épalle arrived in Lyon⁷² he immediately tried to do something about the awful debt burden of the mission. He went to see the Council of the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon. When that did not lead to an immediate solution - or perhaps on their suggestion - he went to see the Central Council in Paris. Colin backed him with a letter of recommendation, dated 23 January.⁷³

Épalle must have told them the whole sad story in great detail. They refer to it in terms of 'awful penury' (*l'affreuse détresse*) and call it a 'shocking scene'. The Paris Council proved able and willing to operate with fast and effective action. They encouraged their colleagues in Lyon to disregard for once the strict rules of the Association with an exceptional allocation even though the contributions for 1843 had not yet come in.⁷⁴

⁶⁶ LRO 2, Doc 166, MTF XIII, 7.

⁶⁷ LRO 2, Doc 159 & 160, letters he wrote before leaving for Sydney.

⁶⁸ LRO 2, Doc 167, MTF XIII, 7. Of the numerous letters of individual confrères of May 1842 it is not always possible to say which ones Épalle carried and which ones were sent later.

⁶⁹ LRO 1, Docs 55, 56 & 57, MTF 239-44.

⁷⁰ It shows that Petitjean's letter of 8 July from Sydney (LRO 2, Doc 176) had reached Colin.

⁷¹ CS 2, Doc 37.

⁷² CS 2, p 129, n 1.

⁷³ CS 2, Doc 39.

⁷⁴ CS 2, Doc 42, 2 & 3.

On 3 February 1843 the Council of Lyon granted 80,000 Francs on the condition that this allocation be used exclusively for the extinguishing of the debt and nothing else whatsoever (*aucun autre usage ou objet que ce soit*). Emboldened by their colleagues in Paris they urge that the ‘venerable head of the mission’ be reminded of the first principle of good management which is never to spend money you are not absolutely sure of receiving in the short term.⁷⁵ They also express the hope that the mission divests itself from its costly ship, no longer necessary anyhow, they write, now that the Polynesian islands will belong to another jurisdiction.

On 7 February Colin wrote a graceful letter to thank the Propagation of the Faith for their generous and prompt action. He thanked them for saving the mission and promised to follow their directives. He told them he already had approached the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda in Rome who in turn had promised to intervene with the Vicar Apostolic in New Zealand.⁷⁶

A final letter

In February the mother of Louis Michel, the Captain of the *Sancta Maria* forwarded a letter she had received from her son. He had sold the ship in Valparaiso and written from there to his mother who lived in Marseille. From this letter Colin learned that Pompallier could well be on his way to Pohnpei in the Caroline Islands in which case he would be out of contact for a long time.⁷⁷ Still, on 28 February Colin addressed a letter to New Zealand on chance.⁷⁸

He had not written to Pompallier in sixteen months!⁷⁹ Since then he had composed but not sent two drafts of which he put the last one aside, as we have seen, on the express order of Cardinal Fransoni.⁸⁰ On 28 February 1843 he sat down again and wrote what was to be his last letter to the Vicar Apostolic of Western Oceania.

On a more reconciliatory tone than in his previous attempts Colin tells Pompallier that he has been extremely saddened by the accounts Father Épalle had given of the hardships and the difficulties of the mission. The administration of the Propagation of the Faith has immediately taken action, he writes, and made an extraordinary grant of eighty thousand Francs. Procure can add twenty thousand Francs from available funds. The Directors of the Association have however, he adds, very specifically stipulated that this money can only be used to pay off the debts in New Zealand. The money has been transferred through London and Father Lagniet⁸¹ has been to London to arrange things.

To make sure the debts can be completely paid off immediately and the payment of ruinous interest rates can thereby be stopped even if the Bishop happens to be away when the money gets there, both the money and the instructions are addressed to Father Petitjean. Colin begs Pompallier to follow these instructions literally and adds a copy of

⁷⁵ CS 2, Doc 42, 2.

⁷⁶ CS 2, Doc 43.

⁷⁷ LRO 2, Doc 22, 2 & Doc 54, 7.

