

## Chapter 13

### January - August 1842 Action in the Pacific

#### Bataillon on Wallis

After the murder of Peter Chanel and the arrival of the refugees from Futuna (early May 1841), everything possible had been done to notify Bishop Pompallier in New Zealand and Father Colin in France. More than half a year later the missionaries on Wallis, the Fathers Pierre Bataillon and Joseph Chevron and the Brothers Marie-Nizier Delorme, Joseph Luzy and Attale Grimaud, had received no reaction from anywhere. Then, in mid-December 1841, an American whaler called in Wallis, probably the same *William Hamilton* that had brought the refugees in May. The Captain told Bataillon he wanted to take in water and fresh foods to sail directly to Valparaiso, Chile.<sup>1</sup>

Bataillon had a long letter on his desk, a sort of report he had been working on for a year and a half but instead of finishing it he wrote another letter for immediate dispatch. He is bitter. Four years earlier his Bishop had dropped him on this island with Brother Joseph promising to come and see them in about four months. Four years later, no visit and only one letter, in May 1840, when Father Chevron had arrived with Brother Attale.<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the year 1841 just about the whole of Wallis had accepted the Christian lotu. They had all been instructed and were waiting for the Bishop to be received into the Church. Many had copied the prayers for themselves and could read them. Just three months earlier the tenth coastal village had finished building its own little chapel. There were problems of course. The chieftain who had been the first to support the lotu, Tuugahala, was now behaving in most unchristian ways. That 'the great missionary' (the Bishop) whom the people were waiting for did not come made some people wonder if the missionaries were not impostors after all. For the rest, he could assure Father Colin, they were safe and in good health. He dated the letter 15 December 1841 and the *William Hamilton* took it to the Picpus Fathers in Valparaiso. They mailed it and Father Colin received it by regular mail on 25 September 1842, shortly after his return from Rome.<sup>3</sup>

#### Pompallier on Wallis

Just two weeks later, on 28 December 1841, at nightfall, a big schooner accompanied by a large corvette flowing the Tricolour of France came into sight close to Wallis. Canoes rushed out and a large number of Wallisians clambered on board the schooner. They were delighted to recognise the Bishop they had been waiting for. The corvette *Allier* stayed outside for the night but the *Sancta Maria* entered the lagoon and helped by the locals

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Girard, *Lettres reçues d'Océanie* [LRO] (Paris: Karthala, 2009) volume 1, Doc 119, 1. Cf Jan Sniijders, *A Mission Too Far...Pacific Commitment* [MTF] (Adelaide: Australasian Theological Foundation, 2012), 340-2.

<sup>2</sup> MTF, 244.

<sup>3</sup> LRO 1, Doc 119.

was able to drop anchor in a safe place. The next day sailors surveyed the entrance and the *Allier* was able to enter the lagoon as well.

Very early in the morning the Bishop's companion, Father Philippe Viard, had himself rowed around the island to the place where the Fathers were living and met them when they were on the point of saying Mass. On the invitation of Bataillon, Viard said Mass for a church full of people praying with great devotion. The two then went to the *Sancta Maria* to meet Pompallier, in the unctuous wording of Viard: 'How sweet a consolation for Monseigneur to meet again with the Fathers who had not seen each other for so long!'<sup>4</sup>

The truce lasted until Pompallier told Bataillon and Chevron that he intended to stay only five or six days, proceed to Futuna to gather the remains of Peter Chanel and return to New Zealand. At that point Bataillon must have blown up. More or less the same day Bataillon repeated in a letter to Colin his accusation: 'Only the death of Father Chanel made him finally decide to come and see us'.<sup>5</sup> This letter, written at that moment, strongly suggests that Bataillon had challenged Pompallier to his face and in those very words. Six weeks later Viard found it necessary to explain to Colin at length why the Bishop did not go any earlier adding, untruthfully, that he had made several attempts to go.<sup>6</sup> Certain is that the two missionaries told Pompallier they wanted to leave the island and get another assignment unless he kept his word to the Wallisian people and stayed for a few months. Nine months later, writing to Épalle, Pompallier still did not have a good word to say on the magnificent achievement of Bataillon: 'I found the mission languishing and the priests wanting to leave. I decided to battle along with them. Within a fortnight I learned the language and in three weeks I visited the villages of the island. The Lord enabled me to preach in the local language and in four and a half months the whole island was baptised and confirmed.'<sup>7</sup>

In any case, Pompallier gave in and changed his plans. He sent Viard with Br Marie-Nizier to collect the remains of Peter Chanel and take them to New Zealand. Himself, he would stay in Wallis and wait for the *Sancta Maria* to return.<sup>8</sup>

## **Viard on Futuna<sup>9</sup>**

On 6 January 1842 Viard left with Marie-Nizier on the *Sancta Maria* under cover of the guns of the *Allier* to Futuna. Marie-Nizier will have guided the ship to the Bay of Singave, near the south-west end of the island, the only anchorage in north-westerly seas. When the Futunans saw the man-of-war approaching many fled into the hills but extremely rough seas and north-west winds kept the two vessels cruising in sight of the

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<sup>4</sup> LRO 2, Doc 133, 3. '*Combien fut douce la consolation de monseigneur de revoir ces pères qu'ils n'avaient pu voir depuis bien longtemps*'.

<sup>5</sup> LRO 2, Doc 125, 13. This was the letter that had been on his desk for a year and a half. He finished it during the presence of the two ships and entrusted it to Captain du Bouzet.

<sup>6</sup> Viard to Colin, 16 or 19 February 1842, LRO 2, Doc 133,4. Unless Viard had heard of it then and there he would probably not even have known of the reproach.

