

Chapter four : *The Second Group*

Confusion in the Pacific

Contrary to his own expectations when sailing out of Valparaiso, Bishop Pompallier managed to achieve in the beginning of 1838 what he had hoped for when leaving France: he had established missions on two Polynesian islands and, himself, he had reached New Zealand. At the same time, unknown to him, his repeated changing of plans, first to give up on New Zealand and opt for Micronesia, then to put off Micronesia and return to the original plan, had thrown other people into confusion.

While the Marists sailed to Tonga, Wallis, Futuna, Rotuma and Sydney, the Picpus Fathers Maigret and Murphy, who had come with them from Valparaiso as far as Tahiti, continued on the *Europa* to Hawaii as planned. In the meantime the Apostolic Prefect of Hawaii, Fr. Bachelot, had arrived there too from California, but was refused permission to stay ashore. He lived on a schooner in the port, waiting for a ship on which to leave again. When the *Europa* docked in Honolulu, the Queen Regent of Hawaii, Kaahumanu II, ordered Maigret to leave again by the same ship he had come on, and to take Bachelot with him, even though the *Europa* was chartered to go to China! Columban Murphy had kept his priestly ordination on Mangareva a secret and the French consul, Captain Dudoit, obtained in good faith permission for Murphy to stay on in Hawaii on the grounds that he was not a priest!¹

When the consul offered to sell Maigret and Bachelot a schooner that he owned, the *Honolulu*, they decided to buy it rather than go to China, even though Dudoit had already undertaken to send it on a trip south of the equator. Expecting Pompallier to do what he had said, namely to sail directly from Tahiti to Micronesia, they arranged for the *Honolulu* to take them first to Pohnpei (some 1.500 km), where they thought they could give the Marists a hand. In July the ship would return to Pohnpei and take them back to Valparaiso.

The *Honolulu* left Hawaii on 23 November 1837, when Pompallier was already past the Fiji Islands on his way from Rotuma to Sydney. Barely at sea Fr. Bachelot fell ill and on 5 December he died on board. Maigret kept his body in a sealed tarpaulin until he could bury him, a week later, on a small island near Pohnpei. On 13 December (with Pompallier safely in Sydney) Maigret wrote in his diary: ‘Ascension Island came into view this morning and we arrived there about four o’clock in the afternoon. The Bishop of Maronea is not here.’ There was little else Maigret could do than stay alone in Pohnpei and wait for Pompallier. Seven months later the *Honolulu* returned and as there still was no word from the bishop, he left on 29 July 1838 for Valparaiso, via Tahiti.²

Confusion in Rome

From Tahiti, Peter Chanel had adverted Colin of the presence in France of a Picpus missionary, Father François d’Assise Caret³, one of the three who had succeeded in converting the Gambier Islands in only a couple of years. His bishop, Rouchouze, had sent him to explain in France and in Rome the situation in Eastern Oceania, to obtain wider faculties for otherwise unsolvable marriage cases and to get additional financial support. Caret had left Chile before the first Marists got to Valparaiso in June, 1837. When on 7 September he

¹ Rademaker, op.cit. pp. 68f.

² Jore, op. cit., II, p. 35ff, 64f, n. 17 & 149. Wiltgen, op. cit., pp. 161ff. The story of Bachelot’s death and his burial after eight days went around the Pacific. Chanel had heard about it two years later, cf. EC, doc. 38 [3].

³ Born 1802, in Miniac, diocese of Rennes, information from SS.CC. archives.

reached France he found that Fr. Coudrin, the Founder of the Picpus Fathers, had died in March and that Bishop Raphaël Bonamie had been elected his successor.⁴ On 13 November, the same day that Colin received mail from Valparaiso, Bonamie⁵ too received a letter from there, probably by the same ship. The local superior, Fr. Pagès⁶, had written on 18 July, the day after Pompallier's first letter from Chile.⁷ Pagès reported that Pompallier had chartered the *Europa*, that the Marists had given up hope of getting to New Zealand and were on the point of sailing for Pohnpei in Micronesia, via the Gambier Islands and Hawaii. Caret was in Paris, read the letter and immediately saw the dire consequences of that decision: Pompallier would soon be so immersed in far away Micronesia, and from there perhaps in Melanesia, that for the foreseeable future nothing would be done about Tonga, Samoa, Fiji and, worse still, New Zealand, allowing the Protestants to consolidate their positions all over Polynesia. The fiery little Caret persuaded his new superior general to support another attempt to get these Polynesian main islands assigned to their congregation, as they had tried to do, without success, two years earlier.⁸ Unaware of the fact that in the meantime Pompallier had changed plans again, dropped four missionaries in the Polynesian heartlands and was approaching Sydney, Caret left France on 4 December for Rome with ample documentation and far-reaching recommendations.⁹

Pompallier's letter from Valparaiso¹⁰ would have been on Fransoni's desk when Fr. Caret called on him. The bishop's change of plans, practically writing off New Zealand and Polynesia, must already have alarmed the Cardinal. The panicky analysis of a man straight from Polynesia, who knew the situation intimately, could only confirm his worst fears.

At the same time the Cardinal received Colin's letter of 1 December¹¹, laconically reporting that the Marist missionary team was on its way to the 'islands of their destination'. Fransoni concluded that Colin did not understand the strategic implications of this turn of events. Colin had added that he was getting three or four priests and two brothers ready to leave 'during the course of 1838'.¹² His letter was low-key and did not show the sense of urgency and frustration that both Pompallier's letter and Caret's *exposé* exuded. Colin, moreover, offered to send two or three missionaries to Rome to obtain at the very centre of the Church the faculties and the instructions needed. The flattery was wasted on Fransoni and the last thing he needed just then were Marists on a leisurely visit to Rome. Things moved fast. Caret arrived in Rome the 15th; the next day Fransoni had his secretary deliver a fast riposte to Belley, telling Colin not to waste time and money sending missionaries to Rome, but to get them on the way to Oceania *quam citissime*¹³. The 17th Caret had a private audience with Pope Gregory XVI that nearly changed the missionary map of Oceania.¹⁴ Colin was out of tune.¹⁵

⁴ On the Roman happenings cf. Wiltgen, op. cit., pp. 142 – 150 & Jaspers, op. cit., pp. 206 – 208.

⁵ The letter was addressed to Fr. Coudrin. When writing, Pagès did not know that the Founder had died.

⁶ Frédéric Pagès, SSCC, had come to Chile with Bishop Rouchouze in 1834 and handled day-to-day business in Valparaiso. Cf. EC, 38.

⁷ Cf. above, p. 54.

⁸ Cf. above, p. 11f.

⁹ From the tone and the content of Colin's letter of 1 December we must conclude that there had been no contact between the two men before Caret's departure for Rome. Chanel's letter from Tahiti, telling Colin about Caret, was not to reach Colin until May or early June 1838 (cf. CS, 37).

¹⁰ ACPF, Congressi Oceania I, 424r, 424v. Cf. LRO, doc. 18 [9].

¹¹ Dated on 1 December from Belley, the letter would have taken ten to twelve days.

¹² CS, doc. 23 [3].

¹³ CS, doc. 24.

¹⁴ Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 145.

¹⁵ In the margin of Colin's letter of 19.05 somebody in Propaganda has written: *quanti ahimè ritardi!* 'Too bad, even more delays!'. CS, doc. 35.

The memorandum that Caret submitted to the Pope stressed that the major Polynesian island groups, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji and especially New Zealand had much larger populations than the islands in Eastern Polynesia. The Methodists had been active everywhere for years. Unless immediate action was taken, they would soon be so entrenched that they could bar entry everywhere to Catholic missionaries. That Pompallier had in the meantime shifted his interest to Micronesia was not mentioned in the memorandum, but must have been added orally. The secretary of Propaganda, Mgr. Mai, took up the matter again with the Pope on 14 January 1838 and Gregory XVI extended Rouchouze's jurisdiction westwards, as far as, and including, New Zealand. On 25 January Fransoni wrote to Pompallier. He told him that, given his involvement in other areas that would surely take up his time, his attention and his resources for years to come, Bishop Rouchouze had been authorized 'on an interim basis' to extend his missionary work to Tonga, Samoa, Fiji and New Zealand. A similar communication went the same day to Bishop Rouchouze. To both bishops went identical, extended faculties for solving marriage cases. Caret got a special subsidy of 3.000 Roman *scudi*, with the stipulation however, that the money could be used only for Eastern Oceania.¹⁶ A sign that Fransoni himself was uneasy about the rather irregular way he had been led to solve the problem?

What then happened, or rather, did not happen, is strange. There is no trace of any attempt to inform Father Colin, the superior general of the congregation to which the territories concerned were officially entrusted! After his visit to Rome, Caret met with Colin.¹⁷ There is no sign that, after that meeting, Colin knew of the new arrangement in the Pacific. It therefore looks as if Fransoni and Caret had agreed to keep Colin in the dark. For the moment, Colin was not only out of tune, but out of grace as well!

Fortunately, the extension of the Picpus Fathers' jurisdiction did not lead to a collision in the islands. In August 1838, probably before Caret had reached Valparaiso, captain Dupetit-Thouars on the frigate *La Vénus*, on orders of the *Affaires Étrangères* in Paris, exacted punitive reparation on the government of Tahiti for the expulsion of the French citizens Caret and Laval, in December 1836.¹⁸ The *Venus* trained her guns on the capital Papeete and the captain requested a written apology from Queen Pomare to be addressed to the King of France. He imposed a fine of 2.000 piastres, insisted that the French flag be raised on an island in the port and saluted by twenty-one shots from the guns of the Papeete fortress. The poor queen had to borrow the money from the Protestant mission. She wrote the apology but when the flag was raised, the queen's gunners had to beg for gunpowder from the *Venus*! The ramshackle guns of the fortress just managed twenty-one shots and French honour was restored. More important for the future of the missions, French citizens were guaranteed freedom of movement in the realm of Queen Pomare: the Picpus Fathers now could work in Tahiti.¹⁹ At the same time they had found an opening to start work in the Marquesas Islands; no dearth of opportunities in the Eastern Pacific. By that time the Pic-

¹⁶ Wiltgen, op. cit., pp. 146 ff.

¹⁷ There is only negative evidence for the assertion that Colin did not hear of the arrangement: namely the fact that there simply is no mention of it, not in Colin's next letter to Fransoni of 19 May (CS, doc. 35), nor in any of Colin's letters to the missionaries. Colin tried to get the second group of missionaries to travel with Fr. Caret to Valparaiso. Colin tells this to Fransoni in a way that suggests he then knew Caret (CS, doc. 35 [2]). Ten years later Colin spoke of having discussed the missions with Fr. Caret (MM IV, 550). As Caret did not return to Europe for a second time and died in the Gambier Islands on 26 October 1844, there can be no doubt that Colin and Caret met during Lent 1838, although there is no trace of it, either in the Picpus, or in the Marist archives (information from Jean Louis Schuester, SSCC archives, Rome).

¹⁸ Cf. above, p. 59.

¹⁹ Jore, op. cit., II, p. 234ff. Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 216. Jaspers, op. cit., p. 197.

pus Fathers in Valparaiso also knew of the presence of Marists in Wallis and Futuna and of Pompallier having settled in New Zealand.²⁰

Pompallier getting his feet on the ground

Happily unaware of these goings on, Pompallier arrived at the Hokianga river on 10 January 1838. The *Raiatea* was taken by a pilot through the dangerous shoals at the river mouth and they sailed about a hundred kilometres up the river to Totara Point, where they landed at the house of the Irishman Thomas Poynton to whom Archbishop Polding had referred him. Thomas and his wife Mary with the three children put the best of their wooden buildings at his disposal and Br. Colomb and Fr. Servant did what they could to turn the biggest room into a chapel. Come Saturday Pompallier said Mass for the first time in New Zealand.²¹ On 11 January the *Raiatea* sailed away, back to Tahiti. By the end of April she would have reached Tahiti and Moerenhout would have known that the Marist missionaries and their Bishop had safely landed in Wallis, Futuna and New Zealand. We can expect the story to have reached the Picpus Fathers in Valparaiso within a few months.

Soon a Wesleyan missionary on the Hokianga had so aroused his flock that a crowd of some twenty Maoris turned up, probably on 22 January, at Poynton's house with the intention of expelling the bishop from the land and throwing his 'wooden gods' into the river.²² Thomas Poynton, helped by a friendly Maori chief, succeeded in calming them down while Bishop Pompallier sat quietly in the house, saying his breviary. European Catholics as well as Protestants rallied behind the bishop and from then on the Catholics attended Mass and received the sacraments regularly at Totara Point. Servant and Pompallier began visiting Maori villages and learning the Maori language as well as improving their halting English. Both of them wrote with optimism of the promising contacts and the friendly reception they received on most places.²³

When the news that Pompallier had been harassed by the Methodists got to Sydney, a French warship, the frigate *Héroïne*, under captain Cécille, promptly sailed to New Zealand to show the flag and pay a courtesy visit to Pompallier in the Bay of Islands²⁴. She also brought part of the mission goods stored in Sydney. The captain had sent a letter ahead to Hokianga, and Pompallier walked across to the Bay of Islands²⁵, where, on 10 May 1838, he was received on board with military honours. Pompallier said Mass on the deck of the warship and, when he left the ship, the guns roared. The message was loud and clear: this man belongs to a mighty nation that will stand up for its citizens²⁶.

Pompallier was certainly not unaware of the political interpretations that some people were inclined to attach to his presence. Referring to the first months after his arrival he wrote: 'People involved in politics felt threatened. They suspected me to be a secret agent for the French government'. If that is so, then for at least some British citizens in the Bay area, the action of the *Héroïne* can only have confirmed their suspicions. Still, that was not

²⁰ Wiltgen, op. cit., p. 216.

²¹ Pompallier, op. cit., p. 71. Pompallier to Propagation de la Foi, 21.05.38. OPM H30. Simmons, op. cit., p. 30f.

²² Pompallier himself estimates the number of Maoris at twenty. Pompallier to Propagation de la Foi, 23.05.38. LRO, doc. 31 [5]. Simmons, op. cit., p. 31. The name *Maori* was not yet in general use for the New Zealand Polynesians until a few years later. The missionaries initially speak of *Nouveaux-Zélandais*, e.g. LRO, doc. 31 [8]. First mention of *ceremonies maoriennes* in LRO, doc. 52 [4] & [6], 05.03.40, by Servant. To avoid confusion we allow ourselves the anachronism. Cf. Yarwood, *Samuel Marsden: the Great Survivor*, p. 170.

²³ On the Wesleyan missionaries on the Hokianga see Howe, *Where the Waves Fall*, p. 224. LRO, doc. 26 [3] & doc. 27 [4].

²⁴ Jore, op. cit., I, p. 189, II, p. 86.

²⁵ According to Fr. Servant twenty leagues, i.e. a good hundred kilometers, LRO, doc. 26 [3].

²⁶ Jore, op. cit., II, p. 86; Jaspers, op. cit., p. 194, LRO, doc. 24 [4].

Pompallier's impression. 'I believe they now see that they were wrong'. Nevertheless, he felt a lot safer after the visit of the warship. The *Annales* of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith reported favourably on the intervention of the French navy.²⁷

The first letters from New Zealand

Before returning home Pompallier wrote a few letters from the Bay of Islands, where mailing was easier than from the Hokianga River. Apart from the duplicate of his letter from Sydney, that he had already sent on 20 March,²⁸ his letter of 14 May 1838 was the first one from New Zealand. He asked Colin to make a copy for Cardinal Fransoni but at the same time he wrote directly, to Rome as well as to Mr. Meynis, the secretary of the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon.²⁹

With many colourful details Pompallier told Colin of the *Héroïne*, how he was received on the ship, and on the pastoral work he had been able to do on board: forty-year old sailors who did their first communion, and many others who had to come to New Zealand 'where they thought to meet only *des sauvages*', to receive the Sacraments after many years.³⁰ He could tell him of the attack by Protestant Maoris on 22 January and of the peaceful way it had ended. He shared with Colin his joy at the friendly reception he had met with in several Maori tribal places.

Pompallier told Colin that he began to feel at ease speaking English and could provide pastoral service to the Catholic Europeans in their own language. The need to learn English put the study of the Maori language back. He praised the British authorities who maintained a strict impartiality between the different missions and would not allow the use of violence. With obvious satisfaction he reported: 'There will be no other combat than that of the word and by persuasion'.

Pompallier also aired his frustration at not having received as yet any mail, news or money from France, and at the debts he had been forced to make. He listed all the letters sent so far, asking Colin to acknowledge receipt as soon as feasible. He explained how he had planned his new house, further inland from Totara. He let his imagination run riot on how he would spread his missionaries if he got large numbers of them! He dreams of a schooner to visit his men on Wallis and Futuna, and what land he could buy in the Bay of Islands if he received some money. Eight tightly written pages in all! It must have kept him up all night.

With the experience of sailing the oceans of the world, he could confirm what he had already written from Sydney. He excluded all other ways than going round the Cape of Good Hope and across the Indian Ocean. There can be no better place for the urgently needed procure than Sydney. New Zealand may geographically not be central to Polynesia, but the prevailing winds and the frequent shipping made the Bay of Islands a good base, and easily reached from Sydney.³¹

With the same ship Pompallier also mailed a letter he had already written to Cardinal Fransoni before walking across to meet the *Héroïne*. It was the bishop's first letter since leaving Valparaiso and he explains why he simply had to change plans several times. He tells the Cardinal of the failed attempt to start a mission on Vava`u and of the successful establishment of missions on Wallis and Futuna. He recounts his visit to Sydney and Mgr.

²⁷ LRO, doc. 24 [3]. *Annales*, LXI, November 1838, p. 76.

²⁸ That duplicate reached Lyon, but when we do not know. Cf. LRO, doc. 22, introduction. On 10.11.1838, eight months later, Colin had not yet received it. Cf. CS, doc. 54, p. 98, n.2.

²⁹ OPM, H30, 00866

³⁰ LRO, doc. 24 [1].

³¹ LRO, doc. 24 [8].

Polding and, of course, his arrival in New Zealand. His account of the first months is optimistic and he does not dramatize the incident of 22 January. He proudly mentions his first adult baptism, and the name he gave: Gregorio, in honour of the Pope Gregory XVI. In the end he expresses his admiration for the talented Maori people and already mentions the prospect of sending students to Rome for priestly formation in not too far a future.³²

Another letter went to Mr. Meynis of the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon. Pompallier gracefully thanks them again for their support and he describes his voyage over thousands of miles across the Pacific Ocean, the near shipwreck off Vava`u, the events at Wallis and Futuna, the stop in Sydney and the arrival in New Zealand. He also mentions the need of a schooner and of a house in the Bay of Islands and asks for their continued support.³³

Father Servant had not waited for a mailing opportunity, and from Totara he had written letters to his parents³⁴, to Étienne Buffard, the parish priest of his home village, Grézieu-le-Marché, and to a priest in Saint-Chamond, Antoine-Adolphe Thiollière du Treuil.

Servant has plenty to tell his family, of the trip across the Pacific, the visit to Tonga, the founding of the missions on Wallis and Futuna, the voyage to Sydney and finally, of the arrival in New Zealand. He enthusiastically gives the first – very favourable – impressions of his new country and its people. The climate suits him, food is sober but adequate. The people are tough and hard working, They are well disposed to the Catholic missionaries. Having put their minds at rest, he exhorts them to accept the sacrifice of his absence wholeheartedly: ‘We are not permanently in this present life. Unless providence arranges things differently, which, humanly speaking, is not to be expected, we meet again in heaven.’

To the two befriended priests he goes into more detail on the voyage, the near disaster on the reefs near Vava`u, the beauty of the Pacific islands, the impressive Christian community in the Gambier Islands, the determined resistance from the Protestants and the way they were received on the islands of Wallis and Futuna where the Protestants had not ensconced themselves yet. He recounts how they were received in Australia and how they have fared in New Zealand so far. To them he describes (what he left out to his parents!) the attack of 22 January, and how since then things have settled down. He feels he is making progress in English and in what he feels is the easier language, Maori.³⁵

Pompallier, in his letter to Colin, is disappointed in Servant and his limited abilities: ‘Poor Father Servant is not of much help. His partial deafness is a real handicap in the beginning of the mission, especially in his contacts with outsiders. I can use him only for internal work on the station, he does some writing and I get him to give a few instructions to the English Catholics’.³⁶ The unpleasant tone of his remarks reveals that, to put it mildly, the two did not get along well. Brother Michel Colomb does not even get a mention.

Father Catherin Servant himself writes on a very different tone. He is a contented missionary, working hard to learn the languages that he needs for his ministry and optimistic about the prospects of the mission. He cannot have been unaware of the bishop’s

³² ACPF Congressi Oceania, vol 1, 485r – 488r. Propaganda keeps here two nearly identical letters of Pompallier, both dated Hokianga 21 May 1838 (the date must have been added later). One is obviously a copy, most probably written by Servant and sent by a different ship. It must have arrived later: the secretary of Propaganda speaks of only one letter, cf. CS, doc. 55.

³³ OPM, H30, 00866.

³⁴ LRO, doc. 25 [1]. On Servant and his parents, cf. above, p. 28.

³⁵ LRO, docs. 26 & 27. The dates on the letters are unsure, probably added later. In all his letters Servant writes extensively on the Maori people, their way of life, their behaviour, their customs. Cf. below, p.

³⁶ LRO, doc. 24 [5].

feelings. From later letters we know that Pompallier felt entitled to open and read the outgoing mail, even letters to the superior general! Fr. Servant had to hide his feelings.³⁷

Servant had stayed behind in Totara to assure Sunday Mass for the European faithful of the Hokianga area. Pompallier took Servant's letters to the Bay of Islands and mailed them with his own.³⁸

Wallis and Futuna

The four missionaries on the islands of Wallis and Futuna, had, all things considered, not fared too badly. The "kings" with whom Pompallier had negotiated, Lavelua on Wallis and Niuliki on Futuna, protected them and they were reasonably well looked after. Naturally they shared the vicissitudes of island life.

On Wallis the two missionaries had to flee with Lavelua when a powerful islander went berserk and terrorized the whole island for a few weeks. After six months the two missionaries had a good house at their disposal where Bataillon could say Mass. All the time, Bataillon refrained from openly evangelizing. In view of the Wallisians' distaste for the Christian religion, that they identified with the Tongan Methodists, he did not show the real purpose of his presence.³⁹

Futuna suffered a devastating cyclone in February whereby the missionaries lost their house and lived in a corner of Niuliki's house for some time. Because of the cyclone food was scarce, but the fertile soils of Futuna quickly recovered. By May Niuliki had another house built for them.

In March war broke out between the "kingdoms" of Alo and Sigave, which unsettled life for the islanders and the two missionaries. After a number of casualties on both sides, peace was restored. Chanel tried hard to raise goats, but the local dogs ate the little ones and the islanders neglected them, or sold them to passing ships.⁴⁰

On Futuna lived an Englishman, named John Jones, who ran a little schooner and on 23 March 1838, shortly after the outbreak of war, Chanel was able to visit Bataillon for the first time. Until then he did not even know if his confrere was alive, and, quite possibly, Bataillon did not know that Chanel and Marie-Nizier were on Futuna! After entering the lagoon, Jones, who spoke the language, made enquiries from the Wallisians in the approaching canoes. Once they were reassured, they went ashore. Bataillon heard about it and was soon there to meet them.⁴¹

I was clear that Bataillon was better at learning the language than Chanel. He had already succeeded in composing the beginnings of a grammar and a lengthy list of words that Chanel was happy to copy and that helped him with Futunian.⁴²

³⁷ Servant to Colin in 1840, LRO, doc. 55 [6]: 'The company of the bishop has often been for me a source of pain and bitterness', *La compagnie de Mgr a été souvent pour moi une source de chagrin et d'amertume*. Cf. Petit to Colin, also in 1840, LRO, doc. 56. On the opening of letters by Pompallier, loc.cit. [10].

³⁸ Pompallier gave the letters to the captain of a French whaler, the *Mississippi*, that was on the point of leaving for a direct voyage to France (LRO, doc. 24 [2]). Jore (II, op. cit., p. 404) says the *Mississippi* left the Bay of Islands on 3 May. That cannot be correct.

³⁹ LRO, doc. 28 [17 & 18]; doc. 38 [3].

⁴⁰ EC, doc. 42 [3], doc 45, [1 & 2].

⁴¹ EC, doc. 39 [3]. The fare was 40 francs. That Jones had to enquire suggests that he at least had not made the crossing since November. From November to April is the hurricane season, with periods of calm interrupted by violent storms.

⁴² Wallisian is close to Tongan, Futunian to Samoan. Tongan and Samoan, and thus Wallisian and Futunian, have nearly the same grammar and, with predictable changes of consonants, they have many words in common. EC, doc. 42 [1].

The missionaries could not be sure whether Pompallier ever got to Australia and New Zealand until June 1838, when Br. Marie-Nizier heard from a sailor on a French whaler that there were stories in New Zealand about a French bishop.⁴³

Not infrequently ships, especially whalers, mostly American or English, but also a few French, called at both islands. Some were on the way to New Zealand, others came from there. A few even came straight from the Bay of Islands, but the missionaries on the shallow Hokianga river would not have had contact with them. In any case, the movements of the whalers were unpredictable, and often they left again before one could get a letter on board.⁴⁴

The Society of Mary

The acceptance of the missions of Oceania had not only led to the pontifical approbation of the Society of Mary, it had also put the Society on the map in France. In Colin's own words, the missions had become 'a source of blessings'.⁴⁵

When Jean-Claude Colin had become the central superior in 1830, there were twelve men committed to the Marist project.⁴⁶ By the time the Oceania mission came into view, one of them had pulled out and nine others had entered: nine in five years. In 1836 Pierre Bataillon joined in order to leave with the first missionary group. Twenty took their first and perpetual vows at the end of the founding chapter of September, four of them left for Oceania which left sixteen professed members in France.

Even before the first missionaries had embarked, new candidates presented themselves.⁴⁷ In May 1837 Colin could tell Fransoni that several priests from among those who had done profession in September 1836, had now volunteered for Oceania.⁴⁸ Moreover: 'A large group of candidates have presented themselves for the Society'.⁴⁹ Around the end of the school year 1836 - 1837, when Pompallier and his team were in Valparaiso, the Society counted sixteen novices. During the next school year seven novices made their profession and seven new novices entered.⁵⁰

Some of the twenty-three novices, most of them priests, who joined the Society within two years of its approbation, may have had some connection with the Marists before the Oceania missions became part of the Marist project, and to what extent the commitment to Oceania influenced their decision to join is impossible to say. Still, in two years' time the number of Marist priests, professed or novice, had more than doubled.

The Brothers too had done well. During 1837 twenty-five made their profession and they received forty new novices.⁵¹ No less than sixty-six requests came in for the Brothers to take on new schools. Jean-Claude Colin and Marcellin Champagnat could afford to work on a follow-up team.⁵²

⁴³ EC, doc. 42 [1].

⁴⁴ EC, doc. 42 [1]. In the 1840's there were 700 American whaling ships in the Pacific Ocean. Cf. Howe, *op. cit.*, pp. 93f

⁴⁵ CS, doc. 13 [1].

⁴⁶ OM I, doc. 220 [2].

⁴⁷ LRO, doc. 10 [10], doc. 11 [1].

⁴⁸ CS, doc. 13 [4].

⁴⁹ CS, doc. 13 [1].

⁵⁰ CS1, p. 33.

⁵¹ CS, doc. 9 [4] and footnote; LC, p. 187, & doc. 194, ll. 37ff.

⁵² Cf. CS1, pp. 652 - 657.

Colin in action

From the day the *Delphine* sailed out of Le Havre, destination Valparaiso, there was little Fr. Colin could do but wait for the first news. The letter from Santa Cruz indicated that the first leg of the voyage would take even longer than foreseen, and it took eleven months before he knew that the missionaries had reached Valparaiso. And then, so it appeared, they were heading into an entirely new direction! Still, it got him into action.

Pompallier later agreed that Colin had been right in not sending a follow-up team before hearing from Valparaiso, but he also felt that by then Colin could have had a team ready to leave. He did not see why, from that moment, it took Colin another nine months to get a team on the way⁵³. Perhaps he had a point. Leaving problems to solve themselves came natural to Colin. ‘My great principle has always been to wait for the moment of Providence’.⁵⁴ The man battling away at the front, not knowing what action, if any, was being taken, cannot be blamed for expecting a little more decisiveness.

On 10 January 1838, Father Colin addressed a circular letter to the priests and the Brothers of the Society of Mary. As Champagnat was away in Paris, Colin asked his deputy, Brother François Rivat, to circulate it to the Brothers as well.⁵⁵ Colin could only tell them that in early August the missionaries had been on the point of leaving Valparaiso ‘for their destination’. He evidently did not want to go into the sudden change of plans and expressed the hope that they would now be among the people to whom they were sent, and would be working the land that by design of Providence had become the ‘heritage of the children of Mary’.⁵⁶ He quoted Cardinal Fransoni⁵⁷ urging him to send reinforcements as quickly as possible.

Colin held to his policy of sending only volunteers. It is a great consolation, he wrote, to see several men in the Society anxious to commit themselves. So much fervour is a sure sign of divine protection. We cannot let everyone go. Our numbers do not allow it. The problem is to choose those who are called by Jesus and Mary. Missionary work is a vocation that can only come from on high. There were more volunteers than the Society could afford to send and it was his unenviable task, he wrote, to know what Jesus and Mary wanted. He begged the whole Society to pray that Jesus and Mary make him know their will. For that purpose he organized in great detail in all the branches of the Society a campaign of prayers to be said until the Feast of the Purification of Mary. In February the missionaries for the second group were appointed.

On 3 February 1838 the newspapers reported that the Marists were ready to send a second group of missionaries to Oceania to reinforce the small group of three priests and three brothers that at that moment formed Bishop Pompallier’s missionary staff, effectively doubling it.⁵⁸

⁵³ LRO, doc. 37 [6].

⁵⁴ *Mon grand principe a toujours été d’attendre le moment de la Providence*, OM II, doc. 425 [17], April 1838.

⁵⁵ CS, doc. 26. Cf. CS, doc. 31 [1]. This letter is not included in the 1897 official collection of circular letters.

⁵⁶ CS, doc. 26 [1]. Champagnat went a step further and mentioned in a letter to the French government that Pompallier had reached his destination, which, unknown to people in France, he in fact had! Letter to *Monsieur de Salvandy*, 14.02.38, LC, doc. 173, ll. 22ff. Cf. doc. 188, ll. 8ff.

⁵⁷ Colin says the letter is dated 26 December, but it is clearly the one of the 16th. He must have quoted from memory, and possibly confused it with the date the letter arrived. This past master of letter writing was not equally good at filing. He often did not have letters in hand when answering, a thing that had annoyed Pompallier from the start! Cf. LRO, doc. 7 [26]. Possibly the reason why he mostly failed to acknowledge receipt.

⁵⁸ *L’Ami de la Religion*, 3.2.1838 (96) 196. Colin Studies, II, p. 57.

Selecting a team

Although several of the Marists who made their profession in September 1836 volunteered, Colin selected only one of them for the next group, and he made him its superior: **Claude-André Baty**.⁵⁹ Born in 1811 in Saint-Jean sur Reyssouze (Ain), Claude was a student in Belley when Colin was the superior there. As a deacon he was part of the staff under Chanel and Colin and in 1835 he moved to the Marist community of the *Capucinière*. He probably volunteered for the first group, but as he was ordained only in December 1835, he would not have been a serious candidate then. In any case he was not selected and after the profession he was assigned to join Pierre Colin at the new Marist house in Lyon⁶⁰, that functioned as a novitiate. Claude-André was socius to Pierre Colin, the novice master. During the school year 1837-1838 he was at Valbenoîte from where he volunteered for the second group and was selected.

Louis-Maxime Petit⁶¹ was the first Marist who did not come from south-eastern France but from Arras, on the coast of the English Channel. Born in October 1797, he would be the oldest missionary sent out so far. He entered the Marist novitiate in May 1837 as a priest of the diocese of Boulogne.⁶² He most probably had heard at home of the first group that left from nearby Le Havre, and presented himself in view of the Oceania missions. The suggestion that Colin made to Cardinal Franson, i.e., to send a few missionaries to Rome, may have come from him. On 20 January Colin wrote to him to forget about going to Rome, quoting the cardinal.⁶³ It gave Colin an opportunity to give him some of his manly spiritual direction: purify your motivations! Colin made him wait for the appointment to the islands, insisting that he learn to accept decisions of his superiors instead of arranging his own life. He was professed on 16 July 1838.

The third priest was **Jean-Baptiste Épalle**⁶⁴, born 8 March 1808 in Marllhes, the same parish where Marcellin Champagnat came from.⁶⁵ After the minor seminary in St. Jodard, he entered Saint-Irénée in 1834 and joined the Marists in September 1837. Both he and Petit were assigned to the missions while novices. He too was professed on 16 July 1838.

In January 1838 Fr. Champagnat left the Hermitage for Lyon and Paris where he hoped to obtain government recognition of the Marist Brothers as a teaching order.⁶⁶ He was in Paris from 18 January to 24 April and again from 14 May to 2 July. His absences complicated the selection of the Brothers. On 23 January Colin wrote to Brother François Rivat that Bishop Pompallier had sailed from Valparaiso on 10 August. And that he had asked for three or four Brothers to be sent with the second group. Perhaps expecting Marcellin Champagnat to be back soon, he added: 'When Fr. Champagnat returns we shall arrange things'.⁶⁷

⁵⁹ OM IV, p. 195.

⁶⁰ Montée St. Barthélémy, 24. Later on they moved down the same street to number 4.

⁶¹ APM, personal file.

⁶² CS I, p. 652.

⁶³ CS, doc. 29. Cf. above, p. 68.

⁶⁴ Monfat, *Dix Années en Mélanésie*, pp. 45ff.

⁶⁵ M. Champagnat was born in Le Rozey, a hamlet within the parish of Marllhes, cf. Farrell, op. cit., p. 6.

⁶⁶ LC I, p. 328. Colin was in Belley and Champagnat did not go there. They did not meet. Cf. LC, doc 169

⁶⁷ CS, doc. 31 [1]. The request for three or four Brothers sounds like a free quote from Pompallier's letter of 28 July from Valparaiso 'four priests and three Brothers', LRO, doc. 18 [5]. The same letter says he hopes to leave on 1 August. That Colin makes it the 10th is a pure coincidence. He did not yet have that information.

The selection of the Brothers started before Champagnat had left. Brother Denis Bron⁶⁸, superior of the community in St. Didier, had volunteered. Champagnat answered: 'I think your desire comes from God. I believe you have the graces and the gift for that work. Keep it in mind. Keep your accounts in order so that if you are called to leave, you will be ready'.⁶⁹ In fact, Denis never left for Oceania.

Another Brother, François-Régis Boiton,⁷⁰ was selected by Champagnat but he then contacted Colin to say he wanted to become a priest. On 10 June he spoke about it to Terrailon,⁷¹ who advised Br. François Rivat, the acting superior, to let the Brother take leave of his parents as if departing for Oceania, which would give François time to write to Champagnat in Paris. Champagnat was not convinced and upheld the original appointment for the missions. He wrote to Rivat to send Brother François-Régis to Lyon to a printer to pick up the trade before the departure. Then Colin overruled Champagnat. Under the circumstances he did not consider François-Régis a suitable candidate for the missions and he took him off the list. As to the priesthood, he let the Brother know that it was entirely up to himself to decide. If he wanted to change his ecclesiastical status for the priesthood, he should leave the congregation and be dispensed of his vows.⁷² He seems to have left. There is no further mention of him in the records.

Another Brother, **Marie-Augustin (Joseph) Drevet**,⁷³ born in August 1809, professed in 1835, was first appointed for the missions, then taken off the list to make place for François-Régis, and put back again when Colin intervened.

The second Brother was **Élie-Régis (Étienne) Marin** (or **Marrin**). He was born on 20 September 1809. A carpenter by trade, he must also have had some years at school. He joined the Marist Brothers in 1835. Within a year he was temporarily professed and on 9 October 1837 he made his perpetual profession. On 12 January 1839 he wrote from Valparaiso with such enthusiasm of the privilege of having been sent to the missions that we may conclude he had volunteered. Colin hesitated about his selection for the missions.⁷⁴

Then there was **Florentin (Jean-Baptiste) Françon**. Born in 1815 in La Versanne Ruthiange, Loire. From his later success as a farmer in New Zealand we may conclude that he must have worked on the farm before joining the Brothers in 1835. He was professed together with Elie-Régis on 9 October 1837. He probably had no formal schooling than what he received as a Brother in the Hermitage. He did not volunteer for the missions but was sent. He wrote a few years later to Brother François: 'As you know, I left not by my own choice, but because I was sent'.⁷⁵

From two of these cases, Brother François-Régis and Brother Florentin, we can conclude that Marcellin Champagnat followed a different policy from Colin. Colin left the initiative to the men, and reserved to himself the judgment of their suitability and the final

⁶⁸ LC II, p. 171f

⁶⁹ LC, doc. 168.

⁷⁰ LC II, p. 231f.

⁷¹ CS, doc. 38.

⁷² LC doc. 197, l. 46. CS, doc. 41 [3].

⁷³ LC II, p. 358. Ronzon, FMO, pp. 35ff.

⁷⁴ Ronzon, FMO, p. 22ff. CS, doc. 41 [1].

⁷⁵ FMO, pp. 30ff. To François Rivat, 09.03.1842: '*Je suis parti, comme vous le savez, plutôt par obéissance que par choix*'.

decision. Champagnat allowed men to volunteer, but he did not hesitate to take the initiative and to appoint someone he considered suitable. Was there less enthusiasm among the Brothers?

Later, after three months together on the ship, the priests were not happy about the way the Brothers had been selected. Especially if the procure was to be entrusted to them it would be important to select them more carefully. One of the three (Florentin?) had told them he had just once mentioned Oceania, and was appointed without further ado. He regretted being on the way to Oceania.⁷⁶

Money matters

On 13 January 1838 Colin wrote to Mr. Meynis, the secretary of the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon, asking for a generous allocation. He was preparing to send four priests and two catechists in the course of the year. In fact they will leave, quoting Cardinal Frasoni, 'as quickly as possible'.⁷⁷

Colin argued that he not only had to cover the costs of travelling, but that the best way of getting money to Mgr. Pompallier was to entrust it to the missionaries. Meynis had read Pompallier's letter from Valparaiso and knew, not only that Pompallier was running out of funds, but also that the 8.700 francs that were sent in May to Valparaiso, had not been there at the Bishop's arrival. 'You know, Colin could write, what financial state he is in at present'. He urges that it would be a great advantage if the Propagation could make an advance on next year's allocation, 'because you know the problem of transferring money, once the missionaries have left'.⁷⁸

When, end May 1838, Colin received Pompallier's letter of October 1837 from Tahiti, he forwarded it to Mr. Meynis to support his application. On 8 June he wrote again. The Propagation would have preferred waiting with the subsidy until the end of the financial year, but Colin urged that without the advance on the allowance for 1838 it would be difficult to get the missionaries to New Zealand.⁷⁹

Where to go, and how?

By the time Colin had his second team appointed, in March 1838, four months had passed since he got the letters sent from Valparaiso and he still knew no more than that Pompallier had redirected his planning towards Micronesia. Valparaiso was now off the list as a place for the procure, and the bishop advised against sending missionaries round Cape Horn. He had said the next group of missionaries could best travel via the Caribbean Sea⁸⁰ and Mexico to Hawaii, where he was thinking of setting up the procure, although he also mentioned the possibility of a procure in California or Mexico.⁸¹

Fr. Caret returned from Rome during Lent and met with Fr. Colin.⁸² At that moment Caret was probably already booked to leave from Bordeaux in May and Colin asked him to arrange for the Marists to travel with him as far as Valparaiso. Not unlikely Caret convinced Colin that, as nobody knew for sure where Pompallier and his missionaries had gone to, Valparaiso was as good a place to find out as any. Unfortunately, the ship on

⁷⁶ Baty to Colin, 12.01.39. Later on, Pompallier too was not impressed: '*braves, mais .. peu formés ..et peu de têtes*', LRO, doc. 34 [17].

⁷⁷ CS, doc. 27.

⁷⁸ Cf. above, p. 55.

⁷⁹ CS, doc. 37.

⁸⁰ He speaks of the *la Mer des Antilles*.

⁸¹ LRO, doc. 15 [5 & 6], doc. 17 [4] & doc. 18 [4].

⁸² Cf. above, pp. 69.

which he was to travel turned out to be fully booked. Caret sailed from Bordeaux in May 1838 with several companions, among whom twelve Sisters of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts.⁸³

Colin then got Archbishop de Pins to approach the minister of the navy and the colonies, Claude du Campe de Rosamel, to whom he had recently forwarded a letter from Pompallier. As Pompallier had suggested, the Archbishop asked for passage on a government vessel to Polynesia or at least to Valparaiso.⁸⁴ Even after a follow-up letter the ministry did not answer and nothing came of it.

On 19 May Colin wrote to Cardinal Frasoni to explain why no action had as yet been taken on the Cardinal's urgent request to get the missionaries on the way. The second group had been appointed: three priests and three Brothers (catechists), and were standing by, but the hope to receive more recent news about Bishop Pompallier's whereabouts had made him put off the departure. However, Colin added, he had come to the conclusion that it did not make sense to wait much longer, and he had decided to send them as quickly as possible to Valparaiso, in the hope that they could find out more there. A first attempt, namely to have them travel with Fr. Caret has failed, Colin wrote, but he was now looking for another opportunity.

Given the long time since news had come from Pompallier, one could not exclude the possibility that he had perished at sea. Colin mentioned this in as many words to the Cardinal and asked for the broadest possible faculties to allow the missionaries to cope with any eventuality. He proposed that Claude-André Baty be appointed apostolic vicar or pro-vicar in case anything untoward had happened, *en cas d'événement*.⁸⁵ Rome granted all requests.⁸⁶

Shortly after writing to Frasoni, Colin received Pompallier's letter from Tahiti.⁸⁷ As far as there at least, nothing had gone wrong. The Bishop's enthusiastic descriptions of the newly converted Gambier Islands were a source of joy. But as to further information the letter was a disappointment. If anything it added to the confusion. Colin now learned that, while in Tahiti, Pompallier had also given up hope of doing anything in Hawaii. He was now (i.e., eight months earlier!) looking again at Tonga, Samoa, Fiji and even New Zealand, without, as yet, losing sight of Micronesia. On the other hand, instead of Honolulu, Sydney was again in the picture as a possible base. In fact, the letter left it all very open. Pompallier now preferred the eastern route, around the Cape of Good Hope and Australia, without excluding the western one around Cape Horn. He heaped praise on Moerenhout in Tahiti and his readiness to help the missionaries who might still come his way.⁸⁸

SUMMARY

Half way through 1838, nearly a year and a half after the first Marist missionaries had left their mother country, Jean-Claude Colin, the superior general of the Society of Mary, knew only that they had reached Tahiti, in the Pacific Ocean and had sailed from there. Further on, he had no idea where they were, nor indeed whether they were still alive. End of March Father Bataillon and Brother Joseph Luzy on Wallis Island had found out that Father Chanel and Brother Marie-Nizier Delorme had been for half a year already

⁸³ CS, doc. 35. Information thanks to Jean Louis Schuester, SSCC Archives, Rome.

⁸⁴ LRO, doc. 20 [5] ; CS 1, p. 63, n. 4 ; doc. 37.

⁸⁵ CS, doc. 35 [3 & 4].

⁸⁶ On 26 June. Cf. CS 1, p. 64. CS, doc. 54 [5].

⁸⁷ LRO, doc. 21. Dated 2 October 1837, it reached Colin after he wrote to Frasoni but before the letter to Meynis of 8 June 1838. CS, doc. 37 [1]. Eight months!

⁸⁸ LRO, doc. 21 [11 – 15].

on the neighbouring (at 220 km!) island of Futuna. Chanel had visited his confrere on Wallis: the first contact between the missionaries on the Polynesian islands. They did not know where their bishop was, nor indeed if he had not perished after disappearing over their horizon. At the same time the bishop and his two companions had no idea how the four missionaries whom they had left behind on the small Polynesian islands had fared, nor indeed if they had not been killed or had not died in some other way.

All the way, the missionaries had done their best to keep the superior general informed. They had sent letters from the Canary Islands, Chile, Tahiti, Australia and New Zealand, but half-way through 1838 the superior had received only those from the Canary Islands, Chile and Tahiti.

Father Colin had sent money in May 1837 and a parcel of mail in November 1837, but half-way through 1838 nothing had reached the missionaries.

There had been good reasons to worry about the way things were going on the other side of the world. Propaganda in Rome had panicked when it learned that Pompallier was redirecting his activity away from Polynesia and Fr. Caret had got the Pope to redraw the missionary map of the Pacific. Rome felt that Colin underestimated the seriousness of the situation and looked in vain for a sense of urgency in Lyon. Colin was unruffled and took his time getting a follow-up team together, but when the team was ready, he did not know where and how to send it on its way.