⁷⁸ CS 2, doc 54. The archives have an incomplete draft in Colin’s hand [1-6] and a complete copy written by Barthélémy Épalle [7-12]. The second one is probably closer to the *expédition* (the text sent).

⁷⁹ 21 October 1841. CS 1, Doc 304. Cf. above p 5. MTF 331.

⁸⁰ Respectively 14 September, CS 2, Doc 4, above p 9 and 20 October, CS 2, Doc 18, above p 15.

⁸¹ Local superior of Puylata at the time.

the letter of the Directors to show that the mission could lose the support of the Association if the money is used for any other purpose [8-9].

Colin then refers to the angry letter of 17 May 1841 that Pompallier had asked him to pass to Cardinal Fransoni.⁸² He explains he had not done so for fear it would make a bad impression in Rome [10]. He had waited half a year and informed the Cardinal only on 18 March 1842.⁸³ He left out that even then he had not forwarded the letter itself but only a relatively mild summary.

In any case, he writes: 'Let us both forget about the past. Let us recommence working in peace and courage for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Let us not get discouraged. God is a good Father, he sees our good intentions' [10]. How this new beginning will work, Colin does not say. The Provincial to whom he had assigned an important role in his earlier drafts, gets no mention.

Colin informs Pompallier of the erection of the Vicariate of Central Oceania and the appointment of Bataillon as Vicar Apostolic. The new Vicar Apostolic gets immediately a Co-adjutor who is readying to leave with eleven new missionaries. He expresses the hope that these developments will significantly reduce the burdens Pompallier has had to carry alone for so long [11].

Colin enclosed the Papal Decree of 16 September 1842 and a detailed list of moneys spent for the New Zealand mission since September 1840 when the fifth band of missionaries under Antoine Séon had left. The total amount gets to 192,384.76 Francs.⁸⁴

Apart from a few courtesy notes several years later this was the last letter Father Colin addressed to Bishop Pompallier. When Pompallier received it we do not know and it is not sure if he ever answered or acknowledged it. It was the end of more than six years of an irregular and often painful correspondence between the first Bishop in Oceania and the Superior General of the Society of Mary to which the mission was entrusted.

The seventh group

While all these momentous events were taking place in France, the last three new missionaries were on the high seas making their way to New Zealand. After sending Jean Forest with five companions in November 1841 Colin had not planned another departure. There were three diocesan priests nearing the end of their novitiate who wanted to volunteer for Oceania but Colin would rather not send them to New Zealand. He hoped that Cardinal Fransoni would take action on the new Vicariate so that the next group could go directly to Central Oceania.⁸⁵

Benjamin Dausse, the lay missionary who had left with Father Antoine Séon in December 1840 but had returned to France from South Africa lived in Normandy and still took a keen interest in the affairs of the Marist missions. On 7 May 1842 he notified Colin that the Ministry had assigned the *Rhin* under Captain Bérard to leave for New Zealand. Colin changed his mind and immediately asked the Ministry for the Navy and Colonies for

⁸² LRO 1, Doc 91, 43. MTF, 310-2.

⁸³ CS 1, Doc 330, MTF XII, 11.

⁸⁴ CS 2, Doc 55.

⁸⁵ MTF, 331-3. CS 1, Doc 342, 1.

free passage for three priests.⁸⁶ He also wrote to his friend at the ministry, Aimé Vigneti to support his request as he had done on earlier occasions.⁸⁷ As he was on the point of leaving for Rome he left things in the hands of Maître pierre and Pierre Colin.

They were: **Jean-Simon Bernard**, born on 9 June 1807 in Chantenay (Loire inférieure), the first Marist missionary from Nantes from where many missionaries would follow him to the Oceania missions. Already a diocesan priest, he joined the Society, made his novitiate in Lyon and was professed on 13 July 1842, a month before leaving.

Delphin Victor Moreau was born on 2 October 1813, in Brain-sur-Allonnes (Maine-et-Loire) in the Diocese of Angers. Already a priest like Bernard he began his novitiate on 6 February 1841 and was professed with Bernard on 13 July 1842.