<sup>7</sup> LRO 2, Doc 193, 4 '*A Wallis, mission des plus languissantes à mon arrivée. Si je n'y eusse pas resté, les pères Bataillon et Chevron me supplioient de les emmener avec moi ailleurs.*'

<sup>8</sup> Pompallier to Maîtrepierrre, 6 November 1842. LRO 2, Doc 218, 8.

<sup>9</sup> This paragraph is a repeat of MTF 351-2.

island. When they finally could approach land, a group of what du Bouzet called Chanel's supporters, came on board of the *Sancta Maria* by canoe.

They learned that King Niuliki had died not long after the murder of Chanel, which the whole island saw as a punishment from on high. On order of Captain du Bouzet a senior Singave chief brought the remains of Chanel, respectfully wrapped in mats. The *Allier*'s surgeon did a proper examination and identified the body from what Marie-Nizier could tell him about the way Chanel was killed. Other people brought his cassock, his chalice and a few books. Musumusuu stayed away even though he was given the assurance that he would not be arrested.

Du Bouzet delivered an address that Marie-Nizier translated into Futunan. He told the islanders that the French authorities had wanted to punish them very severely but on the insistence of the Bishop no punishment would be inflicted. They were warned however that another atrocity would not go unpunished. The people asked for missionaries to take Chanel's place so they could be received into the Church. Viard put the remains on board of the mission schooner and the two ships left, the *Allier* back to Akaroa, Viard on the *Sancta Maria* carrying the remains, straight for the Bay of Islands. The mission ship would come back later to pick up Pompallier.

### **Pompallier receives Wallis into the Church**

Whatever had happened between Bishop Pompallier and Father Bataillon, the two got into a working relationship and set to bring in the harvest. With his gift for languages and his knowledge of Maori it did not take Pompallier long to understand and express himself in Wallisian. He walked all over the island and visited the villages. Pompallier instructed people, prepared them for the Sacraments and organised large baptism and confirmation ceremonies. They would have loved his ceremonial like the Maoris did.<sup>10</sup> The old Pompallier of the first years in New Zealand came alive again among the people of Wallis. In the description of Brother Joseph Luzy: 'The Bishop forgot all about his high rank, he sat on the ground in the midst of his flock. He drank their kava and ate with his fingers from a banana leaf on the ground'.<sup>11</sup>

In New Zealand it took Viard much longer than foreseen to pay off the Captain and the crew and have necessary repairs done. It was not until 2 April that he could set off for Wallis again, taking with him the Fathers Catherin-Louis Servant and Joseph-François Roulleaux and Brother Marie-Nizier Delorme. Mr. Hall went with them expecting to return to Pohnpei in Micronesia with the two priests as Bishop Pompallier had promised.<sup>12</sup>

The *Sancta Maria* reached Wallis the first days of May. With the mail it carried Bataillon received Colin's letter of 21 November 1840<sup>13</sup> which he set to answer straight

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Jessie Munro, 'Colin and Pompallier' in *Catholic Beginnings in Oceania* (Adelaide: ATF, 2009), 65-85. Cf MTF, 394-5.

<sup>11</sup> Luzy to his parents, brothers and sisters, 26 May 1842. Family archives. It was still customary at the time for the kava to be chewed by young people and spit out to mix the drink for the guests!

<sup>12</sup> James Hall, a Presbyterian settler on Pohnpei, Micronesia, came to New Zealand around February 1841 to seek Catholic missionaries for his home island. Pompallier had agreed and made a formal promise to send some (LRO 2, 192, 24). Cf LRO 1, p. 668, n. 24. Hall had become a Catholic while in Kororareka.

<sup>13</sup> Gaston Lessard, « *Colin sup* », *Documents pour l'étude du généralat de Jean-Claude Colin (1836-1854)* [CS] (Rome: Marist Fathers, 2007) volume 1, Doc 217.

away. By now he saw things in a more relaxed perspective and wrote: ‘As all our misery came from the Bishop’s delay, so his visit has made things come right’.<sup>14</sup> Pompallier conferred baptism and confirmation on some 2200 Wallisians. Towards the end of his stay, 23 May, he baptised the last group of 154 converts, among whom was the King and several chiefs who had waited to be received into the Church together with their King.<sup>15</sup> The ceremonies were rounded off with the solemn planting of a large cross on 25 May.

It was only then, with the arrival of Viard, that the Bishop heard how the January visit to Futuna had gone which allowed him to make plans for the future. In answer to the Futunans’ request he assigned Servant, Roulleaux and Marie-Nizier to Futuna in the hope they could receive the island into the Church. He appointed Father Chevron and Brother Attale to begin a mission in Tonga. The mission to Micronesia had to be postponed and Mr Hall stayed in Wallis waiting for a ship to return home. On 28 May the party sailed on the *Sancta Maria* with the Vaimua Lavelua, King of Wallis, and a large crowd of Wallisians going to visit relatives on Futuna.<sup>16</sup>

### **Pompallier on Futuna**

The Singave chief Sam Keletaone had returned to Futuna with Viard in January and when the Bishop got there in May it became clear that Sam had rallied many people around him. Pompallier told the Futunans they would never become a peaceful nation as long as they had two kingdoms and two rival kings. He asked the people whom they wanted as king and it became clear that Sam would be widely acceptable on which the Bishop formally acknowledged him as the one paramount chief of Futuna.<sup>17</sup> He baptised him under the name Petelo Sam in memory of Peter Chanel whose friend he had been. His wife was baptised with him and they were confirmed. They received Holy Communion which established their legitimacy in the eyes of the Futunan people. The crowd of newly baptised Wallisians who had come with the Bishop gave a good example by going to confession and receiving Holy Communion.

