

Chapter eight : 1840-1 *Wave after wave*

*A series of waves,
each one breaking upon the coral ringed shores of the South Seas,
each one overtaken by the next before its energy is quite spent*
J.W. Davidson

The fourth group

The second group of missionaries, Baty and companions, left France in September 1838, circling the globe in westerly direction, around Cape Horn. Letters sent in January 1839 from Valparaiso reached France in April.¹ The same month Baty wrote from Tahiti and that letter reached Colin in November.² The missionaries landed in New Zealand in June, 1839, but this was not yet known to Father Jean-Claude Colin by the beginning of 1840, where this chapter picks up the interlocking stories in France, in New Zealand, in Wallis and Futuna and on the high seas.

The third group, Petitjean and companions, left in June 1839, via London, eastwards around the Cape of Good Hope. Letters sent in July from Cape Verde reached France in December.³ By that time they themselves had reached New Zealand, but news of their arrival did not reach France until many months later. Early 1840, three full years after the first departure, the superior general knew of only the first group that they had reached Wallis, Futuna and New Zealand. Understandably, he was inclined to put off further departures.

However, the work of Victor Poupinel was bearing fruit. On 16 September 1839, Mgr. Raphaël Bonamie, superior general of the Picpus Fathers, wrote to Colin to let him know that a naval vessel was preparing to leave for New Zealand from Brest.⁴ On 16 December 1839, Nicolas Sault, minister of foreign affairs and president of the cabinet in Paris, offered free passage for four missionaries on the supply ship the *Aube*, going directly to New Zealand.⁵ As the news got around, a few older priests in Belley volunteered, but Colin did not release them: 'As a good *pater familias*, I have to look after the continuity of the family. If I let the senior members leave, what would become of the house, of me, and of the Society?'.⁶ Colin assigned two priests who had recently joined in order to go the missions and Champagnat (or the newly elected director general, Brother François Rivat) appointed two Brothers.

Poupinel composed a gracious and substantial letter of thanks to the minister. While reminding him that their first purpose was to work for the salvation of souls, he wrote, the missionaries retain a great love for their mother country and will in that spirit always promote the good of France. As the *Aube* was sent out in the context of the planned French settlement on the South Island of New Zealand, for which a royal commissioner was being appointed, the letter assured the minister that the missionaries

¹ CS, doc. 63.

² CS, doc. 101.

³ CS, doc. 114 [6].

⁴ Bonamie to Colin, 16.09.39, APM 2231/10449.

⁵ CS, doc. 119 [1].

⁶ CS, doc. 130 [3].

would always conform to what the royal commissioner determined for the good order, the policing and the governance of the French settlements. ‘Great respect for the law is the spirit that will guide us everywhere, and I am sure that our missionaries will recommend submission and good order to all people by their example and their influence’.⁷

Who were they?

On 23 May 1839, **Jean Pezant**, a twenty-eight year old priest of the diocese of Clermont, took the coach at Clermont and found there were two older priests already on board: Jean-Claude Colin and Etienne Séon. The two had left Lyon after seeing off Viard and Petitjean leaving Lyon for Paris, London and Oceania⁸, and were on their way to Bordeaux and Angoulême where two Marist priests had become informally involved in a parish.⁹ Pezant had been dreaming of the foreign missions but his parish priest strongly opposed it. He got into a conversation with Séon: Pezant talking of his dreams, Séon telling him about the missionaries who had just left. Pezant asked if he could enter the Society and Séon referred him to the older man in the company, Colin, who had kept quiet until then. Whatever Séon and Colin told him of the Society of Mary and its Oceania missions, Jean Pezant immediately knew where his vocation lay. His parish priest acknowledged the workings of Providence and Pezant entered the novitiate. He was assigned to the missions, professed on 7 January and appointed superior of the group.¹⁰

Jean-André Tripe had already been in charge of a parish in his diocese of Fréjus (Var) when he joined the Society. Later on he claimed that he never had the intention of committing himself permanently to the mission. He was somewhat older, had the habits of a settled parish priest and was rather set in his ways. Colin later described him as: ‘full of virtue, but hot-headed, a man from the South’.¹¹ It did not stop Colin from accepting him for the Society. After a short novitiate he was appointed to the Oceania mission.

Brother Claude-Marie (Jean-Claude) Bertrand. Born in 1814, in Saint-Sauveur-en-Rue (Loire), he was a second cousin to Champagnat. As a boy he wanted to be a priest and began seminary studies but had to abandon them to help his mother run the family shop when his father died. He entered the Hermitage in 1835 and made perpetual profession on 10 October 1836. He was a well educated man, a qualified teacher and was in charge of an orphanage at Saint-Chamond when he was appointed to Oceania).¹²

Brother Amon (Claude) Duperron, was born 1911 in Chauffailles (Saône-et-Loire). He entered the Hermitage in 1837 and, probably without a period of temporary vows, made perpetual profession on 10 October 1838. He later said he only entered

⁷ CS, doc. 119 [4].

⁸ Cf. above, p. 135.

⁹ Cf. J. Coste, *The Chanut Case*, FN, 10 (2008), p. 373.

¹⁰ CS I, p. 123, n.1. The meeting with Colin in the coach left a lasting impression on Pezant, he mentioned it in a letter during the voyage to Oceania, Pezant to Colin 30.01.40, APM, 1405/20047, and again, thirty-three years later, 22.07.1873, APM, personal file.

¹¹ ‘*habitudes de curé*’, ‘*pas très docile*’, Tripe to Poupinel, 01-08-44, APM, personal file. MM S1, 24*.

¹² FMO, pp. 41 – 45.

religious life to avoid having to marry a rich girl instead of the poorer one he was in love with. Whatever the truth of that statement - possibly an excuse for his later behaviour – he was accepted for profession and selected for the foreign missions.¹³

Departure

On 7 January, 1840, the Fathers Jean Pezant and Jean-André Tripe made their vows in the chapel of Puyлата. They entered their names on the ribbon that Peter Chanel had hung around the statue of Our Lady of Fourvière.¹⁴ Colin gave them his blessing and they embraced in a farewell for ever.¹⁵ Colin recounted the events and the departure in a letter to the communities of Belley and used the occasion to introduce special prayers for the missions that became traditional in the Society.¹⁶

They carried several parcels of letters and were given 29.000 francs from the Propagation of the Faith for Bishop Pompallier. For Poupinel it was an occasion to write on Colin's behalf to Pompallier. The involvement of the government broadened the Marist missionary horizon: missionaries devote themselves not only to the conversion of the heathens, he wrote, but also to the betterment of their temporal state. For France it is an opportunity to show its loyalty, its generosity and its commitment to promote the civilization of numerous and worthy peoples: the very thoughts Poupinel had heard expressed by government people during his visit to Paris. Poupinel could tell Pompallier of the favourable instructions to naval commanders, of the appointment of a royal commissioner for New Zealand and the general goodwill in Paris for the Oceania missions.¹⁷

On the way

The two Brothers moved from the Hermitage to their own community in Lyon and made their separate way to Paris where they joined the priests. Both groups travelled by coach and arrived safely in Paris where they lodged as usual with the *Missions Étrangères*. It was a very cold winter. The rooms had no heating and the water froze in their rooms! Perhaps the reason why the welcome they got was not as warm and hearty as before.¹⁸

Colin had given the missionaries letters of introduction to various ministries and to the nunciature. Vigneti helped them along and they were well received everywhere.¹⁹ When Colin learned that Sault, minister of Foreign Affairs, had asked them to report to him personally on the progress of the missions and on Maori culture, he had Poupinel rush a letter to Pezant to prevent letters going directly to the government: what was

¹³ FMO, p. 60, LC I, doc. 318.

¹⁴ Cf. above p. 32. The ribbon must have been removed from the statue in Fourvière for the occasion. The ceremony took place in Puyлата.

¹⁵ Tripe would in fact return to France in 1844 and leave the Society.

¹⁶ CS, doc. 130 [1 & 2].

¹⁷ CS, doc. 126, '*qui se consacrent à la conversion des infidèles et même à l'amélioration de leur état temporal*'.

¹⁸ CS, doc. 134 [9]. The canals may have been frozen over as well, which would explain why they travelled by coach and not by steamer like their confreres six months before.

¹⁹ CS, docs. 127, 128 & 129.

meant for the government should pass unsealed through Marist headquarters.²⁰ From their hosts they learned of the existence of Roman instructions for missionaries. It was too late to get copies but they informed Colin.²¹

They got the usual letters of recommendation to naval captains and French officials and were given boxes of seeds and vine cuttings. They learned that Lavaud, already the captain of the *Aube*, was also appointed royal commissioner for New Zealand and that a naval vessel would be stationed permanently in New Zealand to protect the French settlers about to leave for the South Island. They met with Eveillard who still hoped to become French consul in New Zealand one day. They made an attempt to meet with the Picpus Fathers, who were just then getting a group of missionaries on their way and as a result too busy to receive them. As an introduction to the Pacific they bought *Les Voyages du Capitaine Dumont d'Urville* and books in English.²²

Having finished their business in Paris they travelled on 16 January with nine large cases to Brest where they arrived the 19th and lodged in the navy hospital until boarding. Even before sailing out into the Ocean, Tripe was seasick and the two Brothers too felt queasy at the rolling of the heavily loaded ship in the harbour. In any case, it gave them time to relax. Pezant wrote two long letters to Colin and Claude-Marie wrote to Champagnat.