Auguste Chouvet was from Pernes (Vaucluse) and born on 14 February 1814. Also a priest already, he entered the novitiate on 14 May 1842 and made his profession with the other two on 13 July. However, he made conditional vows only and was to leave the Society and the missions after three years.

The new missionaries met with Bishop Polding who paid a visit to Lyon after his visit to from Rome where he had been promoted to Archbishop of Sydney.⁸⁸

Colin assigned the three to the missions on the proviso that if the Ministry did not grant a free passage, they should wait for his return from Rome. The ministry first showed little interest but when Captain Bérard himself let it be known that he was keen to have them on board, permission was granted with the help of Dausse, Vigneti and another naval officer called Roy.⁸⁹ Maître pierre received their vows and they travelled to Toulon.

Group Seven on the way

It seems there was no superior appointed to the seventh group but Father Jean-Simon Bernard took the lead and wrote from Toulon to the Superior General. They arrived in Toulon on Saturday 6 August and went at once on board to sleep and eat. The rest of their time they spent on land. The money they carried for the mission (21,000 Francs) they entrusted to the Captain for safekeeping in the ship's strong-room.⁹⁰

The ship carried one hundred and eighty men, officers and crew; among them three doctors. For the rest no soldiers or passengers except the three missionaries and a naturalist on his way to Australia. One of the doctors, who had already been in New Zealand and intended to open a practice there took a special interest in the missionaries.⁹¹ On Sunday 15 August, Assumption of Our Lady, at dawn, the *Rhin* hoisted the flag and they sailed into the Mediterranean without having been able to say Mass.

Captain Bérard's desire to have the missionaries on board did not inspire him to provide them with decent accommodation. They had no privacy at all and had to sleep in a corner of the powder magazine. The stench of a case of rotten eggs drove them outside and Bernard remarked it was worse than in the stable of Bethlehem. They asked the Captain

⁸⁶ CS 1, Doc 363.

⁸⁷ CS 1, Doc 365.

⁸⁸ Chouvet to Colin, 22 January 1843, 8. Archives Marist Fathers Rome [APM], 1405/20052.

⁸⁹ Kevin J. Roach, *Venerable John Claude Colin and the Mission in New Zealand, 1838 - 1848* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1963), 127 - 30.

⁹⁰ Anon. *Comptes-Rendus*.

⁹¹ Bernard to Colin, Toulon, 11 August 1842, APM, 1405/20052.

for a canvas to be fixed between the guns so they could stay on deck but Bérard was not in a hurry to comply. To top it off they were pestered by dogs that were chased off by everyone and took refuge in the powder magazine. After dark they could not have any light because of the kegs of powder. The dining room was the only place where they could do any reading or writing.

They once had dinner with the Captain who usually had his meals alone in his cabin, but mostly they sat at table with the officers. However, the food was excellent and they appreciated the presence on board of doctors with good supplies of medicines.

The Marists wore their cassocks on board without the bands they had discarded already in Toulon. In the beginning they were treated with consideration by the officers, the ensigns (of whom they were a little wary) and the sailors. The sailors were quite respectful, to the point of not swearing within hearing of the priests if they could help it. As time went on relations deteriorated, especially after Father Chouvet got into heated debates with some officers on religious questions. After that the officers ignored the priests and some ensigns embarrassed the priests with anti-religious and obscene songs and behaviour. The Captain made his point by telling Father Bernard about another priest he once had on board and who had annoyed people by being over-zealous, as he put it.

The Captain asked Father Bernard to give the ship's boys the classes that Navy regulations stipulated and a few sailors approached the priests for instructions to do their first Communion. There were no religious practices on board ship and the Marists were unable to say Mass.