Accompanied by Petelo and a large crowd Pompallier went on a solemn visit to Poi where Peter Chanel was killed: a four or five hour walk along the south coast and round the eastern end of the island. He said Mass on the spot and after preaching to the repentant crowd he planted a seven-foot-high cross. People handed him objects that had belonged to Peter Chanel. He especially appreciated the adze with which Chanel had been killed and that still carried the marks of what appeared to be with blood encrusted rust. People assured him it had become a sacred object for them and had not been used at all since the killing. Digging into the ground Pompallier found at a few inches depth what he believed was sand still red with clotted blood.

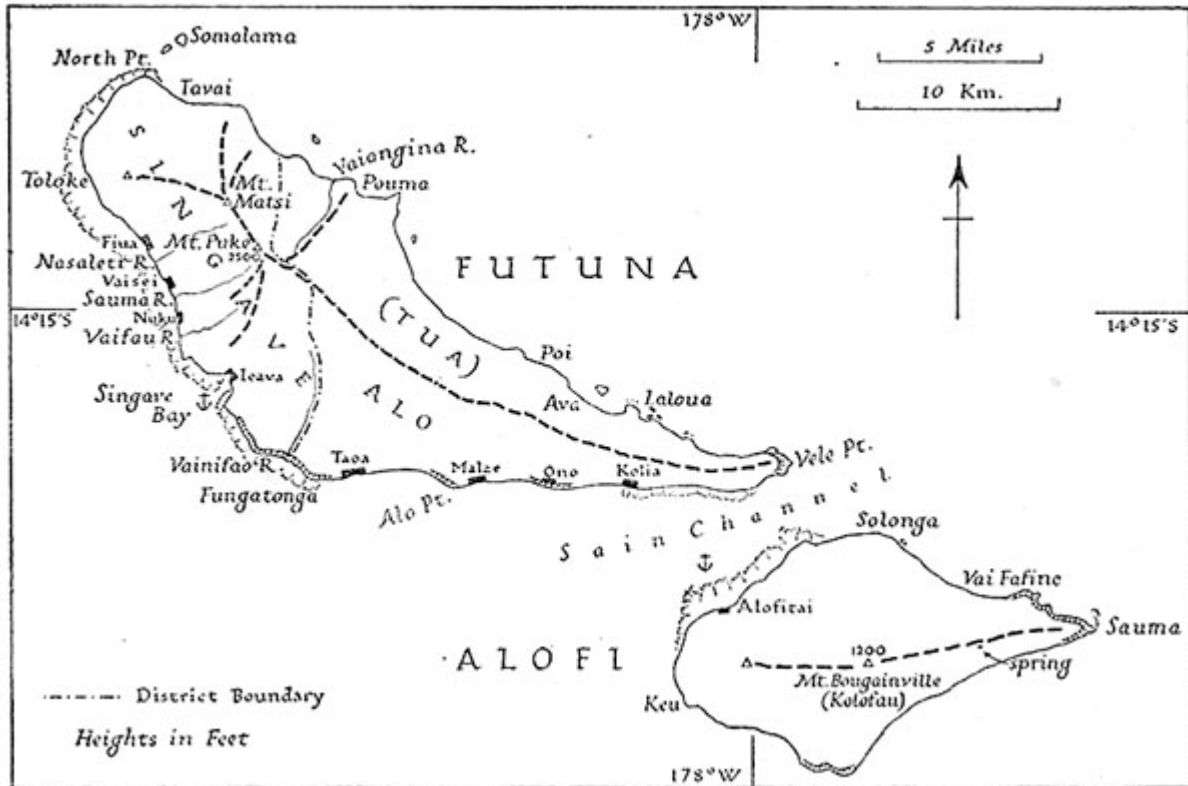
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<sup>14</sup> LRO 2, Doc 143, 2.

<sup>15</sup> LRO 2, Doc 153,12.

<sup>16</sup> LRO 2, Doc 172.

<sup>17</sup> LRO 2, Doc 153, 16. Doc 189, 8.



The wife of Niuliki came to see him, ashamed and remorseful for the role she had played in the tragedy. She showed the two-year-old son of the deceased king Niuliki. The child was very ill and the Bishop suggested that it be baptised which she gladly agreed to. He told one of the priests to baptise it on the spot.<sup>18</sup>

Servant wrote to a friend of his in France how moved he was by the sharp stones on which Chanel had walked barefooted, by his walking stick and the blood-stained clothing. He caressed Chanel's dog *tefia* that immediately recognised Nizier and Chevron, jumped up at them to show its affection<sup>19</sup> and became all excited at the smell of Chanel's clothing. Servant decided to keep it with him. The place of the martyrdom, he wrote, had already become a place of pilgrimage where people gathered to pray early in the morning.<sup>20</sup>

### Pompallier in Fiji

On 9 June 1842 the *Sancta Maria* left for Fiji and Tonga leaving Servant, Roulleaux and Marie-Nizier behind on Futuna. A group of about thirty Tongans who some time ago had come to Futuna on a large ocean-going canoe and had during their stay been introduced to the Catholic lotu by Sam Keletaone. They asked the Bishop if they could travel with him. It suited Pompallier because it gave him an entry into their country. Some came on board of the ship, others followed in their canoe. After a few days the weather got so

<sup>18</sup> LRO 2, Doc 217, 2.

<sup>19</sup> LRO 2, Doc 153, 18.

<sup>20</sup> LRO 2, Doc 189, 10.

rough that they asked to be taken on board. It proved a dangerous undertaking to help the women clamber on board and hand over the children. In spite of the rough seas the Tongans managed without mishap and they abandoned their canoe.<sup>21</sup>

The first place they reached was Oneata, a small island in the Lau group, to the east of Fiji. Chevron went ashore with the Tongans to rest. The local people were very friendly and asked the Bishop for a priest. Pompallier could only offer them a catechist but soon Protestant teachers turned up and objected strongly against any Catholic staying on their island at which the Bishop decided to move to Lakemba, the larger island on the horizon.

In Lakemba too people were quite friendly and would have accepted a priest but Pompallier decided to give them Moïse Matanavai instead. Moïse was a Tongan who had grown up in Fiji. A few years earlier he had been thrown on the reefs near Wallis when travelling with friends to Samoa. He had become a Christian on Wallis. Chevron had instructed him and become very attached to him. When Chevron was appointed to Tonga he had invited Moïse to go with him as a catechist. Now it was a painful sacrifice for Chevron to take leave from him but Moïse accepted to stay on Lakemba.<sup>22</sup>

## **Pompallier in Tonga**

As he approached Tongatapu Pompallier will have recalled his first attempt to establish a mission on the northern island of Vava'u, in October 1837<sup>23</sup> and his second visit there under the protection of the *Allier* in December 1841.<sup>24</sup> He cannot possibly have understood the intricate politics of Tonga but he knew well enough that he now entered a country and a mission field even more divided and more violently fought over than Futuna.

London Missionary Society [LMS] missionaries had penetrated into Tonga in the early 1820s followed by Wesleyans led by the gifted John Thomas, a blacksmith from Hagley in Worcestershire. 'He was a Wesleyan high church Tory (...) out of sympathy with the democratic ideas in the air following the French and American revolutions. These cherished positions he defended in the Tongan setting throughout a career of single-minded preaching and instruction.'<sup>25</sup> His absolutist ideas fitted nicely in the Tongan traditions.

In Ha'apai, the island cluster in the centre of the Tonga islands, John Thomas came into contact with the young and able chieftain Taufa'ahau who found in John Thomas' mission the right tool to foster his political ambitions. Other Methodists came from Australia and settled on Tongatapu. By the mid 1830s Methodism was well established and Taufa'ahau, baptised as George, was close to ruling on most Tongan islands in a sort of theocracy.

Only on Tongatapu several powerful chiefs, centred on the stronghold of Pea, resisted the Methodist lotu they saw as too closely entwined to their taste with the

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<sup>21</sup> LRO 2, Doc 153, 20.

<sup>22</sup> LRO 2, Doc 153, 20. Moïse moved soon to Namuka. Joseph Blanc, *Histoire religieuse de l'archipel Fidjien* (Toulon: Imprimerie Sainte-Jeanne d'Arc, 1928), volume 1, 136-7.

<sup>23</sup> MTF, 97-100.

<sup>24</sup> MTF, 350.

<sup>25</sup> John Garrett, *To Live among the Stars* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 71.

imperial ambitions of Taufa'ahau. Two savage battles in 1837 did not end the rivalries and neither a third attempt by Taufa'ahau nor the ill-advised intervention of Captain Walter Croker of the British warship the *Favourite* broke the resistance of what the Protestants considered pagan chiefs.<sup>26</sup> However, these latter, fearing a British reprisal after the defeat of Croker, had good reasons to welcome a foreign supporter on the scene whom they thought of finding in the Catholic mission they believed to be under some protection from the French Navy. Relatives of the chief of Pea, Moeaki, happened to visit Lakemba when the *Sancta Maria* lay there at anchor. They invited Pompallier to Pea.<sup>27</sup>

The *Sancta Maria* sailed for the island of Tongatapu and reached it on 30 June 1842. They anchored on a safe place near the little island of Pangaimotu where Chevron said the first Mass at the foot of a huge banyan tree. Pompallier and Chevron went to Nuku'alofa to pay their respects to the high chief Aleamotu'a who held the title of Tu'i Kanokupolu.<sup>28</sup> Aleamotu'a although a baptised Wesleyan received them kindly but could not afford to have them settle on his domains, even when their request was supported by the Lavelua Vaimua of Wallis who accompanied them.<sup>29</sup>

Through the intermediary of two messengers they obtained the consent of Moeaki for Chevron and Attale to settle in Pea, thereby helped by the support of Fie'ota, the wife of Moeaki who seems to have felt some sympathy for the Catholic Frenchmen. No sooner had the news of a Catholic presence in Pea spread than it caused wide-spread unrest. Rumours and threats of violence made Chevron fear he might soon suffer the fate of Peter Chanel and on Monday 11 July he made (or renewed) his religious vows as a Marist, as he wrote to Colin the same day: 'This morning I was fortunate to become one of Mary's children when *Monseigneur* allowed me to make my vows. He will send you the formal document'.<sup>30</sup>

On 12 July Chevron and Attale moved their meagre belongings ashore. Pompallier left Chevron fifty Francs and whatever clothing and shoes were still on board. On 13 July the *Sancta Maria* lifted the anchor and Bishop Pompallier sailed in the direction of New Zealand. He took a brother of Moeaki with him for further instruction in the faith and reached the Bay of Islands on 26 August 1842.<sup>31</sup>

### **At headquarters, Kororareka, Épalle in charge**

Before sailing on his own ship the *Sancta Maria* for a trip to the South Island on 23 July 1841 Bishop Pompallier had put Jean-Baptiste Épalle in charge in the Bay of Islands. The little money there was he took with him, leaving Épalle with practically nothing in hand to run headquarters and to support the missionaries in the out-stations. After a time the

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<sup>26</sup> Garrett, *To Live among the Stars*, 77.

<sup>27</sup> Garrett, *To Live among the Stars*, 70-77.

<sup>28</sup> Cf Sione Lātūkefu, *Church and State in Tonga*, (Canberra; Australia National University, 1974, reprint 2014 by UQ ePress), 144-7. The Tu'i Kanokupolu held one of the most senior chiefly titles, cf. Lātūkefu, *Church and State*, 1-3. He had no desire to get into a position where he would have to defer to Taufa'ahau.

<sup>29</sup> A. Monfat, *Les Tonga et le R.P. Chevron* (Lyon: Vitte, 1893), 180-7. The presence and intervention of the Lavelua is mentioned by Monfat but not in the surviving letters of Chevron or Pompallier.

<sup>30</sup> LRO 2, Doc 172, 41. This is one of several instances that missionaries did not seem to be sure of their religious state and the validity or duration of their vows until they made them (again?) before the Bishop! Cf Épalle, MTF, 139. Reignier, LRO 2, Doc 173, 3. Forest to Colin, 26 March 1843, LRO 2, Doc 247, 10.

<sup>31</sup> According to Pompallier, LRO 2, Doc 193, 2. Forest gives 25 August, LRO 2, Doc 215, 2.

Bishop felt a little guilty and he authorised his Pro-Vicar to take up loans, which Épalle did, and sell parts of the Kororareka property if necessary, which he did not.<sup>32</sup>

On 4 May 1842 the sixth band of missionaries under Father Jean Forest reached Kororareka with the Fathers Jérôme Grange and Euloge Reignier, the Brothers Luc Macé and Jean Villemagne and the seminarian Jean Lampila. In the Bay of Islands they were met by the Pro-Vicar Jean-Baptiste Épalle and Antoine Garin as Provincial.

In Lyon Forest had been given about 36,000 Francs. The fares would have been nearly 10,000 Francs so he can have given Épalle at the most 25,000 Francs, half of it carried in cash and the rest in the form of a credit note against Cooper that banks in Kororareka would have honoured.<sup>33</sup> It must have restored some credibility to the mission and given Épalle a little breathing space. It allowed him to leave for Europe on 22 May and made it possible for Petitjean to leave for Sydney in an attempt to get financial support or loans on better conditions than available in New Zealand.

The absence of Bishop Pompallier made Forest's entry easy and pleasant. The men gladly accepted him as the visitor sent by Father Jean-Claude Colin and Forest could stay at headquarters and speak freely with everyone. Still things must have been a bit hectic with Forest trying to get as complete a picture as possible of the situation in as short a time as possible.<sup>34</sup> The Bishop could arrive any day and that would change Forest's position. Épalle and Petitjean were getting ready for departure and Perret was fluttering about, as indecisive as ever. The days were filled with repeated consultations in which each and everyone joined in. They composed a four-page letter to the Superior General that the five priests present (Forest, Épalle, Petit, Garin and Petitjean) signed in support of Forest's report<sup>35</sup> and an authorisation for Petitjean to act on behalf of the mission in Sydney.<sup>36</sup> On 23 May, Épalle sailed for France via Valparaiso followed on 2 June by Petitjean for Sydney and the day after by Perret for Europe also via Valparaiso.

### **Forest's second report**

After the departure of Épalle, Petitjean and Perret Jean Forest stayed with Garin in Kororareka and when Perret had decided to leave Forest wrote a second report for Colin: seven pages of despair.<sup>37</sup> He mostly repeats what he had already written in his first letter that Épalle carried.

His own position, he writes, is impossible. When the Bishop gets back he can be expected to object to Forest's position of visitor and will surely not allow him to go around visiting. Moreover, visiting the outstations costs money and 'we just do not have it (*pas un sou*).'[7]

The mission is in a pitiful state, both materially and spiritually. There is only one house fit to live in, in Kororareka and only one church, or rather chapel, also in Koro-

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<sup>32</sup> Pompallier to Épalle, 15 November 1841, APM 1487/21201.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel Cooper ran a trading and shipping business in London and Sydney with the help of Peter Dillon. Both were well known in New Zealand.

<sup>34</sup> LRO 2, Doc 171, 1.

<sup>35</sup> LRO 2, Doc 166. The supporting letter, LRO 2, Doc 167. Forest started his first report shortly after 5 May and finished it before 22 May. Jan Snijders 'A Quiet Time' in *Forum Novum*, Volume 14, 97-100.

<sup>36</sup> LRO 2, Doc 168.

<sup>37</sup> This second report is dated 2 June, LRO 2, Doc 174 (paragraphs in brackets). He will later (5 November 1842) admit that he may have been a little too pessimistic, LRO 2, Doc 215 [3].



rareka. It can hold at the most forty people but the surrounding terrain is so muddy that the Catholic Europeans, of whom there are about 30 or 40 in the neighbourhood, mostly stay away. There are no Maoris around. So far I have seen twenty at the most. Their settlements are to be found at four leagues distance ( $\pm$  15 km) but they rarely come here.[4]

There is a garden in Kororareka but the soil is unsuitable. It takes a lot of work by the gardener whom the mission employs at ten Francs a day to produce only very little food. The gardener's wife does the laundry but she is not very good at it and has never heard of bleaching.[5]

The Catholic people are ashamed not to have a cemetery of their own while the Protestants have built one as beautiful as the one in Lyon. Catholics who died since the mission has arrived, have been buried in odd corners here and there.[6]

The Bishop has started the mission with an air of grandeur (*sur un grand ton*). He travelled all over the place, making superficial contacts, giving presents and making lofty promises he cannot keep. He needed a ship with a captain and eight or nine sailors and it has been on the go most of the time. But imagine the cost![3]

His performance among the Maoris first gave him a high status and respect. For a time he was immensely popular but that has faded. The last year or so he no longer went out and gave up visiting the tribes. Now, many people feel deceived, they show an aversion for him and with him for the Church. Outside Kororareka there is nothing but three or four stations with tiny groups of Catholics or adherents.[3]

It all goes down to bad, very bad administration (*mauvaise, très mauvaise administration*). Everybody agrees on that. The French priests, people say, are good priests but they are like children when it comes to temporal affairs.[6] Although it is the most expensive place to live, there are far too many missionaries at headquarters but no overall planning. We run around arguing and going in all directions at once. One priest here would be enough with just one other one to visit the tribes.[7]

When money runs out the Bishop borrows for periods of three months, at 12% or even 15%. There has been a collection for the mission in Australia but nobody knows where the money has gone to.[6]

Father Épalle may give you a rosier picture of the mission, 'too much so in my view'. Whatever he tells you will be true but he may not tell you the whole story. Yvert too will be optimistic. He is a good man, sees no evil and hears no evil. Good for mission propaganda but as the responsible superior you should know the whole truth.[3]

I am not saying that nothing could be done in New Zealand. On the contrary. We should start with a few good farms, run by competent men, just so that we have enough to eat. One could have cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, anything.

To get Sisters would be most important. They could easily support themselves with small clinics of which there is a great need in the small towns. And schools for which there is a great demand. They could also improve the living standards of the priests in different ways.[12]

It would take a very competent administrator to put things right provided he gets the needed authority and is independent of the Bishop but I do not see how that can happen. Among other things, such an administrator would have to handle the living allowances for the missionaries that come from the Propagation of the Faith in France, but again, the Bishop will never agree to it. It will take a strong and senior man who can

stand up to the Bishop. I see nobody here who could do it. I asked a few men if Épalle would be the right man. The English people like him and so far he has got along well with the Bishop. But all the men say, no. The Bishop would never take him seriously. He treats him as a child.[9]

On behalf of my confreres here I beg you, I beg the Holy See, to send us a good administrator who handles the living allowances for the missionaries.[9]

As it is unlikely that the Bishop would ever agree to any of these things it might perhaps be better for the Society of Mary to abandon this mission. Let the Bishop get English speaking diocesan priests. They would also be more acceptable to the growing English population. English feelings against the French are still strong and as a result some of our missionaries cannot stand the English![13]

I forget to tell you that the remains of Father Chanel are here, just the clean bones, properly identified. A white metal cask has been made for them and they are kept in a suitable place. If you wish they could be transported to France.[20]

Forest ends by praising the good spirit among the men: 'we get along well'.[21]  
On 2 July Father Jean Forest left with Brother Déodat Villemagne for Auckland.

### **Perret's Report**

Louis Perret had come to the conclusion that mission life in New Zealand was not for him. He first planned to leave with Épalle but was talked out of it. He then thought of going with Petitjean to Sydney but dropped that plan also only to leave on some ship for Valparaiso on 3 June.<sup>38</sup>

Perret was deeply disappointed in the New Zealand mission. He had been invited as an architect to contribute with his professional knowledge to the building work. But, as Forest asked himself, 'building when there is not a penny to buy bread?'<sup>39</sup> Bored stiff from the day he arrived, 13 September 1841, he was soon looking for a way back to France. He must have been happy with the arrival of Jean Forest on 4 May 1842. At least somebody to talk with! As could be expected the two letters have very much the same message, no doubt the fruit of long conversations. He dated his observations on 20 May and gave his letter to Épalle getting ready to sail for Europe.<sup>40</sup>

Perret estimates the debts of the mission at somewhere between 100,000 and 150,000 Francs (between four and six thousand pounds). Nobody knows for sure, he writes. Unfriendly creditors could force a bankruptcy of the mission at any time. There are no account books. All due to bad management. The main cause is keeping a ship the mission does not need but that costs 30,000 Francs a year.[3] With borrowed money at 10% or 14% one has bought land at Kororareka that was not needed and that loses its value now that the British Administration has moved to Auckland. Perret also underlines the urgent need of a professional manager to supervise farms and constructions. He thinks the mission should move into the towns with English-speaking Fathers, Brothers and if at all possible Sisters for work in education and health care. He urges Colin to consider Marist houses in New Zealand, with their own works such as colleges, seminaries and

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<sup>38</sup> LRO 2, Doc 184, 42.

<sup>39</sup> LRO 2, Doc 174, 1.

<sup>40</sup> LRO 2, Doc 163.

formation houses, supported by well-run farms of their own where the missionaries could go for much needed rest and recreation.

### **Petitjean in Sydney**

After the Bishop's departure Jean-Baptiste Petitjean had spent more time in Kororareka than on his station in Whangaroa to help Épalle with the bookkeeping and management. Perhaps it was his own idea but after the arrival of Forest it was decided that Petitjean would go to Sydney and try to collect money and raise some loans at favourable rates to relieve the financial pressure on the New Zealand mission. Adding to the general malaise was the prospect of the *Sancta Maria* returning from the islands and the procure having to pay off the captain and the crew on arrival with an empty till! The priests signed a document, dated 22 May 1824, authorising Petitjean to act in Sydney on behalf of the mission.<sup>41</sup>

Shortly after the departure of Épalle for France, on 23 May, the *Julia*, a small French trading vessel, entered the Bay of Islands on her way from eastern Polynesia to Sydney.<sup>42</sup> Petitjean obtained a passage and sailed on 2 June. Borrowing money in Australia proved more difficult than expected. There was an economic crisis in the colony and people were reluctant to act on the basis of an authorisation without the signature of either the Bishop or the Superior General. Petitjean had to get the French consul to endorse his authorisation and even then he needed the good services of Vicar General Francis Murphy and of Joubert, a prominent French businessman in Sydney, to get Cooper's agent in Sydney to grant a loan of £ 400 (10,000 Francs) against the Marist Fathers in Lyon. Even then he got only £ 300 in cash (silver coins) and had to take the rest in the form of merchandise! As Petitjean wrote to Colin on 8 July, by that time the whole of Sydney knew of the plight of the Marist mission in New Zealand and Joubert openly made jokes about the *Sancta Maria*, calling it an expensive fantasy of the Bishop. Part of the problem may have been that the mission already had a debt of £ 59 with Mr. Joubert that had apparently not been entered in the books in Kororareka and that Petitjean knew nothing about.

The first days of September he was able to catch a ship to the Bay of Islands turning it into a minor version of the Ark of Noah (as he put it) with two cows plus calves, two sheep, two couples of rabbits (each worth 25 francs in New Zealand at the time!) and a beehive. He had also managed to get a supply of leather to have the missionaries' shoes repaired and seeds for Brother Élie at Whangaroa.<sup>43</sup>

When he reached Kororareka he found Bishop Pompallier back from his tour of the tropical islands. Pompallier did not find Petitjean's efforts worth while mentioning in his letters to the Superior General. He poked fun at it and told Petitjean to get the animals off the property. It took Petitjean and Brother Basile four days to drive the cattle and the sheep through the bush and across rivers to Whangaroa where Brother Élie and the local

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<sup>41</sup> LRO 2, Doc 168. As had happened in February when Viard arrived in the *Sancta Maria* with the remains of Peter Chanel and there was not enough money to pay off the captain and the crew!

<sup>42</sup> Possibly in connection with the fact that around that time the French Navy was raising the Tricolour to take possession of the Marquesas Islands, cf Léonce Joré, *L'Océan Pacifique au temps de la Restauration et de la Monarchie de Juillet* (Paris: Besson, 1959) volume 2, 133-40.

<sup>43</sup> Petitjean wrote four long letters from Sydney, on resp. 8, 9, 28/31 July and 28/30 August 1842, LRO 2, Docs 176,177, 184 and 191.

Maoris were delighted with the enrichment of their farm. Dog-tired and with clothes and shoes torn to shreds the two cowboys enjoyed a few joyful days of rest in the relative comfort of Whangaroa.<sup>44</sup> Father Garin kept the bees in Kororareka and later, when Petitjean had moved to Auckland, Garin sent him pots of honey.

Petitjean was an alert observer. He told Colin of the building of Saint Patrick's church that would later become the mainstay of the Marist presence in Sydney and for which there had been a collection held in New Zealand just as in Sydney there had been one for the Catholic church in Kororareka which people kept asking about but that nothing had been done about.<sup>45</sup>

Petitjean also saw the enormous potential of Australia for the Pacific missions and for the Society of Mary itself. He saw that as the hub of shipping in the Pacific, Sydney was bound to become in time the administrative base for the Oceania missions. He also recognised in the rapidly developing Australian economy with its growing Catholic population the ideal catchment area for financial support and English speaking vocations as well as an appropriate field for Marist apostolate. The presence of a large number of French speaking Canadian convicts, neglected so far by everyone, could offer the French Marists a magnificent opening.

Apart from Pompallier himself Petitjean was probably the best English speaker in the mission. More than others he saw how badly they failed in that respect. 'Our fault, our serious fault, is that we do not really work at learning the language. We always speak French among ourselves. (...) It takes courage to make a language your own.'<sup>46</sup>

In a short time Petitjean came to know many people. He became a close friend of John Brady, a former missionary under Jean Pastre on Réunion Island<sup>47</sup> who invited him to preach in the church of his parish in Windsor and donated him a cow. Petitjean begs Colin to send a small team. Brady worked with the Canadians and the Marists could take over immediately. We could also start a school straight away that would pay its way with the school fees. 'An opportunity to make the Society a universal undertaking?'<sup>48</sup>

'Sydney offers full freedom for all religions and all religious orders. We are free. On Mary's behalf, therefore, let us start here a humble community, living soberly in simplicity. I am sure we have a serious obligation before God to establish a place here in Sydney. I am not playing the prophet. I guarantee it, you would see miracles.'<sup>49</sup> Brady supported him with a letter in which he spoke of the 'very good young subjects who would be anxious to embrace the ecclesiastical state and join your most excellent order either at Lyons or in New South Wales. (...) A few pious lay-brothers could avail themselves as teachers of the facilities offered by the Government.'<sup>50</sup>

Petitjean's strategic vision was not entirely wasted on the cautious Superior in Lyon but it would take another three years before the first band of Marists landed in Sydney to stay.

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<sup>44</sup> Petitjean told the story in colourful detail to Claude Girard on 15 March 1843, LRO 2, Doc 244, 3.

<sup>45</sup> LRO 2, Doc 174, 6. It seems that on the urging of Pompallier Maori chiefs too had made a contribution, cf LRO 2, p.238, n.13. John Hosie, *Challenge: The Marists in Colonial Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 209 - 13.

<sup>46</sup> LRO 2, Doc 184, 32.

<sup>47</sup> At the time called *Île Bourbon*. Cf MTF, 1.

<sup>48</sup> LRO 2, Doc 184, 37 (*rendre notre oeuvre universelle*).

<sup>49</sup> LRO 2, Doc 191, 21.

<sup>50</sup> LRO 2, Doc 187.

## At headquarters, Kororareka, Antoine Garin at the helm

When on 23 May 1842 Épalle sailed off for Valparaiso and Europe he left Antoine Garin in charge at headquarters.<sup>51</sup> Garin had always felt inadequate in his role as provincial because, as he wrote, he had never done a proper novitiate and had lived only a very short time in a regular community.<sup>52</sup> When an unexpected official visitor arrived in the person of Jean Forest, Garin hoped to hand him the reins but Colin had expressly defined Forest's role as that of a visitor and had not laid down a procedure to elect a provincial. Nothing could be done until the Bishop returned and perhaps appoint Forest.<sup>53</sup> Colin's intention was that the visitor would work in good consultation with the Bishop and the Religious Superior appointed by the Bishop. Nothing had been said about replacing him.<sup>54</sup> All the same, Garin looked upon Forest as his superior.<sup>55</sup>

In line with the suggestion of Pompallier<sup>56</sup> himself Garin further reduced the numbers of mouths to feed by sending Brother Colomb Poncet to Hokianga and the Brothers Augustin Drevet and Emery Roudet to Whangaroa to assist Brother Élie whose flourishing farm could, by now, easily feed a little community.

With one thing and another, Antoine Garin was in Kororareka with the faithful Yvert waiting for Baty to correct the Maori text of the prayerbook before starting the printing press. Brother Basil stayed on as cook and the competent Brother Luc was to continue constructions. Brother Déodat Villemagne remained in Kororareka to await the arrival of Father Borjon with whom he would go to open a mission station in Wellington. During June, Forest stayed there as well. Garin took on visiting the Maori villages in the neighbourhood on weekdays, which was a new experience for him and helped him become more familiar with the Maori language. He enjoyed every bit of it and told Colin so in glowing terms.<sup>57</sup> In between he taught theology to Jean Lampila, Henry Garnett and Brother Pierre-Marie Pérénon who also ran the little school of the mission. Meanwhile everybody helped in the garden growing carrots and turnips to improve the diet.<sup>58</sup> Within weeks of taking over, the diffident Garin had solved the first problem that Forest had noticed: too many men in Kororareka getting in each other's way! In a few weeks he had turned Kororareka into a tidy place with a community of seven men where each one knew what to do.

On reaching New Zealand, Forest had first set foot in Wellington, at the time a town of two-thousand people, mainly European settlers. He had stayed five days, busy baptising children, hearing confessions and visiting families. With Grange and Reignier he had been able to provide Sunday Masses for all of them and seen the tears in the eyes

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<sup>51</sup> Giselle Lacombe, *Antoine Garin: a Biographical Study of the Intercultural Dynamic in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand*, 2009. <[www.ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/3203](http://www.ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/3203)>. Accessed 14 December 2010. 184-203.

<sup>52</sup> MTF, 280.

<sup>53</sup> LRO 2, Doc 149, 8.

<sup>54</sup> CS 1, Doc 301, 3.

<sup>55</sup> LRO 2, Doc 228, 34.

<sup>56</sup> MTF, 350.

<sup>57</sup> LRO 2, Doc 178, 4 & Doc 186, 10-11.

<sup>58</sup> LRO 2, Doc 178, 1-2, 8-12..

of Irish Catholics who had been deprived of the Sacraments for many months.<sup>59</sup> After his arrival in the Bay of Islands he must have insisted that something be done immediately about Wellington and it was decided to send Father Borjon with Brother Déodat Ville-magne. Reignier was assigned to take his place in Maketu and, in July, Borjon made his way to Auckland. From there he left on 31 July for Wellington with Brother Déodat on the forty-ton schooner *Speculator*.<sup>60</sup>

On 9 August Garin was able to send Colin a parcel of letters, among others from Borjon, Reignier, Brother Claude-Marie in Purakau, Séon in Matamata and others. Some of these letters were written in view of the departure of *Épalle* but had arrived late. Garin had become a friend of the second officer of the *Pallas* who kindly took the letters to avoid the high cost of mailing. The Captain also allowed free passage to France for Henry Garnett.<sup>61</sup>

All the time the men in the outstations kept asking for help. The letters from Tauranga, Maketu, Matamata, Opotiki, Auckland and Hokianga reduced Garin to tears when he thought of the physical and spiritual deprivations of the missionaries. Fortunately he managed to obtain a small loan that enabled him to send all of them a little money and Maxime Petit whose health was not holding up well, some flour, rice and tea. Baty had in the meantime reached Auckland on his way to the Bay of Islands where Yvert was anxiously waiting for him, but he had no money and did not dare take a ship for fear that Garin might not be able to pay the fare!<sup>62</sup>

One day two Futunans arrived at his door. They had been lost at sea and picked up by a British whaling ship that brought them to the Bay of Islands. In spite of what had happened to Peter Chanel on their island they evidently felt they would be welcome and safe at the house of the Catholic Bishop!<sup>63</sup>

On 26 August the *Sancta Maria* sailed into the Bay of Islands, carrying Bishop Pompallier with a few Polynesians. To the relief of Garin he immediately took the administration in hand himself but when he heard about the official visitator who had arrived in the person of Jean Forest, Pompallier was in no hurry to replace the loyal Garin with a man he saw as an intruder and a possible threat to his authority. Garin was to remain in Kororareka for another eighteen months as provincial.

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<sup>59</sup> Forest to Colin, 22 May 1842, LRO 2, Doc 166, 3. Snijders, A Quiet Period, FN, 14, 90.

<sup>60</sup> Doc 205, 4.

<sup>61</sup> LRO 2, Doc 186. This mail reached France on 3 March 1843, LRO 2, p. 289, n. 2.

<sup>62</sup> LRO 2, Doc 186, 5.

<sup>63</sup> LRO 2, Doc 178, 12.