As he relaxed, Pezant had time to reflect and he cried at the thought of his mother,

‘old and in poor health. I shall surely not see her again in this life. It tears at my heart. Thanks to God, mother was perfectly resigned and told me to go in peace.(...) The memory of my brothers and sisters who have always done so much for me, pains me very much. I am so sorry I did not tell them I was leaving when I saw them last, (...) but it was better so’.²³

In spite of Poupinel the Marist head-house still proved not up to the job of fitting out missionaries. Instead of letting each have the necessary clothing made personally (confection clothing and shoes were unknown at the time) there appears to have been a general supply from which clothing and shoes were packed in their cases. The sleeves of Pezant’s shirts were far too long and the shoes were too small!

Handling money also was a problem. They lost count of their expenses and left 230 francs lying in their room at the *Missions Étrangères*. The brothers proved to have very little in the way of clothing and when departure was delayed again and again, they had to buy warm clothing in Brest, quite expensive but a godsend once they got into the wintry Indian Ocean.²⁴

²⁰ CS, doc. 134 [5] & doc. 135.

²¹ CS, doc. 134 [10].

²² Pezant to Colin, 30.01.40, CS 134 [2]. Unless indicated differently, letters sent during the voyage are in APM 1405/20047.

²³ Pezant to Colin, 30.01.40.

²⁴ Pezant to Colin, 26.01.40 and 30.01.40. Bertrand to Champagnat, 25.01.40, LO, Clisby 014.

Going around the world

For months the *Aube* had been lying for anchor in Brest, waiting until the authorities formulated their instructions to Captain Lavaud.²⁵ When the missionaries got to Brest, they had to wait another month, utterly bored. Finally, on 19 February 1840 the captain could hoist the sails. When the ship left the port, the four missionaries gathered in their cabin to pray. They then went on deck to wave their home country goodbye. But when they came out, there was nothing they could see but a few rocks, the sky and the sea. The tears welled up in their eyes.²⁶

For more than a week the *Aube* was battered by storms and the missionaries were violently seasick in their cramped quarters, so much so that Pezant managed to fill five pages on the horrors of sea-sickness!

The ship called at Tenerife where they had the bishop consecrate a chalice so they could say Mass on board. They had a dose of culture shock at what they saw as 'dreadful moral corruption, laziness, dirt and shameful nakedness. I was proud to be French'. The ship called at Saint-Louis and Gorée in Senegal, where, on the advice of Captain Lavaud, they bought 30 lbs of tobacco to take to New Zealand

They underwent sea baptism at the equator although Neptune did not apply the full severity of the French navy on the bewildered missionaries. After initial reluctance they got into the spirit of the thing.²⁷

On 11 May the *Aube* turned around the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean. For nearly two weeks they had beautiful weather but then it turned quite cold and for a month fierce storms pushed them eastwards along the 40° degree south. The *Aube* was heavily loaded and slow. Several times other vessels on their way to Australia overtook her.²⁸

It was not a very happy group. There was a Maori on board, called Etaca, serving as a sailor. Brother Claude-Marie Bertrand enjoyed the opportunity to teach him and tried to pick up the Maori language. He noted down words and little sentences, and noticed that the Maori language had no tenses like French. Pezant proved an officious sort of superior. He stopped the Brother from working with Etaca to take it on himself. Claude Marie had to swallow twice but booked it as a small sacrifice to the Lord.²⁹

Brother Amon Dupeyron neglected the common spiritual exercises and was several times reprimanded by the superior, which he took badly. As Pompallier later wrote to Colin, Pezant did not know how to keep a community happy and how to get along with the Brothers.³⁰

The itinerary was somewhat open. During the voyage there was talk of calling at Cape Town, but that was cancelled. Then the idea was to go directly to the Banks Peninsula on the South Island with a previous call at Hobart where the missionaries

²⁵ Jore, op. cit., I, pp. 188 -205, describes in great detail the political and diplomatic bungling in England as well as in France with regards to the future status of New Zealand.

²⁶ Bertrand to Champagnat, 25.03.40. LO, Clisby 015 [2].

²⁷ Pezant to Colin 09.03.40. Later on, Pezant advises Colin that at least on naval ships missionaries should refuse to take part in the baptisms, LRO, doc. 74 [6].

²⁸ According to Pezant they passed the Cape on 12 & 13 May. LRO, doc. 73 [1].

²⁹ Bertrand to Brother François, 18.07.40, LO, Clisby 018 [10].

³⁰ FMO, p. 60f; LRO, doc. 70 [4], cf. Epalle to Colin 31.08.40, LRO, doc. 71 [5].

could disembark and look for a ship to the Bay of Islands. Because of the many shallows in Bass Strait the *Aube* passed South of Tasmania, and plans changed again. The ship did not call at Hobart and went directly to the Bay of Islands where they arrived late in the evening of 11 July 1840: after five months at sea.

Brother Claude-Marie wrote immediately to Brother François Rivat.³¹ Pezant had started a letter to Colin in May at sea, but he only sent it on 4 September.³² Pompallier announced the arrival of the fourth group to Colin on 22 July.³³

Reporting to Rome

In March 1840 Jean Cholleton went on a voyage to Rome and Colin used the opportunity to write to Cardinal Fransoni. Cholleton had already expressed a desire to enter the Society of Mary when, after the death of Cardinal Fesch on 13 May 1839, it became clear that de Pins would not become Archbishop of Lyon, the archdiocese he had governed as apostolic administrator for twenty-five years. Colin still introduced him to Fransoni as vicar general.

The contacts of the Fathers Pezant and Tripe with the Foreign Missions of Paris had drawn Colin's attention to the existence of Roman instructions for the missions.³⁴ He asks Fransoni for these documents so as to help the missionaries prepare for mission work.

Colin informs Cardinal Fransoni that the last news he has received from Pompallier was from September 1838, nineteen months ago. He complains that he had not received any news at all from Wallis and Futuna, apart from the fact that Bataillon, Luzy, Chanel and Nizier had been left on those two islands in November 1837, two and a half years earlier! Of the second group that left in September 1838, he only knows they had got as far as Tahiti. Of the third group that had left in June 1839 he only knew they had been in Tenerife and Gorée. He confesses to Fransoni that given these circumstances he is reluctant to send more missionaries. Still, a fourth group has just left in order to profit of the free transport on a naval vessel.³⁵

Promoting Peter Dillon

The confusion that had arisen with the booking of Petitjean and his companions from London in June 1839³⁶ gave rise to new correspondence when, on 25 January 1840, Peter Dillon wrote an angry letter to Colin. Naturally assuming that the missionaries had known about his deal with Pierre Colin, he could think of no other explanation than that Heptonstall had talked them into changing to another ship. Moreover, he wrote that the other ship (the *Sultan*) was such a rotten old wreck that he would not send a dog with it 'for which I had any friendship'. The missionaries had caused him a lot of extra work and expenses. Recalling his early services to the Church

³¹ FMO, p. 44.

³² LRO, doc. 72.

³³ LRO, doc. 64.

³⁴ Cf. above, p. 161.

³⁵ CS, doc. 147.

³⁶ Cf. above, p. 136.

when he planned a first mission to the Pacific with de Solages³⁷, and claiming large landholdings in New Zealand, he hoped to be appointed a paid French consul in New Zealand and he asked Colin to use his influence with ministers in Paris in his favour. He must have been hard up, because he asks Colin to answer him post-paid.³⁸

Also in January, Dillon's wife died, which is probably why this letter was sent only on 24 April 1840 with another one in which he could tell Colin that the *Australasian Packet* with Father Petitjean and company had reached Sydney on 23 October. He again offered his services to get mission goods to Sydney and repeated his convictions that a French consul was needed in New Zealand.

On 2 May Poupinel answered on behalf of Colin, partly in English. He apologized for the confusion about the bookings: it was all our fault, we forgot to give the missionaries a copy of the letter we wrote to you confirming the booking you offered. No fault of Heptonstall!³⁹ Poupinel assured Dillon that the Society would do its utmost to get a consul appointed, but after his vain efforts to get Éveillard appointed⁴⁰, he was careful not to get involved in pushing another candidate.

Missed opportunities?

When Tripe and Pezant passed through Paris they heard that an organization in England promoting emigration to New Zealand, offered free passage to Catholic missionaries. Tripe told Colin⁴¹ and two weeks later Colin wrote to Bishop Thomas Griffiths, vicar apostolic of London, to find out if there was any truth in the story.⁴² Heptonstall, who answered on his behalf, had to disappoint Colin. Free passage was allowed only if Catholic priests accompanied Catholic migrants.⁴³

Poupinel's attempts to correspond with Heptonstall in English had given the English Benedictine the impression that, in view especially of their missions in the Pacific, the Society would be interested in having Marists learn English. He used his letter to Colin to offer a place for a Marist in the Benedictine college of Downside, that was looking for a French teacher. In his answer Colin ignored the opportunity this opened up for the Society. He focused simply on the service he might have rendered to the Benedictines, but, unfortunately... 'if one day our numbers increase, I would gladly help you with two priests'. Moreover, he adds, the rule forbids putting a man by himself (in a Benedictine monastery!).⁴⁴

A few months later Colin received a letter from Petitjean, who had become acquainted in Sydney with John Joseph Therry, an Irish priest working in Hobart. Therry had met with Captain Dumont d'Urville and offered him in writing 20 acres of land he owned 25 miles from Sydney with a good anchorage, and a fund of £100 to build a college to train mission workers for the Pacific. Perhaps he wrote, the French nation would support the project and find religious to staff the college. He sent Petitjean

³⁷ Cf. Wiltgen, op. cit. p. 23ff.

³⁸ Cf. Davidson, op. cit. p 298. Correspondence of Dillon in APM, 511.422.

³⁹ CS, doc. 159.

⁴⁰ Cf. above, p. 142.

⁴¹ CS, doc. 134 [4].

⁴² CS, doc. 138.

⁴³ CS, p. 237, n.1.

⁴⁴ CS, doc. 153.

a copy and, as Therry intended him to, Petitjean forwarded it on 24 February to Colin for him and for the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon.⁴⁵

Nothing ever came of either project. Although the Society was engaged in a part of the world where, at that time, English was the only *lingua franca*, as Pompallier had repeatedly pointed out, the full importance of learning that language had evidently not yet become clear to Colin. He even used the commitment to Oceania – the main reason for promoting English in the Society - as an excuse for not accepting the Benedictine offer! A few years earlier Colin he had spoken with great vision: ‘The whole world must be Marist’, but when windows opened up, all he had to say was: ‘We have all more than enough to occupy ourselves, without looking for other work’.⁴⁶ We can only admit that in that fifth year of its existence, 1840, the Society missed out on two promising opportunities, one in England, and one in Australia.

Sailors and a stowaway from Oceania

In May the local paper of Le Havre carried a story of three native New Zealanders (the name *Maori* had not yet become familiar in France) who had arrived on the whaler *Albatros*. The national paper *l’Univers* took up their cause and reminded its readers of what had happened a few years earlier when two sailors from the same country had been whisked away to England by representatives of the Methodist missionary agency. Why does our government not do something? Does France not have its own missionaries in New Zealand? ‘In Lyon we have the head-house of the French missionaries who sent Mgr. Pompallier to New Zealand. What better way to make them look with favour on our compatriots than to give them the faith of France: Monsieur Colin, the superior general of the Marists would surely open his house for them and convert them while they are here’.

Éveillard and Meynis both wrote to Colin the same day (the Marists only read *l’Ami de la Religion*). Colin, or perhaps Poupinel, jumped into action, letters went to Vigneti in Paris, to Franques in Le Havre and to Langlois, the superior of the *Missions Étrangères*, in Paris, offering to take in the three Polynesians and look after them. However, in the meantime Franques had found out the three were not from New Zealand at all! Two were Hawaiians, one was from the Tuamotu Islands, countries where the Picpus Fathers were active. The last one had fled his island because the Protestant missionaries forced him to dive for fish every day. He had hidden on a French ship in order to get to France and become a Catholic! Once in port, the captain had just put them ashore and left them to fend for themselves. Franques had contacted the secretary of the Propagation of the Faith in Paris, presumably to alert the Picpus Fathers. What became of the three Polynesians we do not know.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Petitjean to Colin, 24.02.40, LRO, doc. 50. Therry mentioned the Jesuits as a possibility. Still, in spite of the fact that he knew the Society of Mary had no English speaking members yet, he must have had the Marists in mind as well. Otherwise, why send it to Petitjean? Therry remained a friend of the Marists. Later he tried to give the Marists a property in Sydney. Cf. Hosie, op. cit. pp. 17, 34, 49f.

⁴⁶ FS, doc. 2. CS, doc. 153 [2].

⁴⁷ CS, docs. 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 168 & 169.

Halting communications

On 22 March Colin had complained to Frasoni of the scanty news from Oceania.⁴⁸ A month later he received Pompallier's letter of 28 August 1839 in which the bishop speaks of entrusting letters to French whalers in spite of the fact they take a lot of time hunting, adding with as many words, that the route via Sydney and London was faster!⁴⁹ On 22 April, Colin, or rather Poupinel, wrote two letters in an attempt to repair the halting communications between Oceania and France. A curt letter begs Pompallier not to rely only on French whaling vessels, but to make more use of the speedier way via Sydney and London.⁵⁰ He also wrote to Polding to assure himself of the archbishop's help.⁵¹

Ironically, within weeks news from Oceania rolled in. Apart from Pompallier's letter of 28 August 1839 (his number 16) that we assume to have arrived just before 22 April, Colin received a parcel of letters on the 12 May in which he found the bishop's letter of 14 August and sent with the *Orion* (number 14).⁵² The two letters had taken eight months and were the first news Colin got from Oceania for over a year.

From Bonamie he had confirmation of Captain Cecille's visit to Pompallier.⁵³ From Franques in Le Havre Colin heard via Peters, the captain of the whaler *France* that the missionaries were building a new chapel in the Bay of Islands and that Pompallier was extremely popular. By the end of April Colin had to hear from Peter Dillon in London that Petitjean and his companions had reached Sydney on 23 October.⁵⁴ In early May Colin also knew that the British government had sent a governor to New Zealand whereby it became a British colony.⁵⁵ One thing and another must have shown Colin and Poupinel that communications between Lyon and Oceania could be improved.

A thing they overlooked was keeping the missionaries informed of how the Society was doing in France. Did it continue to grow? Who were the new Marists? What works did the Society take on? From his isolated post along the Hokianga River Baty asked Claude Girard to do something along these lines. Colin restricted his letters

⁴⁸ CS, doc. 147, cf. above p. 164.

⁴⁹ LRO, doc. 37 [1].

⁵⁰ CS, doc. 154. CS, doc. 185 [4] gives the end of April as the time of arrival. On what precise date Colin received Pompallier's letter of 28.08.39 we do not know. If Colin had indeed received it on 22.04, then why does he not mention it? If he had not, Colin's letter does not make sense. Of this letter there is only a summary, not the usual concept (*minute*) from Poupinel's hand. Colin had probably received Pompallier's letter it and the *résumé* is only an incomplete summary of a letter written by Colin himself in Poupinel's absence. Poupinel must then have made the *résumé* from hearsay afterwards. We know he was preaching missions in the diocese of Moulins in early April, cf. CS, doc. 151 [7].

⁵¹ CS, doc. 155.

⁵² Pompallier asks for pictures of the pope and Colin passes the request on to Cholleton in Rome. LRO, doc. 33 [11] and CS, doc. 173 [17].

⁵³ Bonamie to Colin, 16.09.39. APM, 2231/10449. Cécille had arrived in Brest on 22 August, cf. Marc Boulanger, *L'Amiral Jean-Baptiste Cécille*, p. 52. He met with Bonamie and told him he had given Pompallier all the help he could. The visit of Cécille on the *Héroïne* was already known from Pompallier's letter of 14.05.38, that Colin had received on 10.11.38. Cf. above, p. 73.

⁵⁴ Dillon to Colin, 24.04.40; Colin to Dillon 02.05.40, CS, doc. 159 [11].

⁵⁵ Colin to Frasoni, 05.05.40. CS, doc. 160 [2]. Colin can on 5 May hardly have referred to the Treaty of Waitangi (6 February 1840). He must somehow have heard that William Hobson left London in August 1839 to New Zealand for the purpose, cf. Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, p. 156.

to a spiritual exhortation. Spreading news he left to others. But without an organized plan, the missionaries were for a long time dependent on casual remarks and on the stories of new comers.⁵⁶

In New Zealand: Arrival of the third group

While in Europe, Pezant, Tripe, Bertrand and Duperron were preparing for their departure, Petit-Jean, Viard, Chevron, Comte and Attale Grimaud came in sight of New Zealand. On 9 December 1839⁵⁷, their ship dropped anchor in the Bay of Islands. Pompallier received them with his episcopal blessing and immediately set to rearrange his personnel.

A week after the arrival, 17 December, a ship left for a trading cruise to the tropical islands and Pompallier sent Chevron and Brother Attale to Wallis and Futuna. Chevron was to reinforce the group, Attale would take the place of Marie-Nizier whom Pompallier called to New Zealand. They were given to understand that they would reach Wallis in about three weeks.

He appointed Comte to Purakau to replace Servant as assistant of Baty. Pompallier called Servant to Kororareka, because he was planning to be away for a long missionary trip around the North Island. Brother Florentin, who had arrived with the second group six months earlier, would go with Comte and replace Michel Colombon who was likewise changed to the Bay. Comte got a letter away to his family and the two left on 9 January with fifteen carriers to cross to the west coast.⁵⁸

In early January Pompallier appointed Epalle and Petitjean with Brother Elie-Regis to open a mission at Whangaroa where he had been able to buy a property. They were assisted by an energetic and able convert chief, called Amoto.⁵⁹ Viard was to stay at Kororareka with Maxime Petit and Brother Marie-Augustin, soon to be joined by Servant and Brother Michel.

Having sold the *Reine de Paix*, Pompallier asked Colin by letter of 7 December, to let Captain Lateste of *Le Nérée*, who carried the letter, buy a ship for the mission in France and sail it to New Zealand.⁶⁰ In early January he uses the opportunity of the *Meuse* under Captain Pelletier leaving for France to get two letters away. In the first one he recommends Pelletier as a back-up to Captain Lateste. The next day he realizes he had not even acknowledged the arrival of the five missionaries of the third group. He corrects it quickly. Grateful for their arrival he mildly excuses them for having taken so long in Sydney before making the trip to New Zealand which should not take more than 8 to 10 days. He expresses his satisfaction with the much easier quicker and cheaper travel via London and Sydney, but regrets that there was only one Brother in the group. He could use three Brothers for every priest! No acknowledgment of Colin's letters that the missionaries had carried with them.

He tells Colin lightly that 'the Fathers on Wallis en Futuna are well and that their missions are making reasonable progress.' In fact he had had no news from them

⁵⁶ LRO, doc. 66 [2]. The first index of the Society appeared in 1872!

⁵⁷ Pompallier gives 10 December, Chevron 8 December, LRO, doc. 62 [2].

⁵⁸ LRO, doc. 54 [3].

⁵⁹ For details of this foundation, cf. Simmons, op. cit. p. 45f.

⁶⁰ LRO, doc. 44.

for half a year! He tells Colin he has sent Chevron and Attale to visit the two islands. ‘You must have received the news from these two interesting missions through the long letters I sent you six months ago’, forgetting – or disregarding – the fact that he had entrusted their mail to another whaler, the *Pallas*, which was to go hunting before returning to France. In a P.S. he expresses his satisfaction at the appointment of Victor Poupinel.⁶¹

The Treaty of Waitangi

For years New Zealand had been *de facto* a British possession. English, Scottish and Irish people entered in large numbers and settled everywhere. There was barely a Maori tribe, wrote Pompallier in 1840, that did not have at least one British subject living nearby. The Maori chiefs who ruled over their tribes had no authority over the settlers. Unruly adventurers as many of them were, they recognized no authority at all, or, at the most, the far away British governor of New South Wales. Small British settlements, says Pompallier, can be found in every bay.

Then, on 9 January 1840, the corvette *Herald* entered the Bay of Islands. It hoisted the British flag and the ship’s guns gave the salute. The officer in charge, Captain Hobson, acting as lieutenant governor, on behalf of the governor of New South Wales, called an assembly of local chiefs and settlers for the 5th of February near the mouth of a stream, called Waitangi. Pompallier joined the convocation, in full purple dress, accompanied by Servant, who had just a few days earlier come across from the Hokianga. They had not been invited and their arrival raised a few eyebrows. But Captain Hobson had an officer’s respect for rank and, to the annoyance of the Methodist ministers, offered Pompallier, ‘the one lord that New Zealand could boast’ a place of honour at the proceedings.⁶²

Hobson asked the Maori chiefs if they were prepared to become subjects of the British Queen and accept to live under her protection. Pompallier was asked by several chiefs if they should or should not sign. Pompallier explained that he and his missionaries had come only for the salvation of souls and were there for the service of all people. He kept a strictly neutral position and refused to express an opinion.

As Servant wrote to Colin a month after the event, the large majority of Maori chiefs made it clear in their typical, colourful eloquence, they did not want the Queen of England to extend her authority over them. If there was to be a British authority, let it extend itself only over the British settlers who had intruded upon their lands. They complained of the extensive lands the strangers had appropriated and they would gladly give back the bibles they had received in order to regain their land. Some asked Hobson to leave their country. In the end, Servant writes, more moderate speakers took over and stressed the advantages of accepting British sovereignty. The next day, many signed.

Hobson went around the country and held convocations on many places. Servant wrote that in Hokianga one chief asked the lieutenant governor if a Maori chief could do the same, go to England and just proclaim sovereignty there?

Pompallier was convinced that the Maoris did not and could not understand the full implications of the event. Anyhow, it was a farce, he said, to ask the question after

⁶¹ LRO, docs. 46 & 47.

⁶² Simmons, op. cit. p. 43.

raising the flag followed by the salvo of naval guns. He had his doubts whether what he called the *prise de possession* would get international recognition. He noted afterwards that American and French warships entered the Bay of Islands without acknowledging British sovereignty⁶³ and he expressed the fear that the British act could lead to international tensions but he admitted that the new governor had been most respectful. When asked, Hobson announced that the Catholic Church could proclaim its religion all over New Zealand and would receive the same protection as other churches. Adding insult to injury, Hobson asked the Methodist missionary Henry Williams to convey this message to the Maori chiefs present.⁶⁴ The mission ship was allowed to anchor everywhere without charge and mission goods could be brought in free of duty. In fact, Pompallier admits, the *prise de possession* has brought law and order and that can only be for the good. Having been scrupulously impartial, the Catholic Church got no blame from the Maoris for what had happened, while criticism was frequently directed at the Protestant ministers who had openly favoured the treaty. What really upset many Maoris, was the presence of British soldiers on their lands.⁶⁵

A great missionary ⁶⁶

Treaty or no treaty, Pompallier pursued his missionary work with vigour. He would have preferred to make a tour to the South Island as well as exploring the east coast of the North Island, but as he had no ship and had to hire one at great cost, he limited himself to the North. In order to assure continuity of religious services and instructions he called in Catherin Servant from the Hokianga mission who was the best Maori speaker of the moment. Viard and Brother Michel he took with him as well as a Maori catechist, Romano.

From the Bay of Islands he went south along the east coast. In the Bay of Plenty he received an enthusiastic welcome in Tauranga where he delighted the local people with a pontifical Mass, and enrolled several hundred catechumens. He went for several days walking into the interior, climbed mountains and was carried through swamps. His reputation had preceded him and he was respectfully received on many places. He then sailed on to Ohiwa harbour from where he walked to Opotiki where a chief from the Bay of Islands had married into a local tribe and had already built a chapel. After successful visits to tribes near Whakatane he moved back up the coast and spent several weeks in the Coromandel Bay, calling at coastal villages and walking inland, staying two or more days at several places.

Viard described Pompallier amid the Maoris as follows: ‘When they are near His Lordship they cannot bear to part company with him. ‘Epikopo, I am hungry` they say, and without more ado sit down to table. And Epikopo gives them to eat what he

⁶³ Dumont d’Urville, on the *Astrolabe*, only heard of the *prise de possession* when entering the Bay of Islands in March or April. He found Hobson not at home and went to see Hobson’s secretary to whom he explained that in the absence of instructions from his government he was not able to recognize British sovereignty. Cf. Jore, op. cit. II, p. 87.

⁶⁴ King, op. cit. p. 163.

⁶⁵ LRO, doc. 59 [13 - 15]. Servant to Colin, LRO, doc. 52 [14 - 16] & doc. 55 [9].

⁶⁶ I owe this section in large part to Simmons, op. cit. 45 - 48

has, without his courtesy being exhausted and without his zeal ever being wearied.⁶⁷ The description that Joseph Luzy gave two years later of Pompallier in Wallis can also help us picture him (minus the kava and the banana) in the Maori villages: 'Forgetful of his rank he sits down among his flock, drinking kava, eating with his fingers from a banana leaf on the ground.'⁶⁸

When possible his missionary tours were followed by foundations and appointments. In October 1838 he had visited the Kaipara district overland. In May 1840 he sent Petit and Michel Colombon there to start a mission. In his first sea trip, to the North, in September 1839, he prepared the ground in Whangaroa and in January 1840 he sent Épalle, Petitjean and Brother Élie to open a station there. After this trip South he appointed Viard in Tauranga. As he explained to Colin, he would not send his missionaries anywhere until he had made the first contacts himself and broken the ground.⁶⁹ This was Pompallier at his best. This is where he was happy. 'I enjoy the missionary tours in New Zealand, and the dangers involved as if I were in heaven'.⁷⁰ A great missionary indeed!

In the bishop's absence the two naval vessels he had been waiting for, the *Astrolabe* and the *Zélé* under Captain Dumont d'Urville, paid a call to the Bay of Islands. The captain carried Colin's letters of May and November 1837 with the fifty golden Spanish doubloons, that Father Liausu in Valparaiso had entrusted to him for Pompallier.⁷¹ Petit rose to the occasion. He received the captain at the mission and celebrated a solemn high Mass at which Dumont d'Urville and a detachment of sailors attended.

Correspondence

When the first missionaries left, Colin had perhaps not fully realized how crucially important letters to and from Oceania would be. By asking them to pass all mail through Lyon, he just followed the common practice of handing outgoing mail unsealed to the superior.⁷² He had another reason in this case: he wanted to keep an eye on what news from the missions would become public.⁷³

⁶⁷ This quote in Simmons is from 06.01.40, i.e., before the present trip, cf. LRO, doc. 45 [3]. But it is so graphic that it must be true and typical for the way Pompallier got along with the Maori people.

⁶⁸ LL 26.05.42

⁶⁹ LRO, doc.

⁷⁰ LRO, doc. 60 [22].

⁷¹ LRO, doc. 59 [4]. Simmons, op. cit. p. 48. On the letters and the money, cf. above, p. 51, 56, 65 & 118. On the visit of Dumont d'Urville, cf. Jore, op. cit. II, pp. 87 – 90.

⁷² AT, VI, p. 17, nr. 35. CS, doc. 4 [9], cf. above, p. 33, 8°. This was called the 'visitation' of letters. Visitation is an age-old tradition in the Church. Bishops were expected to do the visitation of parishes, higher religious superiors of local communities. The term was extended over the right of religious superiors to read incoming and outgoing mail of their subjects. How much superiors used this right will have differed from case to case, but at least the principle was taken seriously. If a Jesuit candidate objected, it was a sign for Ignatius that he was not made for religious life. Communicating with the outside world was considered to disturb the spiritual life, especially of beginners. Cf. J. Coste, *Autour de la Règle*, doc. 8 [32]; doc. 11 [8]; doc. 15 [10], 4; doc. 17 [25], etc.

⁷³ Cf. CS, doc. 64 & 135.

Equally common was that lower superiors never had the right to open letters to or from higher superiors and the 1833 Constitutions, a version of which Colin gave to the missionaries, explicitly mention the exception.⁷⁴

When Colin appointed Pompallier to religious superior, nothing was said about the visitation of letters⁷⁵, but Pompallier cannot be blamed for thinking that his appointment gave him the right to check the incoming and outgoing mail of his missionaries. Like Colin he was concerned how the outside world would see his mission, especially as English translations from the *Annales* appeared in Australian papers as well as in local newsheets in the Bay of Islands itself. There was no place for bad news or for remarks that might exacerbate the already difficult relations with the Protestants.⁷⁶ However, he also saw himself – rightly – as a delegated, thus lower, superior and he must have known that correspondence with higher superiors, i.e., to and from Colin, was exempt.

Nevertheless, already during the voyage Pompallier wanted the missionaries to hand him all outgoing letters unsealed, even those addressed to the Superior General. When, in May 1839, Chanel and Bataillon entrusted their mail to the visitors for mailing in New Zealand, the matter came up and the two expressed their discontent with the bishop's ruling. Later that year, from something Pompallier told him, Baty concluded that Pompallier had read a sealed letter to Colin and when Servant received Colin's letter that had come with Baty, it had been opened. When, in September 1839, Pompallier came to Papakawau, Servant and Baty challenged his right to read their letters from and to Colin. It must have been a painful discussion, but Pompallier was out of order and he knew it. He gave in.⁷⁷

In practice, entrusting letters to departing ships remained something the bishop reserved to himself and he expected his men to hand him their letters unsealed. There was little they could do but comply and they wrote their letters accordingly. Today's reader must keep this in mind when reading them!

In spite of everything, the Marist missionaries were very faithful to Colin's request to use every opportunity to give him news. For them as well as for their bishop, writing letters was a way to cope with their isolation and, as Claude-Marie Bertrand put it to Champagnat: 'You can't imagine the pleasure it gives me to take a few moments to talk to you. To have an idea, you would need to be several thousand leagues away from your dear friends'.⁷⁸

Although most of his letters to the missionaries have been lost, it seems that Colin wrote to each of the priests at least with every group leaving. No small talk, no

⁷⁴ Cf. AT, I, p. 68, nr. 27, from 1833, in fact a summary only. Colin revised that text several times between 1833 and the first departure in 1836. Most revisions have not been found. Which version it was he gave to the missionaries at their departure is not clear. The stipulation remained in the Marist Constitutions – with the exception mentioned – until 1962 (nr. 221). Cf. Code of Canon Law (1917), canon 611. After the II Vatican Council the rule disappeared from Church law.

⁷⁵ Lillian Keys, op. cit. p. 203, contends that an arrangement had been made before leaving France 'by which all correspondence from missionaries overseas was to be left unsealed'. She does not substantiate this statement and nothing of the kind is known to this author. Moreover, if some arrangement had been made, Servant, Baty, Chanel and Bataillon would not have objected, as we know they did.

⁷⁶ LRO, doc. 59 [12].

⁷⁷ LRO, doc. 55 [8]. Cf. LRO, doc. 70.

⁷⁸ Bertrand to Champagnat, who was dead by then, 18.07.40, LO, Clisby 018 [1].

news; just a short words to kindle their spiritual fervour. But they were highly appreciated and often provided an occasion for many pages long answers.

Philippe Viard

A month after his arrival Viard wrote to his former parish priest at La Guillotière in Lyon. His letter is full of naïve admiration for Pompallier. He recounts how Maoris maltreated a French settler and set fire to his house. The story went around and the Frenchmen in the area came together to take revenge, whereupon the guilty tribe warned they had the guns to defend themselves. As Viard tells it, Pompallier rose to the occasion. He got two ships that lay for anchor in the Bay and went to the tribe. As he approached he saw a large number of warriors armed to the teeth. He went ashore and the simple sight of the *epikopo* calmed them down. They received him with joy, promised to pay compensation and said they wanted to make friends with the French.

Even more naively Viard writes that in the six months since Pompallier had settled in the Bay of Islands there had not been even one death among the Catholic adherents while several very sick people had recovered after they had received baptism on danger of death.

The first story is clearly not the account of an eyewitness and as he had not been there long enough to speak Maori or know the people, the second one too can only from Pompallier himself. These tales of what Servant mockingly called the bishop's *mirabilia* tell us how Pompallier saw himself and how he wanted others to see him.⁷⁹

We probably do hear an eyewitness, where Viard describes the great patience with which Pompallier treats the Maoris and how he keeps up his sweet demeanour even when they behave like troublesome children, sitting down at his table and sharing his food uninvited!⁸⁰

Catherin Servant

On 5 March Servant wrote from the Bay of Islands in answer to the letter Colin had sent him with the third group. He expresses his appreciation for the valuable spiritual direction, or, as he puts it, 'the holy exhortations and the amiable and fatherly concern'.

He tells Colin of the signing of the treaty after Pompallier called him to Kororareka in January to assure the continuity of religious instructions. He is with Maxime Petit who is the bursar and easily fills twelve pages with colourful tales of his visits with Baty to Whirinaki and Wairoa. He also recounts visiting alone places like Ahipara, Tairutu, Wangape, Pawera, and Motu Tapu. He obviously enjoys his work with the Maoris who feel enough at ease to share a joke with him. When one man greeted Servant by touching noses, his friends told him: watch it, you touch a priest's nose and you will die!⁸¹

⁷⁹ LRO, doc. 55 [2]. A biblical allusion, e.g.: '*narrabo omnia mirabilia tua, I will tell of all thy wonderful deeds*', Ps. 9, 1.

⁸⁰ LRO, doc. 45. New to Polynesia, Viard could not understand Maori behaviour in any other way. It may also echo the bishop's own way of speaking. He often writes in similar terms.

⁸¹ LRO, doc. 52.

On 14 May⁸² he wrote to Champagnat how he narrowly escaped getting lost at sea. He had gone to Whangaroa on a visit to Épalle and Petitjean whom he had not met yet. On the way back the canoe was driven past the entrance of the Bay of Islands and they barely managed to get ashore, miles to the South. After an awful night in a derelict hut full of lizards, they took to the sea again and were driven even further off. This time they spent the night at sea, chilled to the bone. The next day by rowing very hard they managed to reach the shore, again on a deserted spot.⁸³

Maxime Petit

Petit wrote to Colin on 8 January and to Poupinel on 21 February. His work as the bursar takes up so much of his time that he is not making much progress in either Maori or English. On behalf of Pompallier he asks for Bible commentaries and church history books. The people love nice church ornaments and the pontifical ceremonies draw people from near and from afar. Don't hesitate to send precious things for fear they would be stolen, he adds. Maoris would never steal anything sacred!

He needs cassocks for the priests and lay-clothing for the Brothers because Pompallier has forbidden them to wear cassocks.⁸⁴ Judging from his shopping list, the mission storeroom must have resembled a bazaar: tobacco, church bells, all sizes of nails, carpentry and gardening tools, ink for the copying machine and letters for the printing press (234.800 a's, 81.600 e's please!), vast quantities of printing paper and any amount of colourful second-hand clothing: 'sometimes a gift to a chief wins a friend, he turns to the Church and converts with his whole tribe'.⁸⁵

The day after Pompallier left for his long tour down the east coast of the North Island. The next day Petit wrote again to Colin with details of the exorbitant costs of travelling, be it as a passenger or by hiring a ship. Equally expensive are building materials: timber costs four times as much as in France, and a good carpenter has to be paid 15 to 18 francs per day. Marie-Augustin is the only Brother at Kororareka and has three hired carpenters with him. Even local food is expensive and Maoris take it for granted that they can stay for days on the mission and be fed while they are there. The bishop pays for the medical expenses of Catholic adherents for fear they would go over to the Protestants!

But even in a later letter that would not be censored, Petit speaks with admiration of the zeal with which people from far and near attend Church services and follow religious instruction. It can only be the Holy Spirit at work!⁸⁶

Jean-Baptiste Petitjean

At the end of January, barely six weeks after the new priests had arrived, people from Whangaroa, a bay to the North, had come to Kororareka and refused to leave until

⁸² The trip to Whangaroa must have been between 3 March (he did not mention it to Colin), and 26 April when he writes he had spoken with Épalle (who was in Whangaroa).

⁸³ LO, Clisby 016.

⁸⁴ FMO, p. 31. The Brothers were very upset at this ruling.

⁸⁵ LRO, doc. 48 & 49.

⁸⁶ LRO, doc. 51.

the bishop gave them a priest. To the objection that none of the new priests knew the language, they answered: we shall teach them! Pompallier asked Petitjean and Epalle to go with them. On 18 March, from Whangaroa, his first mission station, Petitjean wrote a four-page letter to his brother-in-law Auguste Paillasson who acted as an intermediary with the rest of the family. Referring to his first appointment he wrote:

‘This, my dear brother, is what religious life is like. To be everywhere as if you were nowhere. To be attached to neither people nor places, always ready to leave everything behind, at the first wink of the superior. You are always ready to part for another place, where the Lord has prepared other friends, other brothers. It hurts, of course, but while it hurts, the spirit is joyful, the heart expands and becomes more apostolically minded’.⁸⁷

Jean-Baptiste Comte

After a few months in the Hokianga area Comte wrote to his parents. He describes in striking detail the walk with Brother Florentin across the North Island and their arrival at Purakau. Servant, Baty and Brother Michel received them as ‘friends, brothers, sons of the family’. He must have picked up a lot of the language in a short time, his letter has quite a few Maori sayings. He was very impressed by the kindness of the people, the care they took of the missionaries and their piety. ‘In the midst of our dear *sauvages*, God covers us in consolations. ‘People love us, we love them. This mutual love compensates for everything we left behind’.⁸⁸

In spite of the restraint of knowing that Pompallier might read everything they wrote, the letters of the missionaries bring out the depth of their commitment, their love and respect for the Maoris and their ability to stand up to the extremely tough conditions of mission life. Their piety was able to cope. Pompallier need not have worried. But how was his own piety coping with the task of leading these splendid men?

Enough is enough

When Pompallier left for his tour down the coast Servant, the senior missionary, who after more than two years was fluent in Maori and spoke a reasonable bit of English, stayed in Kororareka for the daily religious instructions and the church services. With him was Maxime Petit, the bursar.

Servant had felt guilty for some time. Under the constraint of Pompallier’s censorship he had not been fully honest with his superior general. The picture he had painted of the mission was too rosy, and he knew that at least some confreres felt the same. He had talked it over with Baty. They agreed something should be done. He had gone to Whangaroa and consulted Épalle and Petitjean. As far as we know Petitjean, just new in the mission, had not expressed an opinion. Épalle, always the faithful

⁸⁷ LRO, doc. 53 [1]. This letter was not known to Mary Goulter when she wrote: ‘The first fifteen months of Father Petitjean’s life in New Zealand are without written record’. Op, cit, p. 17.

⁸⁸ LRO, doc. 54 [1 & 4].

servant, objected: there should be no complaints to Colin about the bishop.⁸⁹ But Maxime Petit agreed with Servant. As procurator of the mission, he was deeply concerned about the way finances were handled. The good of the mission demanded an appeal to the superior general.

Pompallier was gone for seven weeks and could return any day, when an English whaler was about to leave directly for London, Servant grabbed the chance. On 26 April he wrote a strongly worded letter.⁹⁰

The first thing he wanted to put right was the overtly optimistic picture he himself too had painted. The numerous conversions, he tells Colin, that earlier letters may have told you about, must not be taken too literally. There may be a fair number of adherents, but genuine conversion is by far not their first interest. Perhaps carried away by anger, he now depicts the Maoris as often greedy, scheming, ungrateful and devious. They want money for everything, even for the use of their canoes when you go to say Mass for them or the food they give you when you visit them. Many come to church only for the presents they expect to get.

What he really wants to write about is the bishop. Pompallier, he writes, is simply incapable of financial and material administration, while, at the same time, he keeps everything in his own hands. He just paid £40 for a dinghy worth £30, although they did not really need it. He could have bought a church organ worth £300 for £40: but did not buy it. When the owner asked £1,250 per month for the ship he wanted for his trip around the North Island, he just paid without trying to get the price down. In any case, he should not get involved in material deals at all. It is painful to hear from outsiders that the bishop is easily cheated and knows nothing of business matters. The bishop should leave those things to the procurator.

To a certain extent the giving of gifts is unavoidable. But the bishop should not be the only one to make gifts. It puts the priest into a position of always having to refuse. As the Maoris put it, the priests have a *hard heart*. If for that reason priests do not have the respect of the people, they have little chance of succeeding in their work.

The bishop treats his priests harshly. For the smallest things he covers them with bitter recriminations, not only in private, but also in front of Brother Michel. Colin is now told for the first time of the painful incident in Vavau when Pompallier blew his top in public when he imagined the men disagreed with the way he handled things. Recently, when some untrustworthy sailor called, the Bishop offered him hospitality, and then told off his own men in the sailor's presence. Both Servant and Petit have repeatedly been scolded in front of local people. In this country we could not do without the Brothers, but they are not treated as Brothers. The bishop's corrections are harsh and humiliating. As a result, the Brothers close up and are discouraged. Brother Michel has repeatedly been treated badly in public..

The bishop is lavish in promising all sorts of things, but he cannot be relied upon to keep his word. The most serious case of course, is the neglect of the missionaries on Wallis and Futuna. Pompallier promised to visit them in six months. Two and a half years later, he has not been there yet. The Fathers who visited them promised to send the ship back in six months: the bishop took no notice. This could have terrible consequences. All the money and all the resources of the mission are used

⁸⁹ LRO, doc. 56 [1].

⁹⁰ LRO, doc. 55.

in New Zealand, and specifically on headquarters. The men on Wallis and Futuna are left in dire circumstances. There should be another vicar apostolic for the islands

Servant admits to Colin that he has been on the point of abandoning New Zealand and returning to France, only, when Epalle came to visit them, he and Baty, talked him out of it. He would rather be sent to the tropical islands where he thinks more good can be done and he asks Colin to support his request with the bishop.

Servant showed his letter to Maxime Petit who immediately wrote to back up Servant and get the letter away with the same ship.⁹¹ To make sure nobody but Colin would read it, he enclosed it – sealed - in another, harmless one.⁹²

Since his visit of Wallis and Futuna, Petit begins, he has been wanting to write in the same sense as Servant, and he is not the only one. One moment he already did, but when he failed to get the letter on the ship he had thought of, he burned the letter: ‘The reason that made me put off writing to you was the fear that our letters would be opened’.⁹³

Petit seconds the complaints of Servant. Pompallier’s obsession with the so-called *esprit de corps* among his men (meaning they gang up on him), has frequently led to painful recriminations and reproaches. The second group was told off for visiting Wallis and Futuna, the third one for staying too long in Sydney. In a fit of temper Pompallier had even threatened to take his complaints to Rome and to get other missionaries.

Petit adds that Servant should also have told Colin about the row in Valparaiso, when Pompallier turned on the Picpus Fathers because he felt they did not show proper respect for his hierarchical dignity. Colin should know and perhaps straighten things with the Picpus administration. They may well be unhappy anyway with the fact that their ship has been sold. Who knows, he adds, when they will get their money, and if they will get all they are entitled to. In any case, apart from Pompallier, we got along very well with the Picpus men and we all have the highest regard for them.

While he disagrees with Servant that a disproportionate part of the money is spent on Kororareka, he supports his observations on the way the bishop handles money. Two months after selling the *Reine de Paix* Pompallier paid an untrustworthy trader 2,500 francs for Chevron and Attale to travel to Wallis and Futuna. For each day spent at these islands he will have to pay another 250 francs. For his present trip, on what Petit calls a ramshackle and dangerous little ship, he is paying the owner an exorbitant 1,250 francs per month, enough to buy the thing in less than six months.⁹⁴

The bishop is a pushover for any smooth talking scoundrel around. Recently some character asked for a loan of £150. Pompallier called me in, writes Petit, and asked me in the presence of the fellow if I agreed! And that was not the first time he did something like it.

‘I do not want to go further into matters such as the loans the bishop makes, or advance payments to dishonest men who know how to get him

⁹¹ LRO, doc. 56.

⁹² LRO, doc. 57.

⁹³ LRO, doc. 56 [10].

⁹⁴ LRO, doc. 51 [1].

to agree with flattering talk, or his rash agreement to proposals by clever and greedy fellows who know that they can get whatever they want'.⁹⁵

In the end, he is happy to ascribe the problems with the bishop to his extraordinary zeal and his kindness. And, like Servant and Viard, he praises Pompallier's endless patience with the Maoris that, he says, he has often admired.

Petit is also prepared to propose solutions. He knows from the latest arrivals that Colin is thinking already of a second vicariate. He supports that plan. When a second vicariate in Oceania is erected, he proposes, the Society should open a procure in Sydney with a procurator. This procurator could at the same time be the higher superior for the missionaries and all Marists should be free to write to him in sealed letters as if he were the superior general. The subsidies from the Propagation of the Faith should not go directly to the bishops but to the Society. The procurator can divide the funds under the responsibility of the superior general according to needs.

Contrary to what you may have heard, he tells Colin, there are no problems with having a house in Sydney. From the priests who stayed with Archbishop Polding we know that he would be happy to have us. Some people (read Pompallier!) oppose it for fear the Society would be asked to take up work in Australia.

Ideally there should be two priests in Sydney, one could be constantly travelling around the missions. With a property of its own in Sydney the Society would be independent of the whims of a bishop; it is the ideal place. We should do the same in New Zealand, and for the same reason.

Petit touches the root of the problem by pointing to the bishop's conviction that the mission should put up a big show, and impose itself by an impressive set-up. His comment: 'This is not how the apostles acted and I personally am convinced that a noble simplicity will gain just as much respect'.⁹⁶

In a veiled reproach directed at Colin as well as at Pompallier, Maxime Petit challenges Pompallier's principle that the superior general of the Society should limit himself to being a sort of spiritual director, without involvement in the Marists' pastoral and missionary activities: 'It is wrong to say that the superior of the Society should deal only with the spiritual welfare of his religious'.⁹⁷ It is in this same letter he tells Colin of the bishop's critical attitude towards the missionaries' common prayers.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ LRO, doc. 56 [5].

⁹⁶ '*la persuasion qu'il faut que l'autorité soit entouré d'une sorte de représentation qui la fasse respecter. Il ne paroît pas que les apôtres aient connu ce moyen, et il me semble qu'une noble simplicité (...) attireroit aussi efficacement ce respect.*' LRO, doc. 56 [6].

⁹⁷ '*il est faux que le supérieur de la Société n'a uniquement à s'occuper que de la perfection de ses sujets*'. Pompallier formulated this principle already in his letter to Colin from Paris 5 November 1836, LRO, doc. 4 [4 & 6], suggesting it was part of the instructions he got from Rome as well as linking it to his delegation as religious superior. When Colin accepted to be his provicar in France, Pompallier wrote: 'Now you can not only care for the salvation of our souls, but also look after the interests of the mission in France', LRO, doc. 8 [4]. Religious priests appointed to a mission territory became, in Pompallier's eyes, the clergy of the vicar apostolic. They were subject to the religious superiors only in as far as their personal spiritual life was concerned, cf. LRO, doc. 10 [6 & 7]. He must have proclaimed his principle *ad nauseam* for Petit (who had not read those early letters of course) to take it up the way he did. As far as we know, Colin never expressed agreement, but neither did he challenge it and so far his letters to the

In Maxime Petit the Marist missions had a penetrating analyst and a far-seeing strategist. He was not afraid to speak out boldly. He could see abuses while appreciating the good being done. It had not taken him long to see the structural weaknesses of the Marist missionary undertaking.

The first letter from the bishop

When the Fathers Baty, Petit, Epalle and the Brothers Augustin, Florentin and Elie-Regis visited Wallis and Futuna in May 1839, they expected and promised that the *Reine de Paix* would return within six months. In October or November Pompallier sold it. On 9 December the Fathers Chevron, Comte, Petitjean and Viard with brother Attale arrived in New Zealand. A few days later Pompallier heard that a trading ship was on the point of leaving for the tropical islands. He was told the ship expected to call at Wallis and Futuna in two or three weeks. He immediately booked Chevron and Attale to visit the confreres. It also was his first opportunity to communicate with the missionaries whom he had left on the two isolated islands more than two years before. On 14 December he sat down and wrote:

‘How I suffer in my heart because I have not been able to visit you since I left you on your islands. It is one of most painful crosses of my mission to have no possibility of communicating with you as often as I would want. From your letters that I received through the confreres that have come to join me last June, I understand that for you too it is an ordeal. (...) I have been waiting for more than eight months for the frigate *Astrolabe* under Captain Dumont d’Urville. She should be here any time now. If he does not come within six months I shall hire the first ship available to visit you. (...)⁹⁹.

Without explaining why, he tells his men that the *Reine de Paix* is no longer at their disposal. The missionaries who travelled on her are in good health and since then another group of four priests and one brother has arrived. The bishop now resides at the Bay of Islands where the procure is established. His mind had been put at rest, he writes, by the news the visitors were able to give, but he would have been happier had they come straight from Tahiti to New Zealand. He could then have used the ship for a visit himself. ‘But once I was reassured about you (...) I put off another visit until now’.

Pompallier goes on to tell the missionaries in the islands of the assurance from the French government that naval vessels in the Pacific would be ready to protect them. He expands on the success of the mission in New Zealand. Everywhere on the North Island he senses a movement towards the Catholic Faith, and the Hail Mary is heard daily in many tribes, in spite of the fierce resistance of the heretics. He is sending them

missionaries are in fact of the nature of spiritual direction only. The delegation of his religious jurisdiction to Pompallier had in fact reinforced the man’s autocratic tendencies. Cf. above, p. 35ff.

⁹⁸ Cf. above, p. 126.

⁹⁹ The letter has survived thanks to a copy that Nizier made for himself and that he quoted in full to Colin 14 October 1860. APM, personal file Delorme. Part of the letter is in Rozier, *S. Pierre Chanel*, doc. 13.

a third priest and a catechist to replace Brother Marie-Nizier whom he wants to come to New Zealand, so he writes, ‘for the good of the mission’.

A nightmare trip

Chevron and Attale sailed on 17 December and their voyage began badly when their ship¹⁰⁰ was becalmed for days in sight of the New Zealand coast. Then they ran into a violent storm that killed one of the sailors. On 4 January they reached the Fiji group and stopped at Levuka, on Ovalau Island. The two were in awe before the dark-coloured, and what Chevron described as Hercules-sized Fijians. The ship’s crew made it worse with tales of the Fijians’ murderous and cannibalistic habits. Their apprehension was not put at rest when they heard that Levuka was near the island of Viwa where in 1834 the French vessel *Aimable Joséphine* was sacked and burned, and Captain Bureau with his crew massacred. In 1838 Dumont d’Urville had bombarded the village from the *Astrolabe* and the *Zélée* in revenge.¹⁰¹ Still, they heard that there were two Anglican missionaries on the island and the first Fijians who came on board evidently had some knowledge of Christianity: they reverently touched the cross on Chevron’s chest and he gave them some medals.

After ten days of trading the ship tried to leave the anchorage but stranded on a sandbar. Within hours numerous canoes approached and the crew readied the guns to repel an attack. For days the ship manoeuvred in nasty squalls, all the time threatened by canoes full of hostile warriors. In those desperate circumstances the rudder was damaged and had to be repaired. The only thing the two missionaries could contribute were their prayers and throwing medals into the sea! Finally, on 22 January 1840, after abandoning an anchor, the ship reached open water.

They then cruised through the length and the width of the Fiji group after which they went to the Tonga islands and called at Ha`apai and Vava`u where they barely survived a cyclone and were nearly thrown on the reefs several times. From there they visited Tongatapu just when King George Taufu`ahau was waging war on the pagan chiefs who refused to convert to Christianity. Finally, on 1 May they sailed from Tongatapu and on Saturday, 9 May 1840, they reached Wallis, five months after leaving for a trip that was expected to take two or three weeks.

Wallis

When Chevron and Attale landed on Wallis, it was a year since the visit of the *Reine de Paix*. Until that visit Bataillon had not openly spoken of his intention to convert the island to the *lotu*. There had been a small number of adherents, barely tolerated, even maltreated, by the Lavelua, and meeting in secret. Since then, Bataillon had been frank about the missionary purpose of his presence, and the tide had turned. Chevron found there were up to 800 catechumens, meeting openly on Nukuatea, the

¹⁰⁰ Chevron’s colourful narrative to his family fills 17 printed pages in LRO, doc. 62. Strangely enough he nowhere mentions the name of the ship or the captain. It certainly was not the *Reine de Paix*, as Rosier and after him Anthony Ward mistakenly note, EC, p. 489, n.1, A. Ward, *Ever your poor brother*, p.225.

¹⁰¹ For Chanel’s comment on that event that he heard about from Jones, cf. EC, p. 398, 12.12.38.

little island on the ring of the lagoon that belonged to chief Tuugahala, who from early days had opted for the *lotu*.

The rapidly growing support also drew increasingly violent resistance. In May 1840 the island was about evenly divided between those who wanted to be instructed in the *lotu papalangi* and those who refused to have anything to do with it. At times there was a real danger of civil war. Although he personally liked the missionaries, the Lavelua stood clearly on the side of the traditional religion and the issue took on the form of a struggle for political power between the old king and the ambitious young Tuugahala. However, the converts were numerous enough to stand their ground

The visit of Chevron and Attale was a windfall for the catechumens. They all wanted to touch noses, or shake hands with the new missionaries and after Sunday Mass on Nukuatea the visitors were regaled with kava. The grace of state, Chevron wrote, carried him through when a chiefly old man honoured him with a piece of fruit out of his mouth after chewing on it. Bataillon wanted Chevron to stay in what really was a time of extreme danger. The catechumens were ready for armed resistance, in case the pagans decided to resort to violence.

Bataillon added a page to the long treatise on Wallis he had begun in September 1839¹⁰² and to a letter for Séon begun in November.¹⁰³ What is needed now, he wrote to Colin, is a printing press. He had taught some young people to read and they are quite able to teach others. He ended on an optimistic note: *The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice, let the many islands be glad!*¹⁰⁴ The visitors boarded the ship for the night and he gave them the letters. Besides their schooner, there was a whaler for anchor in the lagoon. When a rumour went round the ships that an attack on the ships was being planned, the crews stood by all night at their guns. At daybreak both ships slipped out of the lagoon. Chevron could not even go ashore to pick up his breviary that he had left in Bataillon's house.¹⁰⁵

Futuna

The Futunan chief Falemaa, who did not want to get involved in the war of August 1839, had skipped off to Wallis in time and returned by the end of the year. He spread the story that soon Wallis would be entirely Christian. He vowed he would do anything in his power to stop Futuna going the same way, and recalled with glee how the Wallisians had killed Tongan teachers a few years earlier and how the Lavelua had beaten up some early Christian adherents.¹⁰⁶

During January a Sydney based schooner called at Futuna. Its Hawaiian sailors attempted a mutiny, but they were caught before they could murder the captain and his wife with their three children. They escaped to Singave but Niuliki forced the Singaves to hand them over to the captain. Chanel did not feel well and he was very busy

¹⁰² LRO, doc. 38 [29 – 32], cf. above, p. 132

¹⁰³ LRO, doc. 43 [6 – 8].

¹⁰⁴ According to the familiar Vulgate: *Dominus regnavit, exsultet terra, laetentur insulae multae*. Ps. 96 (97).1. The RSV translates *coastlands* instead of *islands*.

¹⁰⁵ LRO, doc. 62 [46 – 49].

¹⁰⁶ EC, doc. 56 [6].

instructing sick people around him. He sent Nizier to visit the ship and offer fresh fruit. They exchanged little presents. The captain's wife gave the missionaries a pot of jam.¹⁰⁷

In February Chanel had found out how high feelings were running on Wallis, when he asked a visiting canoe from Wallis to take a letter to Bataillon. He was bluntly told they had other gods and would do him no favours.¹⁰⁸ A most unusual reaction.

Nevertheless, when Chevron and Attale landed on 16 May 1840, Futuna was comparatively quiet. Peter Chanel was delighted to receive them, but, at the same time, bitterly disappointed that his bishop had again not bothered to come himself. On top of that, Brother Marie-Nizier was told to board the ship for New Zealand! As Chevron half expected to return to Wallis to support Bataillon¹⁰⁹, that would leave Chanel alone with a newcomer who did not speak a word of the language. His health was declining and his feet were in a poor state.¹¹⁰ Chevron told Chanel of the 250 francs the captain would charge the bishop for every day spent off Wallis and Futuna.¹¹¹ The provicar of Oceania, always gentle and flexible, could also take responsibility. He decided on the spot not to keep the ship a day longer. Both Chevron and Attale would stay on Futuna for the time being and Marie-Nizier was not to go to New Zealand. The captain was told they would hand him a parcel of letters next morning but that they did not need his services any longer; there would be no passengers.

Chanel must have stayed up half the night writing to Pompallier and Colin. He also finished a letter to Bishop Devie that he had started already in November.

We shall never know how he expressed his disappointment to Pompallier and how he formulated his decision to disregard the bishop's orders concerning Marie-Nizier. His letter has not been found.

To Colin Chanel expressed his profound disappointment with Pompallier for not coming himself. It would have been an 'unspeakable consolation'.¹¹² He explained why he felt justified to go against the instructions of the bishop: the bad tracks on Futuna and his bruised feet.

While Bataillon, he wrote to Colin, is on the point of converting the people of Wallis, Futuna is still far from it. Listing the causes for this lack of progress, he mentioned in the first place the fact that the bishop still had not come for a visit. The problem lay, he wrote, not with the people of Futuna: I have every cause to be happy with their good character. Nor was it Niuliki personally. Chanel called him with some affection 'my good King Niuliki (*mon bon roi Niuriki*)', who had assured him that the island would soon turn Christian.¹¹³ Chanel blamed the delay on the contest taking place on Wallis reverberating on Futuna. Another thing that kept many people back was their reverence for the king. They just could not get themselves to come out openly against him. And, said the humble Chanel: 'it is my sinfulness and my lack of zeal that delays the conversion of this island'.

¹⁰⁷ EC, p. 486.

¹⁰⁸ EC, p. 487.

¹⁰⁹ LRO, doc. 62 [52].

¹¹⁰ EC, doc. 59 [1].

¹¹¹ Cf. above p. 176.

¹¹² '*l'ineffable consolation*', EC, doc. 59 [1].

¹¹³ According to the *Analyse* by Roulleaux of Chanel's lost diary, EC, p. 487, the king continued to send food to the missionaries and Chanel used every opportunity to speak with him about the *lotu*. The king maintained his neutral position, saying it was up to the people to become Christians if they wish.

The core of the problem however he described with great empathy and understanding for what converting to the Christian faith meant to the Futunans:

Our good King Niuliki, said to be the man into the whom the greatest god of the island descends, seems to have a great fear of what his islanders will say if he rejects a god he has so often told them is powerful and terrifying.

Chanel devoted an entire paragraph to the earthquakes that just then terrified the Futunans. It started a week ago, he wrote, with one, mighty shock at four o'clock in the morning. It felt, he wrote to Colin, as if the earth would open up under my bed. Not used to be woken up like that – Chanel must have been a good sleeper – it took him some time to get over the agitation. He counted nineteen aftershocks in twenty-four hours.

Futunan tradition has it, he wrote, that one of their gods, *Mafuike fulu*, sleeps at great depth under in the earth, and when he turns over in his sleep, he causes the frequent earthquakes on their island. When earthquakes become particularly intensive *Mafuike fulu* suffers of itch and he scratches himself. The Futunans do not understand, Chanel adds soberly, that their island is of volcanic origin and they are not aware of the danger they would be in, if the seemingly extinct volcano were to come to life again.

It is touching to think of Chanel, sitting on a tree trunk in his hut all night, with a burning candle as only light. And then to read his thoughtful and lengthy account of the Futunan explanation of earthquakes. In no way does he make it sound ridiculous; on the contrary, he recounts it with respect. At the same time, there is his geological understanding of volcanic activity. As if Chanel is sorry for the fact that Futunan religious feelings are threatened, not so much by the Christian faith he brings, as by the disenchantment of nature entailed in contact with the other, we would say today, Western world.¹¹⁴

A similar concern seems to underlie the next, equally long paragraph. Chanel is no romantic. He has seen the sordid side of natural religion. In each illness they see the hand of an angry god. Each god has his little sanctuary. People rush to bring their valuables to whatever god is presumed to be the cause of their illness, all to no avail. But at each sanctuary there is a greedy man or woman who claims close links to the gods and the right to take the people's gifts for themselves. 'Please', he wrote to Colin, 'send us good medical handbooks, supplies of medicines, small surgical tools. It is dreadful to visit the sick and not be able to help them at all'. In other words, no good talking about beliefs, give us what we need to help them effectively.

'It is said that France is the most beautiful place after heaven. But there is a beauty about these islands that France would be jealous of.' However tough his life is, and however frustrating his lack of success, he loves Futuna.

Twice, Chanel speaks about his death. 'Death will soon come and thin our ranks'. (...) 'When we are dead, others will come to take our place.' Did he have a premonition of things to come? It was to be his last letter to Jean-Claude Colin.

¹¹⁴ On this sensitive missiological issue, cf. Jan Snijders, *The Best of Two Worlds: functional substitutes and Christian secularity*, in *Catalyst*, I (1971) pp. 47 – 60, with references to Tippett, Larracy and others.

The third letter Chanel wanted to get away was to Bishop Devie. As he had asked Colin to keep the bishop informed, Chanel could presume that his former Ordinary would know of the voyage to Oceania and of his whereabouts. He now told the bishop of the visit of Bataillon, the fighting on Futuna in August, of how he tried to intervene and how the King did everything in his power to prevent the war, to no avail. He shared with the bishop his impression that since the war people's minds were better disposed towards the faith than before. On the neighbouring island of Wallis there was more success to report. The Lord has blessed the work of Bataillon; his island counts many catechumens and some have had to suffer for their faith. A Tongan chief has converted to the Catholic faith while staying on Wallis and wants to return to Tonga with a priest. The Protestants have nearly everywhere established themselves before us. The Methodists have Tonga in their power, they now spread into Fiji. They were in Samoa but now Anglicans are taking their place.

There are promising contacts however with a Fijian chief who visited Futuna, with people of Rotuma, etc. Chanel mentions Tikopia where a Polynesian language is spoken not unlike Futunan. He has heard from the Picpus Father Maigret that Pohnpei too was promising.¹¹⁵ As to Futuna, things are slow but there is hope that the King will decide for the Christian Faith when Bishop Pompallier comes as promised.

Neither the letters Chanel wrote on this occasion, nor a careful use of the *Analyse* of Chanel's diary by Roulleaux for this first half of 1840, suggest that things on Futuna could go seriously wrong.

¹¹⁵ Chanel would have heard this in May 1839 from Baty and Petit, who had met Maigret in Valparaiso in January, after his return from Pohnpei. They had travelled together to Tahiti. Cf. above, p. 111f