Once out in the Atlantic the *Rhin* set course for Rio de Janeiro and on Sunday 2 October they crossed the Equator. It was the first time that the *Rhin* crossed the Line so the ship itself and many persons on board had to face Neptune and undergo the prescribed baptism. The Marists refused to have anything to do with it and locked themselves in their quarters. The Captain made sure they were not bothered. As they approached Brazil Captain Bérard decided he was lagging behind schedule and settled for a call in San Salvador de Bahia where they anchored on 13 October 1842. They found that the *Aube*, on her way from New Zealand, had left Salvador the day before. The Marists were happy to go ashore and enjoy the hospitality of the Franciscan friars.

Bernard wrote an eleven page letter to Colin. Most of what he said on Brazil would have been picked up from their Franciscan hosts. Still, they had a good look around as well. People were very respectful but the priests found the churches neglected and dirty. The local clergy took their clerical attire more seriously than their celibacy and the Marists were shocked to see a priest carried in a sedan by slaves. For lack of proper seminaries future priests arranged their own studies and Bernard remarked that a Marist college would do miracles in Brazil. French was used as a second language and the Marists met with several French people living in Salvador. People were religious enough but good priests were few and far between. The Marists were anxious to know if anything was done for the indigenous people in the interior. They were told there were Italian Capuchins working there but they did not get an opportunity to meet them.⁹²

After Brazil the *Rhin* set sail in south-easterly direction and at 43° South they turned East, passed the Cape and sailed for Tasmania or Van Diemen's land, as it was called at the time. They hoped to be there for Christmas, but wind and sea kept the ship back. With land in sight they had Christmas on board, without Mass or public celebration. Chouvet

⁹² Bernard to Colin, 21 October 1842, APM, 1405/20052, p. 6.

had a nasty fall but the doctor patched him up and he was lucky to get off without broken bones. Seeing a man-of-war flying the Tricolor and counting the twenty-two salute of guns the people of Hobart had first feared a French invasion. By the time the Marists set foot on land, 27 December, the fear of an invasion was gone and the people were most hospitable to the French priests

Father John Joseph Therry, scion of a very rich family who had built the church and the rectory in Hobart from his personal fortune and who, two years earlier, had offered land and money to get a Catholic college built near Sydney,⁹³ though aging and in poor health, offered them the hospitality of his beautiful home and told them of his ministry to Catholics and sometimes Protestants as well, especially among the convicts. Father Bernard immediately set to write to Father Colin and Chouvet too wrote promising a copy of his diary. The Marists looked with admiration at the well-built brick houses, the wide roads and the flowery gardens, often the work of convict labour. Hobart was a town, they were told, of sixteen thousand people, English, Irish and Scottish. Fifteen hundred of them were Catholics. The Marists were curious about the indigenous people and were told there were none in or about the town. They did not want to live with the white people and had withdrawn to a small island.

Captain Bérard told his passengers that if they stayed on board as far as Akaroa they might have to wait there for months before finding a ship for the North Island. Perhaps he did not relish having them longer on board or in Akaroa where he was to be the Station Commander. The missionaries on their part, sick and tired of the awful accommodation and the immoral atmosphere on the *Rhin*, were happy to look for another way to continue their voyage. Everyone in town encouraged them to go directly to Sydney and the good people of Hobart took up a collection to pay for the fares to Sydney. The Marists transferred to the *Trianon* and, loaded with generous provisions, they left for Sydney on 4 January 1843. Of the money the missionaries carried for the mission in the ship's strong-room the Captain kept 8.000 Francs that he would give to the Bishop, he said, as soon as priests were appointed to Akaroa.⁹⁴

The *Trianon* covered the 900 miles in six days and arrived in Sydney on 10 January. In the absence of Bishop Polding the Marists were welcomed by Father Murphy and the other five Benedictines at the diocesan centre where they stayed until 22 January. They met with the French consul and with about a hundred French people living in Sydney. They found passage on the *City of Aberdeen* for what turned out to be a very rough trip across the Tasman Sea. Bernard got violently ill for days on end, not so much, he wrote, from the sea as from changing to English food.

