

Chapter three : ‘Towards the fight proposed to us’

Perils in the sea (2 Cor. 11, 26)

For two months the *Delphine* and the *Joséphine* had been swaying in the port of Le Havre. Finally, on Christmas eve the wind veered to the north-east, the temperature dropped to below zero and it snowed. The captains decided to leave. At nine in the morning the missionaries went on board. They were: Mgr. Blanc with seven Jesuits and fourteen or fifteen sisters on the *Joséphine*, bound for New Orleans; Mgr. Pompallier with seven Marists and four Picpus missionaries on the three-master *Delphine*, 329 tons, for Valparaiso.¹ In the words of Chanel, they were “happy as kings”, yearning to face the dangers of the sea. Jesuits and Marists had agreed to stand proudly on deck when leaving port and to sing together the *Ave Maris Stella*,² but when the ships hit the raising swell, they all rushed to the rails: everybody was seasick! As Pompallier later confessed to Colin: the first days at sea one is unable to do anything, but soil one’s clothes and leave everything lying about in total disorder.³ Although some of them at least had put on civilian clothing when shopping in Paris, they wore their cassocks all the time on the ship.⁴

In a more vital aspect too, getting out of the port of Le Havre proved a messy business. The two ships touched, but worse, an underwater cable lying across the harbour got caught in the *Delphine* rudder. The crew felt that something held the ship back and forced it loose. In fact, two of the four tenons holding the pins on which the rudder hung, had broken off and the third one was severely damaged, but nobody thought of checking if any damage was done. At eleven o’clock the damaged *Delphine* blissfully left port.⁵

They made good speed, passed several other ships and when darkness fell the *Joséphine* was out of sight. As night fell, the English Channel turned very nasty, and next day a rumour went about the ports that about 32 ships that had left at the evening high tide were shipwrecked during the night. The *Delphine* was rumoured to have taken shelter in an English port. These rumours were published in the March number of the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*. The Marists must have heard it earlier, because Champagnat mentions it in a letter of 23 February.⁶ It was corrected only in the May number of the *Annales*. The missionaries themselves did not hear about it until June in Valparaiso.⁷

On Christmas day, with the English coast in sight, some of the missionaries had sufficiently recovered to enjoy the Christmas dinner. Pompallier, Chanel and Joseph Luzy took several days to get over their sea-sickness.⁸ The *Delphine* got clear of the Channel before dark. They had to hoist a lantern to avoid a brig. For four days the cold north-easterly wind with hailstorms and rain pushed them along, but on 28 December the sea calmed down and they were far enough South for the temperature to become comfortable. With obvious pleasure Claude Bret describes in his diary how they now all came out, sat on the deck and enjoyed the beautiful sky at night, the phosphorescence on the sea and the porpoises playing around the ship. For two more days the weather was fine and the *Delphine* managed to keep to three

¹ LRO, docs. 1 [25] & 12 [1], LRO, p. 2, n.4, EC, p. 27

² EC, doc. 29 [1].

³ LRO, doc. 13 [6]. Nizier to Colin, 06.10.1867, APM, personal file..

⁴ Servant to parents 16.10.36: *déguisé en laïc*, cf. LRO, doc. 2 [2] & doc. 15 [4]. Champagnat would probably have considered it an exaggerated precaution, cf. LC, doc. 194, ll. 15f.

⁵ LRO, docs. 12 [1] & 1 [33].

⁶ LC, doc. 95B, l. 75.

⁷ EC, doc. 35 [1].

⁸ At least that is the Marist story. According to Fr. Emmanuel Coste, SS.CC. Pompallier and two other Marists were sick all the way to Tenerife, cf. Coste to Coudrin from Tenerife, 24.02.1837. By courtesy Fr. A. Mark.

knots. Chanel attentively observed the fish and the birds. His interest in nature was known. He had been asked by a naturalist to collect specimens for an entomological collection.⁹

On New Year's eve they ran into a storm and the ship had to take in the sails. To maintain steerage one sail was left up, but it got promptly torn off by the wind. During the night another ship approached. The lantern was hoisted too late, and the two ships touched, but fortunately without damage. On New Year's day the wind fell but it had whipped up a nasty swell in which the ship drifted aimlessly, rolling and creaking, an experience that, Claude Bret writes, is more unpleasant than the storm itself. The Master sent the Bishop a letter with the good wishes of the crew for New Year and the Bishop sent them an appropriate treat.¹⁰

Apart from the eight Marist and four Picpus missionaries and Captain Rouget, there were on board two officers, the master, two apprentices, the guest master and the cook, eight sailors, a ship's boy, and two other passengers, a merchant and a former customs officer. By now they had had time to become acquainted and the sailors had already promised to do their Easter duties.¹¹

Then, on 2 January, the captain discovered the damage to the tenons and the pins holding the rudder. By the investigation overboard the third tenon, already damaged, fell off too. The rudder now hung on one pin only and the sailors had to attach ropes to keep it from floating away in case it should fall off. The nearest land, at eighty miles, were the Canary Islands and that is where they now cautiously set sail for. To make things worse, the wind turned against them and the ship had to tack. Two English ships passed them, one a steamship, bound for India. They exchanged greetings and the *Delphine* raised the distress pennant to ask for help, but the steamer took no notice.¹²

It took the *Delphine* a week to reach Santa Cruz, on the island of Tenerife. A full week to do eighty miles, while in the first week they had sailed from Le Havre past Madeira. On 8 January, before going ashore, the bishop could say Mass on board, the first time after leaving Le Havre. They received H. Communion in thanksgiving for their safe arrival: 'the Blessed Virgin has saved us'.¹³

Santa Cruz

Santa Cruz, in the Canary Islands, was for all of them the first contact with a non-European country. They were met on the jetty by the French consul, who, helpful and charming, took Pompallier to meet the Governor and accompanied him on a visit to the cathedral; in Claude Bret's description: 'a Frenchman all over', *il était tout français*. The next day Pompallier, in episcopal robes (*in splendoribus*), plus the whole group went to the central church of the town, where they were met by the assembled clergy. While the organ played, all said Mass. A few days later Pompallier visited the bishop of Tenerife in the nearby town of Laguna. The bishop offered him the hospitality of his residence, but Pompallier preferred to stay with his men in Santa Cruz.¹⁴

Staying on the ship while in port proved to be very uncomfortable, especially when one night a fierce storm endangered the ship. Moreover, getting ashore and back to the ship was more dangerous than crossing the Ocean! One of the Picpus missionaries had to be fished

⁹ LRO, doc. 1 [26 – 30]. EC, doc. 37 [5].

¹⁰ LRO, doc. 1 [31 - 32].

¹¹ LRO, doc. 1 [26].

¹² LRO, 1 [33-36].

¹³ LRO, 1[37 – 49] *La Sainte Vierge nous a protégés*.

¹⁴ LRO, 1 [39 – 40] & 12 [17 – 45].

out of the water when stepping from the ship into the dinghy, another one fell into the water when climbing from the dinghy onto the jetty. Being the only one who could swim, Pompallier feared for the life of his missionaries. So he rented a house on the shore with a certain Louis Caprario, a widower with eleven children. The missionaries made themselves as comfortable as possible, while sleeping on the hard floor.¹⁵

On 18 January, a week after their arrival, Pompallier wrote Colin a lengthy letter.¹⁶ He enclosed Claude Bret's diary of which a copy had been made for Colin.¹⁷ He also wrote to several other people in France, among whom Archbishop de Pins. He took the opportunity of a ship sailing from Santa Cruz to Marseille to write to Cardinal Franson. He let the Cardinal know that he had appointed Colin to be his pro-vicar in France and that Colin had accepted. He also told the Cardinal of 'the present organisation of the mission and the missionaries', presumably meaning his own appointment to religious superior. When he wrote again, on 22 February, just before sailing for Valparaiso. It still weighed on his mind: 'I accepted the office but let me know if I should give it up, so that I can be occupied exclusively with the mission'.¹⁸

The 'present organization of the mission' that Pompallier wrote about to Franson included probably also the appointment of Peter Chanel to be his pro-vicar in Oceania. While in Le Havre he had preferred to take no decisions other than enclosing under sealed cover the appointment of somebody to take his place in case of his death. Chanel's last letter from Le Havre (29.12.36) is still signed *missionnaire apostolique*. The next letter we have of him is from Valparaiso (23.07.37) and signed *provicaire apostolique*. Some time during the voyage Pompallier must have appointed him.¹⁹

It is odd, that while they all had plenty of time in Santa Cruz with little else to do but sightseeing, only Pompallier wrote to Colin and only once. None of the others wrote to either families or confreres. The only likely explanation is that they agreed not to write for the reason that Pompallier gave later to his mother, namely not to upset anyone by the story of the damaged rudder.²⁰ Father Coste wrote to his superior Coudrin. The Picpus and the Marists got along very well, he said, they had very much the same spirit.²¹

Pompallier picks up the thread of giving conferences to the missionaries on the rule. Bataillon's diary does not say if they showed any more interest than in Le Havre. True to his old ways, Pompallier composes a spiritual rule book that he distributes to his missionaries.²²

Claude Bret in his diary, proves a good observer of the strange world they now have landed in. The mild climate, in midwinter as pleasant as in June at home; the abundance of fruit, both tropical and familiar; the small horses and the ill-treated donkeys; the near absence of wagons; the easy-going people, gentle like the climate. Naturally, they do not escape a touch of culture shock:

What a pity, these people so gentle, but also so poor and miserable, as children already accustomed to beg. Pitiably to be surrounded by men, women and children in rags, a

¹⁵ LRO, doc. 13 [2 & 15].

¹⁶ LRO, doc. 13.

¹⁷ Reproduced in LRO, doc. 1.

¹⁸ APF: SC Oceania vol. 1 f. 389 v, quoted from Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 131.

¹⁹ LRO, doc. 4 [12] & 17 [11]. EC, docs. 33 & 34.

²⁰ LRO, 16 [2] & EC, 35 [1]. Even so an odd motivation since he could have known that the story would be published in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, as in fact it was, with extensive quotes from Fr. Bret's diary. LII, May, 1838, pp. 507–511.

²¹ E. Coste to Coudrin, 24.02.1837: *ils ont au plus haut degré l'esprit que nous aimons*. Archives SS.CC. By courtesy of Fr. A. Marc.

²² LRO, docs. 12 [34] Cf. above, p. 5f & OM II, doc. 625 [25].

half naked woman with two children that make you turn your eyes away; a negro who is human only insofar as he speaks, naked men pushing a boat, it all gives us already an idea of what is in store for us with the *peuples sauvages* deprived of the benefits of religion and civilization... A spectacle of misery and laziness. These begging drifters want to live without working and live like the *sauvages* of the South Sea. Nothing to eat but a few fish roasted on a fire, no bread. At night the nonchalant islander lies on the pavement and plays a guitar to accompany his monotone songs. Stones for bed and the sky for his roof. Santa Cruz is full of prostitutes ready for every stranger to sow his vices... At table especially you feel that you are no longer in France: different things to eat, different ways of eating, pure wine during the meal and just water for dessert.²³

Chanel too was a bit shocked to see the islanders enjoying such a fine climate without any sign of being industrious. Bataillon's diary is more matter-of-fact.²⁴ On Sunday 15 January, they assist at High Mass, in a nearly empty church, whereby Bret comments:

The churches are big and richly decorated... The priests are more respected than is the case in France, but our ceremonies are more attractive, our faithful more prayerful and our churches better filled. We miss the beauty and the reverence of our French ceremonies. In this country, entirely catholic, they keep the abstinence only on Fridays in Lent and during Holy Week. The Mardi Gras was celebrated exuberantly but on Ash Wednesday the church was just about empty. Little in the way of instructions, no catechism classes. No first communion ceremonies. What good a mission could do here..²⁵

They found out that a tropical climate can be less benign than its first impression may make one believe. Servant and Brother Joseph fell ill and had to be attended to by a doctor. It took Servant a week to get over it and Joseph even longer. Chanel caught a dysentery and Pompallier walked a few days around with a nasty toothache. Bret suffered of a serious headache that still bothered him when they left.²⁶

The expectation had been that the damage to the *Delphine* would be repaired in ten days or so. In fact, it took the local labour force ten attempts before they succeeded, on 18 February, to forge the three brass pins that had to be replaced on the stern of the *Delphine*. The rudder too had in the meantime been repaired and only on 24 February it was put back in place. Another few days to settle payments (whereby Pompallier had to lend the captain 8.500 francs), and to procure stores and provisions, and finally, 28 February, after fifty-two days, the ship was ready to sail. They left at nine and around noon Santa Cruz had vanished beyond the horizon. They continued their voyage, eager 'to run by patience to the fight proposed to us', as Pompallier had written to Colin, quoting from the letter to the Hebrews.²⁷

Disaster

Back at sea Servant fell ill and a few days later showed symptoms of suffocation. Claude Bret's headaches got worse by the day and he developed what Pompallier described later as a cerebral fever. Chanel took special care of him and left him as little as pos-

²³ Culture shock has been described as *cuisinophobia*

²⁴ LRO, doc. 1 [52 – 53]. EC doc. 35 [1]. LRO, doc. 12 [16 – 64].

²⁵ LRO, doc. 12 [23, 46, 47, 53].

²⁶ LRO, 12 [52, 59, 45, 67]; Ronzon, *Delorme*, p. 36.

²⁷ LRO, 12 [29 – 58]; 13 [1].

sible. He was given quinine but the fever did not go down. On 12 March, Passion Sunday, the sea was calm enough for the bishop and Chanel to say Mass on board. The two sick confreres were not getting any better. Servant was diagnosed as suffering of a throat infection and after receiving an emetic he began to improve, but Bret was only getting worse. On Palm Sunday the sea was calm enough to say Mass again and Claude Bret received H. Communion. Nobody suspected it would be the last time, his *viaticum*. The next day his condition suddenly changed for the worse and he frightened his companions by saying he felt the end was near. He fell into a coma. The bishop administered the last sacraments and at half past seven in the evening, on 20 March 1837, Claude Bret died, 0°40' North, 24°30' West.²⁸

They transferred his body immediately to the stern of the ship and took turns all night in twos to pray with his dead body. They celebrated a funeral Mass, and because of the heat of the day, they buried him in the early morning at sea. The bishop said some moving words, probably in the same sense as he wrote in his diary: we have lost a dear companion, and gained an intercessor in heaven.²⁹

With heavy hearts the missionaries continued their long and trying voyage. Their early optimism thoroughly shaken, they now had to go through the worst part of it: the terrifying seas around Cape Horn, and at the worst possible time of the year: the southern winter.

There was no way to let Claude Bret's parents and the Marists in France know. Only about four months later, from Valparaiso, could Pompallier write to Colin:

I have to tell you something that will console you as well as put your sensitivity to the test concerning one of your spiritual sons whom the Lord has surely crowned in heaven while we were in mid-ocean. Dear Father Bret has died of an illness of nineteen days, that began two days after he had gone aboard in Santa Cruz until we reached the equator. First undefined and passing head-aches, then fever. After a bloodletting he seemed at first to recover but then things got worse and he did not get up any more. He was conscious until the last day and he himself told us the end was near. We could not believe it. We tried everything but God had decided to take him away in heaven and crown him in advance. Alas! That his designs be adored and his Holy Name be blessed. Let us hope that this dear collaborator will hence be an intercessor with God and Mary for the mission to which he had consecrated his life. Be consoled, dear Father, and may the peace of Jesus-Christ be with you.³⁰

Peter Chanel, Claude's best friend, who had shared his cabin, who had cared for him and had not left from his side in his illness, could even four months later not bring himself to mention his friend's name:

... a letter has just left for Bordeaux that will mean great sorrow for you, telling you of the loss of one of your dear children. Fortunately all circumstances that could give us some consolation in such an event come together in the *coup* that has hit us. This dear confrere has left us to return to the bosom of his God (*dans le sein de son Dieu*). He does not cease to be our friend and confrere. He only changed his name, from missionary to that of protector of our mission...³¹

²⁸ LRO, 12 [67 – 87]; 19 [1]; EC, 35 [2]; EC, p.162 n.4. In the case of Servant the diary of Bataillon, LRO, 12 [81], speaks of an *esquinancie*, a word that old dictionaries define as a popular term referring to a variety of anginas and throat infections, or infections of the tonsils, cf. LRO, footnote by doc. 12 [81]. On Bret Pompallier wrote later on: '*maux de tête qui dégènerèrent en une fièvre cérébrale*', Pompallier, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁹ LRO, doc. 12 [86-87].

³⁰ CS, doc. 13 n. 2. LRO, doc. 15 [2].

³¹ EC, doc. 34 [1].

To his family Chanel wrote: ‘The Good Lord was satisfied with the sacrifice. He has preferred to give him the crown of victory even before arriving at the place of combat.. For me, it was as if I was struck by lightning...’³²

Bataillon, writing to Étienne Séon, also from Valparaiso, expressed the hope that Claude Chavas, Bret’s personal friend, would do everything possible to console his parents and help them cope with their grief.³³

Not wanting to hurt the missionaries’ feelings the sailors did not hold the traditional sea-baptism for those who crossed the equator for the first time.³⁴

Colin at a distance

After the retreat and the election in September 1836, in spite of the compromise made in July, Colin had returned to Belley. Although a Marist community was soon installed in Lyon at 24, montée Saint-Barthélémy, the new superior general did not move there as yet. He did visit it at times, but mostly in a hurry, only to return as fast as he could to the hill country where he felt at home. At the time of the tragedy at sea, Colin, back in Belley, and still busy mostly with his work in the minor seminary,³⁵ had received no news at all yet from the missionaries. He would only have picked up the rumour of ships wrecked in the English Channel in the night after their departure, and of the *Delphine* possibly having taken shelter in an English port.

Pompallier’s letters from Santa Cruz with Claude Bret’s diary, must have reached France in early April and somebody passed the news to *l’Ami de la Religion*, the paper most read by Marists at the time. On 27 April, when Bret had died already and the *Delphine* was nearing the Falkland Islands, the paper reported that the *Delphine* with Mgr. Pompallier and the Marist missionaries had been forced to stop at the Canary Islands for repairs of a damaged rudder.³⁶ The story in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* of the near loss of the *Delphine*, proved not to be true. The *Annales* retracted their story in their May number.³⁷

Of the events up to 18 January, the day Pompallier wrote, shortly after the arrival in Santa Cruz, Colin then knew as much as we today. Of the death of Claude Bret he was not to hear until many months later. He understood that Pompallier had expected to sail from Santa Cruz again around 28 January, which, in fact, he did only a month later.

Pompallier’s letter from Santa Cruz must have reminded Colin of the bishop’s request from Le Havre to forward some money to Valparaiso.³⁸ So far he had not done anything about that. Now he took up contact with the Propagation of the Faith. They were prepared to release an advance of 8.700 francs on the grant for 1837, and Colin ‘took measures to have the money transferred to Valparaiso’.³⁹ What these measures exactly were, we do not know. On 25 May Colin notified Cardinal Frasoni of all the news received and of the action taken.⁴⁰

By asking that all mail should pass through him,⁴¹ Colin had made himself somehow personally responsible for communications with the missionaries. Pompallier had made several suggestions on how letters could be sent: through Fr. Coudrin and the Picpus head-house, specifically Fr. Hilarion Lucas, the secretary general, or through Mr. Franques in Le

³² EC, doc. 35 [2]. P. Chanel cut a strand of his hair and treasured it: EC, doc. 53 [3] & 54 [9].

³³ LRO, 19 [1].

³⁴ LRO, doc. 12 [88].

³⁵ CS, docs. 10 [1], 11 [8], 34 [1], summaries of Colin’s whereabouts on p. 33 and p. 86.

³⁶ Colin Studies II, p. 57. *L’Ami de la Religion*, 27.04.1837, (92), p. 472.

³⁷ *Annales*, LII, p. 507f.

³⁸ 28.11.1836 LRO, doc. 7 [7].

³⁹ This is how Colin describes his action to Frasoni, CS, doc. 13 [4].

⁴⁰ CS, doc. 13.

⁴¹ CS, doc. 4 [9]. EC, doc. 35 [4].

Havre via his business connections in England, or through Fr. Cambis, the rector of the Major Seminary in Bordeaux who looked after mail to the Picpus Fathers in the Pacific. Mail could also be addressed directly to the French Priests of the retreat house in Valparaiso.⁴² Before leaving Pompallier as well as Chanel had mentioned the imminent departure of the *Colibri* as a possibility of sending mail to Valparaiso.⁴³ In spite of this surfeit of options, or because of it, neither Colin nor anyone else thought of writing to the missionaries.

Although Colin had expressed in October his wish to get into contact with Coudrin, the superior of the Picpus Fathers,⁴⁴ and Pompallier had let Colin know from Paris that Coudrin would be happy to communicate with him, and to be of service in any way,⁴⁵ Colin did not follow the lead. Fr. Coudrin died on 27 March, but neither during his life time, not under his successor, did the Society of Mary in France take advantage of the experience of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts on how to correspond with missionaries in Oceania, how to transfer money and do whatever else could be useful in their support.

One of the lecturers at the seminary of Saint-Irénée in Lyon was a Sulpician priest, Fr. Amable Denavit, acquainted with the Marists, who was in correspondence with the Picpus missionaries in the Pacific, but there is no indication that Marists used his good offices either to get into contact with their own missionaries.⁴⁶

Around the Cape

Once past the Equator favourable winds carried the *Delphine* along at a fine speed. On 4 April they passed the Tropic of Capricorn (23° S.). But then they encountered strong contrary winds and for many days they made barely any headway at all. From the Capricorn it took them a month to reach, on 4 May, 50° S. Off the Falkland Islands the sea got very rough and the first snow fell, very welcome insofar as it allowed the ship to replenish its reserve of water that already had been rationed. On 2 June they passed 59° S., the southernmost point of the voyage and could safely turn west. It took them four days of contrary winds to reach 74° W., where they passed Cape Horn. Another week and they reached 85° W. and could turn north.⁴⁷

All the way from the Falklands, round the Cape, to the island of Chiloé, nearly six weeks sailing, the weather was very stormy with hail, snow, ice, nearly constant tempests, and excessive cold. Both Pompallier and Chanel later recalled this part of their voyage as particularly frightening, *une mer fort mauvaise*.⁴⁸ Once they had passed Chiloé the climate improved and the weather was pleasant. On 24 June they celebrated St. John the Baptist, the name-day of Bishop Pompallier, with a bottle of champagne. They started saying Mass again. Their courage and their trust in God seemed to *regain* every day new strength again. In other

⁴² Cf. resp. LRO, docs. 7 [8 & 9], 7 [11], 7 [12], 10 [4] & 11 [3].

⁴³ LRO, doc. 8 [12] & EC, 33 [1]

⁴⁴ CS, doc. 5 [1].

⁴⁵ LRO, doc. 4 [15]. Neither the Marist nor the Picpus archives contain any indication that Fr. Colin or any other Marist besides the parting missionaries has been in contact with either Fr. Coudrin or his successor Mgr. Bonamie (communication from Fr. André Mark, SS.CC). This fact stands in odd contrast with Coste, *A Founder Acts* (FA), doc. 301 (taken from Mayet, *Mémoires*, {MM}, S 2, 200 – 202, 202m – 204m) where Colin is praised for his frequent contacts with other religious. For the later periods there may be an explanation. Cf. below, p. 54.

⁴⁶ LRO, 19 [2]; OM III, p. 780; OM IV, p. 132; MM, I, 813s.

⁴⁷ LRO, 12 [88 – 170].

⁴⁸ LRO, doc. 16 [4]. EC, doc. 37 [3]. Pompallier op. cit., p. 12. How dangerous the passage round Cape Horn was became very evident a few years later, in 1844, when Bishop Rouchouze had visited France, bought a ship there, the *Marie-Joseph*, and sailed with six priests, eight brothers and ten sisters for Valparaiso. The ship went down without a trace. Cf. Jore op. cit. II, p. 144, n. 57 & p. 356.

words, spirits had been rather low! Peter Chanel admitted as much in a letter of 23 July, from Valparaiso.⁴⁹

The long months on board were not entirely wasted. They got along very well with the sailors. Marists and Picpus Fathers took turns offering them religious instructions that were well attended. All the sailors, with the ship's boy, went to confession, several of them did their Easter duties and received H. Communion on several occasions. One did his first H. Communion and renewed his baptismal vows. Pierre Bataillon noted on a tone of bitterness that this good example was unfortunately not followed by the officers.⁵⁰ When the weather allowed, Pompallier restarted his instructions to the priests and, on his request, Chanel gave spiritual conferences to the brothers.⁵¹

In the six months they had been on the way, they had seen the four seasons, beautiful days and horrible days. 'Some days are so delightful', Chanel wrote after their arrival in Valparaiso, 'that everybody should want to travel by sea, if it were not for the other days that are rather frightening'. 'Once you are used to the sea, he wrote to his sister Françoise, there is no better way to travel'. To Bourdin with whom he had sailed to Rome in 1833 he wrote enthusiastically of the pleasure of long sea travelling. Chanel had carefully observed everything: the officers determining the position of the ship with octant and sextant, the manoeuvring of the ship, the different species of birds and fish in the different climates they passed through, the changes of constellations according to the latitudes and the rainbow caused by bright moonlight. He enjoyed the beauty of the phosphorescent wake that the ship's rudder left behind on the sea. The splendid colours in the sky at daybreak and at sunset he described as the entry hall of paradise, *des vestibules du paradis*. But, he admitted, there also are very bad days to remind the voyager that he is still in a valley of tears.⁵²

Pompallier too had come to see the importance of navigation and asked Jean-Claude Colin to make sure the next lot of missionaries would come armed with sextants, compasses and navigation manuals.⁵³

Valparaiso

On 28 June they reached Valparaiso, four months after leaving Santa Cruz, having covered roughly 16.600 km in six months from Le Havre. Chanel wrote that the same voyage should in better conditions have been possible in two months, which is a bit optimistic.⁵⁴ The *Delphine* dropped anchor at one o'clock in the afternoon. The Picpus Fathers in Valparaiso came on board to welcome their confreres and their Marist guests.⁵⁵ They accompanied Bishop Pompallier in full regalia to the chapel in their house, where they all sang at the top of their voices the *Te Deum*. The Picpus Fathers' house was big enough to offer hospitality to all of them. Next day, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, they sang a pontifical High Mass, *à la*

⁴⁹ *notre courage et notre confiance en Dieu semblent reprendre de jour en jour de nouvelles forces*, EC 34 [1]. A pious hand has corrected the manuscript to read *prendre* instead of *reprendre*, *gain* instead of *regain*, EC, p. 163, n. 3.

⁵⁰ '*les chefs sont hélas bien loin de les imiter*', LRO, 12 [92].

⁵¹ LRO, 12 [95].

⁵² EC, docs. 35 [1], 36 [1] & 37 [3].

⁵³ LRO, doc. 18 [3].

⁵⁴ EC, 35 [1]. The *Venus* left Brest on 29 December 1836. and reached Valparaiso on 26 April 1837: four months, cf. Jore op. cit., I, pp. 90f. Bishop Rouchouze, travelling on the same *Delphine* two years earlier had taken four months as well, from 20.10.1834 to 19.02.1835, cf. Jore, op. cit., II, p. 114. The next group of missionaries would do it in the southern summer in three months (from 11 September to 12 December 1838). The estimates of the distances are by courtesy of M. Puyn, ret. Royal Dutch Air force.

⁵⁵ On the Picpus missions in the Pacific, cf. Rademakers, op. cit. pp. 66ff.

Lyonnaise. The only parish priest of this town of 35.000 people came to pay his respects to the Bishop.⁵⁶

The Marists got first-hand information about the missions. While the Marists were in Valparaiso two missionaries arrived from the islands: Fr. Maigret, vicar general of the mission, and Br. Columban. The Marists heard all about the Gambier Islands, and how, in two years, the entire population of the island group, including the king, had been baptized. The Picpus missionaries spoke highly of the faith and the lives of their neophytes. They also warned about the resistance the Marists could expect from the Methodists: six months earlier four Picpus Fathers had been expelled from Tahiti, and others had been refused entry there.⁵⁷

France was well represented in Chile by a consul, resident in Santiago, and by the commander of the French naval station in Valparaiso. There were friendly visits to and by the consul and the acting commander of the naval station. Pompallier wrote an extensive report of the voyage so far to the minister for the navy, Claude du Campe de Rosamel, in which he praises the co-operative attitude of the French officials: 'Wherever I meet with Frenchmen in positions of authority, I get a feeling of the goodwill of the King and the protection of France; this dear *patrie* shows that the Catholic missionaries who leave her bosom for strange countries do not become indifferent strangers to her'. Pointing to the enormous distances and the expenses of travelling he expresses the hope that the missionaries may at times be allowed to travel on naval vessels. He points to the dangers that the missionaries face from the primitive islanders, often maltreated by foreign visitors and worthy of compassion rather than punishment if they take revenge. Let the religion do her work of healing the scars and of treating their moral weaknesses. He recalls the difficulties that Catholic missionaries often meet from the non-Catholic ministers who already have gained a great influence in many island countries. The only support he asks in this regard is that the islands where French priests are present will regularly receive peaceful visits of the French navy. Pompallier sent this letter directly to the minister but with copy to Colin, asking him to see what he can do to support his requests.⁵⁸

Accompanied by Peter Chanel and two Picpus priests Pompallier went to a visit of several days to the capital, Santiago, some 45 km from Valparaiso, where they were the guests of Bishop Vicuña.⁵⁹

The missionaries enjoyed all the new things they saw. They were surprised by the churches in Valparaiso and in Santiago. Writing to his friend Bourdin, Chanel did not miss a thing: the carriages, the horses and the abominable state of the roads. He commented on the singing in the churches, on the altars, the tabernacles and the cemeteries. He admired the piety of the people, and the large numbers who took part in the retreats that the Picpus Fathers organized. He expressed his surprise at the penitential floggings that the people administered to themselves in public. Nothing escaped his interest and attention.⁶⁰

Chanel must have walked around and talked to lots of people. A sailor of the French corvette *Ariane* told him of an Englishman who had just finished charting the Strait of Magellan. It had taken him three years to do it, but he told Chanel that the dangerous and long way around the Cape would in the future no longer be necessary. He talked to a ship's captain (probably Captain Stocks who would later on take them from Tahiti onwards) who avowed he would not go around the Cape for 20.000 francs! Bataillon was the first to contact a ship that

⁵⁶ LRO, 12 [170 - 171].

⁵⁷ LRO, 16 [6] with footnote, n. 6. Cf. LC, doc. 164. The Marists still called all Protestants 'Methodists'.

⁵⁸ LRO, docs. 12 [173], 18 [14] & doc. 20.

⁵⁹ LRO, doc. 12 [174-178]. Mayère, *Père Chanel, je vous écris*, p. 24, adds they were received by the president of Chile, but it is not clear where he gets this information from.

⁶⁰ EC, doc. 37 [6, 7 & 8].

might take them to Hawaii: the *Europa*, an American brig that already had transported Picpus missionaries to the islands, under a certain Captain Shaw.⁶¹

The stay of the Marists in the Picpus community was somewhat marred by the officious behaviour of Pompallier. The Picpus missionaries, evidently accustomed to the unpretentious and fraternal Bishop Rouchouze, failed to pay Pompallier at all times the formal deference that his Marist confreres had apparently become used to give him. He did not hide his hurt feelings towards their hosts and complained later that there was not a good spirit among the Picpus religious, 'because hierarchical rank obviously meant little to them'!⁶²

In correspondence with the superior general

Still at sea, approaching Valparaiso, and the dangerous parts of the long voyage behind them, in the pleasant climate of those latitudes, the missionaries had set to writing letters home, adding bits and pieces as they went along.

They could presume that by then their confreres and families would know of the stop they had made at the Canary Islands, but of course nothing further. Pompallier got a first letter ready, dated 17 July⁶³, to inform Colin, and through him the family, of the death of Claude Bret and of their safe arrival in Valparaiso. By the time they reached Valparaiso several letters were ready. On arriving they found a ship, the *Hudson*, on the point of leaving for Bordeaux and they used it to dispatch a packet of letters for Colin and for friends and families.

A few days later, another ship, the *Télégraphe*, also left for Bordeaux. It carried a second letter from Pompallier to Colin, dated 20 July, with a copy of Bataillon's diary and among others, a letter of condolence and consolation to the parents of Claude Bret. A third letter to Colin is dated 28 July and was sent by regular courier overland to Buenos Aires and Montevideo, from where they heard there were frequent ships to Europe.

Everyone wrote a personal letter to the superior general. Apart from the three letters to Colin, Pompallier wrote a long letter to his mother. He probably wrote to Marcellin Champagnat. Further letters that have been preserved include one from Bataillon to Etienne Séon, one from Chanel to his family, one to his sister, one a combined letter to Colin and the boys at the seminary of Belley and one to his friend Jean-Antoine Bourdin.⁶⁴ Servant wrote to Champagnat.⁶⁵

Only now did they hear of the rumour, published in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, that the Delphine would have taken shelter in an English port while ships that had left the same day on the evening high tide had perished. Not knowing that the last bit was untrue, Chanel commented that they had been lucky to get away in time.⁶⁶

The joy of being able to write letters home was toned down by the disappointment that there were no letters waiting for them. For Pompallier this also meant that, in spite of his

⁶¹ EC, doc. 37 [15]. LRO, doc. 12 [177 & 179]. Jore, II, p. 115.

⁶² Three years later Maxime Petit told Colin about it, LRO, doc. 56 [4]. He thought Colin should know so he could apologize to the Picpus general. Petit wrote together with Servant. Although on other points he also was critical of Servant, he told Colin about the incident in Valparaiso as something he was sure of. He could have heard it about it also on Wallis or Futuna. We cannot exclude that someone else had already told Colin in a letter that we do not know of and that this is what withheld Colin from taking up contact with the Picpus.

⁶³ Partly published in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, LVI, January, 1838, pp. 236f.

⁶⁴ LRO, docs. 14 – 19. That everyone wrote personally to Colin follows from Mayet op. cit., 7, 815, cf. FA, 216. Pompallier's letter to the parents of Claude Bret has not been preserved. Pompallier to his mother: LRO, doc. 16. For Pompallier to Champagnat see LC, doc. 194, a letter that may have been not from Chile, but from Tahiti. Bataillon to Étienne Séon: LRO, doc. 19. Chanel to his family: EC, doc. 35, to his sister Françoise: EC, doc. 36; to Colin and the boys in Belley: EC, doc. 34, to Bourdin: EC, doc. 37.

⁶⁵ 14.06.1837, LO, Clisby006.

⁶⁶ EC, 35 [1].

urgent requests from Le Havre and the gentle reminder from Santa Cruz, there was no money. The 8.700 francs that Colin had arranged to be forwarded in April or May had not arrived. Nor did anything reach them during their seven weeks' stay.⁶⁷ Pompallier was angry. In his second letter (20 July) he vented his feelings:

I wrote to you on 16 January from Santa Cruz. Did you receive my letter? For important things we must get used to keeping copies. Since I have left France I have received nothing, no letters, no answers. Still, ships have left Bordeaux long after our departure, and have arrived in Valparaiso before us. They could have carried mail. But then one needs to know when there is an opportunity. Therefore one has to have someone in the ports who is alert and willing to be of service. Or one has to rely on a shipping journal that carries such news. Alas, Rome, Lyon, Belley, all are cloaked in silence as far as we are concerned, and, dear superior, we had wanted so much to get some news of the congregation, the priests, the Sisters and the Brothers. We are very mortified to have to leave Valparaiso without having received any word.... Now it may be another year before we can be contacted.⁶⁸

Even when writing to his mother Pompallier showed his bitter disappointment.⁶⁹ The other men were less outspoken, but Chanel and Bataillon too hinted at the pleasure it would have given them to get mail from home. Mail could have reached them if sent with the *Colibri*.⁷⁰ Chanel alluded to the name of the ship that took their mail to France: the *Télégraphe*: if only the mail was as fast! He was a bit homesick. When two French naval vessels, the frigate *Andromède* and the corvette *Ariane* appeared in the port of Valparaiso, his heart beat faster at the sight of the impressive ships with their mighty guns and the familiar banners: 'At once we felt like being in our dear France. How proud we were to be home again!'⁷¹

There had been occasions to get mail to Valparaiso. The news of the marriage of the Duke of Orléans, on 8 May, had reached Valparaiso by 8 August: just three months after the event.⁷² The things Pompallier now mentioned were exactly the things he had begged Colin to do. He had asked Colin to note down mail sent and received and to acknowledge receipt when mail arrived. Later he himself often began a letter by indicating what he had received and what he had sent, when and from where.⁷³

Colin's own letters were always courteous, concise, methodical and to the point, but he was not good at chatty letters, which is what they now needed. He may well have been irritated by the bishop's windy and chaotic writing, and his often patronising and nagging tone. Pompallier's insistence on detail, and his habit of repeating what he had already said, betray his misgivings about Colin as a practical manager. The absence of money and mail, rightly or wrongly, confirmed his fears. Whatever did or did not happen: it was a sadly missed opportunity.

Colin was not the only beneficiary of Pompallier's grumbling. Writing to Frasoni he points out that he already had sent three letters to Rome without receiving an answer. He did not tell the Cardinal how unhappy he was with Colin for the same reason, nor did he tell him

⁶⁷ From Le Havre: LRO, docs. 7 [4 – 7] & 11 [23]. From Santa Cruz: LRO, doc. 13 [5].

⁶⁸ LRO, doc. 17 [10].

⁶⁹ To madame Solichon: LRO, doc. 16 [6].

⁷⁰ EC, doc. 33 [1].

⁷¹ Bataillon: LRO, doc. 19 [8, p. 3]. Chanel: EC, doc. 34 [1], 35 [4], 37 [11 & 14 & 15].

⁷² EC, 37 [17].

⁷³ LRO, docs. 8 [1], 9 [2], 18 [11].

that the information he had received in Rome, had not been of the best. He did share with the Cardinal the poor impression he had of the Church in the Canary islands and in Chile: the low moral standard of the clergy, the money exacted from the faithful for the sacraments and the poor level of religious instruction.⁷⁴

He also wrote to Archbishop de Pins with a second copy of Bataillon's diary.⁷⁵

The long way around, *le chemin de l'école*

The historian Reiner Jaspers makes the following kind and optimistic assessment:

The apostolic vicar, Mgr. Pompallier carefully prepared the way to open up his mission territory. He sought and got plenty of information from Pastre, who was familiar with the plans already made by de Solages, in Rome, in Paris from the Picpus Fathers, from government people in Paris, and from the Irish seminary there.⁷⁶

This view is not shared by another acute and informed observer, Léonce Jore, who wonders why Pompallier travelled the way he did.⁷⁷ Nor is it shared by Pompallier himself! Once he had looked at the Pacific from Valparaiso, he fully realized the mistake. After six months and many thousands of miles at sea, he found himself on the wrong side of the biggest ocean of the world! He confessed as much to Colin:

As the good Lord evidently wants us to begin in Micronesia, it is evident that going from Europe over the Southern Atlantic, round Cape Horn, as we did, thinking that this was the way to New Zealand, one really takes the longest possible way (*le chemin de l'école*), and do four thousand miles more than necessary. We do not even have enough money to go the direct way!⁷⁸

Valparaiso confirmed all that Pompallier had heard already in Lyon from Pastre, in Paris from Coudrin and in Le Havre from shipping people. The Marists now got a better understanding of the lay-out of the Pacific, of its vastness, of the distances between the island groups, and of the patterns of communication between them.

They found a ship going to New Zealand but it was an American ship already chartered by Protestants who would not think of allowing Catholic missionaries to travel with them.

As to a procure, they were soon convinced that Valparaiso, given its immense distance from Western Oceania, and the near absence of shipping in that direction, was not the place from where to operate their missions.

At the same time, seeing the Picpus Fathers at work they realized the crucial importance of a procure, not only for communications and supply, but also as a refuge, whenever things went wrong. The internal unrest and the threat of wars between the countries of South-America only confirmed their decision.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ ACPF, Congressi Oceania I, 424ff. LRO, doc. 18 [9].

⁷⁵ LRO, docs. 15 [3].

⁷⁶ Jaspers, op. cit., p. 191.

⁷⁷ Jore op. cit., II, p. 148.

⁷⁸ LRO, 17 [3] *dans toute la force du terme, prendre le chemin de l'école* (i.e., like children who look for the longest possible way to go to school). To get to Sydney he travelled indeed about 7.000 km more than necessary.

⁷⁹ LRO, docs. 15 [5] & 17 [5].

New Zealand?

Already in the first letter of Cardinal Fransoni to Pastre, New Zealand was the most important and promising target of the new mission. Pastre understood it that way and gave it special emphasis from the beginning.⁸⁰ In French publications the senior naval officer Dumont d'Urville who had visited New Zealand in 1824 and again in 1826/1827 had made it better known in France and painted it as a paradise, peopled by splendid Maori people.⁸¹

Captain Dillon who had sailed all over the Pacific for years, and had visited New Zealand at least six times, had persuaded his friend de Solages, Apostolic Prefect of the island Réunion, in the Indian Ocean, to set up a common venture to evangelize New Zealand in the late 1820's and had nearly succeeded in getting Propaganda in Rome, the French government and the Picpus headquarters in Paris to take it on.⁸² Rome was sold on it and only for the July revolution in France (1830) and the refusal of Fr. Coudrin to have his men work under de Solages, this fantastic project would have been attempted.⁸³

The Propagation of the Faith in Lyon had in 1835 received a letter from Dr. Ullathorne, vicar general of Australia, telling them of Maori converts to the Catholic Faith and of a lively interest among Irish settlers in New Zealand to get Catholic priests.⁸⁴

In October 1836, in Paris, Pompallier had picked up stories about a French nobleman, Baron Charles de Thierry, who in the early 1820's had visited New Zealand, had befriended a Maori chief, Hongi, had bought extensive tracts of land, learned the Maori language and who had tried in vain to interest first the English then the French government to establish colonies. Pompallier was impressed and considered him a sort of king in New Zealand. Although the government did not take the stories seriously, the director for the colonies had given Pompallier a letter of recommendation for Thierry.⁸⁵

In Santa Cruz Pompallier had met with an old soldier, Major *de Plais*, who claimed to have been in New Zealand and to have befriended the king of New Zealand (no reference to Thierry!). He had given him letters of recommendation and lent him a grammar of the Maori language.⁸⁶

During his visit to England before sailing for Chile in 1834, Rouchouze had come to the comforting conclusion that, if Protestants were active there, New Zealand was just too big to be completely under their influence.⁸⁷ Pompallier would have heard that from his Picpus companions. No wonder New Zealand always had a central place in the plans of Pompallier.⁸⁸

But here Pompallier stood with his band of missionaries on the shore of the Pacific, many thousands of miles from his target, in a place from where there just were no ships to where he had to go. To make things worse, he picked up stories that things in New Zealand were not as rosy as he had been told in Europe, and that the letters of recommendation he had got in Paris were worth nothing.⁸⁹

⁸⁰ OM I, doc. 337. The original of this letter has not been preserved. We only have a copy made by a clerk in Propaganda who writes *New Ireland!* The original that Pastre had in hand must have read *New Zealand*, as is clear from Pastre's answer, cf. OM I, doc. 341.

⁸¹ Jore, op. cit., I, p. 76 & 80f. Jaspers, op. cit., p. 21.

⁸² Simmons, op. cit., pp. 15 – 19. Jaspers, op. cit., pp. 162 – 176.

⁸³ Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 53 – 67.

⁸⁴ Simmons, op. cit., p. 16. Keys, op. cit., p. 78.

⁸⁵ *comme roi dans la Nouvelle Zélande*, LRO, doc. 4 [13]. Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 133.

⁸⁶ LRO, doc. 12 [27].

⁸⁷ Jaspers, op. cit., p. 191. Roach, op. cit., p. 45. LRO, doc. 15 [5].

⁸⁸ A French newspaper spoke of New Guinea instead of New Zealand, and Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 153, n. 23, concludes that New Guinea was the original centre of Pompallier's interest. More likely a journalist got the names mixed up, just as the clerk at Propaganda who had called it *New Ireland* a year earlier, cf. above, note 79.

⁸⁹ LRO, doc. 18 [9].

Now, what ?

Less sure now that New Zealand was indeed the best place to start anyway, Pompallier had to tell the Superior General in the first letter he wrote from Valparaiso, 17 July, that to all practical purposes, it simply was out of reach.

Fortunately, an American came to see Pompallier who had lived for seventeen months on Ascension Island, today Pohnpei, in Micronesia. The American put him into contact with a captain who also knew the island. Both of them spoke highly of the people and of the opportunities for a successful mission. It lay in the Caroline group and from there the missionaries could work the whole of Micronesia and other islands, north and south, as far as New Guinea. Pompallier saw the hand of Providence in this opening, just when his original plans looked no longer feasible.

He knew he had come the wrong way, but he did not cry over spilt milk. He changed his strategy and decided to forget about New Zealand for the time being. He would sail from Valparaiso to the Gambier Islands and visit the successful mission of Bishop Rouchouze, then sail to Hawaii in order to establish a base, and from there try to reach Pohnpei. The American would sail with them and introduce the mission to the Micronesian people.⁹⁰

Hawaii was a centre of shipping, from where the other islands were more accessible. They could leave some of their belongings with the Picpus Fathers who in spite of great resistance from the Protestants still had one priest in Hawaii: the Englishman Fr. Walsh, and one Brother. The latest news was that Catholic priests were allowed to stay provided they did not engage in missionary work among the Hawaiian people. Perhaps one of the three Marist Brothers could stay in Hawaii and wait for the next group of missionaries. With New Zealand put off for the foreseeable future, Pompallier lost interest in Sydney as the place for the procure, in favour of California and Hawaii. The next group of missionaries, he told Colin, should travel to Mexico, cross overland and take a ship in California for Hawaii. Mail should be sent care of Fr. Walsh whose address in Honolulu he already included.⁹¹

Pompallier explained to Cardinal Fransoni that he had to change all his plans and why. His presentation is not only a rosy description of the golden opportunities of Pohnpei as a mission field, but also a wildly optimistic estimate of its possibilities (its 'quasi central' location) as a base from where to extend his mission to the Western Pacific. One look at his new atlas will have made Fransoni shake his head in unbelief.⁹²

An encouraging experience

Pompallier chartered the *Europa* under Captain Shaw for 150 piastres per person to take them to Hawaii via the Gambier Islands. Compared to the *Delphine* it was not much of a ship, much smaller (250 tons against 329). As a consequence, the accommodation was more cramped. But the missionaries transferred their luggage, that had survived the voyage so far undamaged, and on 10 August they bravely boarded for the first leg of their long Pacific crossing. Peter Chanel and Joseph Luzy were seasick again for a week, but the others by now

⁹⁰ LRO, docs. 12 [182], 15 [6], 16 [6], 17 [2]. Bataillon: LRO, doc. 19 [2]. Chanel: EC, docs. 34 [1], 35 [3], 37 [9]. The old name *Ascension Island* was very confusing, because of the island of the same name in the Southern Atlantic. From the two seamen the missionaries picked up spellings such as *Pounipet*, *Bonibet*, etc. It was later called *Ponape*, but the modern name is *Pohnpei*. In spite of the anachronism we will use its modern name. According to Bataillon's diary the two came to see Pompallier on the 17th of July, the same day that he wrote to Colin and to his mother. Either some dates are wrong, or he had heard about Pohnpei earlier and had already decided to change his strategy before the two actually came to see him personally. The two would have been known to the Picpus Fathers.

⁹¹ LRO, 18 [4, 6].

⁹² ACPF, Congressi Oceania I, 424ff. LRO, 18 [9].

had their sea-legs.⁹³ Two Picpus priests, Father Maigret and Father Guilnard, and Brother Columban, (i.e. the Irishman James Murphy) sailed with the Marists: an opportunity for the Marists to improve their English. Having heard that English was understood by many Polynesians, and that English and American ships were about the only ones to sail the Pacific, they put a lot of effort into it, but found it difficult to get their tongues around the strange English vowels. Pompallier considered it necessary for the priests but saw little reason for the Brothers to learn it!⁹⁴

Due to eight days of calm and three days of contrary winds, the 5.600 km to the Gambier Islands took them thirty-three days. On 13 September the *Europa* dropped anchor and they transferred to a rowing boat. Three hours through the lagoon, under a nearly full moon and the splendid stars of a Pacific night, gave them a taste of the beauty of Oceania. It was nearly midnight when Bishop Rouchouze met them gracefully on the beach of the island of Aukena. They enjoyed his hospitality and talked into the little hours, while hundreds of islanders sang outside as only Polynesians can.

They visited the island of Mangareva, where they were met by the King sitting on top of his magnificent large canoe. What they saw exceeded everything they already had heard from the Picpus Fathers. Large numbers of friendly converts, enjoying the excitement of foreign visitors in a display of musical exuberance and happy children trying out the French words they had picked up from the missionaries. Pompallier and Chanel, in their written accounts, could not get over the beautiful and placid people they met. Page after page their letters reflect amazement at the rapid and total transformation of people from – as they believed – being little more than savage cannibals to peaceful Christians, piously kneeling for a blessing from the bishops.⁹⁵

The Marists had ample time to listen to the stories of the successful missionaries and felt enormously encouraged to see that in spite of the unknown difficulties and dangers that still might lie ahead, theirs too was not a *mission impossible*. With Rouchouze Pompallier discussed at length the options before him. In the end Rouchouze laughed it all off, saying: ‘Wherever you will land up in the end, Bishop, it will be different from where you now think!’⁹⁶ They delegated their faculties to each other, so that each bishop was empowered by the other to authorize his missionaries to work in the vicariate of the other, an arrangement that could be very convenient in case missionaries were expelled from one place or another.⁹⁷

Tahiti

Everybody expected that Catholic missionaries would not be allowed ashore in Tahiti. On instigation by George Pritchard, of the London Missionary Society, the Fathers Caret and Laval had been expelled in December 1836, and Caret and Maigret again in January 1837.⁹⁸ Still, on 16 September, after only a few days in the Gambier Islands, encouraged by recent information, the *Europa* set sail for Tahiti for a commercial call. They arrived around noon on the 21st and the ship was allowed to enter port. Thanks to the intervention of Mr. Jacob Moerenhout, a Belgian trader on the island who also functioned as American consul,⁹⁹ Pom-

⁹³ As Servant wrote later: “The perils of travelling at sea are more in the imagination of people thinking of it from afar, than in reality”. LRO, doc. 27 [5].

⁹⁴ LRO, docs 12 [182 & 183], 21 [1], n.1 & 23 [1].

⁹⁵ LRO, doc. 21 [2 – 6]. EC, doc. 38 [1 – 6]. Wiltgen, op. cit., pp. 151f.

⁹⁶ LRO, doc. 26 [2]. Ronzon, *Delorme*, p. 38.

⁹⁷ Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 152.

⁹⁸ Jore, op. cit., II, pp. 209 – 212 & pp. 219 – 226.

⁹⁹ Since 1830 Moerenhout was an important trader in Tahiti, importing shiploads of goods from France, cf. Jore, op. cit., I, p. 100. In July 1837 he had been dismissed by the American government on request of Queen Pomare, but the news was to reach Tahiti only in August 1838. Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 154. Jore op. cit., II, p. 233.

pallier and his men were allowed to move about freely, and by displaying full purple he drew large crowds. Queen Pomare Vahine IV was curious enough to invite Pompallier to the palace and her charm made him think that she and many people with her would have liked the representatives of the true Church to stay. Having been expelled already once, Maigret who was set to sail with the Marists in a new attempt to get into Hawaii, and Columban Murphy, who for that same purpose had secretly been ordained a priest by Rouchouze during their stay in Mangareva, prudently stayed on board.¹⁰⁰

The Marists visited Moerenhout regularly, and Pompallier said Mass in the privacy of his home. He also baptised and confirmed the seven-year-old son of the third officer of the *Europa*. The boy, baptized Jean-Marie, was born in New Zealand but had been brought up in Tahiti. Pompallier felt elated at this first baptism of a New Zealand born child: the first fruits of New Zealand, *les prémices de la Nouvelle Zélande*.¹⁰¹

Pompallier was very appreciative of the reception he received from Moerenhout. He recommended him to the Director of the Colonies at the Ministry of the Navy in Paris for an appointment as consul of France. After Moerenhout was dismissed as consul for the United States he was indeed appointed consul of France, first in Tahiti, later in California.¹⁰²

The stay in Tahiti turned out to be a godsend. This time Pompallier heard less favourable reports on Hawaii, and more favourable ones on Tonga, Samoa, Fiji and New Zealand both from Moerenhout and from Captain Stocks who had sailed all over the Pacific for years. Moerenhout had recently been able to purchase a small schooner, the *Raiatea*. He offered it to Pompallier for 400 piastres a month, to go wherever he wanted under Captain Stocks, and to keep it for as long as he needed it. The missionaries were to look after their own provisions. In Valparaiso Pompallier had abruptly changed his plans; in Tahiti he did it again. After consulting the confreres he now decided to forget about Hawaii and go straight to Pohnpei that captain Stocks knew well; and from there via Sydney to New Zealand! He did not get a refund from the fare he already had paid as far as Hawaii, but, as he wrote to Cardinal Fransoni, in this way he avoided the cost of travelling from Hawaii to Pohnpei. He chartered the *Raiatea* on the conditions offered. He did not have enough money, and left owing Moerenhout several thousand piastres. The *Europa* with Captain Shaw in command, would continue to Hawaii with Maigret and Murphy as planned.¹⁰³

Chanel looked with diffidence at the *Raiatea*. He called it a *méchante petite goélette*, a nasty little schooner (only 60 tons), and without even a copper bottom! This time travelling was going to be very uncomfortable indeed. They took their luggage off the *Europa* and transferred it to the *Raiatea*.¹⁰⁴

After the favourable stories he had picked up about Tonga, Pompallier now decided to visit Vava`u first, and sail only then to Pohnpei in Micronesia. There he might leave some missionaries with Chanel in charge, and sail on to Australia and New Zealand himself. All of this news, with his change of plan and many interesting details, he communicated to Colin in a five-page letter from Tahiti, dated 2 October. He told Colin to forget about a procure, not only in Valparaiso, but also in California or Hawaii. By now it had become clear to him that Sydney was the only and the best place because of its frequent communications with Europe

¹⁰⁰ LRO, 21 [8- 9]. EC, 38 [6 – 9]. Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 152. Pompallier, op. cit, p. 14. Rademaker, op. cit. p. 91.

¹⁰¹ LRO, 21 [9]. EC, 38 [8].

¹⁰² Pompallier to M. de Saint-Hilaire, Directeur des Colonies, 28.09.1837. Moerenhout became consul of France in Tahiti in September 1838, and later on in California. Jore, op. cit., II, p. 229 & 342.

¹⁰³ LRO, doc. 21 [10], Pompallier to Fransoni, 21.05.1838, ACPF, Congressi Oceania I, p. 485r. doc. 37 [5]. The *Raiatea* was at his service for about seven months, which amounted, not counting the provisions, to an expense of 2.800 piastres = 15.400 francs. What down payment he was able to make, we do not know.

¹⁰⁴ In the tropics the hulls of wooden ships need a copper lining to protect them against the so-called ship-worm, *teredo navalis*, that uses its shell to gouge holes into the wood of ship hulls and jetty posts. (with thanks to captain L. Oosthuizen and Google) Br. Nizier later recalled this remark of Chanel. Cf. Ronzon, *Delorme*, p. 40.

as well as with New Zealand and the islands. Moreover, in Australia one would find a civilized environment, an established church under a vicar apostolic and a Christian community protected by Great Britain.

Pompallier foresaw that the next missionaries might still come the long way, around Cape Horn, in which case they should avoid Hawaii, where the situation was confused and opposition against Catholics had flared up again. Tahiti was the place to aim for, and if they were not allowed to land, they could always stay on the ship and Moerenhout would help them on their way. Moerenhout was also a reliable postal address. If they came around Cape of Good Hope, they could rely on Bishop Polding in Sydney for the necessary help.¹⁰⁵

He repeated his urgent request for reinforcements, and, having seen the Picpus men at work, he now insisted on Brothers as well as on priests. In two cases, Hawaii as well as Tahiti, the priests had been expelled but a Brother allowed to stay! He hoped Colin to be able to send at least four priests and three Brothers soon. He begged Colin also to plead his cause with the Propagation of the Faith. His funds were about exhausted. He was at his wit's end on how to even begin the actual mission work.¹⁰⁶

Tonga

Two days after mailing his letter to Colin, 4 October 1837, a magnificent day, *un temps magnifique*, Pompallier and his Marist companions set sail on the *Raiatea*, this time directly towards the heartlands of the Western Pacific. Having passed within sight of Palmerston, one of the Cook Islands, they reached Vava`u, the most northern of the larger islands of Tonga on 22 October. The *Raiatea* narrowly missed getting thrown on the reefs by a sudden contrary wind and the high swell, but got undamaged into the shelter by what even the captain considered a near miracle. They were received by King Taufa`ahau, originally the king of the central islands of Ha`apai, and since 1833 also ruler of Vava`u. The King even accepted an invitation to dine on the *Raiatea*. By now Pompallier could read English, but recognised the spoken English words only if the captain pointed them out in a dictionary! Charles Simonet, a French sailor who had deserted from the *Astrolabe* of Dumont d`Urville in 1827 and had set up a forge on Vava`u, served as an interpreter. He was helped by Thomas Boog, an English sailor who had deserted from an American whaler, married on Futuna and settled on Vava`u where his wife had died.¹⁰⁷

Earlier in the same year 1837, Taufa`ahau, encouraged if not actually led, by the Methodist minister John Thomas, had headed an expeditionary fleet and engaged in two fierce battles on the Southern island of Tongatapu, in support of the christian chief Tupou against the majority of pagan chiefs of the island. Initially 'New Testament counsels of peace-making and gentleness prevailed', but when resistance held out in fortified strongholds that had to be taken by brute force, it led to massacres and atrocities that were rationalized in Methodist sermons with quotes from 'the books of Joshua, I Samuel, Chronicles and the imprecatory psalms'.¹⁰⁸ Although there is no sign of it in our documentation, we can be sure that Pompallier or his companions heard about it all from Simonet and Boog. In any case, the memories of the recent Methodist victory and the influence of John Thomas and his colleague William Brooks were too powerful. The King did not allow Pompallier to leave a missionary on Vava`u, and they had to move on.

¹⁰⁵ LRO, doc. 21 [10 - 15]. Jore, op. cit., I, p. 212; II, pp. 197 – 212.

¹⁰⁶ LRO, doc. 21 [10]. Pompallier, op. cit., p. 14.

¹⁰⁷ LRO, docs. 22 [2] n. 2, 23 [4], 26 [2]. Ronzon, *Delorme*, p. 41. Wiltgen, op. cit., pp. 156ff. Pompallier, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁰⁸ Garret, *To Live Among the Stars*, pp. 76ff.

From their local knowledge Charles Simonet and Thomas Boog could point Pompallier towards the island of Wallis, 650 km to the North of Vava`u, where nearly the same language was spoken as in Tonga. A few years earlier the Methodists had sent Tongan teachers to bring Wallis into the fold, but the Wallisians had killed them. In any case, the Methodists had not yet managed to establish themselves there. The island had a bad name among sailors and Captain Stocks was reluctant to go there, but Pompallier insisted. Thomas Boog went with them as an interpreter in exchange for free passage to Futuna where he wanted to settle again and open a trade store.¹⁰⁹

Back on board there was a nasty incident. After the tricky negotiations Pompallier's nerves must have been on edge. What triggered the outburst we do not know, but, as Servant wrote Colin later, something must have made him think – mistakenly - that his companions took a different view of the situation. He lashed out, accusing them of disloyalty, of ganging up on him and of wanting to go their own way. He threatened them with excommunication, raising his voice to the point that, but for the fact that they did not understand French, the crew would have understood what the row was about.¹¹⁰

Wallis

They sailed on 28 October and reached Wallis on 1 November, the feast of All Saints. They went ashore in their long black soutanes to show that, although they came from Tonga, they were different from the hated Methodist ministers. With the help of the captain and of Thomas Boog, using the bit of English that the King of Wallis had picked up, and whatever English Pompallier and Bataillon had acquired, they managed to communicate. The King lent them a sympathetic ear, and in spite of the negative pressure from some people around him, gave permission for Fr. Bataillon and Br. Joseph-Xavier Luzy to stay on the island. Pompallier got the king to agree by telling him he would take the missionaries away again, if one day they were no longer welcome.¹¹¹

There were a few tight moments when rowdy Wallisian youths threatened to take over the ship. Calm was restored through the intervention of the King and the missionaries unloaded their cases whereby the young carriers managed to help themselves to some of Brother Joseph's clothing. The King gave them a house near his own compound.

Pompallier gave Bataillon a few hundred francs to buy supplies from passing ships, and a good quantity of trade goods to exchange for food with the locals. It does not seem to have been Joseph's first choice to stay on Wallis with Bataillon. He later wrote to his family that he had found it hard to be separated from Pompallier and Chanel.¹¹²

Having promised the two missionaries that he would return within six or seven months, Pompallier sailed on 7 November. Although he now had his eyes on Rotuma, he agreed, on request of the King of Wallis, to take fourteen Futunians home first. In any case, he had promised Thomas Boog to take him there.

¹⁰⁹ LRO, 22 [3], n. 3. Pompallier, op. cit., p. 20.

¹¹⁰ ...*croyant avoir aperçu parmi nous un esprit d'aliénation à son égard... des allocutions foudroyantes jusqu'à nous traiter de vouloir faire bande à part, de vouloir nous séparer de lui, et jusqu'à nous menacer d'excommunication*, LRO, doc. 55 [5]. Cf. above, p. 54, n. 57. By the time he wrote this (1840), Servant was on bad terms with Pompallier. He may have exaggerated, because, in spite of the event, Brother Luzy regretted being separated from the Bishop when he was assigned to stay on Wallis with Bataillon.!

¹¹¹ The Methodist ministers were reported to beat the faithful if they got drunk cf. Jore, op. cit., II, p. 152ff. Pompallier, op. cit., p. 22ff. Cf. the story as told by Bataillon in the report dated July 1838, LRO, doc. 28 [17].

¹¹² LRO, docs. 22 [4], 23 [5] & 26 [3]. Nizier to Champagnat, 30.09.39, Ronzon, *Delorme*, p. 41, FMO, pp. 12f.

Futuna

They must have had a very fine sea and wind, because they did the 225 km in a good day and reached Futuna on 8 November¹¹³. Once there he found the people open to the suggestion of having a missionary on the island. In fact, one Futunian had worked on an Australian whaler, had visited Sydney, spoke a bit of English and recognised the Marists as Catholic priests. He invited them to stay.

Now Pompallier had to choose between Futuna and either Rotuma or far away Pohnpei. Opting for Futuna would allow the two missionaries to keep in contact. So, in discussion with his missionaries the bishop changed plans again, put off Pohnpei for the time being and decided to leave Peter Chanel and Brother Marie-Nizier on Futuna. As on Wallis they too got a house near that of the king, Niuliki, king of Alo, which they hoped would give them a sort of official protection. They moved in there on 12 November. Having understood that there were two kingdoms on the one island of Futuna, one in Alo and another one at Sigave, Pompallier left them with some goods to use as presents for the other king.¹¹⁴

On 13 November Bishop Pompallier, Father Servant and Brother Michel left Peter Chanel behind on the beach, with Brother Marie-Nizier and Thomas Boog, who asked to be allowed to stay with the two missionaries. The *Raiatea* took fourteen shipwrecked sailors on board who were stranded on Futuna, and sailed for Rotuma, some 200 km to the West, where they arrived on 15 or 16 November. There too they were well received but Pompallier had no missionaries left, and could only promise the local people of whom he had heard favourable information that he would return with a missionary. Six sailors stayed on Rotuma that they knew was regularly visited by whalers. The *Raiatea* left after one day and set sail directly for Sydney, taking the remaining sailors along.¹¹⁵

Colin receiving mail

Pompallier's first letter from Valparaiso, sent on 17 July by the *Hudson*, announcing the death of Claude Bret, arrived on 13 November, the day after its writer had left Chanel and Marie-Nizier on the beach of Futuna island, staring after the *Raiatea*. It came in a packet of letters, just before dinner. He quickly opened them, glanced at the signatures, and went to dinner. On the way down, and all the way during dinner, he kept wondering. 'But there is one who has not written! Why has Father Bret not written? That is not nice of him'. It was only after dinner, when he started reading that he found out. 'He could not write, because he is dead!' Colin burst out in tears. 'God be praised! Let His will be done'. He called the community together in the chapel to tell them.¹¹⁶ In the same packet Colin received Pompallier's second letter, dated on 20 July and sent via the *Télégraphe*.

¹¹³ It usually took two and a half days to sail between Futuna and Wallis, cf. EC, doc. 39 [2], & p. 336 & 345.

¹¹⁴ LRO, doc. 22 [5]. Wiltgen op. cit., p. 159. Ronzon, *Delorme*, pp. 53ff. Either they had an exceptionally favourable wind, or their dates got mixed up by the date line, which happened again with the second group, cf. LRO, doc. 32, p. 266, n. 7! Although more than 200 km apart, there were regular contacts between the two islands. During Chanel's first year there, we know of six opportunities to travel or send letters. In his later report Pompallier mentions explicitly that he discussed the decision to opt for Futuna with his missionaries. Cf. Pompallier, op. cit., p. 43. Jore, op. cit., II, p. 154.

¹¹⁵ Wiltgen, op. cit., pp. 159f.

¹¹⁶ FA, 216, n. 1, from MM 7, 815. There is an unexplained discrepancy in the dates: 13 November is well attested, but on 27 October Pierre Colin is recorded to have told a group of Lay-Marists of the safe arrival of the missionaries in Valparaiso! Cf. ML, doc. 37 [4]. If news had reached Pierre Colin three weeks earlier, how is it possible that Jean-Claude had not heard about it? Cf. LC, doc. 158.

The packet also contained the bishop's letter to his mother with the personal letters from all the missionaries, Pompallier's letter to the parents of Claude Bret plus a few other ones, among which were letters from Peter Chanel to his sister Françoise and his family.

Colin would have read all the letters and he forwarded those addressed to other persons. He did not sit down immediately to write back. The absence of any definite information on the whereabouts of the missionaries may have held him back. From the letters received he had to conclude that the missionaries would be in Hawaii, still on the way to Pohnpei, or possibly already there. He too would now see the need for a procure, although Pompallier's writing did not yet answer the question where: Valparaiso was out, but California, Hawaii and Sydney were all possibilities. Not much to take action on!

On 27 November Colin decided to write to Pompallier anyhow and he invited others to do the same. The letter has not been preserved but we know he told Pompallier of the 8.700 francs sent in May. He sent the parcel to the Picpus Fathers in Valparaiso, so far the only sure point in the equation. It did not reach Pompallier until March 1839, i.e. fifteen months later!¹¹⁷ It was Colin's first attempt to write to the missions.

On 1 December Fr. Colin wrote to Cardinal Frasoni to tell him that the missionaries had arrived in Valparaiso, but that, *helas*, one had died in mid-ocean. At the time of writing, he could say, i.e., in July, they had been readying themselves to continue their journey. Reflecting Pompallier's abrupt change of plans he cautiously added: 'We can presume, if nothing untoward has happened to them, that by now they will be among their island people'.¹¹⁸

The third batch, with a copy of the letter for the minister of the navy in Paris, and a letter from Bataillon to Étienne Séon, that had all been sent by overland courier via Montevideo and Buenos Aires, arrived much later, somewhere between 1 December and 10 January 1838, although Bataillon had thought that the overland courier would be quicker.¹¹⁹

The end

It took the *Raiatea* with Bishop Pompallier, Catherin Servant and Michel Colomb a month to cover the distance from Rotuma to Australia. On 9 December they sailed into Sydney harbour, just when a violent tropical storm hung over the town. It could not dampen their joy. The three Marists were most graciously received by Bishop Polding and invited to stay in Polding's own residence where they celebrated Christmas together.

Again there were no letters waiting in Sydney for Pompallier, Servant or Brother Michel. No letters, no news, no money. However, there were so many exciting things to tell that in his first letter, dated 23 December 1837, he kept it to a frustrated sigh: 'How much would I love getting an answer to all the letters I sent to Europe!'. Undeterred he recounted all the good news, of Wallis and Futuna, and of the advantages and the facilities that Sydney, and only Sydney, could provide.

Bishop Polding offered to take care of mail to and from France. An Irish priest in the Bishop's house, John McEncroe, was to be Pompallier's agent. They were given a room in the newly built seminary to store the goods they did not want to take along immediately. The governor of the colony made special arrangements for the mission goods to pass through customs even though they were brought in on a Tahitian ship from a non-British port. They found out that mission goods sent from France could enter Australia on the same conditions as goods from Britain irrespective of what ships, British or French, they arrived on, provided

¹¹⁷ Pompallier to Meynis, 17.03.39, OPM H30, 000867.

¹¹⁸ CS, doc. 23.

¹¹⁹ Cf. above, p. 55f. Colin mentions the letters of 17 and 20 July to Frasoni on 1 December. In his circular letter of 10 January 1838 he mentions the third letter of the 27th (in fact sent early August) as having just arrived. *L'Ami de la Religion* carried the news on 25.01.1838 (96), p. 169.

French ships had come without commercial stops on the way. All mail, all personnel, all goods should from now on come the shorter, safer and much cheaper way of London-Sydney. He urged Colin to send him reinforcements as soon as possible, specifically two Brothers to start the procure. A priest with them would be very useful, but on that point he hesitated. Priests were badly needed elsewhere and the long-term presence of a French priest in Sydney could cause problems.¹²⁰ There must have been something in his contacts with Archbishop Polding that made Pompallier think so.

Of particular concern was his financial situation. He had practically nothing left now and he had promised to visit Wallis and Futuna within five or six months. The trip would cost some four or five thousand francs. The sort of house needed for a procure would cost about 20.000 francs.¹²¹

Bishop Polding gave Pompallier a letter of introduction to Thomas Poynton, a Catholic Irish settler on the Hokianga River in New Zealand, who had a trade-store and a sawmill there. Poynton's Australian-born wife had become a Catholic and had travelled to Sydney to have her first daughter baptized. Poynton himself had come to Sydney when Bishop Polding arrived there in 1835, and he had asked for a priest. The Governor of New South Wales gave Pompallier a letter of recommendation to James Busby, the British resident in the Bay of Islands, and Polding gave him a similar document for Thierry who had just returned to New Zealand.¹²²

On 30 December 1837 Bishop Pompallier, Father Catherin Servant and Brother Michel Colomb left Sydney on the *Raiatea* and on Wednesday, 10 January 1838, three hundred and eighty-three days after leaving Le Havre, the first Marist missionaries sailed up the Hokianga river, on the north-west coast of the North Island of New Zealand.¹²³

Conclusion

The letters sent from Santa Cruz, Valparaiso, Tahiti and Sydney together make up an impressive testimony of how faithfully the missionaries responded to Colin's request to write to him frequently and to let him know everything. The total absence of any letters in the other direction is sad. It was not Colin alone. Nobody thought of translating the early enthusiasm for the missions into writing a simple letter. They could have been sent on good luck via any of the different ways that had been suggested. Colin's recommendation to have all letters pass through his hands, possibly had the unintended effect that nobody else took an initiative.

Before their departure Colin's main concern had been the spiritual preparation of the missionaries. As to the practicalities, he had good reasons not to get involved. But the same Pompallier had also made it very clear, if only by appointing Colin his pro-vicar in France, that he wanted Colin to take an active role from then on, in supporting him and his missionaries. When, in late March or early April 1837, Colin got the letter from Santa Cruz, he took up contact with the Propagation of the Faith and obtained an advance of 8.700 francs. By then there was little he could do than send it to Valparaiso. When he got the mail from Valparaiso he sent a first parcel of mail. It was not much, but what more could have been done?

Whatever misgivings Jean-Claude Colin had had about Pompallier as the leader of the mission, the man had proved to be an undaunted pioneer. He never gave up. He was adaptable, could drop earlier plans and improvise. His docility to the Roman perspective that made

¹²⁰ LRO, doc. 22, introduction and [6]. A copy was sent in March from New Zealand via Valparaiso. Cf. CS 54 [2]. The letter was published in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, LXI, November 1838, pp. 70 ff.

¹²¹ He landed in New Zealand with £ 113. 8s. & 6d. (about 1.200 Francs) which enabled him to build the house at Papakawau (Simmons, op. cit., p. 35, Diocesan Archives of Auckland). LRO, doc. 22 [7].

¹²² LRO, doc. 22 [5], n. 10. Jore, op. cit., I, pp. 188ff. Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 203f. Jaspers, op. cit., p. 193f.

¹²³ LRO, doc. 26 [3]. Simmons, op. cit., p. 28.

him take the western route, disregarding the advice of Pastre, and without fully researching the best way to get to his mission field, made the opening of the Marist missions in the Pacific needlessly difficult, dangerous and expensive.

The constant changes at least illustrate the extreme difficulty of Pompallier's undertaking, compounded by the wrong start.

- When leaving France, the plan was: Valparaiso - Gambier - New Zealand.
- In Valparaiso it became: Gambier - Hawaii - Micronesia.
- In the Gambier Islands he changed to: Tahiti - Hawaii - Micronesia.
- In Tahiti he changed to: Micronesia (direct) – Sydney – New Zealand
- On the way it became: Tahiti - Tonga - Wallis - Futuna - Sydney - New Zealand.

It turned out as Rouchouze foretold him: whatever plan you make now, in the end you will get somewhere else. And as Pompallier admitted himself: we went the longest possible way, *le chemin de l'école*.

But he pushed on regardless. With barely a penny in his pocket, he went ahead with just one priest and one Brother and continued the planning for a procure in Sydney. Cholleton's choice of the leader had not been so bad after all.

It looks as if Pompallier had feared all the time that Colin would not be a good hands-on manager. He betrays these feelings by the tone of his letters and the repetitive detailed instructions. Perhaps Cholleton had similar misgivings when he bypassed Colin at the crucial decisions of the beginning. The first year Colin had little opportunity to prove the contrary.

At first Colin did not catch the seriousness of Pompallier's financial situation. He took no action until he got the letter from Santa Cruz. Then he did not contact the Picpus administration to find out if there was not a way to get the money in time to Valparaiso (there would have been a little chance)¹²⁴. As it turned out, it was too late to reach the missionaries there.

While the missionaries now faced the challenge of first contact with people of alien cultures and in strange countries, the Society and its superior had to invent ways of supporting them on the other side of the world.

¹²⁴ Mail from 8 May reached Valparaiso on 8 August, cf. above, p. 55.