On 7 February 1843 the Marists of the seventh group landed in Auckland where they found Father Petitjean who had only just settled there. He lived very poorly near a small, steepled wooden church where they gathered for a hymn of thanksgiving. Petitjean received his guests with great joy and the Catholics of Auckland were happy to see them. When a group of Maoris came to welcome their new missionaries they greeted them with the traditional *hongī* (touching of noses) that Chouvet told Colin all about. Three days later they were joined by Father Forest who had been visiting the neighbouring places. Together with him they travelled to the Bay of Islands where they arrived on 18 February

⁹³ Chouvet to Colin, 22 January 1843, APM, 1405/20052, p. 6. MTF, 226.

⁹⁴ LRO 2, Docs 186, 3 & 257, 2. Pompallier got it only in November 1843. LRO 2, Doc 279, 8.

to be welcomed by Bishop Pompallier with his blessing and an embrace. With Pompallier they found there Baty as Provicar, Garin as provincial, Tripe and a few Brothers.

Bernard immediately finished his end report for Colin, dated 19 February 1843.⁹⁵ Chouvet had written a diary that he promised Colin to send a copy of in due time.⁹⁶ On the instigation of Jean Forest, Victor Moreau whom Bernard described as solid, never seasick but taciturn, wrote a long letter to Colin on 12 May. He expands on the miseries of the accommodation and the atmosphere on the *Rhin* as well as on the bad reputation of the clergy in Brazil where even religious, he wrote, move about in palanquins carried by slaves. He appreciates the advantages as well: travelling is cheap, the food is excellent, the ships are safe and so big that one does not suffer much of seasickness. But on balance he advises Colin not to send missionaries by Government ships again unless they get private cabins.⁹⁷

Conclusion

In New Zealand Bishop Pompallier had paid off the debtors in September and October by issuing Promissory Notes for at least fifty thousand Francs. While these notes were on the way to France the thirty thousand Francs that Épalle had obtained in Valparaiso were in the clumsiest possible manner on the way to New Zealand. Before that money reached its destination, where by then it was no longer needed to pay off debts, and before the pertinent Notes from New Zealand and Valparaiso reached France to be redeemed by procure, another hundred thousand Francs obtained as an extraordinary grant from the Propagation of the Faith were on their way from London to New Zealand for the same purpose! And while these vast sums of money and the cheques crossed each other on the oceans in opposite directions, twenty-five Marist missionaries were living in dismal poverty, often unable to do the mission work they remained faithful to.

The bizarre cash flows by themselves show how inept and chaotic the governance of the Marist mission in the Pacific had become in the first six years! At that point the Superior General of the Society of Mary to whom the mission was entrusted broke off relations with the Vicar Apostolic and stopped sending missionaries to New Zealand. To be true, on the insistence of the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda he had left out of his last letter what the Cardinal had called ‘threats’, but he carried them out all the same.

In 1836 Colin had in fact abdicated his responsibility to care for the missionaries by entrusting it completely to someone who turned out to be an incompetent and ill-disposed bishop. Ten years later, in 1846, he admitted that the Society of Mary was the only Congregation to do so and that other Superiors had advised him against it. Still, he was not going to change it. It was ‘one way, he said, of ensuring unity in the missions in the beginning’ and ‘I am not sending men out there to dispute about what they think are their rights’.⁹⁸

In the perspective of a sober observer the first ten years in Oceania had proved that Colin’s arrangement did not ensure unity at all, not in New Zealand and not in

⁹⁵ LRO 2, Doc 242.

⁹⁶ Auguste Chouvet was to leave the missions in 1846. In 1855 he published a two-volume travelogue, *Un Tour du Monde, Voyage à la Nouvelle Zélande et retour par l’île Sainte Hélène*.

⁹⁷ LRO 2, Doc 256.

⁹⁸ FS, Doc 119, 10.

Central Oceania where problems were by that time mounting to the point that in 1849 Colin stopped sending missionaries there as well. Did Colin's ascetic priorities really have to outweigh the good of a young mission, the interests of twenty-five missionaries and the urgent appeal of the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda?